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## "Social Innovation and higher education institutions' policy labs"

# Case Study Finland

# – DiakHub –

## A human-centric co-creation platform for solving wicked social challenges

*Summary:* As a University of Applied Sciences, Diak has a unique profile in the Finnish education sector in three respects. First, its national, not merely regional, work to educate future professionals; secondly, its particular combination of study fields and programmes; and thirdly, its strategic aim to focus its RDI activities on improving the wellbeing of those in the most vulnerable positions through co-creating societal innovations, services, and capacity building.

As one of the Diak's key strategic operations, *DiakHub* is based on our broad and long-term expertise in RDI resulting evidence-based metrics, methodologies, and concepts. *DiakHub*'s concept is to face complex, wicked social challenges guided by interactions between a so-called quadruple helix co-creation innovation framework. Human-centric solutions are sought to address problems across governance and administrative silos and boundaries, particularly targeted at the most vulnerable joint service users with complex needs and multiple service agency use. *DiakHub*'s innovation activities lead to more functional human-centered service systems and service processes.

*DiakHub* activity can be verified through co-creation RDI activities and public service innovations. The role of students is central; while engaged in *DiakHub* activities, they become co-designers and experts, participating in the teaching and RDI activities they are exposed to during their studies.

*Keywords:* co-creation, ecosystem, complex wicked social challenges, public sector innovation, quadruple helix.

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# Content

# Descriptions of the public policy labs established in your country

## Diaconia University of Applied Sciences

Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (Diak) is a Finnish University of Applied Sciences (UAS) specializing in social services and healthcare education. Diak has 5 campuses in different parts of Finland and offers degree programs in Finnish and English. With its 3000 students, Diak is the largest provider of UAS-level education in social work, the main provider of higher education in sign language interpreting, and the only provider of community interpreting in the main immigrant languages and diaconal work. Diak's strategic aim is to achieve a world where no one is left behind and, thus, promoting inclusion and multiculturalism are core areas of Diak's work.

In the RDI sector, Diak works with its partners to promote the sustainable wellbeing of the most vulnerable groups in society within national, European, and global contexts by improving social and health care service systems by bringing focus to the service user perspective. A community development and co-creation approach is applied both in our education and RDI activities. Diak's strengths include close contacts with a nationwide professional network, and this allows Diak to combine theory and practice in innovative ways, bringing research results from the grass roots level to the level of decision making.

## Complex social challenges

Complex social and health policy problems are commonly known as *wicked problems* in public welfare, health and employment services. Wicked problems accumulate for the most vulnerable people. The most vulnerable are often public social and health service users with complex needs; they are often multiple service agency users. Wicked problems are hard to resolve as they each take place within a unique context and have many interconnected root causes.

In the context of the rapidly changing needs at the individual and societal levels for the most vulnerable groups services and the unprecedented challenges, the current multifaceted, diversified, and partially fragmented social and health care service system in Finland is also a complex puzzle. In addition to there being multiple organizations, funding services, and various professions, there are numerous technologies, personal data records, legislative processes, and working methods that are used simultaneously. This type of multi-layered and splintered system has become a problem not only for the most vulnerable service users with wicked problems and multiple needs, but also for public sector services management and administration; the fragmented system and its multi-layered supervision and management cannot ensure continuity for the service users.

Continuity of care, including continuity of information and management, as well as of the relationship between the service user and the employee, has been recognized as one of the key elements of human-centered service provision, ensuring service users' satisfaction, and maintaining trust. Continuity of care is most at-risk during transitions, and many of these transitions occur across organizational boundaries particularly transitions within and between primary and specialized services and transitions between different professionals and units, and, increasingly, with diverse private service providers. The existing service culture formed based on modern professionalism and the development of specialized institutions and expertise along with the hierarchical, fragmented paradigm of public service organizations. A paradigm shift is therefore needed in order to overcome this paralyzing fragmentation of practices.

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Wicked problems are unable to be successfully tackled with traditional linear, analytical approaches, where individual initiatives focus on one or a few root causes, or by replicating initiatives that have been developed in other contexts. To address wicked problems and accelerate public sector innovations, social and health care organizations need co-creative and co-design tools that focus on the following: enabling public sector organizations to take coherent action; building the adaptive capacity of public sector organizations; and assisting public sector organizations in creating the enabling conditions required for this type of approach.

## How do the identified policy labs contribute to social innovation: How do we do it?

*DiakHub* is augmenting Diak's expertise so as to support public service innovation as well as building of social and health care and employment services capacity, diverse service producers (social enterprizes, third sector and diaconia), and higher education institutions to better tackle wicked problems by creating human-centric systemic change via co-creation activities.

### RDI excellence

*DiakHub* assists public sector social and health care and employment services via its quadruple-helix co-creation framework to address wicked problems. It does this by bringing different actors together with three RDI excellence co-creation tools: 1) a *Service Integration Design (SiD)* collaborative leadership tool for human-centric public social and health care; 2) the so-called *3X10D®* human service integration self-assessment tool; and 3) a *Primary impacts* tool for evaluating the strengthening of human-centric inclusion and agency.

