Interreg Co-funded by the European Union

Aurora

FINAL report

Project name	Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster
Nyps-ID	20361797
Reporting period *(YYMM-YYMM)*	2511 - 2607
Web and social media	https://www.linkedin.com/company/arctic-europe-tourism-cluster https://visitarcticeurope.com/ https://www.facebook.com/visitarcticeurope https://thisisarctic.com/ https://www.instagram.com/thisisarcticcom

By submitting this report, we hereby confirm that:

☒ The mandatory A3-poster is displayed and clearly visible to the public (in the premises of each partner)

☒ The Interreg Aurora logotype is used in all communication material

☒ The project team carried out the mandatory project internal workshop about the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

A. Project management

How has the project been organized and coordinated?
Describe the cooperation between partners and the daily work practices during the reporting period, including the roles of the project group and the steering group. Inform about any changes regarding the structure of the project, contact persons and staff.

The Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster (AETC) project was implemented through a close cross-border partnership between Finnish Lapland Tourist Board (LME), Arctic Sweden Visitors Board (ASVB) and Arctic Norway Tourist Board (NNTB). Finnish Lapland Tourist Board acted as the Lead Partner and was responsible for the overall coordination, reporting and administration of the project. Arctic Sweden Visitors Board name was previously Swedish Lapland Visitors Board. Arctic Norway Tourist Board name was previously Northern Norway Tourist Board.

The project was organized around the principle of shared ownership and joint implementation. All partners participated actively in all work packages and contributed to the planning, implementation and evaluation of activities. Rather than working from a national perspective, all activities were designed and implemented for the benefit of the Arctic Europe region as a whole. The partners contributed their regional expertise, stakeholder networks and market knowledge while jointly developing solutions that supported the common objectives of the project.

Daily cooperation was characterized by continuous communication, regular online meetings and close collaboration between project staff across the three countries. Responsibility for specific activities was allocated according to expertise and practical considerations, while implementation remained highly collaborative. Individual staff members took the lead in specific activities or work packages, while planning, decision-making and delivery were carried out collectively.

Procurements were carried out jointly whenever appropriate in order to ensure transparency, efficiency and consistency across the project. Financial responsibility for individual activities was distributed among partners according to the agreed implementation model. For project events, the hosting partner generally assumed responsibility for local arrangements and related costs. This approach provided an efficient and practical framework for implementation while reinforcing the project's strong culture of cooperation and shared responsibility.

Throughout the project period, the partnership structure remained stable and effective. The cross-border cooperation model established within AETC demonstrated the value of joint planning, shared resources and collective ownership in creating results that benefited the entire Arctic Europe region.

As all activities were planned and implemented jointly by the three partner organizations, it was not possible to separate or describe activities solely from the perspective of one partner. The results were achieved collectively through the combined expertise, resources and commitment of all project partners.

The project organization consisted of the **Project Team**, **Task Force Groups**, **Steering Group** and **Partner Group**.
The Project Team consisted of the Project Director, Project Coordinator and Project Managers from all partner organizations. The team was responsible for the day-to-day implementation of project activities, coordination of work packages, stakeholder engagement, communication, monitoring and reporting. The Project Team worked closely together throughout the project period and maintained continuous communication to ensure efficient implementation and high quality of all project activities.

The Task Force Groups supported the implementation of thematic activities within the different work packages. These groups brought together expertise from all partner organizations and enabled practical cooperation across borders in areas such as product development, sustainability, digitalization, marketing and sales activities. The task force groups operated flexibly, with their composition and level of activity varying across the different phases of the project according to the content and needs of each phase.

The Steering Group provided strategic guidance and oversight throughout the project period. The Steering Group monitored the progress of the project, supported decision-making and ensured that activities remained aligned with the overall objectives of the project and the needs of the participating regions.

The Partner Group ensured effective communication between the partner organizations and supported the coordination of activities, resources and stakeholder engagement across Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Project Staff
Finland (Finnish Lapland Tourist Board)

- Nina Forsell served as Project Director, partner representative and Steering Group member.
- Maikku Raittimo served as Project Coordinator.
- Marika Tiikkaja served as Finnish Project Manager.

Sweden (Arctic Sweden Visitors Board)

- Petronella Modin served as Swedish Project Manager.
- Johanna Ögren, David Lind, Johanna Elenius, Nicklas Wede, Petter Norén, Linda Norén and Sofi Holmgren contributed to the project on a part-time basis in task forces.
- Annika Fredriksson served as partner representative and Steering Group member.

Norway (Arctic Norway Tourist Board)

- Alexia Diakaki served as Norwegian Project Manager.
- Trond Øverås served as partner representative and Steering Group member.
- Agnete Stensland, Jan Roger Eriksen, Knut Hansvold, Marie Nystad, Arune Kliore and Olga Philippenko contributed to the project on a part-time basis in task forces.

The staffing structure allowed the partnership to combine regional expertise, destination knowledge and specialized competencies from all three countries. This cross-border approach strengthened cooperation, facilitated knowledge sharing and ensured the successful implementation of project activities across the Arctic Europe region.

The Steering Group consisted of one partner representative and two members from each participating country, together with their designated substitutes. Finland chaired the Steering Group throughout the project period

Project steering group was following:
(FI) Ari Vuorentausta, Lapland Hotels & Safaris Oy as chairman
(FI) Reijo Lantto, Lomakeskus Himmerki,
(FI) Jouko Lappalainen, Wilderness Hotels & Safaris, substitute
(FI) Rami Korhonen, Lapland Safaris, substitute
(FI) Nina Forsell, Finnish Lapland Tourist Board, LME (partner)
(SWE) Annika Fredriksson, Arctic Sweden Visitors Board (partner)
(SWE) Petronella Modin, Arctic Sweden Visitors Board (partner)
(SWE) Ida Johansson, Camp Ripan
(SWE) Graeme Richardsson, All Nordics
(SWE) Göran Widen, Brändon Lodge, substitute
(SWE) Susanne Wallin, Haparanda Stadshotell, substitute
(NO) Trond Øverås, Arctic Norway Tourist Board (partner)
(NO) Trond Arne Kongsli, Best Arctic
(NO) Knut Sigurd Pettersen, Scandic Hotels
(NO) Erik Taraldsen, Thon Hotels, substitute
(NO) Vegard Berge Uglebakken, Æventyr, substitute

How have you ensured involvement from the target group?
Describe how you have considered target group needs during the reporting period. In the different phases of a project, it is important to systematically ensure an on-going dialogue with the target group.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

The main target group of the project consisted of tourism companies operating in the Arctic Europe region. By the end of the project, 110 tourism companies from Finland, Sweden and Norway had participated in project activities.

