

What is the Key to Successful Cooperation?

Fruitful collaboration can be undermined by a number of factors including differing interests and corporate culture, local regulations and even simple misunderstandings. When two companies are divided by a governmental border the range of possible obstacles only expands. Complications may be caused by a language barrier, cultural differences, export/import regulations and many other circumstances. Since the beginning of 2020 [Graduate School of Industrial Economics](#) has been working on a project that is aimed at researching this topic and improving future collaboration between companies from Russia, Finland and other bordering countries.



[INCROBB \(Inclusive cross-border business networking of tomorrow\)](#) project takes a close look at the intricacies of cross-border cooperation between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from Saint Petersburg, Leningrad Oblast and South-East Finland. The goal of the project lies in researching different factors and obstacles that influence cross-border cooperation. The project also aims at facilitating such cooperation through working with different businesses and business owners and helping companies with finding partners and specialists across the border.

The project was launched in the beginning of 2020, bringing together representatives from [LUT University](#) (lead partner), [Graduate School of Industrial Economics](#) ([Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University](#)), [Saint-Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#), [Etelä-Karjalan Yrittäjät ry](#), and [SaimaanVirta](#).

After the initial meeting in Lappeenranta came the first major step, the development of a survey aimed at researching the opportunities and barriers for successful cross-border collaboration. In February a meeting with SaimaanVirta, a recycling company from Finland, at the Saint Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry marked the completion of the first version of the detailed questionnaire.



In 3 days more than 80 companies have participated in the survey. The list of participants included both organizations with already established cross-border partnerships and firms that are considering this opportunity in the future. The survey showed that 60% of participating companies collaborate with businesses from the European Union, while 46% are partnered with businesses from Finland. The next step was a conference with more than 40 managers of small and medium-sized enterprises. This event proved to be a crucial source of information about further improvement of the survey and difficulties that SMEs experience in cross-border collaboration.

The survey also shined some light on the topic of barriers for cross-border cooperation. According to the results the main obstacles are high competition in the international market, lack of information about customer demand and the steps needed for establishing cross-border partnerships. The survey also showed that the main factors for successful cross-border collaboration include mutual trust, a similar vision for the project and active communication.

Meetings between SaimaanVirta, "Spasibo!" Project and Neorecycling were another noteworthy step in the history of INCROBB. In spite of originating from different business environments these companies found solid common ground in regards to their business models and heavy focus on recycling. All companies agreed on the importance of collaboration between bordering countries and decided to plan a visit from Russian managers to Finnish companies.

The development of the INCROBB project is continued to this day by the Director of the [Graduate School of Industrial Economics](#) Dmitriy RODIONOV, Associate Professors Tatyana KUDRYAVCEVA and Anton TIHOMIROV, assistants Angi SHVEDANI and Valentina KRAVCHENKO, students Maya LEUHINA and Aleksandra SHNEIDER.

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