

GOOD PRACTICE

Higher education in support of internationalization processes

ORGANISATION: University of Modena and Reggio Emilia - UNIMORE

TOPIC: Penetration of territories, attraction of talents, creation of partnerships

TOPIC OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

With the development of training and educational paths, based on the local economy excellences, in partnership between business and universities, it is possible to create shared routes for the penetration of foreign markets, for attracting talent and investment, for the creation of international networks.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

The University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, UNIMORE, is developing a strategy of collaboration with local companies in order to prepare students in the field of internationalization processes and to help enterprises to go global. Unimore is ranked among the top 8 universities in Italy for its high level of research. With over 20,000 students and 300 international exchange agreements and cooperation programs, it is composed of 14 Departments and offers a wide range of degree programs. Unimore is working especially on three lines of action: 1) **Food Innovation Program (FIP)**; 2) **Cooperation Unimore-Enterprises for the development of new products/ markets**; 3) **Short Master Emerging Markets**.

All three lines focus on the collaboration between Unimore and foreign universities and companies, through the active participation of students in programs and/or experiences of intensive training, in order to enhance the skills needed for the development of new products and/or new markets. The activities of this action lines are based on institutional agreements, which identify students as the hub for the sharing of skills to be transferred to businesses. The University has the role of 'facilitator' of exchanges and coordinates and co-finances the initiatives.

1) **The Food Innovation Program** is a 12-month full time Master Program, promoted by Unimore, the Future Food Institute in Bologna (FFI) and the Institute for the Future in Palo Alto, California (IFTF). The Program is centered around the "Seed of Disruption Forecast Map" developed by IFTF that uses foresight, scientific rigor as well as proven methodologies which aim to help the development of collaborative and innovative entrepreneurship. The map is the result of careful research that led IFTF to map out how emerging technologies and sciences are reshaping the global food web. The map has a set of five perspectives - production, distribution, manufacturing, shopping and eating - explaining how the emerging information technology will reshape every stage of the food system. For each perspective, map indicates current signals of innovation that provide insight towards the direction of future changes.

The Program is structured in three distinct phases with final thesis project.

The Inspiration Track takes place in Reggio Emilia and combines classical and innovative educational methodologies, such as foresight training and design thinking. In this phase students are led by international professors and take part into conferences and talks by renowned global opinion leaders, policy makers, inventors, artists and social entrepreneurs at the forefront of food and innovation.

The Aspiration Track focuses on cross-pollination of ideas, cultures and culinary traditions through a 2 months Global Food Innovation Mission tour of Netherlands, Boston, New York, Silicon Valley, California, Osaka/Kyoto, Shanghai, Seoul, Singapore, Tel Aviv, the most important innovative food hubs of the world. Students in Global Mission were appointed "ambassadors of the territory" by Italian Foreign Ministry, visiting

Italian embassies abroad and getting in touch global players of the Food Innovation system as Italian delegation made of non-Italians who have chosen Italy for their activities and studies.

The Perspiration track includes laboratory training and prototyping in the Officucina, the kitchen maker-space designed specifically for FIT, with 3D printers, laser cutters, sensors, Arduino, and more. In this phase students work on innovation Challenges provided by corporate partners to develop solutions for industry and society, participate in workshops and hackathons events for exchanging and building out ideas with a broader community and develop and pursue entrepreneurial ideas.

The main aim of the FIP to train Food innovators: managers and entrepreneurs capable of identifying, classifying and analyzing the needs of the food industry and those of involved stakeholders, in addition to being able to rapidly prototype solutions and navigate in a network of contacts. In both editions, the FIP involved 40 Food Innovators coming from all over the world (Italy, Kenya, Congo, Zimbabwe, Canada, USA, UK, Brazil, Mexico, China, Ethiopia, Egypt, Philippines, Germany, Jordanian, UK, India, Poland, Peru, Turkey, Venezuela).

Key in building relationships with world academic and business partner, the **Global Food Innovation Mission** aims to represent Italy and the "Made in" products on a global scale, to visit Italian companies in the world, to meet Italian diplomatic figures who have always supported the internationalization of Italian companies. Each member of the delegation then will have a specific objective indicated by project partners as well as a personal research topic that will feed into the mapping of Global Food Hubs and trigger the creation of global innovations that is inclusive and sustainable.

