

## Change of majority owner at Santapark Ltd

*The City of Rovaniemi, the Finnish Government and Lapin Matkailu Oy are selling the shares they own in Santapark Ltd to the Rovaniemi-based company, Santa's Holding. Behind this company are Ilkka Länkinen and Katja Ikäheimo-Länkinen, owners of ProSanta Oy.*

In 2008, the Ownership Steering Department in the Prime Minister's Office organised competitive tendering for the Santapark shares amongst several Finnish organisations.

In the opinion of Mayor of Rovaniemi, **Mauri Gardin**, the transaction will safeguard Santapark's operating environment, both now and in the future. "As far as Santapark's future is concerned, it is important that ownership is transferred to a strong, focused, local and active party. The new majority owners will reinforce the Christmas activities on offer to tourists in Father Christmas' home town, Rovaniemi"

### **Christmas tourism a significant employer**

Santapark, situated on the Arctic Circle at Rovaniemi, has proven to be one of Rovaniemi's and Lapland's most attractive destinations, both in winter and in summer. In recent years, Santapark has been visited by 50,000–60,000 people per year.

"The concept of Santapark has proven to work well, but in order to ensure its continued development, we must invest in sales and marketing and keep tight control of costs", says **Ilkka Länkinen**. "We will be introducing additional content and a more diverse range of experiences, which will support the image of Father Christmas and other tourism in Lapland", he continues.

He emphasises that the near future will be challenging on account of the global financial situation. "Together with other Arctic Circle and Rovaniemi tour operators, we must increase Rovaniemi's prominence in the international arena", agree Ilkka and Katja.

**Katja Ikäheimo-Länkinen** says that the time to implement the new plans will be in 2010–2011, and the objective will be to improve customer activities, boost the Christmas theme and increase profitability. We will try to make changes aimed at improving efficiency as early as Christmas 2009, she explains. "The aim over the next five years is to be Finland's leading provider of Christmas tourism services. Key to our future strategy is continued investment in product development where the role of personnel will be significant", say the new directors of Santapark, Katja and Ilkka.

### **Further information**

Managing Director Ilkka Länkinen, +358 (0)50 517 6989

[www.santapark.com](http://www.santapark.com) [www.prosanta.com](http://www.prosanta.com), [www.joulukka.com](http://www.joulukka.com)

## **Past financial year good for Rovaniemi**

Preliminary financial statements: despite the increased loans, debt remains smaller than the municipal average

Pekka Rytkönen

The financial development of the City of **Rovaniemi** was favourable over the past year.

Central indicators of municipal economy, such as the result of the financial period, operational profit and annual profit increased from the previous years. These are results from the hefty increases in tax revenues and central government transfers to local authorities.

According to Mayor Mauri Gardin, the city's financial development turned out as predicted. One of the initial goals after the municipal merger was to attain positive financial performance in the 2008 financial period. This objective was reached, despite the two preceding years ending with a minus sign on the bottom line.

There was an 8.3% increase in tax revenue in the past year, and a significant increase – 12.4% – in transfers from the central government.

The growth in tax revenue was partially produced by the city council's decision to increase taxes. The lighter purses of the city population resulted in a nearly four million euros' increase in tax revenue for the city. The other seven million are accounted for by the positive economic development.

The annual performance of the city – the remainder between operating costs and income figures – was, according to the preliminary financial statements, €14.6 million. This is a significant improvement from the previous years, but still not enough to cover investments. Loans were taken out to cover the investments.

According to one rating, the city's financial standing is good, but not excellent.

As such, the increased burden of debt is alarming. According to Gardin, it is however essential to bear in mind that, when calculated per inhabitant, the amount of debt remains significantly below the municipal average.

### **Problems ahead**

There was an exceptionally rapid increase in the number of city employees after the municipal merger.

Last year this progress came to a halt. With 3,325 people employed by the city in 2007, the number was 3,275 in 2008.

The amount of sick leave taken by city employees remained exceptionally high. The increase rate has lowered, but the growth still continues.

Every employee spent an average of 21.1 days on sick leave in 2008.

After the merger, it was believed that the annual increase in population would hover around 200 people. However, there have been around 500 new residents in the city each year. Gardin believes that this development in population gain will continue.

A very apparent dive seems to be ahead in the city economy. For the time being, it remains

unknown how much income will decrease. The city's elected officials are about to start figuring out how the city will adapt to these decreases.

### **Increases in social welfare expenditure**

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities predicts that there may be a negative increase in tax revenue this year.

Next year is predicted to be even harder.

The city budget is based on the prediction of tax revenue increasing by one per cent.

