

Challenges of keeping the talents

Abstract/introduction: A description of the Study Tour I to Tallinn, which took place 25th – 27th May, 2022 focused on the challenge of keeping the talents. A description is given of the partner institutions and the organization of the study tour. It is argued that the study tour benefit from taking place in Ülemiste since it especially is designed to solve this problem for Estonia. A short presentation of companies visited is given from which some of these problems are presented as well as what the companies do to solve them. Students worked in group on finding ways to improve the mental wellbeing of Ülemiste City employees? The winning solution was an app – The Momentus App – which is presented. Finally, the students work, prepared from before the conference, on the lessons and experiences were of the Covid-19 period was.

Partner Institutions

The participating partner institutions of this study tour were from 7 nordic countries Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland. The partner schools and universities were Mainor AS (EE), The International School of Tallinn (EE), Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (LT), Vilniaus kolegija/University of Applied Sciences (LI), Aalborg University (DK), University of Stavanger (NO), South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (FI), Arcada University of Applied Sciences (FI) and University of Iceland (IS).

1. Challenges of keeping the talents

In general companies now a days face the challenge of keeping the talents. Few people expect to remain in their current work till they retire. The problem is especially evident in the IT sector where capturing the best talents is part of the competitions that give one IT company an edge against the others. Ülemiste City constitutes an exemplary place to study this phenomenon because it is built to face that challenge in Estonia and is the attempt to be a Smart Future City where talents would like to come and find work and take part of the future as it evolves in Estonia. Estonia investigates grim statistics that, when projected into the future means that the available workforce for the IT sector is radically diminishing. In spite of this, Estonia has managed to attract businesses and outpace many OECD countries on the employment rate of people between 15 and 64 (75,2 against the average of 68,8 in OECD and 68,4 in EU). They struggle however with structurally employment related challenges in terms of a shrinking workforce (OECD 2021). For this reason, we have investigated how that challenge is met in Ülemiste City by inviting companies, students, and researchers to define the challenge and discuss how it is met in Ülemiste City.

1.1 Defining the challenges of keeping the talents

Companies working in the IT sector, such as those which took part of the Study Tour at Ülemiste City, rapport about the challenge of keeping the Talents. Four areas stand out as defining for the challenge:

- The challenge of the spouse and children.
- The challenge of brain-drain from other parts of Estonia.
- The changing dynamics at the workplace if talents stay for more than five years.

- The changing dynamics of Ülemiste if talents and their families live in the city itself (babies, children, teenagers, young people, elderly)
- The challenge of teaching talents new ways of working, from top-down leadership to bottom-up problem-based teamwork
- Mental health issues, especially during crisis and critical times

1.2 Different actions done

Proposed actions regarding Ülemiste Mainor University:

- I) Teaching problem-based learning and teamwork
- II) Humanities as a groundwork for understanding work/life balance

1.2.1 Panel Discussion: How to keep international talents?

Opening the theme. Moderator Leonardo Ortega, Manager of International House of Estonia.

The panelists were:

Maira Leščevica, Professor, HESPI Leading Researcher, Faculty of Society and Science, Institute of Social, Economic and Humanities Research – Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, <https://va.lv/en/contact-us/contact-via-team/maira-lescevic>

Christa Tigerstedt, Arcada University of Applied Sciences, Project researcher <https://www.arcada.fi/en/about-us/contact-details/school-of-business-and-healthcare/christa-tigerstedt>

Laura Sildmäe, Partner at Move My Talent, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/laura-sildm%C3%A4e-38361b11/?originalSubdomain=ee>

The main question of the panel and the seminar is the question of keeping international talents for at certain amount of time in Estonia and Ülemiste. As it is, talents stay in Estonia for two to five years, before leaving again. Keeping the talents, means to understand that language and origin of the talents is less important than their skills and work ethic. Moving between different countries and companies means, the talents are collecting experiences and knowledge before returning to their home country. This goes both ways, meaning, Estonians working abroad and returning to Estonia with new ideas and insights, as well as foreigners coming to Estonia with their education and experiences.