The project was planned and implemented in close collaboration with the target group. Continuous dialogue with participating companies ensured that activities responded to actual business needs, market developments and emerging challenges within the tourism sector. Project managers maintained regular contact with participating companies through workshops, networking events, sales workshops, webinars and online communication channels.

The needs and expectations of participating companies were integrated into project implementation through a co-creation approach. Feedback was systematically collected after events and activities and was used to improve upcoming actions and ensure their relevance for the target group. In addition, discussions with companies during meetings, workshops and networking events provided valuable insights into future development needs and opportunities.

All participating companies were invited to project activities and all events, ensuring equal access to project services across the Arctic Europe region. To facilitate broad participation regardless of geographical location, the project organised webinars and other online learning opportunities alongside physical events. Project materials, recordings and relevant information were made available through the Basecamp platform, which supported continuous knowledge sharing, direct communication with the project team and collaboration between companies across national borders.

To ensure that project activities remained relevant and demand-driven throughout the implementation period, an annual Current Situation Analysis survey was conducted among participating companies. The survey provided valuable information on business needs, market trends and future priorities, enabling the project to adapt activities and continuously respond to the evolving needs of the target group.

Which actions or achievements would you like to highlight regarding your transformation process towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals?
Describe actions or achievements during the reporting period. If this is your first progress report, attach your completed SDG workshop template.

During the project, the partners have taken significant steps towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals by integrating sustainability into tourism development across Finnish Lapland, Arctic Sweden and Arctic Norway. The project strengthened cross-border cooperation and knowledge sharing between tourism stakeholders, directly supporting SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Through joint activities, businesses, destination organisations and regional actors developed new networks and cooperation models that will continue beyond the project period.

The project also contributed to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by improving the competitiveness and resilience of tourism SMEs. Participating companies gained access to international markets through sales workshops, product development programmes and digital upskilling activities, creating new opportunities for sustainable business growth and year-round tourism.

Through the development of the Care for the Arctic Code of Conduct, resident sentiment measurement activities and the AETC Tourism Value Tool, the project advanced SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). These initiatives support responsible visitor behaviour, stronger community engagement and a better understanding of tourism’s social value and local impacts. The project also contributed to

SDG 13 (Climate Action) by promoting sustainable tourism practices, visitor distribution and more resource-efficient approaches to destination development and marketing.
SDG 5 – Gender Equality and SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities: The project promoted equal access to knowledge, training, networking and international business opportunities for all participating SMEs, regardless of company size, location, ownership structure or participant background. By combining on-site and digital activities, the project also improved accessibility and participation across the Arctic region.

Overall, the project has helped shift tourism development from a destination-centred approach towards a more sustainable model that balances economic growth, environmental responsibility and community well-being across the Arctic Europe region.

Primary SDGs

- **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth**: Strengthening SME competitiveness, digital resilience, innovation capacity and year-round tourism development.
- **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities**: Supporting sustainable destination development, visitor management, cultural preservation and community resilience.
- **SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals**: The strongest and most consistent SDG across the entire project, demonstrated through cross-border collaboration between Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Secondary SDGs

- **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production**: Through sustainable tourism communication, visitor guidance, digital efficiency and responsible travel promotion.
- **SDG 13 – Climate Action**: Through awareness building, sustainable travel behaviours, visitor distribution and reduced reliance on inefficient marketing and operational practices.

Supporting SDGs

- **SDG 5 – Gender Equality** and **SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities**: Through equal access to knowledge, participation opportunities, digital inclusion and SME support regardless of company size, location or ownership structure.

Taken together, the AETC project has demonstrated how digital transformation, destination cooperation and sustainability can be pursued simultaneously, with SDG 8, SDG 11 and SDG 17 forming the central framework that connects all activities and outcomes.

What connections are there with other projects and/or initiatives?
Shortly describe connections during the reporting period.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

The project built directly on the results, networks and cooperation structures established through the previous Visit Arctic Europe I and Visit Arctic Europe II projects, continuing the long-term development of Arctic Europe as a joint tourism destination. The project further strengthened cross-border cooperation between tourism stakeholders in Finland, Sweden and Norway and created a foundation for continued collaboration through the Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster Strategy.

Throughout the project, partners actively engaged with a wide range of tourism development initiatives, destination organisations, industry networks and public stakeholders at regional, national and international levels. These activities and connections have been reported in detail in previous progress reports.

The project maintained also connections with several other projects funded under the Interreg Aurora Programme, participating in joint meetings where experiences, results and best practices were exchanged. These interactions increased the visibility of project results and helped identify common development opportunities across the programme area.

The project also established links with other Arctic regions and international cooperation initiatives. Through knowledge exchange activities and participation in Arctic tourism networks, the partnership connected with stakeholders from Yukon, Canada and other northern regions facing similar opportunities and challenges related to sustainable tourism, year-round destination development, accessibility, digitalisation and community well-being. These exchanges provided valuable insights and enabled the comparison of approaches across Arctic destinations.

In addition, the project complemented regional and national tourism strategies by supporting sustainable tourism development, strengthening digital capabilities, promoting year-round tourism and increasing international market access. Through these connections, the project contributed to broader efforts to enhance the competitiveness, resilience and sustainability of tourism across Arctic Europe and the wider Arctic region.