If the city predictions become the reality, about €6.6 million allocated for services will be lost.

The decrease will be most significant in corporate income tax, but the magnitude it has is not as noteworthy in **Rovaniemi** as in many other cities, for instance Oulu.

Corporate income tax constitutes approximately five to six per cent – or nine to ten million euros – of **Rovaniemi's** tax revenue. In Oulu, the respective proportion is 12%.

Social welfare expenses have increased over the last year by approximately €200,000. In January of 2008, the amount was €400,000 euros, and in January of this year, €600,000.

The growth in tax revenue was partially produced by the city council's decision to increase taxes. The lighter purses of the city population resulted in a nearly four million euros' increase in tax revenue for the city. The other seven million are accounted for by the positive economic development.

Preliminary information on financial statements:

Population of **Rovaniemi**: 59,335.

Operating profit: 6.3 per cent.

Financial statement result: €2.5 million.

Debt increased by: €1.8 million.

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**Dive in city finances smaller in Rovaniemi than other cities**

Financial development: elected officials to face problems worth millions in the near future.

## **Pekka Rytönen**

The City of Rovaniemi did exceptionally well financially in the past year.

Tax revenue and government transfers obtained by the city were significantly increased. It is predicted that, this year, the positive development will come to an abrupt halt nationwide.

Civil servants working in city management believe that Rovaniemi will not suffer to a great extent.

It has been publicly discussed that, in the big cities of southern Finland, need may arise that budgets are modified early on in the year. Rovaniemi does not seem to be headed in that direction, at least not yet.

Mayor Mauri Gardin wants to remind us that incorporate tax revenue and its possible dive have not got the same significance to Rovaniemi as they do to, for instance, Oulu.

Problems do exist. The city council is scheduled to start discussions soon on how to respond to the ever gloomier financial prospects. If increases in income tax revenue remain at one per cent – instead of the three per cent recorded in the budget – tax revenue will suffer a cutback worth €6.6 million.

Several large construction projects are about to be launched in Rovaniemi, which entails employment for the people and revenue for the city. Construction of the Haltik facilities will begin in Pöykkölä in May. This project is worth around €30 million.

There are also plans for beginning construction on the Metsähallitus (Finnish Forest Administration) offices and the Eteläkeskus shopping centre.

## **Ford built a winter testing centre in Rovaniemi**

*The Ford car manufacturer has opened a new research and winter testing centre in Rovaniemi. During the winter season, the Ford centre will bring around 200 testing engineers to Rovaniemi; with the improved facilities, testing becomes more efficient and accurate. The facilities – around 1,200 square metres in size – consist of a R&D hall, a private testing road and a “freezer” accommodating 16 vehicles.*

A Finnish-Swedish derby has been going on in vehicle winter testing for some time now. Mostly due to its own vehicle production, Sweden has assumed a leading role for quite some time in this battle. However, over the past few years, Finnish Lapland and Rovaniemi have managed to attract new manufacturers.

“The winter conditions in Finnish and Swedish Lapland are similar to a great extent. Rovaniemi has the advantages of a better service structure and more efficient logistics, with the airport

located in the immediate proximity of the city centre. You only need a thirty-minute drive from the centre of Rovaniemi to get to conditions of absolute wilderness”, explains Juha Seppälä, Managing Director of the Rovaniemi Regional Development Agency Ltd.

Vehicle winter testing also provides a welcome boost for other business in the Rovaniemi region.

“The Ford project has great significance for the City of Rovaniemi. In the hotels in Rovaniemi alone, this amounts up to almost 3,000 overnight stays. During the winter season, vehicle manufacturers that carry out winter testing or driving instruction bring a significant amount of professionals to the city. These people use the versatile services in the region, making up an important customer segment. Our active cooperation with local businesses in testing aims at attracting more new vehicle manufacturers to Rovaniemi”, outlines Managing Director Seppälä.

The Ford project was managed by the Rovaniemi-based company Arctic Testing Services. Prospects for attracting more car manufacturers to Rovaniemi are regarded as excellent in the company.

“The current financial crisis is disturbing to all car manufacturers. They cannot stop testing, though. On the contrary: the new, more rigid emission norms that enter into force in 2012 will increase testing. The Rovaniemi region is capable of offering excellent services in a very cost-effective manner. This was the determining factor in the decision made by Ford to construct their winter testing centre here in Rovaniemi”, says Managing Director Risto Keskiruokanen of Arctic Testing Services.

## **Gloomy prospects with hope on the horizon**

SME barometer: market trend expectations decreasing, but less in Lapland than elsewhere in the country.