Because of this, it is important to develop an environment in which talents can grow and thrive. With a prolonged stay, they will be able to contribute further value to Ülemiste and Estonia, as well as bringing knowledge about Estonian life, culture, and companies back to their home countries. This means possible business co-operations in the future, as well as possible returns of talents at a later stage.

Like Estonia, Finland has experienced an increase in work ‘nomads’ after Covid-19. Talents look for opportunities, including professorships, in other towns or countries. This includes the search for family friendly places, where people can connect on a personal level, despite being from different countries.

Part of this must be found in the virtual world, which already is an important space for teenagers and young people. Here, talents could be discovered and nursed, as well as opening possible business connections, which can evolve into partnerships across countries (van Kessel et al., 2022).

In conclusion; we need to retain international talent security, including intuition and curiosity. The possibility for self-development and openness towards new talents, cultures, and languages.

1.2.2 Company visits

Helmes

Keeping talents for five instead of the average one and a half year; working in autonomous teams which requires a certain culture and knowledge, not given to all talents who come from abroad (and would be something, Ülemiste university could work actively with); having one customer and the team can be in-house with the customer (ownership, responsibility); very good knowledge of each talent regarding their needs and wants; many one to one meetings.

Eurora

Fast developing start-up which has hired 125 people only this year and requires at least the same amount of people the rest of the year. Very acute keeping track of each talent, including discussions of leaving Eurora on good terms with the possibility to enter an Alumni association. Estel Pukk, Director of People and Culture at Eurora, presented Eurora's ideals on how to keep the talents. Pukk won Best HR consultant 2021 and it shows in her commitment. As the below figure shows, working for Eurora means becoming part of a large team. During the time at Eurora, Pukk thinks of the talent as being on a journey, which does not end after leaving Eurora. Pukk's wish is to create an Alumni association, which can help to keep people at Eurora, as well as get new people to Eurora.

My journey in Eurora

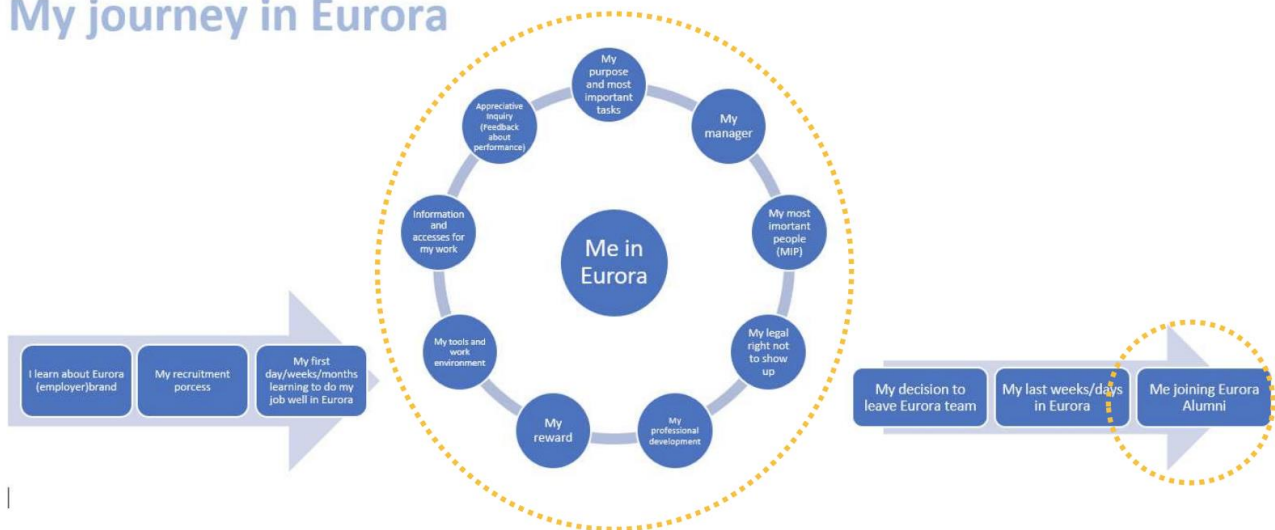


Figure 1: The Eurora work-life cycle.

