

Press Release

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University of Eastern Finland

International University of Eastern Finland Summer School Course Focuses on Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

On August 8–12, 2022, nearly 50 international students and teachers from 17 countries participated in a course on the Joensuu Campus of the University of Eastern Finland to address conflicts related to natural resources governance and environmental protection, as well as environmental collaboration between different parties.

Themes of the five-day intensive course included, facilitation of environmental collaboration, mediation methods related to natural resources conflicts, and citizens' participation in the governance and protection of natural resources.

"Environmental collaboration is more than having a seat at the same table. Constructive collaboration and long-term facilitation require methodological expertise and listening skills. Collaboration should be seen as a civic skill, just like first aid," Professor of Natural Resources Governance **Irmeli Mustalahti** of the University of Eastern Finland says.

In addition to master's and doctoral-level students, practitioners of natural resources governance attended the course, which focused on concrete ways to prevent conflicts between different parties, and introduced collaborative and participatory methods and their application in environmental collaboration.

"A collaborative approach to natural resource governance that addresses environmental, economic, and social needs is critically needed to build sustainable and long term solutions. Such an approach must be promoted at international forums and on a national level. However, it is equally important to act locally since many environmental conflicts are local in nature. Training opportunities like this one can help develop the expertise needed to advance collaboration at all these levels." Executive Director of Portland State University's Hatfield School of Government, **Laurel Singer**, says.

The summer course is part of the Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution module, which is coordinated by the University of Eastern Finland and funded by the EDUCase network supported by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The project promotes collaboration between Finnish, Tanzanian, Ugandan and United States higher education institutions in teaching related to environmental collaboration. The project is led by the University of Eastern Finland and training is offered by Portland State University in the United States, the College of Business Education (CBE) in Tanzania, the University of Makerere in Uganda, the Pan African University network of the African Union, the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, and the UNESCO Network of Biosphere Reserves, which, in Finland, includes the biosphere reserves of North Karelia and the Archipelago Sea in Finland.

The next course within the project will be held in Mafinga, Tanzania, in October 2022, with a focus on small-scale private forestry as well as on conflicts and collaboration related to forest fire management.

For further information, please contact:

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The Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution project: <https://educase.aalto.fi/educase-platform/environmental-collaboration-and-conflict-resolution-course-series-and-teaching>

The University of Eastern Finland Research Group on Responsive Natural Resources Governance: <https://sites.uef.fi/responsive-natural-resources-governance/>