Seppo Savolainen

In comparison to nationwide prospects, the market trend expectations are slightly better for Lapland’s small and medium-sized businesses, indicates the SME barometer published on Thursday by regional business organisations and Finnvera.

This barometer is another indicator that the region’s business structure is capable of battling the recession; having services, in particular tourism, in a dominant position is an advantage point for Lapland.

The results primarily indicate the market predictions of small and medium-sized businesses, with participants in the survey consisting of members of the Federation of Finnish Enterprises and Finnvera customers. The sectors most suffering from the recession, such as exports and the paralysed construction sector, are primarily present in the results indirectly. This depends, however, on the region: the influence of the industry is inevitable in companies providing services for the industries, in particular in the Kemi-Tornio region.

The SME barometer is less detailed than the report on regional development, published on Tuesday. The barometer by the enterprise federation and Finnvera examines Lapland in three units. The Kemi-Tornio and Rovaniemi regions are surveyed in accordance with the subregion categories classified by the Ministry of the Interior, but the four other of Lapland’s subregions are treated as one unit.

## **Gloomy Rovaniemi**

In the Rovaniemi subregion, 42% of businesses predict a downward trend in the economy, with the respective figure of 35% in the Kemi-Tornio subregion. However, in other regions of Lapland, 71% of the businesses expect that the economic trend will improve or remain in its current state, and only 29% see the economic situation deteriorating.

One in five businesses in the service sector predict that the trend is upward; more than half predict that the situation will not change, and only 25% predict a negative market trend. Responses are the most pessimistic in the construction sector, where two in three businesses predict a weakening economic trend. In the industrial and trade sectors, two in three believe that the economic trend is going to improve or remain in the current situation, one in three believe that it will weaken.

Only 10% of the businesses in the industry and service sectors estimate a decrease in the number of staff in the following year. The respective number in trade is 15%. The gloomiest response was that of the constructions, with 43% of businesses anticipating decreases in employment.

## **Almost 200 new jobs**

Regionalism policies: Rovaniemi receives the technical service tasks of the new government agencies on infrastructure and safety.

Esa I. Järvinen

## **Rovaniemi**

As many as 200 new jobs may be created in **Rovaniemi** with the project for the regionalisation – lead by the Ministry of Transport and Communications – of some responsibilities of the new government agencies on safety and infrastructure issues, beginning operation in the start of 2010.

Anu Vehviläinen, Minister of Transport, states that the agencies will be located in the capital region, but she is determined to fulfil the administrative branch's regional policy objectives of 200 to 400 jobs. Vehviläinen has set up a committee with the objective of establishing which of the duties of the new agencies can be transferred to **Rovaniemi** and Lappeenranta.

**Rovaniemi** is likely to receive the technical service tasks for the agencies. According to a report commissioned by the Ministry, **Rovaniemi** is a successful candidate for these responsibilities due to the services and infrastructure levels in the region.

The responsibilities subject to regionalisation would support the city's existing ICT safety cluster. It is also estimated that the agencies will benefit from the existing network in the field.

Another of **Rovaniemi**'s advantages is that no construction of new facilities is required. One of the locations proposed by the report is the property on Siljotie 2, opposite to the railway station, owned by Senate Properties.

Mayor Mauri Gardin is satisfied with Minister Vehviläinen's proposal, which would meet the

regionalisation goals of **Rovaniemi**.

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## **Hostel Rudolf in Rovaniemi – Hostel of the Year 2009**

Hostelling International Finland has nominated Rovaniemi's Hostel Rudolf the Hostel of the Year 2009.

According to the board of Hostelling International Finland – in charge of the decision – Hostel Rudolf is a representative of a modern, high-quality hostelling concept, where rooms are equipped with en-suite facilities and twin rooms constitute the majority of the accommodation in the hostel. For restaurant services and staff, Hostel Rudolf resorts to the comprehensive services of its “main building”, Clarion Hotel Santa Claus, just a few hundred metres away.

Rovaniemi is one of the most renowned cities in Finland internationally and with respect to tourism. The port of Lapland attracts tourists both as a main destination and a stopping point throughout summer and winter seasons. In Finnish hostelling tourism, the city is one of the key destinations for HIF.

“The customers are thankful for the private and peaceful atmosphere offered by the hostel. They are very happy with the hostel's en-suite twin rooms that meet hotel standards”, explains Sales Manager at Hostel Rudolf Kati Nivala, who goes on to state that particular praise for the functionality of the hostel should go to the vigorous housekeeping staff who pay attention to details important for customer satisfaction.