How has the project handled any delays or other deviations?
Reflect on any delays or deviations, including activities and spending flow. Describe measures taken during the reporting period to make sure the impact of such deviations does not affect the sought results.

Throughout the project, some activities required adjustments to schedules, implementation methods and resource allocation due to changing market conditions, availability of participants and the need to align activities across three countries. However, no major deviations occurred that would have jeopardised the achievement of the project's objectives or planned results.

Some activities were rescheduled during the implementation period to maximise stakeholder engagement and ensure the quality of outputs. Any delays were compensated for through revised work plans and close monitoring of progress and spending. The partnership maintained a strong focus on achieving the agreed outputs and outcomes, and all major project objectives were reached by the end of the project.

Regarding spending flow, the project continuously monitored budget utilisation and adjusted activities where necessary to ensure efficient use of resources. Despite minor variations between reporting periods, the project remained on track and successfully delivered its planned results and impacts.

B. Project activities

WP 1: Arctic Culture and Year-round development

Which activities have been carried out during the reporting period?

The description shall clearly clarify the work done by each partner. Describe how you ensure the thresholds in GBER art 20a) and how you document indirect support to participating companies.

(Maximum 4 000 characters)

The objective of Work Package 1 was to strengthen the competitiveness, resilience and year-round attractiveness of Arctic Europe tourism by developing tourism products, strengthening the role of Arctic culture and improving cooperation between tourism businesses, cultural actors and international tour operators. The work package addressed one of the key challenges facing Arctic tourism: strong seasonality and the need to create more balanced tourism demand throughout the year.

A major achievement of the work package was the increased recognition of Arctic culture as a strategic resource for tourism development. Through workshops, networking activities, product development programmes and collaboration with cultural and creative industries, participating businesses gained a deeper understanding of how local culture, traditions, storytelling, food, handicrafts and contemporary cultural expressions can enhance visitor experiences and strengthen destination identity. The project demonstrated that culture is not merely an additional tourism component but a core asset that contributes to authenticity, differentiation and year-round attractiveness.

The project successfully strengthened cooperation between tourism businesses and cultural and creative actors across Northern Norway, Swedish Lapland and Finnish Lapland. In many cases, these stakeholders had not previously worked together in a structured manner. Through targeted activities and pilot workshops, the project created new networks and opportunities for cooperation, helping participants identify common interests and develop ideas for future products and services. One of the key findings was that the main barriers to cooperation were not a lack of ideas or willingness, but rather a lack of established meeting places, networks and collaboration structures.

One of the key outputs of the project was the Product Development Programme that supported participating companies in developing more customer-oriented and market-relevant tourism products. The programme encouraged companies to test new ideas, strengthen their storytelling and develop products designed to attract visitors outside the traditional peak seasons. Market insights from international tour operators and cultural stakeholders enabled businesses to better understand visitor expectations and emerging trends. As a result, participating companies improved their capacity to create more sustainable and year-round tourism offerings.

International market development formed another key component of the work package. During the project period, three Arctic Europe Sales Workshops were organized and attracted 199 international tour operators from 15 countries. More than 4,500 business meetings were facilitated between international buyers and participating tourism companies. In addition, 13 Knowledge Transition Tours enabled 108 tour operators to experience destinations, tourism services and seasonal opportunities first-hand across Arctic Europe. These activities strengthened business relationships, increased market knowledge and helped create new business opportunities for new tourism products. They also reinforced the positioning of Arctic Europe as one interconnected destination rather than three separate national tourism regions.

The work package also placed strong emphasis on peer learning and knowledge exchange. Through networking events, case presentations, study visits for participating companies and destination organizations, as well as Knowledge Transition Tours for tour operators, stakeholders

gained insight from regional and international best practices. Activities were organized in different locations across the Arctic region, allowing participants to explore successful tourism concepts, meet local stakeholders and experience destination development approaches in practice. These exchanges strengthened mutual learning, inspired innovation and deepened cross-border cooperation across Arctic Europe.

Overall, WP1 contributed to strengthening the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of Arctic Europe tourism. The project increased the capacity of tourism businesses to develop year-round products, enhanced the visibility and value of Arctic culture, strengthened international market access and created new cooperation structures that will continue to benefit businesses, destinations and local communities beyond the project period. Through these achievements, the work package supported the transition towards a more resilient, diverse and sustainable tourism sector across the Arctic Europe region.

The work package was implemented jointly by Finnish Lapland Tourist Board, Arctic Sweden Visitors Board and Arctic Norway Tourist Board. All partners contributed to the design and delivery of product development activities, networking events, Sales Workshops and Knowledge Transition Tours, while engaging tourism businesses and cultural stakeholders from their respective regions. Activities were planned and implemented collaboratively to ensure a shared Arctic Europe perspective and equal opportunities for participation across the programme area.

Compliance with GBER Article 20a was ensured by providing open access to project activities for SMEs. Support was provided in the form of training, networking, market access activities, knowledge transfer and product development services, without direct financial support to companies. Participation and indirect support were documented through registration forms and participant lists enabling the project to monitor beneficiary participation and ensure compliance with programme requirements.

Which communication activities have been carried out during the reporting period?
Describe how you have communicated the activities and results of the work package during the reporting period. Specify the target group of each activity. Indicate references and/or links to implemented activities.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

Communication activities within WP1 targeted tourism SMEs, cultural and creative sector actors, international tour operators, destination organisations and other tourism stakeholders across Finnish Lapland, Arctic Sweden and Arctic Norway. The objective was to increase awareness of project activities, disseminate results and encourage participation in product development, networking and international market access initiatives.

Throughout the project, information about WP1 activities and results was communicated through newsletters, project websites, social media channels, workshops, networking events, Sales Workshops and Knowledge Transition Tours. Project partners regularly shared information on upcoming activities, success stories, best practices and opportunities for participation. All participating companies received project updates and invitations through direct communication and newsletter campaigns.