The following points were in conclusion after the presentation and discussions:

- to include physical and mental health related touchpoints to the Employee Life Cycle
- to highlight more the professional and personal growth opportunities
- to diversify depending on age, family profile etc.

1.2.3 Future City hackathon

Three challenges were presented for the Future City Hackathon. Each challenge had two teams working on a solution. Each team consisted of students from at least two different universities. The three challenges were:

How to motivate Ülemiste City campus office workers to move more?

Ülemiste City is the largest and fastest-growing innovation hub in the most digitally advanced country in the world - Estonia. It's a city as a start-up. Home to nearly 500 companies, 13 000 talents from over 70 countries.

Context

In Ülemiste City, a recent survey of employees by researchers at the University of Tartu revealed that 1/5 of people sit for an average of 4 hours a day. However, the city is very interested in getting its employees to move more. The workers' mobility habits are shaped by uniting work duties and mobility, like walking meetings, the Bike 2 Work challenge, outdoor workplaces, and popularizing the using of stairs by stair races and by making the stairwells more attractive.

Challenge

Create a marketing campaign to make office workers move more in Ülemiste City.

How to make 2-day innovation event that would attract international students

THE AIM OF THE ÜLEMISTE CITY FUTURE FORUM 2023 (April)
Turning Ülemiste City and Tallinn into a spot full of superb and versatile innovation by bringing together great ideas and valuable talents, companies, students, and higher education institutions.

Focus Areas

Future business innovation

Future talent and its health

Future technology incl. big data

Target groups

- Companies, start-ups, talents
- NGOs, representatives of urban organizations ecosystems
- Teachers and students of Estonian and foreign higher education institutions, researchers
- Foreign guests

Challenge

Create a 2-day innovation event program that is attractive to students.

How to improve mental wellbeing of Ülemiste City employees?

Ülemiste City is the largest and fastest-growing innovation hub in the most digitally advanced country in the world - Estonia. It's a city as a start-up. Home to nearly 500 companies, 13 000 talents from over 70 countries.

Context

In Ülemiste City, a recent survey of employees by researchers at the University of Tartu revealed that on average Ülemiste City employees spend more time in the state of flow (increased engagement and productivity) than an average employee. However, the stress levels are also higher. The challenge is how to keep employee work engagement and mental wellbeing balanced to prevent burn-out.

Challenge

Create a plan to improve mental wellbeing of Ülemiste City employees.

1.2.3.1 Proposed solutions

The student teams presented their solutions as short pitches. Several of these pitches are almost ready for implementation and use. Team VI was named as the winner by Eneken Titov with their app Momentus (see below).

Ad challenge 1: **How to motivate Ülemiste City campus office workers to move more?**



Figure 2: Presentation Team V. Link: shorturl.at/irvNO or scan the QR code.

Team V members were Gustavs Mázins and Krista Leimane, Latvia, Kalu Oji Ndukno, Norway, Þorsteinn K. Ingolfsson and Arnar Guðnarsson, Iceland, and Stella Huang, Norway. They propose the 5-minute city. The main idea being, that every relevant element of one's life is only five minutes' walk away. At the same time, the office should be designed to afford more walking. E.g. the printer being away from the desk. Also, walkathons and competitions should give incentives to walk more.

