

# w-power\_podcast\_episode2\_v1

## Saavutettavuusteksti

\*Intro jingle\*

Matthew:

Hello, and welcome to the W-power podcast series. I'm Matthew Comber, and I'll be your host. The W-power project works with women entrepreneurs in sparsely populated areas across Northern Europe and Arctic communities, encouraging them to set up and develop and grow their own business. The project is funded through the Northern periphery and Arctic program of the European development fund. One of the many ways the w project is helping women in rural communities start their own enterprise has been to encourage them to come forward with new business ideas. Even if these ideas are at a preliminary stage, the innovation platform, a business idea competition model, is based on an initiative called the draft program, which was developed by the Karelia university of applied sciences. This idea has now been piloted by the w power project. Successful applicants are provided with support in terms of business planning, a financial award and networking opportunities. The idea is to allow would be entrepreneurs to experiment with starting their own business, but without financial risk and to gain valuable knowledge and contacts. In this episode, we'll be hearing from two of the business competition winners. We have Sanna Jeskanen from Eastern Finland, who participated in the first pilot scheme in 2019, which was organized transnationally. We also have Laura Knuuti from Lapland, who participated in a second pilot scheme from 2020, which was organized in the Lapland and North Karelia regions of Finland.

\*Jingle\*

Matthew:

A bit about yourself, where you live and, and the business that you have started.

Sanna:

I'm Sanna Jeskanen, I'm an entrepreneur. Uh, I own a bakery, a gluten-free and vegan, uh, sourdough bakery here in North Karelia. And I'm also international relations coordinator at Karelia university of applied sciences. How it all started with us was two years ago. Um, my sister was actually a major also, uh, she made a fabulous gluten-free sourdough bread for me, and it was so, so good. So amazingly good that I decided to push my sister to open a bakery with me, uh, because it was so good and I have a disease, so CEDIA also, my sister has, and, uh, we know how much people who has this disease. How much they grave, uh, tastes of sourdough rye bread actually here in Finland. So, it was really similar to rye bread. Then we decided, okay, we want to provide this to everybody. And that's how it's, uh, how the

idea started. And then we heard about this, uh, W-power project, uh, from my colleague working at the university of Karelia and who is a coordinator of this new W-power project. My colleague told me about the project and that's how we decided to step into that project and apply for funding from there.

Matthew:

That's lovely. Well, I'm going to ask you a little bit more about that in a few minutes. Um, in the meantime, uh, Laura, please, could you also introduce yourself please? And about your business.

Laura:

Yes. So my name is Laura Knuuti. I live in Sodankylä in Lapland at the moment. Uh, so far we've lived here for almost exactly three years now, and my business is it's not up and running just yet. That's why I entered the, uh, the whole competition. And I am currently on my, uh, on my summer holiday from my normal day work. But meaning also that I'm trying to start up my business during this holiday. Uh, the business is, um, well, I cannot tell you too much about it just yet, because it's really not, I'm not ready for that yet. I'm aiming to produce some natural, uh, handmade products that has not been produced in this way previously

Matthew:

Are these decorative products, or are these cosmetic products or what, what is the field?

Laura:

Uh, well more decorative, I would say at least it's not something you can eat that much. I'll tell you.

Matthew:

Okay. Fair enough. Would you say, uh, perhaps, uh, put this question to Sanna, as a woman, do you find there's, uh, enough support generally, uh, outside of this W-power project, but generally in Finland for starting our own businesses as a woman, as opposed to a man starting his own business?

Sanna:

Yeah, it's a good question. I mean, for me, uh for example, I want to consider myself as an entrepreneur, as a woman entrepreneur. So, I don't, I don't want to categorize things, um, like this, but, um, of course it's a fact that, uh, businesses are run more often by men, even if, even in Finland though we are very, uh, equal and democratic country, uh, I think it's still so that women are more taking care of the families and households and children and even the parents. Uh, but the world is changing luckily and men are taking more responsibility for all those things, and therefore women have more time to do what they want to do. I mean, some follow their passion and open, open the businesses and so on.