*Service Integration Design* and *3X10D®* tools are recognized and recommended tools reforming social and health care services by Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. OECD´s Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI) has presented *3X10D®* tool case study as a one of the best practices in public service innovations. *3X10D®* tool was launched to social and health care professionals in June 2020 as a part of nationwide digital social and health service platform omaolo.fi.

The tools tackle the multi-causality and interdependencies of complex problems. Co-creation tools support public social and health care and employment systems to re-combine existing organizations and resources in a manner that improves systemic functioning and collective effort, and these tools consider the different roles in enabling systemic human-centric change and public sector innovations.

## What kind of quadruple helix partnerships have been established?

Diak's RDI activities addressing complex wicked social challenges need a common infrastructure to connect diverse actors across disciplines, and *DiakHub* was established to meet this demand. *DiakHub* is part of Diak's RDI ecosystem, a new structural cooperation model. Cross-disciplinary knowledge creation and communication flow secures the relevance of our RDI, and consequently, of the learning outcomes. This co-creative approach grounds scientific knowledge creation and experimentation in complex wicked societal challenges, experienced locally, regionally, nationally and globally, applying the quadruple helix (see figure 1.) and exploiting co-creation methods.

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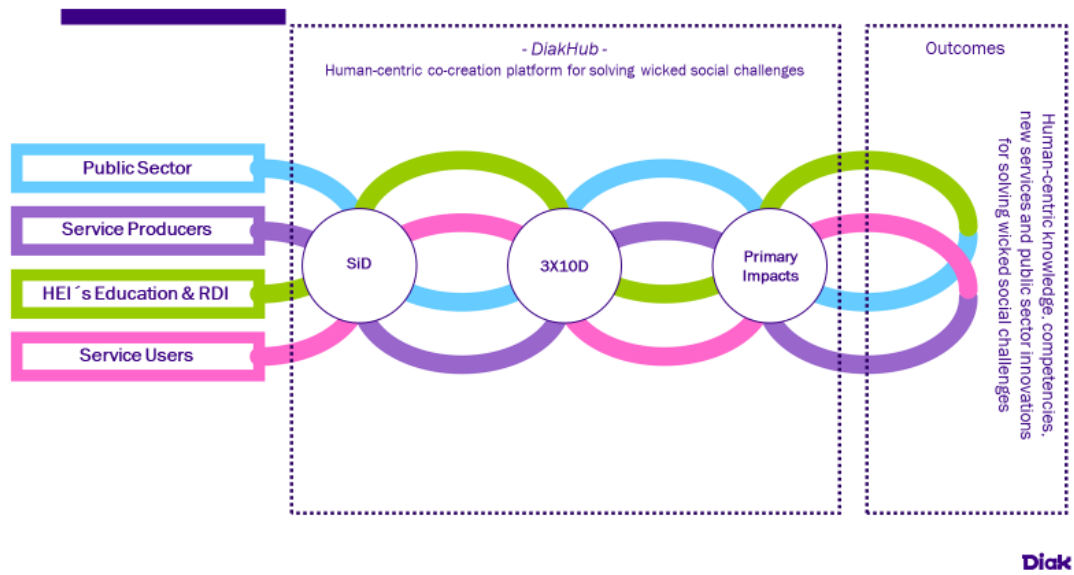


Figure 1. *DiakHub´s* Quadruple-Helix framework for HEI-led Public Social Innovation System

Building a more inclusive society and solving wicked social challenges calls for thoroughly rede-signing the relationship between Diak as a higher education institution, the public sector, and diverse service producers and service users in accordance with co-creation principles. This implies building a structural institutional infrastructure linking Diak's teaching and RDI with public sector, diverse service producers and service users' perspectives and needs. It also includes making already existing connections visible, developing them into wider networks, and subsequently transforming them into systematic cooperation feeding into education, research, development, and innovation. Establishing structures for co-creative research and innovation is an iterative, experimental process.

## What is the role and innovative contribution of HEI in those partnerships for supporting social change?

Knowledge creating multidisciplinary and multi-actor teams within the *DiakHub* produce relevant content, solutions, and social innovations to contribute to development in respect of the identified wicked social challenges and phenomena. The new knowledge is utilized in education development at all levels from BSc to post-graduate life-long learning education provision and diverse RDI activities.

## What are the financial models of the policy labs?

Indicative 20 – 60 – 20 model during the pilot phase 2020-2021 (~1,2 M€)

– 20% Diak

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– 60% applied project funding (ESF, other national project funds)

– 20% sales of the RDI services

## How is the impact of the HEI labs measured?

*DiakHub* model for RDI ecosystem is structurally interlinked and built on Diak's quality standards, covering a multidisciplinary approach and the shared co-creation environments and forums for divers' actors operating in the quadruple helix.

*DiakHub* activity can be verified through *financial outcomes*, *co-creation RDI activities* and *public service innovations*. The *role of students* is central; while engaged in *DiakHub* activities, they become co-designers and experts, participating in the teaching and RDI activities they are exposed to during their studies.

## Core team of the DiakHub

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