Smart choices help to meet future challenges

Lapland is the northernmost part of Finland and of the entire European Union. At the same time, Lapland is geographically the most international region of Finland. The Arctic elements are an essential part of the internationally known Lapland brand that is being strengthened further.

Lapland wants to be the most innovative and entrepreneur-friendly of all the sparsely populated and circumpolar regions. That requires strong expertise of the entire region, as well as innovation activities and strong regional ecosystems, which together create a foundation for sustainable growth and international business.

The obtaining of versatile industrial growth requires skilled labour force and strong regional ecosystems, which together create a foundation for sustainable growth and international business.

Arctic expertise, renewal and innovations strengthening the growth and international business activities

The implementation of the Lapland—Arctic and International Smart Specialisation strategy is based on good co-operation between regional stakeholders. The strategy reinforces the conditions for operating in an international field. In Lapland as well as beyond, Lapland utilises financial synergies and seeks after most useful EU funding opportunities which will contribute to increasingly internationalising smart specialisation.

The key to the implementation of the approach is maximising the effectiveness of available financial instruments and programmes. At the same time, the leverage of the development efforts is directed at the growth and internationalisation of the regional economy.

Lapland is the most international region in Finland—be it in the middle of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, and we have always lived, done business and worked across the borders. The people of Lapland have always been a strong education, research and innovation ecosystem and the resulting new economy geography is being reinforced through foreign experts. More international, and the Lappish expertise is reinforced—labour force and a strong education, research and innovation ecosystem supporting the economical growth and internationalisation. In Lapland, as well as beyond, Lapland utilises financial synergies and seeking after most useful EU funding opportunities which will contribute to increasingly internationalising smart specialisation. International collaboration and active participation in EU thematic partnerships will be even more important in the future.

Lapland is looking towards the future of international smart specialisation with an open mind. By applying the experiences and successes and drafting a clear financial roadmap, Lapland can achieve goals and priorities set for the internationalising smart specialisation.

To succeed, we need more courage, networking and co-operation. To support this, we have updated our smart specialisation strategy–Lapland Arctic and International Smart Specialisation Strategy.
Regional Council of Lapland gathered different tourism actors together to a build joint regional tourism strategy, with the bottom-up approach already from the start. Since then, Lapland tourism strategy has formed the common vision, set the goals and defined the actions for tourism development in Lapland. As a result, tourism has succeeded and the growth in the international tourism has been record-high. Today tourism is one of the key industries in Lapland, producing 6% of the GDP and being one of the most important employers in the region. In the peripheral and sparsely populated area like Lapland, tourism has a big significance for the vitality of the whole region.

Tourism industry and other tourism related actors have worked together to build a cluster like manner already before the time it received to appear more in European union context. Lapland tourism strategy was the factor that brought together tourism companies, destination organisations, municipalities, development organisations, education and research institutes, public sector authorities etc. to actualise the common goals set in the strategy. This committed work been a key element for the success of Lapland tourism.

However, smart specialisation has brought new understanding and structure to tourism development. Lapland has recognised its role as a pioneer in the arctic nature and experience tourism in the very fragile and vulnerable arctic region. Through the strategies, tourism industry and other tourism actors have committed to develop sustainable and responsible tourism. The development priorities are year-round sustainable nature tourism, management of arctic conditions, experiences, well-being and safety.

Lapland’s tourism can offer expertise and knowhow about how to operate and make the successful and sustainable business in the harsh arctic conditions. However, fast growth, climate change and changing tourism have brought new challenges for Lapland tourism. In order to solve them, more international cooperation, networking and mutually benefitting partnerships are needed.

Through smart specialisation Lapland has established useful partnerships with other European tourism regions. Especially co-operation with regions and NECSTour network within the thematic area of “Tourism Safety and Digitalisation” has expanded the views and increased knowledge. Being a part of the smart specialisation structures has helped to develop the Lapland tourism business cluster by clarifying the roles of the different tourism actors. Lapland has high expectations also for the future co-operation.

Tourism safety in Lapland

The competitiveness and appeal of tourism in Lapland are based on its natural conditions and their sustainable use. The tourism safety network, which has been built together with businesses in the region and tourism areas over several years, is an operating model based on trust and cooperation. Safety is a central part of the quality and competitiveness of tourism businesses. Cooperation, information exchange and joint development interests solidify the network operations and bring added value to all parties. The tourism safety cluster consists of tourism businesses and other businesses that serve the field. In addition, key actors in the cluster include support and development organisations, which support and serve business activities, as well as institutions of higher education and research institutions. The tourism safety cluster is already strong both in Lapland as well as nationally, but it also has become widely networked on an international level. Lapland has joined the Network of European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism (NECSO Tour). In the Nordic network, Lapland coordinates the sub-theme called Tourism Safety, under the thematic network for Safety and Security. In addition, the Digitalisation and Safety for Tourism theme network, which is also coordinated by Lapland, has been accepted into the European smart specialisation Platform. The cluster’s activities and actors can be found on the cluster’s website www.arcticfi.com.