The FIP has also created a version "**On The Road**" that involves students, teachers and international opinion leaders in food innovation, discovering traditions, innovations and industrial excellences of Emilia Romagna, enabling a fruitful exchange of expertise, experiences and inspirations. Food innovation program "On The Road" has given birth to a full calendar of events in the form of meetings, some open to the public, which were held during the master: "Food is a conversation" (more than fifty meetings where food is an opportunity for discussion and dialogue), "book tasting" (presentation of books at Officucina in Reggio Emilia, meetings with writers and journalists on publications about food and innovation), "Field trip" (real "mission" to discover companies and territories to discover the culture, the land and the tradition of food industries in the region), "meet the founder" (meetings with startup founders and innovative companies to figure out how to start a company and become entrepreneurs), EXPO (research activities during Expo Milano 2015), finally, the "Hack FIP" (co-design events that are born to hack and improve outdated models, and stimulate the creation of new business ideas).

Companies can support the project through:

- Scholarships for students (fees and accommodation)
- Sponsorship of individual research projects that students develop during the Global Mission

Challenge: 3 months full time projects where a team of students works side by side with a company's professional team to develop an innovative solution by applying the Design Thinking

Mini challenge: 2 days intensive workshops or hackathon based on Design Thinking where students are involved in innovation activities to resolve a proposed challenge support outreach events of the contents developed in the master. The Program aims at spreading a new culture of innovation in the food sector, whereby students become agents of change in society and in the involved companies. The partner firms, in addition to a return in terms of image, are in fact in contact with professors and students of international level, experiencing the major industry breakthrough innovations and innovating products / services / business process by proposing challenges for the future of their industry (according to the "challenge based innovation methodology" that includes the development of innovative projects by the teams participating in the Master in response to the challenges posed by companies). The aim of involvement is also to directly involve the companies in mapping the critical technologies for shaping agriculture, food distribution, retailing and consumption of the future and help narrate the territory and the Emilia Food Valley in the world.

2) **Cooperation for the development of new products/markets.** Through the creation of intensive workshops, University has stimulated a favorable framework for collaboration between preselected students and local businesses to evaluate the placement of new products on larger territorial markets than those traditionally covered, in a perspective of international growth.

The activities directly involve the investors in the presentation of the project to be submitted to strategic assessment and the students in the preparation of project work intended to respond to the challenge provided. The project is coordinated by a teacher with the role of tutor. The students who provide the most attractive solutions continue their experience with an internship aimed at developing new products. Company and University, specifically through the tutor, found convergence on the initiative with an informal agreement that allowed the company to enter the classroom on a weekly basis to discuss proposals and solutions, and the students to experience six-month internships to implement the project proposed and discussed in the classroom. Even during the internship, collaboration among enterprise-students-Unimore continues through the implementation of various steps: analysis and evaluation of the idea of innovation and estimated composition of demand for a hypothetical launch.

3) **Short Master Emerging Markets.** Another action, still oriented to students, provides a direct experience of visiting and training on the Indian and Chinese markets. The Summer School in India was held for two consecutive years and aimed to introduce Italian students to the economics and social and cultural context of India. In particular, the first edition saw the involvement of businesses both in the role of sponsors and as partners for visits to branches of Italian companies and local businesses. The Summer School was also an opportunity for discussion with institutional local players (Embassy, ICE, etc.). Similarly, the initiative of the China Study Tour (the 2nd edition will take place in 2017) allows the students to participate in training modules at local universities and take part into company visits and cultural experiences. In this second case the main support comes from China Association, a local institution constituted for the promotion of cultural exchanges Italy-China.

The introduction of students to the economic, social and cultural environment of the two countries, thanks to agreements with local universities, national institutional partners and businesses, allows the integration of traditional university education and gives local businesses the opportunity to access human resources already involved into specific learning experiences about markets of their potential interest. In this perspective, the main focus at the institutional level is the creation and dissemination of a culture of internationalization which must permeate institutions, companies and people (students, in this case).

The common aims of these action lines are the creation and the consolidation of the innovation culture and of businesses' and territory's internationalization. Given specific differences, all lines focus on the students as actors of innovation and internationalization: on one hand the integration of company's and students' competences, with the aim of supporting growth, is realized through internships coordinated by the University, on the other hand though experiences in foreign countries, the students gain competences and skills that can be shared with other territorial actors who may employ human resources that already have a knowledge of internationalization and foreign markets.

