

PRESS RELEASE

EUROPEAN AND LAO UNIVERSITIES HAVE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED A FOUR-YEAR COLLABORATION

Helsinki, 31 August 2021 – At the end of August, the implementation of the almost four-year ForHeal project was successfully completed. However, cooperation between European and Lao universities will continue.

ForHeal, or Forestry Higher Education Advancement in Laos, was a project implemented by three Lao universities under the auspices of three European universities, financed by the ERASMUS+ programme. The overall aim of the project was to strengthen the forest-related higher education system in Laos to improve domestic capacity to sustainably manage forests for the benefit of the people and the environment, while at the same time enabling Laos to effectively respond to the demands and opportunities of international processes such as the Agenda 2030 (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The project was coordinated by the University of Helsinki and, together with the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague and University of Freiburg, provided support to three universities in Laos – Savannakhet University (SKU), Souphanouvong University in Luang Prabang (SU) and National University of Laos in Vientiane (NUOL).

During implementation of the project, a total of 81 participants were involved through training courses and workshops. The topics of the workshops were very diverse e.g., Scientific writing in English, Social Forestry and Resources, Collaborative research on local development. As part of the cooperation on MSc curricula development, 11 new courses were developed, and 19 existing ones were updated. The Lao universities purchased the necessary teaching equipment and two people from Souphanouvong University had training directly at Freiburg university within an exchange activity. As part of the webpage a traineeship database for Lao students was created.

“We are really happy, that we have had the opportunity to influence the next generations of foresters in Laos by improving their higher education and employability”, says Prof. Markku Kanninen from the coordinating University of Helsinki. His colleague from University of Helsinki, Prof. Benno Pokorny adds: “We are confident the ForHeal project is a starting point of our future collaboration”. Indeed, another Erasmus+ project called FRAME was approved this year, which builds on the ForHeal project. In addition to Lao universities, two other Thai universities are involved. Emphasis will be placed on supporting innovative methods and tools for teaching. "Although the last year and a half of the implementation was severely affected by the covid pandemic and some activities could not take place, the main goal was achieved and I look forward to the further cooperation," adds the Dean from the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Prof. Róbert Marušík.

The project is funded by the ERASMUS + programme, Key Action No. 2 Capacity Building in Higher Education. For more information, you can visit the project website at: forheal.eu, where you can also find the final promotional video.