## **Halt to the fast growth in Rovaniemi tourism**

*The fast, nearly 10%, growth rate of tourism to Rovaniemi stagnated in 2008. The number of registered stays at Rovaniemi accommodation facilities in 2008 was nearly 480,000, but the number of overnight visits decreased by nearly one per cent in comparison to the previous year. The number of overnight stays by foreign tourists decreased by 4.3%, whereas an increase of 4.1% was recorded for domestic visitors.*

The number of visitors to Rovaniemi has increased annually by five to six per cent on the average for the past ten years. Not since 1997 has there been a decrease in the number of tourists to Rovaniemi. The decrease in overnight stays by foreign tourists started in July, and in December there was a nearly 18% fall in their number of stays. In the main market areas, an increase was gained from Germany and Russia. On the other hand, the overnight visits by the British, Italian, French and Spanish visitors decreased.

The occupancy rate of all accommodation facilities in Rovaniemi was 50.7% in 2008; slightly lower in comparison to the previous year. The nationwide occupancy rate for all accommodation services was 50.4% in 2008. The value of the accommodation service sales continued to grow,

however, totalling €19.66 million. The tourism sector income in Rovaniemi exceeded €150 million and the employment impact was more than 1,100 workyears.

In terms of the overall number of overnight stays, Rovaniemi ranked as the sixth highest of Finland's cities, preceded only by Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, Vantaa and Oulu. When comparing overnight stays by foreign visitors, Rovaniemi kept its standing at second place right after Helsinki.

## **Lappset granted an IT award for a smart playground**

Lappset Group, a Rovaniemi-based manufacturer of playground equipment and products, has received an award for the best IT product of 2008.

The award was granted for the SmartUs playground developed by Lappset.

The smart playground combines information technology, exercise and learning. The playground has been sold all over Europe and, according to Managing Director Juha Laakkonen from Lappset Group Ltd., eyes are now turned to Asia.

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## **Lapland Studio expands operations to mobile phone business**

Jarno Lakkala

Lapland Studio, a graphic design company for video and games in Rovaniemi, is set to expand operations to the mobile phone business.

The company has begun cooperation with programming company Ardites, based in Oulu.

Lapland Studio's CEO Ilkka Immonen confirms that cooperation will guarantee better opportunities for Lapland Studio in the mobile phone business.

“Ardites has extensive experience in cooperation with companies in telecommunications, which will open the doors for us, too. With just Lapland Studio it would not yet be possible”, Immonen says.

Lapland Studio has also gained more managerial strengths with a new appointment. Petri Talala was appointed as COO of the company. His previous employers include the programming company Futuremark.

The COO post is located in Helsinki.

Talala has also become one of the three major shareholders in Lapland Studio. Other shareholders

include CEO Immonen and capital investment company Vera.

Lapland Studio's current staff consists of 16 people.

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## **Ounasvaara investing in early snow**

**Rovaniemi** At Ounasvaara, the snow storages for next early snow seasons are already being built.

Next season, the early snow skiing tracks at Ounasvaara will be in use no later than 24 October.

This February and March, three times the amount of snow compared to last season is stored, amounting up to 18,000 cubic metres. With this amount of snow, the goal is to prepare about six kilometres of skiing tracks that can be used in both directions. The skiing tracks to be created with storage snow will run through the lit course from the Ounasvaara Ski Stadium to the Santasport Institute. Construction work on the course is done over the summer to accommodate tracks that are five to six metres wide, making it easy to ski in both directions.

Using the track is free of charge for the locals; others have to pay a small track entry fee.

The construction costs of the skiing tracks are covered by companies and organisations known as the Ounasvaara "ski track pool", Santasport Institute and the City of **Rovaniemi**.

The previous seasons' positive results and experiences indicate that early snow conditions result in financial growth, well worth of hundreds of thousands, in the sales in **Rovaniemi** with the acceleration of demand in services. Furthermore, the population of Rovaniemi – renowned for their overall positive attitude towards exercise and sport – regards that the early snow skiing tracks are an excellent form of sport services and enhance the image of Rovaniemi as a winter sport city, which is something that should be invested in.

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## **Santa's Express: Santa logos to the buses to the Arctic Circle**

No more wondering which of the buses will take you to the Arctic Circle from **Rovaniemi**. The Santa's Express bus – operated by the Rovaniemen Pikakuljetus bus company and running between the **Rovaniemi** railway station and Santa Claus' Village once every hour – has been decorated with pictures of the snowy Santa's village and Santa Claus. This helps tourists and locals alike to find the right bus when they are headed to the Arctic Circle. The stops also now feature schedules for the **Rovaniemi**-Arctic Circle bus line. In addition, the schedules are available from Tourist Information in Lordi Square, and online at [www.visitrovaniemi.fi](http://www.visitrovaniemi.fi). Besides

the stop at the railway station, some of the stops on the route of bus line 8, operating to the Arctic Circle, include the locations of Ruokasenkatu and Valtakatu Streets and the Toripuistikko Park.