SOLUTION

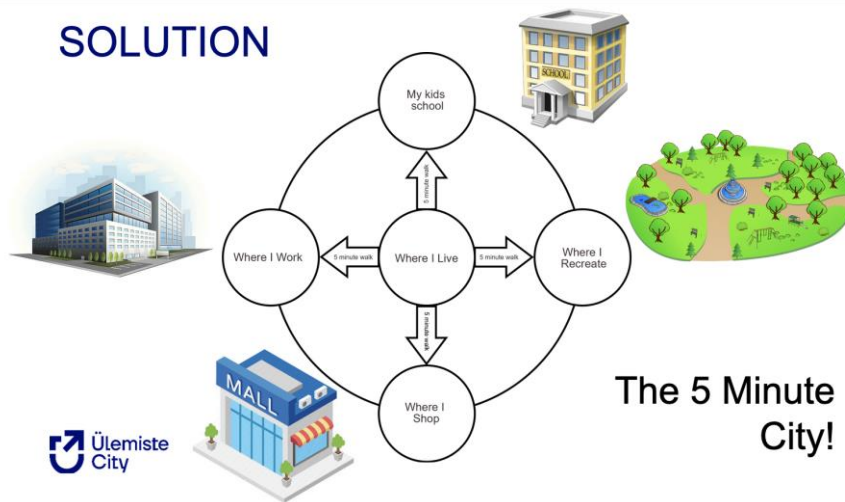


Figure 3: The 5 minute city.



Figure 4: Team VI presentation. Link: shorturl.at/hnOTW or scan the QR code.

Team VI members were Henriette Larsen, Denmark, Karolina Petrauskaitė, Lithuania, Muhammad Asif, Pakistan, Ayomiposi Feyisekemi Akinwale, Nigeria, Anna Hole, Norway, and Selma Dagmar Óskarsdóttir, Iceland. The team proposes the Momentum app, which should be seen as an integrated part of the company. While taking a break, the user's working computer shuts down and can only be unlocked through a code, which in turn is generated once the Momentum app has registered a certain number of steps taken by the user while on break. The user sets the system to certain hours or minutes of work and breaks, which means, the computer is shut down at the set times, forcing the user to take a break.

Ad challenge 2: **How to make 2-day innovation event that would attract international students**

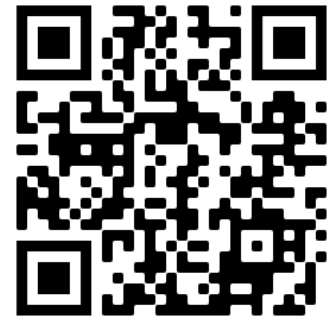


Figure 5: Team 1 presentation. Link: shorturl.at/csty5 or scan the QR code.

Team I members were Andreas Ottossen and Simon Dannevang, Denmark, Efe Uzum, Norway, and Estere Loreta Ábelina and Ervins Boikovs, Latvia. Their proposal is called “Ülemiste Event Days” and is based on gamification and social events. Through participation in conference events, the participant collects points and rewards. Rewards could be food and drinks, or conference merchandise. The social events could engage people with each other using the app.

Event App

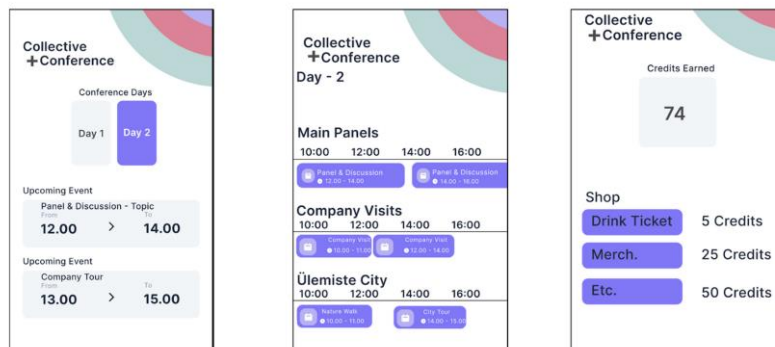


Figure 6: Event app by Team I.



Figure 7: Team II presentation. Link: shorturl.at/dJ059 or scan QR code.