Matthew:

Well, I'm going to talk a bit now or ask you more about the, um, the process of applying for the W-power assistance. Uh, Sanna let's we start with you, uh, you mentioned earlier that you worked for the Karelia university of applied sciences and that as such, you were able to part and take part in a scheme that they were running whereby uh, business development scheme was available for all students and staff working there. Can you describe how the process worked from the application and how it went forward?

Sanna:

Actually, the timing was perfect for us. Uh, two years ago, we were in a phase that we had an idea, we had a good recipe, but we didn't know how to proceed with this, how to progress. And at the same time, my colleague told me about this project and we were thinking, okay, this is a possibility for us. Of course, since we are female, we have the idea and we decided to apply. And it was really a huge asset for us. We, uh, we had to think about our, our goal again, and our plan again. And we had to clarify this, the whole idea for ourselves. Um, it was really, really important and we also made a business plan and we had to think, who are our customers, and, you know, all sorts of things. Then we were lucky to, uh, to have the funding. And then we had to, um, report on, we had to do what we actually, um, apply it. We had to report what we did, what we did with the money. And did we do those activities that we planned and that pushed us a step towards our company again, you know? And, um, we know that project and without the process itself, uh, I don't know. I think we might still have a bakery, but I think we made it more effectively and faster. And, uh, yeah, I think he was a huge help for us.

Matthew:

When you made the initial application, um, was it like a business idea competition? Was it something where the organizers chose the best idea?

Sanna:

Yes it was. And, uh, then we had this team event, which was really very exciting and, uh, but it was really, um, rewarding because we, we had to, the jury asked good questions and we have to rethink again our idea, our goals a year ago and whatever, and it developed our idea further.

Matthew:

Well, you've already told me what a big difference this project has made to your business being in this competition. So that's really good news, and I'm really happy that you're able to take part in that. And it's made such a difference to you, and you've been able to develop your business perhaps in ways that you might not have done before. Um, so where are you now with the business? Uh, has the original idea evolved? Um, how has it been a success so far?

Sanna:

Yeah, I would say that it's a success. I mean, we, we, we are doing good, but we are in a phase that's, uh, we need to do more investments at the moment and we don't have money for that yet. So, we are not, we are thinking of, uh, how to get money for the, all the investments and for the marketing activities in order to get more customers in order to recruit more personnel. So, we are really, um, we are growing all the time and that's the good news, but of course we have to make decisions that are not really cheap. So, but I think we are confident that we are making good progress, I would say.

Matthew:

So, the business competition model was developed by the Karelia university of applied sciences. Uh, it was developed further by the W-power project, with the aim of activating women to consider entrepreneurship as a career option or to develop their current business. So, turning to Laura now, you participated in the W-power business competition also. And congratulations to you for being one of the winners. What has the competition meant for you? How has your participation in the innovation platform made a difference to your business plans?

Laura:

Well, it's, it's made a huge difference because I actually entered the competition sort of by accident. I was searching for knowledge online and came across this competition, decided that, okay, I have an idea. I think it's, it's great. I'm not sure if anyone else thinks it's great. So, I wanted to sort of test if my idea was worth developing further in the competition. And then in the end, I was one of the lucky winners, which I must admit. I was so sure about my idea. I wasn't that I wasn't that surprised really, because I still have a very strong belief in my idea, and my businesses is possibilities and, uh, it has the whole competition and participation on the competition and the, uh, the, uh, the money prize, but mostly, uh, consultation and all that that was included in the price was worth so much that like, uh, like Sanna said, it's it kind of, it's a driver that makes you want to try a bit harder and a bit faster. You want to take a holistic approach and, uh, you know, see the big picture instead of just, just having a like, uh, um, a hobby.

