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Commission



HOW THE EU HELPS NORTHERN SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS

Europe's northern sparsely populated areas face a common set of challenges linked to their remoteness, limited human capital and at times difficult climatic conditions. EU support can help them overcome these hurdles by facilitating new forms of economic activity and promoting greater use of e-technologies and innovative partnerships – ultimately improving people's lives. The EU-funded Visit Arctic Europe (VAE) project is one such example.

Worth the trip! Attracting more tourists to Europe's Arctic

An EU-funded project has helped increase tourism in Europe's remote Arctic region by putting the northern parts of Finland, Norway and Sweden on the map and promoting cross-border collaboration. With a follow-up project under way, local residents stand to benefit from opportunities linked to a more developed tourism industry.

Far northern Finland, Norway and Sweden boast an abundance of stunning landscapes and other attractions. Yet tourism in this northern sparsely populated area – situated within the Arctic Circle – remains underdeveloped.

The **Visit Arctic Europe (VAE)** project sought to make the region a more desirable international vacation destination by bringing together an array of different partners. These included the Finnish Lapland Tourist Board, the Northern Norway Tourist Board, the Swedish Lapland Visitors Board, as well as companies, tour operators and other stakeholders.

The project partners joined forces to put the region on the radar through a series of steps aimed at increasing the total number of tourists and encouraging longer stays – boosting local economies and businesses in the process.

On the marketing front, this included cooperation with a dozen European tour operators, as well as targeting potential US and Chinese visitors by a consortium whose actions have included outreach to the media.

Efforts such as these have paid off, with organisers saying more than 70 000 new travellers visited the region as a result of the VAE project.



'Joining forces, the project partners worked to put the region on the radar through a number of steps aimed at increasing the total number of tourists and encouraging longer stays – boosting local economies and businesses in the process.'

Successful stepping stone

To overcome challenges such as long distances between destinations within and across borders in the region, the VAE project developed ways to facilitate travel. These are intended to encourage visitors to be more mobile and explore the region, increasing demand for tourist offerings and benefitting local economies and businesses.

It did so by creating toolkits for area airports to help them attract airlines and tour operators. It developed models to boost transportation within the region, including hop-on, hop-off bus routes.

VAE laid the foundations for a three-year, follow-up project known as Visit Arctic Europe II (VAE II), which started in April 2018. Its goal is to continue developing Finnish Lapland, Northern Norway and Swedish Lapland as a year-round, sustainable and high-quality destination.

By doing so, VAE II aims to increase profitability of the regional tourism industry and help create new jobs and economic opportunities.



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VAE

Project full name: Visit Arctic Europe

Sectors: Tourism/Support to SMEs

Project website: <https://visitarcticeurope.com/outcomes-of-vae-1/>

Total cost: EUR 6 491 802

EU CONTRIBUTION: EUR 2 780 000

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PROGRAMME: Interreg V-A – Sweden-Finland-Norway (Nord)

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