Team II, “Countrybox”, members from Latvia: Nikola Anna Samoilenko and Santa Skaistkalne; team members from Estonia: Elnaz Nasiri, Johnnel Tan, Joseph Okunhon, and Joy Mitra. Their solution is based on involving the students in the event and programme. Not just as helping hands or nameless audiences, but as part of the programme itself. This would involve panel for both professionals and students, as well as icebreaker events prepared by students. Furthermore, the event should present Estonia and Ülemiste city, using coffee breaks, discovery tours, and the like.

Ad challenge 3: **How to improve mental wellbeing of Ülemiste City employees?**

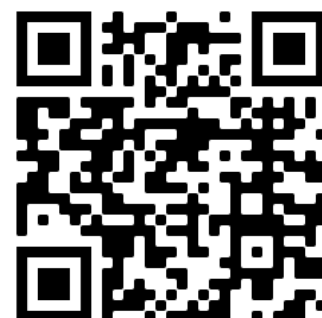


Figure 8: Team III presentation. Link: shorturl.at/beSV9 or scan the QR code.

Team III, “Flode”, members: Gustav Schrøder, Denmark, Guðrúndsk Friðrilsdóttir and Esjar Baldurrson, Iceland, Inesa Penikaitė and Migle Linbamirestaitė, Latvia, and Rebecca Ojolade, Nigeria. The app ‘Flode’ consists of two parts. One for the manager, which provides an overall look at any team’s well-being, and one for the employee only. The employee part consists of a mental overview of the employee themselves, a quest progress, and a growth overview. The employee chooses their quests, which could be as simple as ‘running with colleagues’ to more complex like ‘work-life balance’. In the personal growth part, the employee can choose different courses, which focus on mental health. This could be ‘How to give great feedback’ or ‘How to motivate people’. The app should have focus on data safety and security.

Our Solution

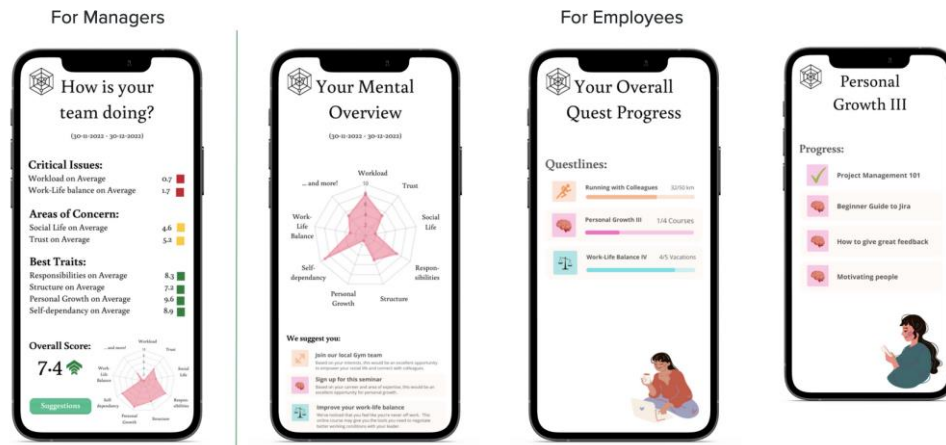


Figure 9: The Flode app by Team III.



Figure 10: Team IV presentation. Link: shorturl.at/cKMSV or scan the QR code.

Team IV, “Mental Bridge”, members: Armandas Jasdaussas and Denis Pokrekosvkij, Lithuania, Joan O. Onto-Osawe and Daniel O. Olurunferm, Nigeria (Estonia), and Henrik Gamborg, Denmark. The team argues for two main problems: talking about mental health is hard; talents might not understand what they are experiencing themselves. Their solution creates mental health awareness through anonymous surveys, in-house psychologists, creating social connections, and other employee assistance initiatives. The main idea is to connect talents directly with the specialists without involving the leadership of the companies.

1.2.4 Business Speed Dates

The final day of the Study Tour included a business speed date where students from the partnering universities were introduced to five companies *ABB*, *Global Business Services*, *Nordea Estonia*, *Topia*, *Eurora* and *Helmes*. The students were organised around 5 tables and then the business representatives had 10 minutes to introduce their business to the students and answer questions that the students had.