Next, the Napapiirin maa Cooperative and **Rovaniemi** Regional Development Agency are aiming at the harmonisation of opening hours for the businesses in Santa Claus' Village.

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## Several new construction sites in Rovaniemi

Construction: Haltik, House of Arts, K-Supermarket, renovation work on day care centres and schools

Outi Torvinen

Rovaniemi

Several construction projects, mostly public buildings, are to be initiated in Rovaniemi this year.

The largest of these are the facilities of the Internal Security ICT Agency (Haltik), with a budget of around €30 million. The city starts renovation projects for schools and day care centres. The preliminary demolition work for the House of Arts has been initiated after a long wait.

The construction of the Haltik offices is being done by Senate Properties, and Project Manager Timo Kylmänen explains that site area work will be initiated near Pöyliövaara in the summer. The construction works are scheduled to start in the spring of 2010, and should be completed by autumn of 2011.

House of Arts, designated for the use of Rovaniemi Art Museum and The Chamber Orchestra of Lapland, is being built by Rovaseudun Markkinakiinteistöt. The cost is estimated to be €6.8 million.

Managing Director Heikki Alaluusua says that construction is likely to start in May. The majority of the work is being done this year, and the project should be completed by next spring.

No new company facilities are currently being even planned.

“Companies are taking a break. They do not dare to make investments.”

### **Renovation work by the city**

The City of Rovaniemi is preparing for several renovation projects, the most important of which is Korkalovaara School, being dismantled at this point.

The renovation of the school – with the budget of €3.6 million – starts in the summer.

Director of Facilities Administration Hannu Pirinen explains that with the renovation work on the Lapinrinne day care centre turning into the construction of a new building, beginning the work will be postponed to autumn. The new day care centre will be ready next spring.

The renovation and expansion work for Ounasmetsä day care centre will begin in the autumn and continue until next spring.

The facilities administration investments total over €8 million this year.

### **Business construction projects**

For businesses, new construction projects are being initiated with the large-scale construction by Viitakiinteistöt of the Kesko retail corporation at the Eteläkeskus shopping centre.

The costs of the expansion project for the former Eurospar market will be around €10 million, and a new K-Supermarket store will be located in the facilities.

The Osuuskauppa Arina co-operative is preparing for the building of a Terra hardware store at Eteläkeskus, next to the Prisma hypermarket. The scale of the investment is around €10 million.

Managing Director of the co-operative, Veli-Matti Puutio, states that the goal date for beginning the work is scheduled for this year. The prerequisite for the launch of the project is that a conclusion be reached with the city about land sales, because Arina owns only a part of the area required for Terra.

## **Dive in real estate sales**

Real estate: sales figures for new flats unchanged from previous year in Rovaniemi, with no major change in market prices.

Jarno Lakkala

The sales of existing flats and property has decreased by a third for the period between September and February, in comparison to the same period a year ago.

Managing Director Juha Jaakola, who works at a Rovaniemi estate agency (Kiinteistövälitys Jaakola), predicts that the numbers will remain unchanged throughout the year.

“I predict that the sales will fall by about one third this year in comparison to the previous two years. Time on the market for the flats will also increase”, he says.

According to Jaakola, apart from September, last year was normal. Around 150 new flats, for instance, were sold in Rovaniemi. The figure is unchanged from 2007.

Negative market trends in the autumn and early winter made people cautious. This has now changed, however.

“There are new items on market and real estate is about to start rolling”, Jaakola states.

Prices have not undergone substantial changes. Prices for flats in row houses have actually increased a few percentages in comparison to last year.

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## **Environmentally friendly policy pays**

Construction: green electricity and ground heat to new row houses.

Jarno Honkanen

The first completely emission free, low-energy housing in Finland with ground heating is to be constructed in Rovaniemi's Pöykkölä.

The Samperi houses will be completely emission-free, if the housing co-operative and constructors agree to architect Teuvo Kairesto's suggestion to use green electricity for providing the ground heat and circulating it in the heating system.

The constructor and designer both believe that technology in building and energy has improved sufficiently over the past few years to make environmentally friendly construction policies economically efficient.

“Under normal circumstances, the cost of building a house like this would be around five per cent more expensive than ordinary construction. However, in the long run, the house stores and utilises heat and air much more efficiently than a traditionally built house”, describes Kareisto, who was responsible for designing the house.

