

# Yliopiston Apteekki manages stringent regulatory requirements with IFS whilst implementing best practices with IFS Success



Tuototamme käytetään koulutukseen ja tutkimukseen

Balancing the demands of retailing medicines to consumers and commercial customers, operating a pharmacy network, running two online stores, manufacturing pharmaceuticals and fulfilling rare medicines requests, Yliopiston Apteekki relies on IFS to deliver its Moment of Service.

As the second-oldest company in Finland, Yliopiston Apteekki has been providing medicines since 1755. The group supplies and retails over-the-counter medicines to the public via a pharmacy network; operates two online stores; and manufactures and distributes drugs and supplies to businesses and hospitals. Owned by the University of Helsinki, Yliopiston Apteekki also develops and manufactures bespoke formulations of rare medicines for patients when requested. All company proceeds fund education and research.

## Stringent regulatory requirements

Operating in a highly regulated market, manufacturing and logistics processes for pharmaceutical products in Finland are highly audited and controlled. Explains Emilia Arko, ERP Service Manager for Yliopiston Apteekki, “The ability to track and trace lot batch numbers and guarantee origin and provenance is critical. When we take delivery of raw materials from our vendors, they are automatically placed in quarantine and thoroughly checked,” she explains. “We have to be able to act on any recall by a supplier immediately and identify and isolate any batches that may be at risk.”

The decision to originally move to IFS was taken in 2018. The company wanted to modernize, replacing several disparate ERP systems with an integrated ERP and a unified database. Explains Arko, “The system went live in October 2020, and is currently used across purchasing, sales, logistics, manufacturing and finance operations. The current IFS system also supports some 40 point-to-point integrations, connecting with B2B and B2C ecommerce stores, and a smaller ERP system that serves the pharmacy network.”

The main benefits seen from IFS derive from the streamlined dataflows between the five different business areas. Of the 400 users on the system, around half have full access managing the

## About Yliopiston Apteekki

With a heritage spanning 268 years, Yliopiston Apteekki is now Finland’s largest pharmacy group. Owned by the University of Helsinki, the business operates 17 pharmacies in 14 cities, providing prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines and health and wellness products. In addition, the company operates ya.fi, an online pharmacy, and provides contract manufacture including the production of rare (ex tempore) medicines.

Employing around 1000 staff, the group achieved sales of 357m Euros in 2022.



five business areas. The remainder have limited access based on role-based permissions, for example approving purchases and invoices.

## A business-critical role

To provide access to medicines and data 24/7/365, ensuring robust continuity for IFS is business-critical. “The 40 integrations we rely on currently require around 100 customizations,” observes Arko. “We had our pre-study project of IFS Cloud in autumn; one of our goals is to significantly reduce or eliminate customizations to move to an evergreen instance of software.”

## IFS Success

Yliopiston Apteekki originally engaged with IFS Success in 2022 to support the IT team on projects alongside some role changes in the department. The support allows Arko to explore strategic business initiatives and establish and implement the IFS system functionalities required. “My IFS Success Manager and I meet bi-weekly to discuss priorities, resources and schedules, and work together against a plan which is reviewed annually,” she says. “It’s not just about implementing modifications; the services also provide us with guidance to ensure we maximize the efficiency of our system.

“For example, we have a large customer base nationwide – our customer loyalty program alone has 900,000 customers, and ya.fi, our online consumer store, gets over 12m visits a year. Here, we were able to use IFS Success to automate the manual elements of our accounts receivables process, allowing us to integrate and outsource the operation to a third party.”

## Efficiency and best practice

As well as the IFS Cloud pre-study project, other areas Arko targets for IFS Success include potential warehouse automation. “The ability to pick and dispatch goods more efficiently improves the customer experience and also our margins on lower value items,” she says.

The IFS Success engagement also allows IFS to regularly share its experience of best practice garnered in the sector. “That external insight is useful, because it means we can benchmark ourselves. It’s a way to understand where and how we could improve our processes and approaches,” says Arko.

Yliopiston Apteekki has unique obligations. Explains Arko, “We are the only pharmaceutical company in Finland required by the state to formulate one-time medicines for sick patients (typically children) at the request of a doctor.” she says.

## Benefits seen using IFS

- Unified real-time data across all key operational areas
- Successful integration with 40 existing systems
- Robust adherence to regulatory requirements
- Cost-efficient operation within government-controlled profit margins
- Reduced manual workflows



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“Using IFS and accessing resources and industry insight through IFS Success, we have the ability to constantly improve and refine our operations.”

Emilia Arko, ERP Service Manager at  
Yliopiston Apteekki

### Implementation advice

What advice would Arko give other companies starting to use IFS? “Think very carefully before deciding modification of the standard system is warranted or needed,” suggests Arko. “Don’t rush into customization, especially when the ultimate goal will be to transition to an evergreen solution like IFS Cloud. Take the necessary time to fully evaluate the processes you use and consider if they are fit for purpose by discussing best practices with IFS. Implementing modifications that are unnecessary will create complexity and cost,” she observes.

### Moment of Service™

“Thanks to IFS and accessing resources and industry insight through IFS Success, we have the ability to constantly improve and refine our operations,” says Arko. “Ultimately we are here to provide affordable medicines safely and efficiently from order to delivery in the shortest possible time.”

### Find out more

Further information, e-mail  
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