ROLE OF ACTORS

In all three cases the institutional role of Unimore was pivotal in coordinating objectives and aims proposed by different social and economic actors. Unimore coordinated participant selection, the intensive training, the projects evaluation, the internship selection and the phases of product innovation with the students selected for internship. Unimore, as coordinator of the training experiences abroad, promoted the activities among its students, coordinated and financed the actions and played a central role as a facilitator for fund raising among third parties. Beside this coordinating role, Unimore was able to consolidate its relationships and network with local economic actors, with the aim to enhance and innovate its academic activities in order to foster integration between specialist and disciplinary training and cultural internationalization issues and territorial needs. Unimore also strengthened its academic network through formal agreement with foreign Universities like Amity University, New Delhi, UIBE in Beijing e Tongji University in Shanghai.

A wider network of Italian and foreign Universities, cultural associations, business with consolidated experience on foreign markets and students was activated.

This kind of activity obviously had a specific impact on the businesses and on the students, who were able to increase their management skills and start an intensive training in terms of product innovation and marketing aimed to foster growth and internationalization at local business level. Local business and associations provided management and financial support. Foreign universities, through the agreement signed with Unimore, took part into the definition of objectives and processes related to the training experience on foreign markets. In some cases, companies supported the actions hosting students in their headquarters abroad. Food Innovation program was born thanks to the collaboration with two main actors: The Future Food Institute (based in Bologna, Italy) is a non-profit organization that seeks to study, research and analyze new trends around the world while implementing and testing new solutions to help food system organizations plan and create a sustainable future for the betterment of people and the planet.

Institute for the Future is an independent, non-profit strategic research group with over 45 years of forecasting experience based in Palo Alto, California. Their mission is to help organizations, communities, and individuals think systematically about the future.

Food Innovation program has been also supported by many public institutions:

The city of Reggio Emilia decided to host the FIP within the Civic Museums, with the aim to go beyond the academic scope and make the program open to the entire city. Thus, was born Officucina, the laboratory of FIP, a hybrid space somewhere between a workshop and a kitchen, where the students are able to experience theories and projects shared in the classroom. Also, REI (Reggio Emilia Innovation) and the Pietro Manodori Bank Foundation of Reggio Emilia supported the project. FIP, supported by Emilia Romagna and EXPO 2015, was also one of the points of excellence of We A.Re / Reggio Emilia for Expo 2015, the program of events built by the Reggio Emilia system for the Universal Exposition in Milan, with the aim of qualifying - with an important proposal of innovation, economy, culture and tourism - Reggio Emilia, making it more attractive and recognizable to visitors of Expo 2015, highlighting the distinctive skills of the territory.

FIP received also support by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for the development of WikiExpo.org, a project that aimed to map the creation of new knowledge, research, innovation projects, events and seminars that took place at Expo from May to October 2015. The platform has been curated by an international team, selected and managed in partnership with the Food Innovation Program, and it also involved young journalists, foodies, Future Food Institute fellows and of course, the general public.

BENEFICIARIES

Direct and indirect beneficiaries were involved in the actions:

- 1) Unimore, in terms of consolidation of territorial relationships, improving its institutional relationships with foreign Universities and local businesses with international vocation;
- 2) Local businesses, in terms of: integration of internal marketing and business intelligence skills together with academic competences provided by Unimore, exploitation of market analysis techniques and product innovation solutions provided by students during the internships, potential hiring of new graduates that through their training experience can foster or consolidate the company's presence on foreign markets.
- 3) Students, in terms of fruition of a training and academic experience that, beside enhancing their competences, offered the opportunity to foster the culture of innovation and growth of the territory;
- 4) Businesses for the FIP: Local companies active in the agrifood sector (from production to food industry, from manufacturing to distribution) and companies active in other sectors related to the agrifood system or interested in building partnerships (ICT, packaging, transports, logistic, automation technology) in terms of financial support for students and research partner that commit ad hoc research project to a selected FIP student who carries out the exploratory research on the field during the 2 months Global Mission, in

terms of challenges proposals (Barilla, Tetra Pak, Coop Nordest, Alce Nero, Saclà, Mars, Coopbox, Nuova Castelli, Havi Logistics, Kamer, CIR, Day Up, Amadori, CAMST, AirBnB, Google, etc.).

Cooperatives - Reggio Emilia Legacoop, the Italian oldest association of cooperatives and part of the International Cooperative Alliance (Ica), fully supported the Food Innovation Program as a tool for innovation, growth, development, sharing, sustainable progress and involved and coordinated in the project 3 realities of first level on the national economic scenery: Coop Italia, Cir Food, Cantine Riunite (large retailers - hyper and super markets, commercial and private catering, wine production).