Particular attention was given to communicating the outcomes of the Product Development Programme, cross-border cooperation activities and the role of Arctic culture in tourism development. Results and experiences from participating companies were highlighted through

articles, social media content, presentations and case examples. The project also communicated market insights and lessons learned from international tour operators to support business development and product innovation.

Key communication channels included the AETC newsletters to participants and tour operators, project websites, the AETC LinkedIn page, the Visit Arctic Europe Facebook page and partners communication channels. Project results and outcomes were also published on the project website, including a dedicated outcomes section presenting the main achievements of the work package and on the digital communication platform.

Links:
https://visitarcticeurope.com/outcomes-aetc
https://thisisarctic.com
https://www.linkedin.com/company/arctic-europe-tourism-cluster
https://www.facebook.com/visitarcticeurope

What are the upcoming communication activities?
Describe planned communication activities to raise awareness and visibility of your project activities and dissemination of your results (regarding the work package). Activities such as events, publications, reports, articles, newsletters, films, campaigns on social media, exhibitions etc.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

Project results and outcomes are disseminated through various channels, including the project webpage, social media platforms, digital communication platform and our YouTube channel.
https://www.youtube.com/@arcticeuropetourismcluster
https://visitarcticeurope.com/outcomes-aetc

WP 2: Arctic Sustainability

Which activities have been carried out during the reporting period?
The description shall clearly clarify the work done by each partner. Describe how you ensure the thresholds in GBER art 20a) and how you document indirect support to participating companies.

(Maximum 4 000 characters)

The objective of Work Package 2 was to strengthen the sustainability of tourism in Arctic Europe by improving cooperation, increasing knowledge on tourism impacts and developing practical tools that support balanced tourism development. The work package focused on ensuring that tourism growth benefits businesses, local communities and destinations while maintaining the attractiveness and resilience of the Arctic region.

A major achievement of the work package was the development of new approaches for understanding and managing tourism impacts. The project developed the AETC Tourism Value Tool, which provides destinations with new opportunities to assess tourism's contribution to community well-being and regional development. The tool supports evidence-based decision-making by visualising tourism's economic and social value at different geographical levels.

The project also increased understanding of residents' perceptions of tourism across Finnish Lapland, Arctic Sweden and Arctic Norway. Surveys and analyses provided valuable information on how local communities experience tourism and what factors influence support for future tourism development. The results offer destinations practical knowledge for balancing tourism growth with community well-being and local acceptance.

Another key result was the development and implementation of the Care for the Arctic Code of Conduct and supporting activation tools. Rather than focusing solely on awareness-raising, the initiative applied behavioural science principles to encourage responsible visitor behaviour and strengthen sustainability practices among tourism businesses and destinations. The results provide practical guidance that can continue to be utilised throughout the Arctic Europe region beyond the project period.

The work package also contributed to increasing the resilience of Arctic tourism destinations to climate change. Through sustainability-focused cooperation, responsible tourism development, visitor management approaches and year-round tourism development, participating businesses and destinations strengthened their capacity to respond to changing environmental, social and market conditions. This supports the long-term adaptability and resilience of Arctic tourism destinations.

Cross-border accessibility was strengthened through closer cooperation between tourism stakeholders across Finland, Sweden and Norway and through the promotion of Arctic Europe as one interconnected destination. Joint development activities increased awareness of cross-border travel opportunities, built a better understanding of tour operators' transport needs in the region and helped create a stronger foundation for seamless visitor experiences across the region.

Throughout the project knowledge was strengthened through workshops, stakeholder engagement, cross-border cooperation and the sharing of best practices between destinations and tourism businesses. Upskilling was a central element of the work package. Six cross-border networking events were organised to provide tourism companies, destination organisations and other stakeholders with opportunities for learning, knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer collaboration. The events strengthened participants' understanding on a wide range of topics, such as sustainable tourism development, visitor management, responsible business practices, climate resilience, community engagement, market development and value of tourism . Feedback from participants highlighted the value of these activities, particularly the opportunity to learn from peers across the Arctic region. Due to their strong relevance and positive impact, continued upskilling, networking and knowledge-sharing activities have been identified as important elements of future Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster collaboration and activities.

The work package created stronger networks between tourism organisations, businesses and communities and contributed to a more holistic understanding of sustainable tourism development across Arctic Europe.

Overall, WP2 strengthened the capacity of destinations and tourism stakeholders to make more informed and responsible decisions. By combining tourism competitiveness with community well-being and sustainability considerations, the work package contributed to the long-term resilience and sustainability of tourism in Arctic Europe.

The work package was jointly implemented by all AETC project partners. All partners contributed to the development, testing and dissemination of sustainability tools, stakeholder engagement

activities and knowledge exchange processes. Compliance with GBER Article 20a was ensured by providing open and non-discriminatory access to project activities and services for eligible SMEs. Any indirect support provided through training, workshops, networking and sustainability development activities was documented through participant registrations, attendance records and project monitoring systems.

Which communication activities have been carried out during the reporting period?
Describe how you have communicated the activities and results of the work package during the reporting period. Specify the target group of each activity. Indicate references and/or links to implemented activities.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

Communication activities within WP2 targeted tourism SMEs, destination management organisations, regional authorities, local communities and other stakeholders involved in sustainable tourism development across Arctic Europe. The objective was to increase awareness of sustainable tourism practices, share project results and encourage the adoption of new tools and approaches developed during the project.

Throughout the project, WP2 results were communicated through newsletters, webinars, workshops, stakeholder meetings, networking events, social media channels and the project website. Particular emphasis was placed on sharing knowledge related to responsible tourism, community perspectives and tourism impact measurement. Participating companies and stakeholders received regular updates on project activities and opportunities to engage in sustainability-related initiatives and discussions.