Markku Tuovila, supervisor of the project at Futuroi construction company, explains that in the Samperi housing project, the price per square metre has been decreased to the average level of newly built housing in Rovaniemi.

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## **City of Rovaniemi supports the university**

*The City of Rovaniemi has donated €100,000 to the fundraising for the University of Lapland's anniversary year. The news was published at the University's 30th Anniversary Ceremony on 13 March 2009 by Chairman of the City Board Sakari Trög.*

The foundation for the University of Lapland is organising an anniversary fundraiser to celebrate the 30 years of academic education at the university, and to ensure its future development. The fundraiser challenges the population, municipalities and other public organisations in Lapland, as well as all businesses and organisations, to take part in the foundation's fundraiser to the best of their ability.

A reform of the Finnish universities is under way, and it includes the transformation of the University of Lapland from a government account office to a public corporation. The government proposal on the new University Act will be submitted to the parliament this spring, and it is intended to take effect at the beginning of August 2009. With the reform, the position of the universities is substantially changed as their financial responsibility increases. They also have to play a more active role in acquiring financing.

The University of Lapland began operation on 1 March 1979, after a long struggle. The past thirty years have witnessed the growth of a small college into a medium-size university, a very important academic facility for the people in Lapland and an influence in the lives of most people and their families.

## **The grown-up university is responsible for its own fate**

**Mauri Ylä-Kotola, Rector of the University, reminisced about the past and contemplated the future in his speech at the Anniversary Ceremony of the University of Lapland on 13 March.**

Rector Ylä-Kotola pointed out that the 30-year history of the University of Lapland would not be possible without its two rooting points: Lapland and the international university institution.

“Over the decades, the University of Lapland has developed from a regional and national operator to a member of the international academic community. Globalisation is changing the traditional

ideas of centre and periphery on the national level as well. The north and the arctic are concepts that no longer refer to periphery or remoteness; instead, they have gained new dimension as the university's global strong points. Only the future will tell how the University of Lapland will manage to continue its renewal and succeed in the changing operational environment.

“In the North, for the North” is an excellent description of the University's philosophy in the 30 years of its history. The current slogan for the University of Lapland, “In the North, for the World” can be regarded as an indication of the new era”, Ylä-Kotola said.

## **Rovaniemi appeals with education in English**

**Rovaniemi** The new education programmes in English starting at the **Rovaniemi** University of Applied Sciences this autumn, attracted applicants from all over the world.

In all, applications were received from 64 different countries round the world, with 19 primary applications from China and 11 from Russia.

314 primary applications were received for the study programme in information technology; this means that there are almost 13 applicants for each study place.

There were 149 applications for the degree programme in tourism, which means that each study place is sought by over seven primary applicants.

There were five Finnish applicants for the degree programme in Information Technology.

28 of the applicants for the Tourism Programme were Finnish.

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## **TRAVELLERS IN LAPLAND**

**<http://www.rovaniemi.fi/lapinkavijat>**

Eight cultural facilities of Lapland: the Provincial Museum of Lapland, Rovaniemi Art Museum, Tornio River Valley Provincial Museum, Gold Museum, Regional Library of Lapland, Tornio Town Library, Pello Municipal Library and the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland were awarded a grant for the Illustrated Northern Culture partnership project. These participating bodies have been involved in producing the “Travellers in Lapland” multimedia presentation by independently selecting and working on their own theme, material and scriptwriting.

The themes of the projects were Alvar Aalto's architecture in Lapland, Giuseppe Acerbi's travels in Lapland, Nenets people, De Maupertuis' expedition to Lapland, the gold rush of the Lemmenjoki River and the history of tourism in Lapland and Rovaniemi.

## **Kalevi Aho and Rituals**

### **New record by the Chamber Orchestra of Lapland – “The Book of Questions”, Viola Concerto and Symphony No. 14**

The recording “Rituals” – consisting of music by composer Kalevi Aho – was completed conveniently to celebrate the beginning of the composer’s 60th anniversary (9 March) year. The record features three works by Aho, all custom compositions for the Chamber Orchestra of Lapland and premiered just one day before their recording in 2007. The recording was made in the Church of Rovaniemi for the BIS record label, with John Storgårds – the artistic director of the orchestra – as the conductor and soloists Monica Groop, mezzo-soprano and Anna Kreetta Gribajcevic, viola. Darabuka and djembe are played by Herman Rechberger.

In Rovaniemi, the record can be purchased at Osviitta, Suomalainen kirjakauppa, the Arktikum gift shop and the Rovaniemi Tourism and Marketing Ltd.