The turnover of companies in hotels, restaurant and activities grew from 2015–2021 by more than 25% in Lapland. The turnover of tourist sectors companies exceeded 770 million euros in 2017 (+4.3% in 2016) when transport sector is included. While growing, the tourism demand for Lapland has become more and more global. Most important markets are Britain, Germany, France and Netherlands, but growth has been fastest in Ireland (+35%), Belgium (+42%), USA (+30%) and India (+26%).

Not only has success been achieved in growth in numbers, but also in international recognition of quality and experience in tourism companies. Arctic Treehouse Hotel has received several awards during last years. In 2018 they received the European Continent Winner for Best Luxury Resort in World Luxury Hotel Awards and The Destination and Travel Company of the Year from The Finnish Guild of Travel Journalists and in 2017

Success Stories of Tourism in Lapland

During last years the tourism industry has achieved huge success and made new records. Long-term development activities and co-operation has made tourism industry grow especially in international tourism.

In 2017 Lapland had more international registered overnight stays than domestic. Total number of registered overnights was more than 5 million in 2018 and this growth can be also seen in companies turnover and economic impacts of tourism to the local economy.

Best innovation in hotel concept by The Worldwide Hotel and Lodgings Awards. Mr. Ilkka Länkinen, CEO of the Arctic Treehouse Hotel, has stated “Instead of creating accommodation, we wanted to give an experience of the Arctic Circle that our guests can enjoy with all the senses. Embracing our surroundings and heritage, our wonderful team is dedicated to bringing the best of Lappish hospitality and warm welcoming atmosphere.” Other winners of awards include

Lapland’s Arctic Tourism Cluster – Smart Growth by common strategy, cooperation and smart specialisation

ERDF Funded project of Lapland’s Arctic Tourism Cluster aims to create a unique innovation cluster for tourism in Lapland, based on the smart specialisation program in Lapland. The project will make the Arctic Tourism Cluster in Lapland, develop network co-operation and the division of tasks between the actors, and raise awareness of the Arctic tourism know-how of Lapland.

As a part of the Arctic tourism cluster in Lapland is a clash for cooperation between the tourism industry and education, tourism safety and development organisations. In action, the project will increase the awareness of Lapland tourism at national and international level, actively influence decision-making in line with the goals of the tourism strategy and help to international partnerships in development. The project will develop new tourism strategy for Lapland for the years 2019-2022. The strategy will be based on tourism scenario work assessing threats and opportunities that may affect tourism development.

Our strengths

- Experience in international and local tourism development
- MTT brings together the know-how at the University of Lapland, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, the Lapland Education Centre REDU and Kemijärvi-Naantaliakoski Municipal Educational and Training Consortium Lappia
- Working co-operation network with private and public
- Innovative tourism companies and destinations
- Tourism industry growing rapidly
- Key figures
- Tourism expenditure over 1 billion €
- International tourist 5.2%
- Tourism employment over 7400 persons
- Over 100 000 beds in accommodation capacity
- Six International Airports

Tourism in Lapland – Existing business cluster develops further through smart specialisation

International tourism in Lapland has long traditions. The industry has grown more systematically from the late nineties when co-operation increased between companies and destination organisations started to emerge. In the 20 years the tourism industry has achieved huge success and made new records. Long-term development activities and co-operation has made tourism industry grow especially in international tourism.
Cooperation with Sitra

• The Centre aims to develop a more competitive business environment for companies involved in the circular economy.

• Centre helps companies to develop circular economy business and products by providing expert assistance, applying for funding, linking operators, creating networks, promoting pilots and supporting in scaling-up.

Education responding to challenges of circular economy

Cicular economy needs professionals with understanding of principles and methods in the implementation of circular economy. Professionals are required to apply their own skills to new approaches while large enterprises are always developing new innovations. Taking the knowledge to the field and making partnerships is the essential elements of the future. The study modules will be carried out in real-life situations.

Cluster’s partnerships in the Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 is a European Union’s biggest Research and Innovation programme which targets to ensure EU’s world-class science, remove barriers of innovation and make it easier for the public and private sectors to work together. Arctic Industry and Circular Economy Cluster partners, Geological Survey of Finland (GTK) and Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke) have formed successful partnerships under the Horizon 2020.