Special communication efforts were dedicated to disseminating the results of the Care for the Arctic Code of Conduct, including practical guidance on responsible visitor behaviour and sustainability actions for tourism businesses and destinations. The project also communicated findings from resident sentiment surveys and promoted the development of the AETC Tourism Value Tool, which helps destinations understand and communicate tourism's contribution to community well-being and regional development. These activities targeted both tourism professionals and wider destination stakeholders.

To ensure broad accessibility, key outputs, articles and results were published through the project website, newsletters and social media channels. Recordings from networking events and webinars were made publicly available on the project's YouTube channel, allowing a wider audience to access project knowledge, lessons learned and practical tools beyond the project consortium and participating companies.

References
https://visitarcticeurope.com/outcomes-aetc/
https://visitarcticeurope.com/care-for-the-arctic-from-good-intentions-to-better-behaviours/
https://visitarcticeurope.com/listening-to-locals-measuring-tourism-satisfaction-across-arctic-europe/
https://visitarcticeurope.com/the-aetc-value-of-tourism-tool-putting-a-number-on-tourisms-value/
https://www.linkedin.com/company/arctic-europe-tourism-cluster
https://www.facebook.com/visitarcticeurope

What are the upcoming communication activities?
Describe planned communication activities to raise awareness and visibility of your project activities and dissemination of your results (regarding the work package). Activities such as events, publications, reports, articles, newsletters, films, campaigns on social media, exhibitions etc.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

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WP 3: Arctic Digital Innovation

Which activities have been carried out during the reporting period?
The description shall clearly clarify the work done by each partner. Describe how you ensure the thresholds in GBER art 20a) and how you document indirect support to participating companies.

The objective of **Work Package 3: Arctic Digital Innovation** was to strengthen the digital capabilities, visibility and competitiveness of tourism businesses across Arctic Europe. The work package aimed to help tourism SMEs adapt to the rapidly evolving digital environment by increasing digital skills, testing innovative technologies and joint marketing approaches that position Arctic Europe as a year-round sustainable destination.

A major achievement of the work package was the significant improvement of digital competencies among participating tourism businesses. Through digital assessments, webinars, workshops, AI-focused training sessions and the AETC Tech Week series, companies gained practical knowledge on digital marketing, customer engagement, content creation, artificial intelligence and emerging digital tools. The work package combined traditional training with a strong learning-by-doing approach, enabling participants to apply new knowledge through practical exercises, digital experiments and real-world testing. The activities increased participants' confidence in adopting new technologies and strengthened their ability to respond to changing customer expectations and market conditions.

The work package also contributed to the development of a stronger shared identity for Arctic Europe as a tourism destination. Through the development and promotion of the This is Arctic destination brand, the project strengthened cooperation between destinations and provided a platform for communicating a common Arctic story to international audiences. The initiative demonstrated the benefits of joint destination marketing and helped position Arctic Europe as one connected tourism region rather than separate national destinations. The work package also explored co-branding opportunities with non-tourism brands and partners, expanding the visibility of Arctic Europe and creating opportunities to reach audiences beyond traditional tourism marketing channels.

Another important result was the testing and development of innovative digital solutions. The project piloted the Destination Direct Search concept to explore new ways of connecting travellers directly with tourism businesses and destinations. In addition, partners tested the use of artificial

intelligence, digital storytelling and interactive content to enhance destination discovery and customer engagement. A strong emphasis was placed on learning by doing, allowing participating businesses and destination organisations to gain hands-on experience through digital pilots, experimentation and testing of new tools, technologies and marketing approaches.

The work package also explored innovative digital traveller outreach together with international tour operators and airline partners. New technologies, targeted digital campaigns and collaborative marketing activities were tested to improve destination visibility, traveller engagement and customer acquisition. These activities enabled Arctic Europe destinations and tourism businesses to reach potential travellers through new digital channels and provided valuable insight into future opportunities and challenges related to tourism digitalisation.

The work package also strengthened the visibility of Arctic Europe through shared digital channels and content. Through the This is Arctic platform, storytelling initiatives, digital touring routes and collaborative marketing activities, the project created new ways of presenting Arctic Europe as one connected destination. These activities increased the visibility of regional tourism offerings and provided participating businesses with additional opportunities to reach international audiences through shared channels and coordinated promotion.

The work package strengthened collaboration between tourism businesses, destination organisations and digital experts across Finland, Sweden and Norway. Knowledge sharing and peer learning enabled businesses to learn from each other's experiences while developing a stronger understanding of digital trends affecting the tourism sector. Cross-border cooperation accelerated learning and allowed participants to test and evaluate solutions from a broader Arctic perspective.

Many of the digital tools, communication channels and operating models developed during the project will continue to be utilised after project completion. The knowledge generated through digital pilots, AI experimentation, digital marketing activities and upskilling programmes provides a strong foundation for continued digital development within the future Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster. The project demonstrated the value of cross-border collaboration in testing new technologies and sharing digital expertise across the Arctic region.

Overall, WP3 contributed to a more digitally mature and future-oriented tourism sector in Arctic Europe. Participating businesses improved their digital skills, gained new tools for customer engagement and increased their readiness to utilise artificial intelligence, digital marketing and innovative technologies. At the regional level, the work package strengthened destination visibility, supported international competitiveness and created a foundation for continued digital collaboration beyond the project period.

The work package was jointly implemented by Finnish Lapland Tourist Board, Arctic Sweden Visitors Board and Arctic Norway Tourist Board. All partners contributed to planning and delivering digital training activities, pilot projects, marketing initiatives and knowledge-sharing events. Compliance with GBER Article 20a was ensured by providing open and non-discriminatory access to project activities for eligible SMEs. Indirect support provided through training, mentoring, networking, digital assessments and participation in pilot activities was documented through participant registrations, attendance records and project monitoring systems.