1.2.5 Student presentations: „Challenges of keeping the talents during the covid“

The participating students summarized the best practices of their country (talents+health). Each university prepared Powerpoint presentation, which contained research and best cases in their countries related to the subject: “Challenges of keeping the talents during the Covid-19”.

Denmark



Figure 11: Team from Denmark, presenting best practices. Link: shorturl.at/1U138 or scan the QR code.

The team from Denmark, Henriette Larsen, Gustav Schröder, Andreas Ottosen, Henrik Gamborg, and Simon Dannevang, explained about the different lockdowns occurring during the Covid-19. Using Bredgaard et al.’s paper ‘Den anden nedlukning’ (The second lockdown), the team asked the following question:

“How did practitioners of liberal professions experience leadership and management during covid-19 in Denmark?”

Positive insights from the paper were:

Understanding practical problems for employees, like taking care of children.

Using digital tools to maintain social relations to strengthen the mental wellbeing of their employees.

The effectiveness of working from home, which covers less interruptions as well as more effective and shorter meetings. This also covers a positive attitude in working from home.

High level of freedom for the employees, as their leader would trust them to do their job, while taking care of children and family.

Good communication and clear instructions from the leader to their employees also enhanced the wellbeing of the employees during the lockdowns.

The final takeaways from the paper are:

- As a leader you will have to deal with the taboo regarding discussion of mental health with employees.
- If working from home, you may want to ask if your employees would be interested in online events to strengthen social relations between co-workers.
- Discuss if your employees want a different balance between working from home or the office.
- While online meetings are effective and cut out transportation, consider if employees are losing out on the nuances of in-person meetings. If possible, discuss if this lack of in-person meetings is harming job satisfaction and the quality of work.



Figure 12: The team from EUAS presenting best practices. Link: shorturl.at/BMW01 or scan the QR code.

The team from EUAS, Muhammad Asif, Joy Mitra, Joan Osaogie Omo-Osawe, Ayomiposi Feyisekemi Akinwale, Joseph Okunhon, Namrata Rajesh Gaikwad, Nandini, Daniel Oluwasegun Olorunfemi, Elnaz Nasiri, Jahnnel Shaun Gotis Tan, and Ololade Rebecca Oyekunle, presented the paper Innovative human resource management strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic narrative review approach. This research paper is from Iran and defines three main challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Economic shock
- Change of social behavior
- Challenge at organizational level

Possible solutions for these challenges are:

- Flexibility of employee's life cycle
- Availability of adequate resources for employee's home office
- Training courses to gain new skills
- Establishing continuous communication with and among employees to promote and develop the employee's motivation and participation
- Support employees to support and maintain their health and welfare
- Provide innovative and fun activities for employees
- Strengthening internal efficiency and talent acquisition
- Manager's commitment
- Selection and participation of employees in decision-making
- Strengthening cohesion and sharing experiences
- Making changes based on organization assessment and data

The students round up their presentation with an overview of the main challenges from their different home countries. Especially inadequate resources for working from home shows as the main challenge (see figure 13).

Country	Challenge	Solution
India	Social distancing because of overpopulation	Work from home or split shifts
Iran	Inadequate resources for remote work	Half of the employees went to work 2-3 days per week
Nigeria	Inadequate resources	Shuffled work routine (3-4 day work week, rotation)
Pakistan	Inadequate resources for remote work	Smart Shift Systems
Philippines	Health risk in the workplace or public spaces due to crowding	Work from home, skeletal/split operations, suspended operations



Figure 13: Overview of main challenges from EUAS students' home countries during Covid-19.

Latvia



Figure 14: The team from Latvia presenting best practices. Link: shorturl.at/btuY0 or scan the QR code.

