

Perspectives on the Nature of Open Data in Business Cooperation

Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) educate professionals solely based on labour market needs. The education follows tightly the needs of business, industry and service sectors. Research, development and innovation (RDI) work and regional development are two of the other mandated UAS tasks. RDI activities are typically heavily practice-oriented and have a strong regional impact. All RDI work is done in close cooperation with various partners generating new knowledge, competence, products and services for the region and beyond.

The total volume of RDI activities in the Finnish UAS sector was around 180 M€ in 2018. There are more than 2 500 RDI projects running every year, most of them tightly linked with SMEs and other organizations. During the projects, a considerable amount of research data is produced. The data is created mostly based on interviews, surveys and measurements.

In the Finnish UAS system, it is easy to see an ongoing transition into more open working methods in RDI projects. This relates to publications and data as well as research methods and processes in addition to results. Indeed, the well-known guideline “as open as possible, as closed as necessary” is gradually becoming a reality.

Especially sharing data in a UAS context can speed up innovation and enhance the involvement of businesses and other working life organizations in the research process. In the UAS sector, there is a lot of RDI data, which could be utilised also in upcoming projects, possibly with totally different companies involved. However, are the UAS sector and businesses able to reuse the data in practice? Is the data findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable (FAIR) also for businesses? What are the bottlenecks and practical challenges of curating RDI data and fostering data usage in general?

In this poster, we present challenges of data management where the data is produced in co-creation with companies in the Finnish context. The co-creation of data generates obstacles related to ownership, ethical questions, confidential information and business secrets, among others. It can also be that businesses are not ready to open up the research data because of an ongoing patenting process.

The more detailed purpose of the poster is to highlight what kinds of aspects should be considered in each phase of an open RDI process cycle to improve the dissemination and the use of research data in the future. In doing so, the poster attempts to identify the most critical issues relating to FAIR data management, especially in projects fundamentally linked with companies and other working life organizations.