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Dr. Heikki Särkkä

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Dr. Heikki Särkkä is working as a research engineer, especially focusing on our school's Research & Development Department. Previously, he had graduated from University of Jyväskylä majoring in Applied Chemistry. Then, he started studying at Lappeenranta University in Environmental Technology and after his graduation, he began his work in the Mikkeli Campus of XAMK.

In our school's R&D Depart. there are different sectors, and Dr. Heikki is involving in Environmental Safety one. There is this one project called "Smart Effluents", in which they are developing and investigating wastewater treatment technologies. During the project, modelling of wastewater treatment processes, new technology "membrane bio-reactor", and bio-gas production are involved. Surprisingly, one of the school's exchange students, who is from Netherlands, is participating in this project. So, he thinks that it is a very good change for exchange students to join practical researches also.

Additionally, along with Smart Effluents, Dr. Heikki is also doing another project named "[Smart Ground](#)", funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 program. He claims this is a rare project since it is very competitive (around the whole EU) and difficult to have this kind of funding. The main idea of the project is to investigate secondary raw materials in landfills such as valuable metals, control wastes, develop circular economy, and focus on old municipal landfills and mining industry. He even shares that [Smart Ground](#) project concentrates on the making of an open platform/ data bank at EU level, hence potential customers and landfill operators could meet and cooperate. Moreover, it is good to hear that in this project there are students in Mamk participating as well, including three Finns and two from Environmental Engineering programme.

When asked about the importance of his work, Dr. Heikki is confident that research activities would have positive impacts on Mamk's and regions development. One of the reasons is that they create opportunities for students to take part in, who would experience practical works and have an idea of the real life job. Standing in Mamk's point of view, advancing R&D means we can prove to local operations and businesses, or maybe to the whole Finland that we have good quality research and can develop something new. Because the results would be published, it is essential to show that these can be useful.

Talking about English-conducted courses in XAMK, Dr. Heikki believes it is almost a must to follow this direction for every institution aiming for an international approach. The gap between theoretical study and practical research and training should be closer, and their combination should be increased as well. Therefore, in the future, it is recommended to make courses about practical researches, such as will be done in [Smart Ground](#) project and put into the educational system. This is highly important since not only does it promote the projects, but it also benefits the students. However, because it is challenging to change all Finnish courses into English-conducted, this must be in a long-run process and improved gradually over time.

Lastly, Dr. Heikki also mentions the emerging of Mamk with Kyamk (will be XAMK from 1 January 2017). It might aid the quality and research development, as well as attracting more students. "When you are bigger, you are stronger.", he said, which implies the meaning of strengthening our research & study opportunity.

More information about Smart Ground Project can be found [here](#).

The overview can be found [here](#).

Credit to Dr. Heikki Särkkä

Writte by Nguyen Ha Tien