Which communication activities have been carried out during the reporting period?
Describe how you have communicated the activities and results of the work package during the

reporting period. Specify the target group of each activity. Indicate references and/or links to implemented activities.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

Communication activities within WP3 targeted tourism SMEs, destination management organisations, digital marketing professionals, tourism technology stakeholders and other actors interested in digital innovation across Arctic Europe. The objective was to increase awareness of digital opportunities, disseminate project results and strengthen the digital capabilities of tourism businesses.

Throughout the project, WP3 activities and results were communicated through newsletters, webinars, online learning events, workshops, social media channels and the project website. Participating companies received regular information about digital upskilling opportunities, AI-related training, innovative marketing solutions and pilot initiatives developed within the work package. These communication activities supported knowledge sharing and encouraged businesses to adopt new digital tools and practices.

Particular attention was given to communicating the outcomes of the digital upskilling programme, AETC Tech Weeks, AI-focused webinars, digital marketing pilots and the development of the shared Arctic Europe destination brand, This is Arctic. The project also actively disseminated results from the Destination Direct Search pilot and shared lessons learned regarding customer engagement, digital visibility and the future role of artificial intelligence in tourism development. Digital traveller outreach activities implemented together with tour operators and airline partners were also promoted through project communication channels.

Project results were made available through the project website, newsletters, social media channels and the AETC YouTube channel. To ensure broad accessibility, recordings from webinars, Tech Weeks, networking events and other learning activities were published online, allowing a wider audience to access project knowledge, practical experiences and lessons learned. Articles, videos and digital content were also used to communicate best practices and experiences from the project's learning-by-doing approach, including digital pilots, AI experimentation and collaborative marketing activities.

References
https://visitarcticeurope.com/outcomes-aetc/
https://visitarcticeurope.com/tourism-smes-digital-upskilling/
https://visitarcticeurope.com/aetc-digitalization-journey/
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https://www.linkedin.com/company/arctic-europe-tourism-cluster
https://www.facebook.com/visitarcticeurope

What are the upcoming communication activities?
Describe planned communication activities to raise awareness and visibility of your project activities and dissemination of your results (regarding the work package). Activities such as events, publications, reports, articles, newsletters, films, campaigns on social media, exhibitions etc.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

Project results and outcomes were disseminated through a variety of communication channels to ensure broad visibility and long-term accessibility for tourism businesses, destination organisations, stakeholders and the wider public. Communication activities included the project website, newsletters, social media channels, webinars, events and video content.

A particular focus was placed on making project results openly available beyond the project period. The dedicated Outcomes section on the Visit Arctic Europe website presents the main achievements, lessons learned and outputs from all work packages, including culture and year-round development, sustainability and digital innovation. Project articles, tools and best practices remain publicly accessible for continued use by tourism businesses and stakeholders.

To further support knowledge sharing and outreach, recordings from webinars, networking events, workshops and project presentations were published on the AETC YouTube channel. This enabled project knowledge, practical experiences and examples of good practice to reach audiences beyond the direct project participants and supported the continued use of project results after project completion

https://www.youtube.com/@arcticeuropetourismcluster
https://visitarcticeurope.com/outcomes-aetc/

WP 4: Project steering/communication

Which activities have been carried out during the reporting period?
The description shall clearly clarify the work done by each partner. Describe how you ensure the thresholds in GBER art 20a) and how you document indirect support to participating companies.

(Maximum 4 000 characters)

The objective of **Work Package 4: Project steering/communication** was to ensure effective project management, coordination, communication and dissemination throughout the project period. The work package provided the organisational framework necessary for successful cross-border cooperation and ensured that project activities, results and lessons learned were communicated efficiently to participating companies, stakeholders and wider audiences.

A key achievement of the work package was the establishment of a strong and well-functioning cross-border partnership between Finnish Lapland Tourist Board, Arctic Sweden Visitors Board and Arctic Norway Tourist Board. The partners jointly planned, implemented and monitored project activities across all work packages, creating a genuinely integrated approach to tourism development in Arctic Europe. Regular steering group meetings, project management meetings and partner workshops ensured effective decision-making, transparent communication and efficient project implementation throughout the project period. The Steering Group played an active role in monitoring project progress, supporting strategic decision-making and reviewing the long-term sustainability of project results.

The work package supported active stakeholder engagement and ensured continuous dialogue with participating tourism companies and other stakeholders. Through regular communication, feedback collection and collaborative planning processes, project activities remained relevant and responsive to the needs of the target group. The partnership applied a co-creation approach that

enabled stakeholders to contribute to the development of project activities and outputs throughout implementation.

Communication and dissemination formed another central component of the work package. Project activities, events, results and success stories were communicated through newsletters, websites, webinars, social media channels and direct stakeholder communication. The project maintained an active presence through the Visit Arctic Europe website, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube and partners communication channels. These efforts ensured broad visibility for project activities and strengthened awareness of Arctic Europe as a shared tourism destination.

Particular emphasis was placed on making project results openly accessible. The project published articles, tools, case examples, webinar recordings and outcome summaries through dedicated online platforms and communication channels. The Outcomes section of the project website provides a comprehensive overview of the achievements and lessons learned from all work packages, ensuring that project knowledge remains available after project closure.

An important long-term result of WP4 was the strengthening of cooperation structures that will continue beyond the project period. Through the establishment of networks, communication channels and the AETC Cluster, the project created a foundation for continued collaboration between destinations, tourism businesses and development organisations.

During the final phase of the project, the Steering Group; partner Group and the AETC Cluster Task Force worked actively on the project's exit strategy and the future structure of cooperation. This work resulted in the adoption of the Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster Strategy, which commits the partners to continued collaboration, regular joint activities and the further utilisation of project results after the project has ended. These structures support the sustainability of project results and contribute to the ongoing development of Arctic Europe as a competitive and sustainable tourism region.

Overall, WP4 ensured effective project governance, facilitated strong cross-border cooperation and maximised the visibility and long-term impact of project results. By combining efficient project management with strategic communication, stakeholder engagement and long-term planning, the work package contributed significantly to the successful achievement of the project's objectives and the sustainability of its outcomes beyond the project period.