The team from Latvia, Estere Loreta Abeltina, Ervins Boikovs, Krista Leimane, Gustavs Mazins, Anna Nikola Samoilenko, and Santa Skaistkalne focused on the health care system during the first lockdown of Covid-19 pandemic in Latvia. As the students point out, Latvia suffered a great loss of lives due to Covid. These losses can partly be explained by a lack of preparedness of the national healthcare system. Lack of guidelines, both for the overall system as well as family doctors and doctors for chronically ill patients, were one problem. Also, decision making had to become more

efficient and closer to the actual crisis point. Remote counselling should be encouraged. Emergency staff could not handle all incoming calls, which points to the overall problem of lack of hospital infrastructure, which needs to be increased to avoid short comings in the case of another pandemic.

Lithuania



Figure 15: Team from Lithuania presenting best practices. Link: shorturl.at/nxx48 or scan the QR code.

The team from Lithuania, Vilnius University of Applied Sciences, Business Management faculty, International Business students Karolina Petrauskaitė, Inesa Penikaitė, Miglė Liubamirskaitė, Armandas Jazdauskas and Denis Pokrovskij, presented the business case of Barbora UAB, founded in 2014 by Andrius Jurgelevičius. It is in Vilnius, Lithuania, and is part of the Electronic Shopping and Mail-Order Houses Industry. It has already expanded to other countries like Estonia, Latvia, and Poland. The company doubled its sales during the lockdown, both by taking risks as well as working together with other companies. By making it possible for people to order from home, the company helped decrease the number of customers in shops, thus helping the risk of spreading Covid-19. Lithuania has a problem with keeping talents, especially during the Covid-lockdowns where many people emigrated to other countries.