## **The band competition sets the tunes for Simerock**

**Rovaniemi** For the fourth consequent time, young bands from Lapland compete for a chance to perform at the Simerock festival.

Preliminary registration for the band competition starts on Monday 9 March. The competition is held in **Rovaniemi** mid-April, and the tunes of Simerock will be playing in July.

The band competition offers bands at the demo stage an opportunity to play in front of a large audience instead of those basement rehearsals, as the competition has always gathered a large crowd. Some of the bands that have benefited from the leverage of tough competition include Stalingrad Cowgirls – who have actually gone on to make a record – Kotoisat Sävyt and Stonestorm.

Again this year, the countdown for the summer’s Simerock is kicked off at the band event in the Monde youth centre. The event is co-organised by **Rovaniemi** City Youth Services and the Simerock 2009 festival on 17 and 18 April.

A preliminary jury will select 14 bands from the pre-registrants, half of whom will proceed to the final, with the winner going on to perform at Simerock on 10 to 12 July. Juries for past competitions, always of great quality, include such names as Juhani Merimaa, Jone Nikula, Juha Torvinen of the band Eppu Normaali, Toni Wirtanen of Apulanta, Jonne Aaron of Negative and Asko Kallonen. Information about the members in this year’s jury will not be released in advance.

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## **Rovapolut project supports vocational education of immigrants**

**Rovaniemi** At the Lapland Vocational College in **Rovaniemi**, new methods are introduced to support vocational education and entry into working life for the immigrants in the city.

The project is based on the immigration strategy for Lapland, completed last year, with an objective to decrease the unemployment rate of immigrants to half of the current level. The current rate stands at 32%, being almost twice the overall unemployment rate.

The Rovapolut project promoting immigrants' entry into working life was launched at the Vocational College in late 2008 and will last three years.

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## **City board gives up paper in Rovaniemi**

Pekka Rytönen

The City Board of **Rovaniemi** plans to move to a paperless era this spring.

The practical implications are primarily that agendas of the matters to be covered by the city board will no longer be sent on paper to the members.

The city will procure laptops for all board members and deputy members, city council chairpersons and chairpersons of the council groups as well as chairpersons of the committees and boards.

The cost will be a little over €50,000. No printers will be provided.

This practice has been applied by the board before; however, the transfer to a completely paperless era does require that the deputy members also have access to city computers. The board will establish guidelines on the matter on Monday.

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## **It is Lapland's turn to help the children of the world**

UNICEF city 2010: Rovaniemi challenges the entire region to support the work by the organisation.

Outi Torvinen

**Rovaniemi**

Children in Lapland received international emergency aid 60 years ago, after all the conditions for living in the region had been destroyed by the war.

It is now the time for the citizens of Lapland to help the world's children in need. The challenge is being made by Pentti Kotoaro, Executive Director of UNICEF Finland, and Mayor of **Rovaniemi** Mauri Gardin. On Monday, they signed a cooperative agreement, with which **Rovaniemi** – the 2010 UNICEF city – commits to the promotion of the organisation's international work for children.

Santa Claus, a friend to all of the world's children, is an obvious cooperative partner.

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## **Tanja Poutiainen returns to grass roots level**

Her competitive career is sure to continue for two seasons.

Kari Pyykkö

Tanja Poutiainen jumped quickly from the top of the alpine skiing circuit to the grass roots level of the sport.

The Rovaniemi resident celebrated the crystal globe for the giant slalom in Åre, in Sweden, on Saturday, but on Tuesday evening she was already in charge of a lesson for the future stars of the sport at the alpine skiing school named after her.

The looks on the faces of the juniors of the Santa Claus Ski Team left no question as to who is their biggest idol right now. Poutiainen is known for her perfectionism, so matters at the skiing school are attended to with the precision they deserve. Juha Tahvonen is the Headmaster, but Tanja drops in every time her busy schedule lets her.

“The main idea at this point is to encourage children to exercise. We go through the basics. Everyone should have fun here”, Poutiainen explains.

Poutiainen's plans for the near future are crystal clear.

“My goals are at next winter's Vancouver Olympics and World Cup. My career will definitely continue beyond next season.

### **Globe beats the medals**

Winning the world cup in the giant slalom this season beats her two World Championship medals.

“The crystal globe is the dream and inspiration of every alpine skier. I had to wait for four years, but it was worth it.

A gold medal in the World Championships would have made my season perfect. But I've still got a few seasons left to try and win that missing gold medal.”