Which communication activities have been carried out during the reporting period?
Describe how you have communicated the activities and results of the work package during the reporting period. Specify the target group of each activity. Indicate references and/or links to implemented activities.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

Communication activities within WP4 targeted participating tourism SMEs, destination management organisations, tourism stakeholders, public authorities, international tour operators, media representatives and the wider public across Finland, Sweden, Norway and international target markets. The objective was to ensure broad visibility of project activities, communicate results and support stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle.

Throughout the project, activities and results were communicated through newsletters, websites, webinars, workshops, social media channels, videos and direct stakeholder communication. Regular newsletters informed participating companies about project activities, upcoming events,

training opportunities, sales workshops and project results. These communications primarily targeted participating tourism businesses and project stakeholders across the Arctic Europe region.

The project maintained an active online presence through the Visit Arctic Europe website, the dedicated outcomes page, the AETC LinkedIn page, the Visit Arctic Europe Facebook page and the AETC YouTube channel. These channels were used to communicate project progress, share success stories, disseminate tools and publications, present best practices and promote participation in project activities. Target groups included tourism businesses, destination organisations, policymakers, industry stakeholders and international audiences interested in Arctic tourism development.

Particular emphasis was placed on communicating project results and ensuring their accessibility beyond the project period. The project published dedicated outcome articles covering all work packages, including cultural tourism development, sustainability initiatives, digital innovation activities and cross-border cooperation achievements. Webinar recordings, reports, tools and other materials were made openly available to support continued learning and utilisation of project results after project completion. Recordings from webinars, networking events and project presentations were also published on the AETC YouTube channel, enabling project knowledge and best practices to reach a wider audience beyond the direct project participants.

Project partners also disseminated project activities and achievements through their own websites, newsletters and social media channels, significantly extending the reach of communication activities to regional, national and international audiences.

References

https://visitarcticeurope.com/outcomes-aetc/
https://visitarcticeurope.com/
https://www.linkedin.com/company/arctic-europe-tourism-cluster
https://www.facebook.com/visitarcticeurope
https://www.youtube.com/@ArcticEuropeTourismCluster

Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster – All Newsletters

What are the upcoming communication activities?
Describe planned communication activities to raise awareness and visibility of your project activities and dissemination of your results (regarding the work package). Activities such as events, publications, reports, articles, newsletters, films, campaigns on social media, exhibitions etc.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

Following the closure of the project, communication efforts will focus on ensuring the long-term visibility, accessibility and utilisation of project results. The target groups include tourism SMEs, destination management organisations, regional authorities, tourism stakeholders and future development projects across Arctic Europe.

Project partners will continue to disseminate project outcomes through their organisational websites, newsletters, social media channels and stakeholder networks. The key results, tools and publications developed during the project will remain publicly available through the Visit Arctic Europe website, including the dedicated outcomes section. Webinar recordings, articles, reports

and other project materials will continue to be accessible to businesses and stakeholders after project completion.

Communication activities will also focus on promoting the long-term use of key project outputs, including the Care for the Arctic resources, the AETC Tourism Value Tool, digital learning materials and the knowledge generated through cross-border cooperation. Partners will continue sharing best practices and lessons learned through existing tourism networks and industry events when relevant.

In addition, the established AETC Cluster, the AETC Digital Community Platform and the partner cooperation network will support the continued exchange of information and dissemination of project results beyond the project period. The digital community platform provides a channel for ongoing communication, knowledge sharing and networking between tourism businesses, destination organisations and other stakeholders across Arctic Europe, helping to maintain and further develop the networks created during the project.

Together, these activities ensure that the knowledge, tools and experiences generated by the project continue to benefit tourism businesses, destinations and communities throughout Arctic Europe long after the project has ended.

C. Results and exit strategy

What results have been achieved so far?
Describe the results achieved so far. Reflect on the forecast for result fulfilment and any need for an action plan to improve the result fulfilment. The further ahead in the project implementation, reflect on the exit strategy.

Remember to register, and comment, the outcome of programme indicators in Min ansökan.

(Maximum 2 000 characters)

The Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster (AETC) project has successfully strengthened cross-border cooperation, sustainability and competitiveness within the tourism sector across Finnish Lapland, Arctic Sweden and Arctic Norway. Through a joint implementation model involving 110 participating organisations, including tourism companies and destination development organisations, the project created new opportunities for knowledge exchange, product development, internationalisation and digital innovation, while strengthening networks between tourism businesses, destination organisations and other regional stakeholders.

Key results include the development of the Arctic Europe Sales Workshop concept, which facilitated more than 4,500 business meetings between tourism companies and international tour operators, improving market access and international visibility for Arctic SMEs. The project also supported businesses through product development programmes, digital upskilling activities, AI-related training, sustainability initiatives and cross-border networking. Concrete outputs include the Care for the Arctic Code of Conduct and Activation Toolkit, the AETC Tourism Value Tool, digital training materials, webinar recordings, destination marketing assets, the This is Arctic platform and the AETC Digital Community Platform. These outputs support tourism businesses and destinations in developing more sustainable, innovative and year-round tourism offerings.

The project successfully exceeded its target indicators. While the target was to develop and implement three jointly developed pilot actions, a total of five pilot actions were successfully

developed and implemented during the project: the AETC Digital Community Platform for tourism stakeholders across Arctic Europe; a model for sharing best practices between participating companies; several innovative digital marketing concepts tested and piloted together with project participants; the AETC Tourism Value Tool, which supports destinations in assessing tourism's contribution to community well-being and regional development; and a Local Satisfaction Survey model, which provides insights into residents' perceptions of tourism and supports sustainable destination development. In addition, two joint strategies and action plans were taken up by organisations: the Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster Strategy, which provides a framework for continued cross-border cooperation after the project, and the Care for the Arctic Code of Conduct, which supports more sustainable tourism development and responsible visitor behaviour across the region.