Norway

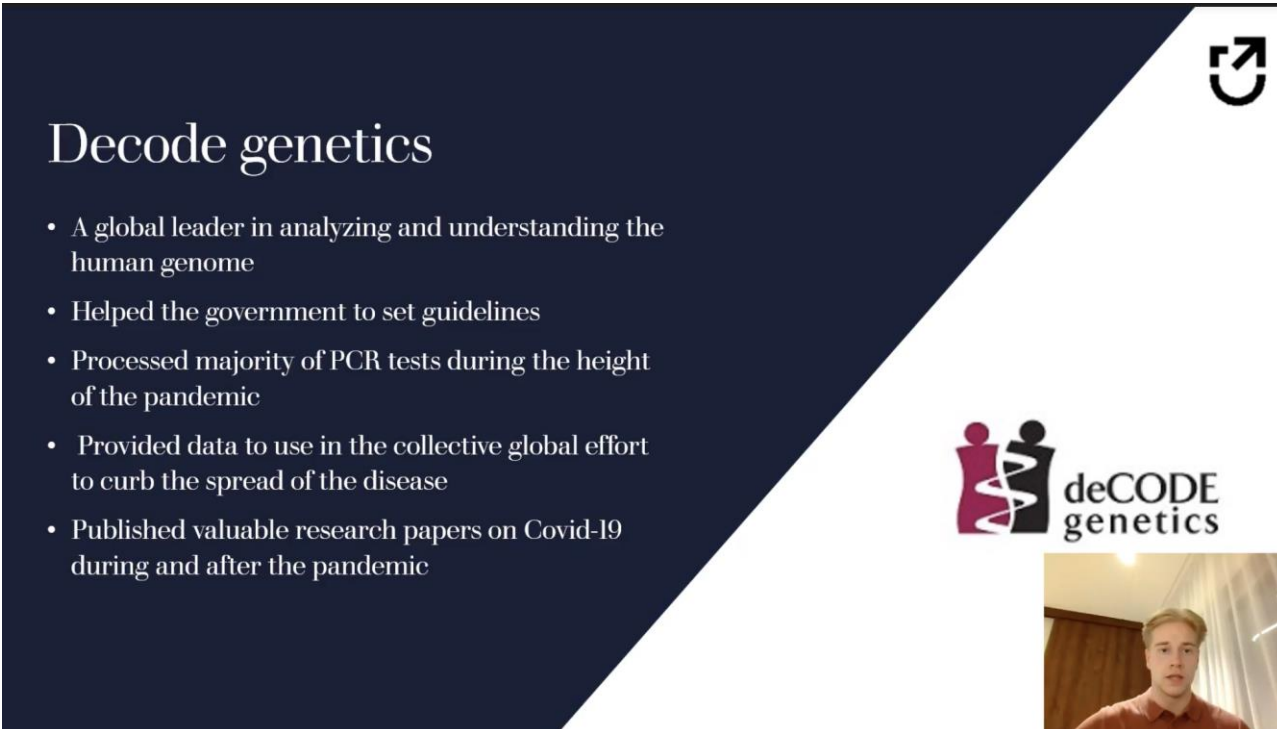


Figure 16: The team from Norway presenting best practices. Link: shorturl.at/FJLU6 or scan the QR code.

The team from Norway uses different papers to explain the situation in Norway during the Covid-19 pandemic (FHI, 2021; SSB, 2022; Svarstad, 2021). Contrary to other nations, Norway was prepared

for the pandemic, avoiding a total lock-down of the country. Extensive self-testing, as well as home-office and partial lockdowns, helped avoid deaths. While the country avoided the worst outcomes of the pandemic. However, spikes in mental health issues and social isolation could not be avoided. While people were laid off during the height of the pandemic, in 2022 more people than before had jobs, as well as many changed jobs. To keep talents, companies provided telework possibilities, and the government developed and stimulated measures for a green transition. Also, people's transport patterns changed, the use of shared transport increased.

Iceland



Decode genetics

- A global leader in analyzing and understanding the human genome
- Helped the government to set guidelines
- Processed majority of PCR tests during the height of the pandemic
- Provided data to use in the collective global effort to curb the spread of the disease
- Published valuable research papers on Covid-19 during and after the pandemic

deCODE genetics

Figure 17: Screen dump of the slideshow from the Icelandic team.

The Icelandic team, Arnar Gudnason, Gudrun Osk Fridriksdottir, Hafsteinn Esjar Baldursson, Selma Dagmar Oskarsdottir, and Thorsteinn Kristinn Ingolfsson, presented three business cases and the Icelandic government's response to the pandemic. Kara Connect, a company founded in 2014, enabled healthcare workers to work from home as well as connect with colleagues through teleworking. Surveys showed that people would prefer 2 to 3 days working from home if their jobs are suitable for telework. Advania conducted surveys during the pandemic, as well as provide telework possibilities for companies, including methods for management to implement telework. Challenges were adopting new management methods while keeping the company culture intact. Elding Whale Watching company held weekly meetings with their employees, in which their situation was reviewed, support was provided, and the emotional well-being was addressed. Decode Genetics is the leading global genome decoding company. It provided analyses of PCR-tests as well as data worldwide to use in combatting the pandemic. Finally, the Icelandic government provided aid to companies and employees in the form of payment people, who were laid off, and partly paying salary to keyworkers, so companies could keep them during the pandemic. Also, citizens received travel gifts after the pandemic to restart the Icelandic tourism. The government started major construction projects ahead of time in order to provide jobs.

Summary

Educators as well as student benefitted from the study tour and the visit by the companies demonstrate how Ülemiste City is on the cutting edge of tackling a challenge that face all countries that fight for keeping the talents, which the Corona pandemic in various ways accentuated. The reports by the students highlight various points that were also pointed out by the companies visited. Among these were such a thing as struggles with loneliness which in general is a problem when a talent is recruited and must root up his family and settle them far from where they used to live. On the other hand, the pandemic also gave 'working from home' which to some degree has been a positive lesson learned, though as demonstrated also came with problems. Solutions were presented such as shuffled work routines which is a tool that could be tested perhaps in Ülemiste. Some measurable points to follow up upon where the solutions worked on by the students concerning how to improve the mental wellbeing of workers as this could constitute an important tool for companies to keep the talents.

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Appendices

1.3 Summary of the report – feedback questionnaire – **Mainor/Report writers**

1.4 Conclusions- collected by admin partners - **Report writers**