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## **International migration increases the population in Lapland**

International migration increased the population in Lapland by nearly 500 people in the period between January and November 2008. There were 437 more new international arrivals than people moving away. More than half of the migration gain was directed to Rovaniemi.

The migration gain from European countries was 185. The largest migration gain came from Turkey (65), followed by Sweden (59) and Russia (50).

The migration gain between Africa and the northernmost Finnish province was one hundred people. The greatest gain was from Ethiopia (38) and Rwanda (15).

The migration loss to North America from Lapland consisted of five people, but from South America there was one new immigrant.

Numbers for Asia were much larger. Migration gain was at 132, with Thailand (74) and China (15) adding to the population most.

890 people moved between municipalities in Lapland.

Of the population gain in Rovaniemi of a little over 500 people, nearly half is accounted for by migration gains and the other half by a natural population increase. There were 707 births to 455 deaths in Rovaniemi. The gain accrued from moving inside the country was only 16 people.

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**Rovaniemi, 20 March 2009**

## **Visitrovaniemi.fi – more than 25,000 monthly visits**

There have been more than 172,000 visits to the [www.visitrovaniemi.fi](http://www.visitrovaniemi.fi) website, launched in a renewed form last autumn and with the site focus on Rovaniemi travel services. The site is maintained by Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd., responsible for the brand advertisement for the city of Rovaniemi and duties of the regional tourism organisation.

The new image of the Visitrovaniemi.fi site was launched at the beginning of September 2008. The most popular month on the site was, as predicted, December, with the 23<sup>rd</sup> as the single busiest day. On that date, the site featured a live broadcast of Santa Claus setting out on his journey from the Santa Claus' Village in the Arctic Circle. There were 61,000 visitors to the site during December alone.

The most frequently visited pages were the front page of Visitrovaniemi.fi (153,000 downloads of the Finnish front page, 93,000 of the English), accommodation (41,000 and 43,000), activities (22,000 and 27,000) and sights (23,000 and 16,000).

The site currently features – in addition to the Finnish and English versions – sections in French, German, Russian and Swedish. The pages are to be launched next in Spanish and Italian. The pages in Chinese and Japanese are to open in the spring, as well.

### **Four minute visits, one in three returns**

The Rovaniemi tourism site is an attention-grabber, as the average visit time is almost four minutes. About 30% of the visitors are returning visitors, who have visited the site before.

The largest numbers of visits are made from Finland, Italy, the UK, Russia, France, Germany, Estonia, Sweden and the US.

Only a few visitors are directed to the site from sites of local businesses. The development work of the Visitrovaniemi.fi site is going to give attention to links that will improve the visibility of Rovaniemi with the help of search engines, for example.

Locals are also encouraged to look for information and ideas on the Visitrovaniemi.fi site for their recreation and to review, for instance, current event information.

### **Rovaniemicongresses.com site features all congress services**

The Rovaniemi Congress site, concentrating on the things that Rovaniemi has to offer from the perspective of a congress visitor, can be visited using the link on the Visitrovaniemi.fi site or directly at the address [www.rovaniemicongresses.com](http://www.rovaniemicongresses.com). This site has been in operation for slightly over a month, and includes information about the congress facilities and changing congress offers, which take advantage of regional special features and events. One of the service ideas of Rovaniemi Congresses is to produce cost-effectiveness for the congress customers: services are searched and introduced in a cost-effective, professional manner, with no service charges incurring.

### **Chinese built Finnish Lapland out of snow**

#### **A vast Finland snow park was built in the city of Harbin in north-eastern China.**

The snow park includes some of the most famous Helsinki landmarks, buildings from Santa Claus' Village and other architecture of Lapland, all built out of snow. Harbin – with a population of nearly four million – is a partner city to Rovaniemi, and Mayor Mauri Gardin attended the opening ceremony of the park, together with Antti Kuosmanen, Finland's Ambassador to China, and honorary guest Santa Claus.

The snow sculptures are part of the massive Snow and Ice Festival organised on the island every year. The festival consists of an ice city, ice sculpture and snow park areas, and the theme for the latter this year is Finland and Lapland.

The works are located in an area of 38 square kilometres, on an island called Sun Island Scenic Spot. The island is a popular place for recreation in both the summer and winter seasons. Hundreds of thousands of visitors come to the island every year.

The snow sculpture village is one of the most important destinations and venues in the winter season. The festival takes place over six weeks and gathers visitors in the millions.

“The selection of Finland and Rovaniemi as themes for the snow park brings visibility not only in Harbin but, through the media, everywhere in China. Santa Claus is extremely popular in China and we strongly believe that tourism from China will increase in the future”, explains Mayor Mauri Gardin.