A total of 110 organisations cooperated across borders through project activities.
The project contributed to a more integrated Arctic Europe tourism region by creating stronger cooperation structures and a shared understanding of opportunities and challenges across national borders. Businesses and destination organisations gained access to wider networks, shared expertise and new development opportunities that would have been difficult to achieve through separate national initiatives.

To ensure the sustainability of project results, the partners have adopted the Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster Strategy, establishing a long-term framework for continued cooperation between Finnish Lapland Tourist Board, Arctic Sweden Visitors Board and Arctic Norway Tourist Board. The partners have committed to maintaining the Arctic Europe network, continuing regular cooperation, organising recurring flagship activities, including the Arctic Annual Summits and the Arctic Europe Sales Workshops and look into possibilities for future joint marketing and development initiatives.

Project outputs, tools and materials remain publicly available through project websites, communication channels and digital platforms. Through this commitment, the knowledge, partnerships, networks and development models created during the project will continue to benefit tourism businesses, destinations and local communities across Arctic Europe beyond the project period.

D. Summaries – mandatory in Final report

Project summary (4 000 *characters*)
The project summary from the final report will be frequently used on European and national level to spread results from Interreg Aurora projects.

The Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster (AETC) project was implemented between August 2023 and July 2026 by Finnish Lapland Tourist Board, Arctic Sweden Visitors Board and Arctic Norway Tourist Board. The project aimed to strengthen the competitiveness, sustainability and year-round attractiveness of tourism across Arctic Europe through cross-border cooperation, innovation and knowledge sharing.

The project brought together 110 organisations, including tourism companies, destination organisations and other tourism stakeholders from Finland, Sweden and Norway. Through a collaborative approach, the partners worked to position Arctic Europe as one interconnected

tourism region rather than separate national destinations. This strengthened cross-border cooperation, increased knowledge exchange and enabled stakeholders to address common challenges and opportunities together.

The project achieved significant results in three thematic areas. In Arctic Culture and Year-round Development, participating organisations strengthened product development capabilities, improved cooperation between tourism and cultural actors and developed more market-oriented tourism products. Through three Arctic Europe Sales Workshops, 199 international tour operators from 15 countries participated in more than 4,500 business meetings with tourism companies, creating new opportunities for international business and visibility.

In Arctic Sustainability, the project developed practical tools and approaches to support responsible tourism development. Key results include the Care for the Arctic Code of Conduct and Activation Toolkit, resident sentiment measurement activities and the AETC Tourism Value Tool. These initiatives improved understanding of tourism's impacts on local communities and provided destinations with new tools to support evidence-based decision-making, responsible visitor behaviour and long-term destination resilience. In addition, the project delivered extensive upskilling activities through cross-border networking events, peer learning and knowledge exchange, strengthening the capacity of tourism businesses, destination organisations and other stakeholders to implement sustainable tourism practices and respond to future challenges.

In Arctic Digital Innovation, participating organisations strengthened their digital capabilities through digital assessments, workshops, AI-focused training, peer learning and learning-by-doing activities. The project developed and tested innovative digital solutions, including the Destination Direct Search concept, digital storytelling tools and new customer engagement approaches. The shared destination brand This is Arctic further strengthened the visibility of Arctic Europe in international markets and demonstrated the benefits of joint destination marketing. A strong learning-by-doing approach enabled companies and destination organisations to gain practical experience through experimentation, pilot activities and real-world testing of emerging technologies.

The project delivered five jointly developed pilot actions: the AETC Digital Community Platform, a model for sharing best practices between participating organisations, innovative digital marketing concepts tested together with project participants, the AETC Tourism Value Tool and a Local Satisfaction Survey model. In addition, two joint strategies and action plans were adopted: the Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster Strategy and the Care for the Arctic Code of Conduct. A total of 110 organisations cooperated across borders through project activities.

The project contributed particularly to UN Sustainable Development Goals 8, 11, 12 and 17 by supporting sustainable economic growth, responsible tourism development, community well-being and long-term cross-border partnerships. Through stronger networks, increased knowledge sharing and practical development tools, the project has benefited tourism businesses, destination organisations, local communities and the wider tourism ecosystem across Arctic Europe.

Project results have been published through the Visit Arctic Europe website, the dedicated AETC Outcomes section, the AETC Digital Community Platform, newsletters, social media channels and the AETC YouTube channel, ensuring open access to project knowledge, tools and lessons learned.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of project results, the partners created the Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster Strategy and committed to continuing cooperation through the Arctic Europe

Tourism Cluster. The partners will maintain the Arctic Europe Cluster network. Cooperation will continue through recurring flagship activities, including the Arctic Annual Summit and the Arctic Europe Sales Workshop, while partners identify new development opportunities. This commitment ensures that the knowledge, tools, networks and cooperation structures established through the project will continue to create value for tourism businesses, destinations and local communities across Arctic Europe long after the project has ended.

Short project summary (1 000 *characters*)
The short project summary from the final report will be frequently used on European and national level to spread results from Interreg Aurora projects.

Write a short and clear text for the general public about the project results, and how the cross-border cooperation has impacted the life of the target groups and citizens. Inform on where the project results are published.

The Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster (AETC) project brought together tourism organisations, businesses and stakeholders from Finnish Lapland, Arctic Sweden and Arctic Norway to develop a stronger, more sustainable and year-round tourism region. Through cross-border cooperation, 110 organisations improved their knowledge, networks and international market access.

The project supported tourism businesses through product development, sustainability initiatives, digital innovation, AI training and international sales activities. Key results include the Care for the Arctic Code of Conduct, the AETC Tourism Value Tool, the AETC Digital Community Platform, the shared destination brand This is Arctic and more than 4,500 business meetings with international tour operators. To ensure long-term impact, the project partners have committed to continuing cooperation through the Arctic Europe Tourism Cluster. Project results are publicly available through the Visit Arctic Europe website, the AETC Outcomes page and the AETC YouTube channel.