Cooperatives have decided to undertake a closer run of collaboration with the Food Innovation Program, because dedicated to the study and dissemination of the principles of innovation in the food industry, with a strong vocation to the characteristics of socialization to it connected. The collaboration with FIP involving the cooperatives in a process of continuous contamination and comparison with other partner companies, students, university, researchers, in Italy and abroad, widening the possibility to access information on their process of production, systems of retail and distribution innovation. The FIP allows Coop Italia, Cir Food and Cantine Riunite to compare excellence and avant-garde in the world of food, combining respect for tradition with new consumer trends, exploiting suggestions coming from every angle of the planet and strengthening their own culture of “international” enterprises, more and more oriented to the foreign markets.5) Territory - Particularly through the FIP's On the road project, an entire territory and its vocation for food and food innovation has the opportunity to be promoted and presented to the most important American players of the food industry. The aim of the project is to enhance trade and promotion opportunities with USA partners, also in terms of B2B, of widening the network of relations for business associations, local administrations, universities, research groups, in terms of fund raising opportunities.

CULTURAL ASPECTS: POSSIBLE KEY LEVERAGES FOR INTERNATIONALISATION PROCESSES

Social and cultural connections had a pivotal role in the actions. In particular, the actors involved shared a common view on the importance of a territorial culture of innovation and internationalization. People, members of companies and institutions with a natural sense for internationalization, have a leading role in terms of creating and fostering a territorial network. The actions are an opportunity to enrich Unimore with guest professors and lecturers from 7 different international universities and organizations, to accelerate the internationalization process of its activities and experiences and to foster the expansive academic-scientific, industrial and diplomatic network which has been cultivated over many years.

INNOVATION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE, POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT AND REPLICABILITY

The Food Innovation Program aims at creating a network of people, places and contents to disrupt the Food Systems around the world, building an international network of Professors, food hackers and activists that now spans more than 500 people around the world., supporting the creation of Food Innovation Spaces (like Officucina in Reggio Emilia) in several countries, like: Canada (Toronto), Turkey (Istanbul), USA (Davis) and Italy (Milano), Barcelona and London, creating summer schools (Messina on Mediterranean diet, Barcelona on Food Design, Davis (USA) on Food Tech), organizing discovery missions, where entrepreneurs and managers from the Region could visit Silicon Valley and discover what's going on in Food Tech and Food Innovation, developing executive programs, a compressed version of the program in one week for executives of the food industry. The actions described have innovative contents, in incremental terms. In the next future Officucine in Milan, Toronto, Davis will be opened. Many delegations have visited the Food Innovation Program during these years and are considering participating in the program: Hong Kong Korea, China, Japan, the United States, France, Spain, England.

The Short Master Emerging Markets has innovation potential not specifically in itself in terms of product/service innovation, but more important in terms of willingness to create and consolidate a network of multilateral relationships, direct and indirect, that can spread and foster a territorial culture. This, in turn, can propel international growth of various economic and social actors of the territory.

The Cooperation for the development of new products/markets action enabled to revisit traditional products made in Italy to facilitate access to new segments of the national and international demand and to estimate

the impact of different communication patterns in the launch of 'new' products. Beside this product innovation, a process of organizational innovation was started involving both the university and the enterprises. In particular, universities, with these experiences, integrates in its institutional tasks new models of interaction with the territory.

The companies and future businesses may find in the university an actor to entrust with specific steps of innovation process and a partner to work with on product/market innovation activities.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS AND THE ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT AND RESULTS OF GOOD PRACTICE

Unimore is currently undertaking a process of evaluation of the actions in terms of: innovation interactivity, new potential areas of interest for the companies involved and number of students taking part into it, enterprises involved and new agreements signed with international institutions and Universities. The evaluation will enable Unimore to find ways to consolidate the activities within a wider network and an increasing number of local companies. Unimore will also focus more specifically on targeted needs and skills demands of enterprises involved.

The FIP - 1st edition FIP numbers: 80 events organized, 2,500 participants at FIP events, 24 major international events attended to present the project, 24 Food Innovation Program expeditions, 80 Food Companies involved, 100 food experts involved.

Cases of recruitment or continuation of employment with companies after the first edition:

- a student hired by Barilla for the development of the 3D printer for pasta;
- a student hired by Tetra Pak;
- a student employed by the research team of Caleb Harper, MIT Media Lab researcher and professor of the master;
- 4 students who joined the Future Food Institute as researchers;
- 5 students who launched their business activities (three startups - mylbread, featup, kase and two pre-existing business in Zimbabwe and Congo);

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