Matthew:

Yeah. So, it sounds like, um, it sounds like you were provided with both provided with a lot of support, a lot of, uh, expert knowledge, a lot of contacts, networks, perhaps, uh, that you wouldn't have had before and being made to think differently. You made to focus more on your idea and making, taking those first steps and making it a business. So that sounds great. And what I like about this scheme is that it lets people test their idea and let them go forward and, and really experiment with and try and see if it is, has got legs to be a real business. So it sounds like you're both, um, taken that opportunity, Laura, how are you, how has your business now

doing? What are your conclusions about the help you've received and where it's going forward, is it in a good place? Is your business, you were saying it's in the preliminary stage. Are you able now to take the steps forward to take it where you want it to go?

Laura:

I'm well, on my, on my way towards the goal, but it's still a long way ahead, but it sounds so familiar. What Sanna said about entering the competition. I only had the idea and like a slight idea how to make it happen, but not, but entering the competition, having to report things. And it kind of pushed me into clarifying the whole idea so that I actually know now which way to proceed. Uh, at the moment I have applied for financing from Leader, which is, I think it's under Ely-keskus financing. And I actually received my financing, which was very good news. So now I'm at the face of testing, which way would be the best and most make most sense in developing the product further. So, um, with that financing from leader, I can now, uh, make certain tests that need to be tested before I can enter to the market with my product, uh, because it has all kinds of legal issues and such which I, to be honest, have not realized when first entering the idea, the competition. So it kind of seems it's blowing from a little piece of an idea, a little product to something a lot bigger, and it's good news, but it does require some, a lot more time than I was expecting if I want to. And when I want to produce something, that's actually something more than just a hobby.

Matthew:

Well, I mean, it sounds like both of you, your participation in this program has really moved things forward. You both got very positive experiences and things to say about the experience. Is there lasting support within the W-power program? Do you feel if you want further advice, now you have people you can speak to, uh, or there's any way where you can go for further advice or support?

Laura:

Yeah, I think there are some, at least the consultants, the experts are, there are some that I can ask for more information. I can just give them a call and they probably will remember when I tell a little bit more who I am and they can maybe give me names of other people that might be helpful for me. So, and especially for me, when I moved to Sodankylä from far away, I didn't know that many people. And also, when I work in another city, I don't know people here close by. So, I would say it's helpful and I can still contact those people who have helped me so far.

Matthew:

That's great. Sanna, do you agree? You still got continued support?

Sanna:

Yeah. The beginning, we, uh, we got some advice from business advisors. We haven't used them so far. I mean, we haven't used them after that, but we've been talking with my sister that we should contact them again and ask them, we should do that.

Matthew:

They're there if you need them, is the feeling I'm getting. So that's great. Okay. Right. Well, I'm already at my last question now. Um, and it's really, for both of you, uh, either you have an opinion on this, but some people listening to this might be wondering why this startup competition was for females only. Why do you feel having a women-only-competition was necessary? Do either of you have a view on that?

Laura:

Well, I think it's, uh, it probably kind of pushes women to make the effort and take the first step. And even if you didn't win in the competition, just taking part in a competition like this, will give you some sort of support that you might need. I think it lowers the step of entering for women at least. Well, at least for some, if you're not so sure about your business idea or your business in general, if you're a little bit more careful with things, I think you might need the support.

Matthew:

Sanna, have you got anything that you'd like to add?

Sanna:

I agree. I agree. Totally. I mean, this kind of competitions or projects are really good for the ones who are not so confident about the idea or confident about themselves, but they would like to try at this their idea and, uh, sort of a very, it is also easy way to, to try and test and see if it's really, if it would be your thing to do.

Matthew:

Thank you both very much for your time today. I wish you both all the best with your business. Both of you sound like you've got so much out of this competition. So, it's really great to hear. It's been great to talk to you both. Thank you very much. I think we'll leave it there for now. Thank You very much.

Sanna:

Thank you.

Laura:

Thank you.

\*Outro jingle\*

Matthew:

Thank you to all our guests and thank you for tuning into the W-power podcast. If you'd like to discover more about this project and access a wide range of material, please visit the W-power website. You can find the link below.