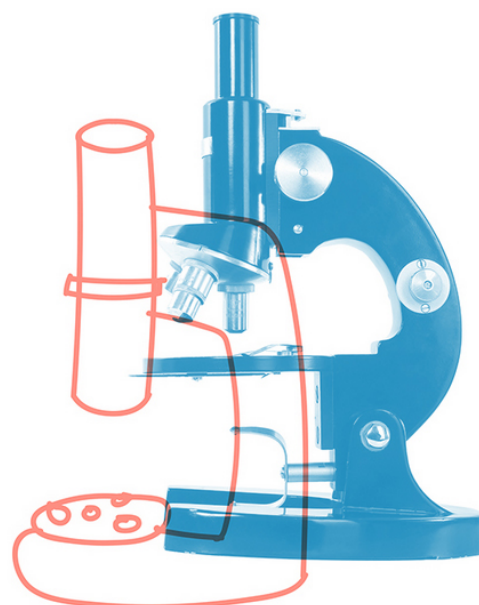


Health Innovation Start-Up Accelerator SPARK Finland Selects 19 New SPARKees

**Turning
good ideas
to great
solutions**

to benefit patients
and society



SPARK Finland's International Evaluation Panel has selected a new patch of SPARK projects and teams. Projects will start their 2-3 year program in January 2020. From the University of Turku, ToxElegans project lead by University Lecturer, Docent Päivi Koskinen was selected. The project develops indoor air diagnostics using fluorescent *C. elegans* nematodes.

International panel of 15 acknowledged professionals in health tech and life sciences represented experience in international business, R&D, technology development, science and financing.

According to the panel, level of applications was exceptionally high as well as the amount of high quality projects. That is why SPARK Finland selected record high 19 new projects to the program. 16 of the new projects were selected by evaluation panel and also three new projects start at the University of Eastern Finland. Expansion of SPARK to Eastern Finland enables reaching the record high potential of scientists, clinicians and students of health tech and life sciences.

- Reason for high number of high quality projects is mainly based on the success of alumni SPARKees. Awareness of positive experiences and success of the former SPARKees has increased remarkably, Pasi Sorvisto, Director of SPARK Finland tells.

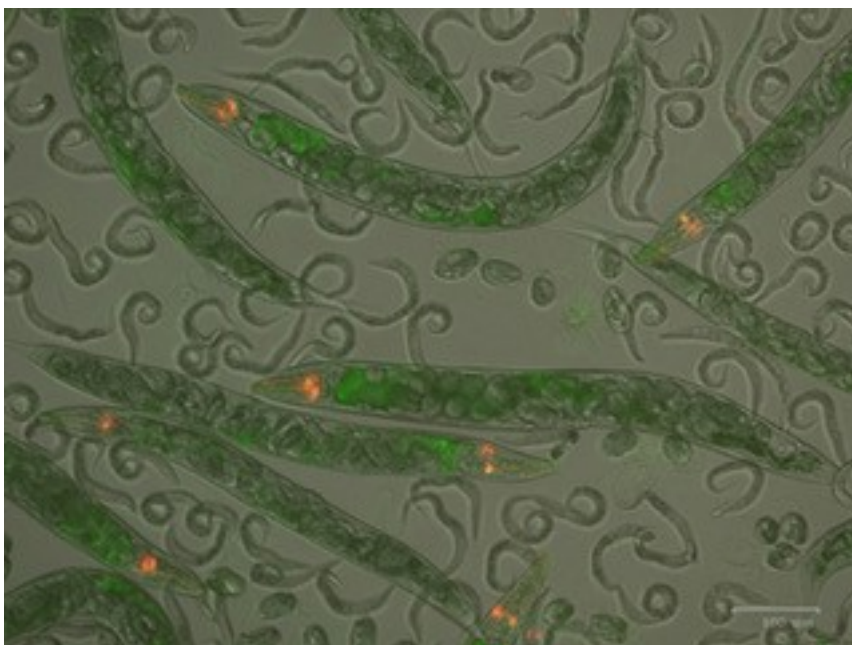
And the positive reputation is justified. As an example, large share of former and current SPARKees have raised remarkably large financing packages during the program and as

startups right after completing the program. Access to global SPARK network is also highly valued by applicants.

- Collaboration activity between TTOs or innovation services and SPARK seem to have remarkable impact on prevalence of selected projects. From those institutions in which TTO and innovation services are actively collaborating with SPARK, the number of selected projects - by evaluation panel - was the highest, Sorvisto adds.

In the University of Turku, Nematodes Will Be Utilised to Detect Toxins in the Indoor Air

From the University of Turku, the *ToxElegans* (Indoor air diagnostics with fluorescent *C. elegans* nematodes) project led by University Lecturer, Docent **Päivi Koskinen**, was chosen as a new SPARKEE. The project aims to develop a method, which measures indoor air total toxicity, and with which possible problems for human health can be recognised already before they cause symptoms.



Nematodes exposed to indoor air toxins. (Photo: PhD Sari Paavanen-Huhtala, linear scale 100 µm)

- The method is based on our promising preliminary results, according to which transgenic *C. elegans* nematodes start to produce fluorescent light, when they are exposed to health hazardous microbes or chemicals, Koskinen tells.

With the support from the SPARK program, the method will be further developed for field conditions, so that the indoor air quality of the objects of investigation could be evaluated easily, reliably and in an unbiased fashion.

- We are especially excited about the ability of the program to provide mentoring and peer support, so that we do not have to re-invent all the wheels by ourselves, but we can learn from the successful experiences of others, Koskinen adds.

In 2020, SPARK Finland continues with a record high number of projects and aims to support even stronger emergence of the new international success cases in health tech and life sciences from Finland.

SPARK Finland is part of the global SPARK network, which helps shape the health innovations developed in universities into finished products and new enterprises. Health Campus Turku (the University of Turku, Åbo Akademi University, Turku University Hospital and Turku University of Applied Sciences) joined SPARK Finland in 2018.

Read more about the SPARK Finland: <https://sparkfinland.fi>

Read more: [Call for Applications for SPARK Finland Health Innovation Start-Up Accelerator Open Until 2 December](#)

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