

FINLANDS SVENSKA UNGDOMSFÖRBUND FSU RF**Impact evaluation**

This pilot course, Föreningsfestivalen, focused on culture volunteers sustainable project work in sparsely populated areas. The course is divided into three parts; Project management, learning new ways of cooperation between NGOs in sparsely populated areas (networking), and finally, as implementation of the learnings, the participants organized events based on their project plans.

We interviewed 2 respondents from the two main target groups: (1) involved persons from the voluntary culture associations and culture groups, and (2) other stakeholders as politicians or managers from the culture departments or staff from local culture institutions. One had done voluntary work with associations for almost 20 years, the other worked in a municipality.

The respondents thought according to the feedback that this pilot course had been fruitful and well compressed into one day of lectures and tasks before and after. They also added that this course could gladly be arranged 2 times a year on a permanent basis. They had heard about the course through social media.

When asked about civic participation, one of the respondents said that *“People represent many different associations, so sometimes the associations collaborating are simply names on a paper, as the same people are standing behind them. But this time I feel it was a bit more than that.”*

When asked about needed skills by the participants in the project, one of the respondents said *“People need to get better in selling what they have. No need to be shy – just go out there and tell the world you have got the best thing in town going on”.*

The respondents did feel they had found new means and technologies to reach-out to the citizens in the local communities, but otherwise they seem to already have had a variety of competences. So, this project did not bring many new competences for them.

There were an indication of respondents thinking that there was an increasing interest amongst cultural voluntaries and civic participation, but both the respondents felt it was on an ordinary level. Then again, asking how the pilot project promoted the insight in the local history of the community among the local citizens, the respondents clearly stated that it had increased.

The respondents thought the lecturers were quite compressed – which in turn some participants seemed to appreciate, thus leaving the outcome on a quite rudimentary level. Furthermore, there would have been a need of a follow-up meeting after the participants events.

When asking if the respondents had anything to add, one of them said that *“I think you have to put your heart in it. Whatever you do, do it 110%. That will motivate not only you, also everybody around you.”*

Overall you could say the respondents seem to share a quite positive view on the Spark projects impact on sparsely populated areas.