The Geological Survey of Finland (GTK) is an active partner in the Arctic Industry and Circular Economy Cluster especially in terms of the mining industry value chain. In 2017, the cluster cooperation resulted in two new projects that will be implemented in 2017-2020. The “Mining and Metallurgy Region of EU” (MIREU) project is producing a European network of regions with economic interest in mineral raw material production. In addition to GTK as the MIREU coordinator, the Regional Council of Lapland and the University of Lapland are included in the consortium as core project partners. GTK also participates in the other Horizon 2020 projects Mëhland, which concentrates on land-use issues associated with mining industry and NEXT, which develops new methods of utilisation and recycling of the mining waste or side stream being someone else’s resource. The work in progress is accompanied not only by the promotion but also by huge business opportunities. The promotion of the industrial circular economy improves industrial competitiveness and offers business opportunities for new operators. The key is the principle of someone’s waste or side stream being someone else’s unprocessed raw material for production. Industrial circular-economy products are utilised, among other things, in geotechnical construction, as nutrients, in concrete products, in chemicals production and as energy. New methods of utilisation are constantly being developed among industry and industrial service companies. In the cluster, the development work is done by SMEs, mid-cap and large enterprises. Pilots, which companies, municipalities, educational establishments and research institutes conduct as part of their operations, are an integral part of industrial side stream utilisation.

After joining the cluster, we have been able to connect better with decision makers and make an influence in the operational environment

— Mikko Alasuutari, Managing Director, Paleutch

Kemi-Tornio industry and the cluster

Kemi-Tornio is the world’s north ernmost concentration of base metal, mining and energy industries. The innovation area of Kemi-Tornio is unique in its size, since all the companies operating in the area are located within a radius of 25 km. Within this area, there are three major industrial aggregates and around 500 SMEs. Small and medium-sized enterprises are often operators serving big businesses. The Kemi-Tornio economic region represents 10% of all of Finland’s industrial production and 8% of Finland’s exports. Exports of companies in the region exceed EUR 5 billion annually. The region has a long tradition of utilizing the circular economy.

Arctic Industry and Circular Economy Cluster connects process- and mining industry companies, SMEs serving industry, universities, research institutions, funding and regional authorities to a same co-operation network. Common goal for Lapland is to be a front-runner in sustainable utili zation of natural resources and sustainable environmental issues but also by huge business opportunities. The promotion of the industrial circular economy improves industrial competitiveness and offers business opportunities for new operators. The key is the principle of someone’s waste or side stream being someone else’s unprocessed raw material for production. Industrial circular-economy products are utilised, among other things, in geotechnical construction, as nutrients, in concrete products, in chemicals production and as energy. New methods of utilisation are constantly being developed among industry and industrial service companies. In the cluster, the development work is done by SMEs, mid-cap and large enterprises. Pilots, which companies, municipalities, educational establishments and research institutes conduct as part of their operations, are an integral part of industrial side stream utilisation.

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the Business concept of the Arctic Smartness society has thoroughly changed my work and also my attitude towards regional cooperation and internationalisation”, says Dr. Kari Mäkitalo, Senior Scientist from Natural Resources Institute Finland. All these European partnership projects will benefit from the strong and ongoing Arctic Smartness cooperation in Lapland

STRENGTHS OF THE ARCTIC INDUSTRY

• Ecosystem of the Arctic Industry is an operational environment and unique innovation platform.

• The process industry, which is largely concentrated in the Kemi-Tornio region, actively seeks for new, eco-innovative ways to modernise its processes.

• Management of by-product processes of industries and process exploitation in the Kemi-Tornio region is a prioritised issue.

• The annual volume of by-products and residues of Kemi-Tornio large scale industries amounts to 1.7 million tonnes.

• Rovaniemi is the administrative centre of Lapland and an important regional centre of public governance for mining in Finland.

• Mining Industry is active throughout Lapland.

• With the long traditions in Lapland the coexistence between industries using natural resources has been amicable.
Arctic development environments produce services for the region’s businesses

The significance of development environments and experts working there to the area’s RDI activities has been traditionally valued in Lapland, which is why much investment has been made in them. The development environments are physical and virtual environments meant for use in learning and innovation, such as laboratories, studios, workshops or simulation environments where products, services and expertise can be further developed.

A rctic Smart Growth (ASG)

The goal of the Arctic Smart Growth (ASG) project is to boost SMEs to grow and go international by supporting companies to utilise EU funding, international networks and Arctic Smartness Clusters more effectively.

International projects have been implemented mainly by universities or research institutes and involving big companies. The purpose of this project is to reinforce emphasis on SMEs and increase SMEs’ research, development and innovation activities. The project is mapping the most relevant sources of funding and networks, including international investment funding sources for supporting the growth and internationalisation of the SMEs. The project in closely linked to the regional business services and other business networks. In order to strengthen the business interface the regional development services, the Enterprise Finland Network is closely connected to the project.

The result of the Arctic Smart Growth project will be a cooperation model, which connects enterprises, universities, regional actors, international networks and funding sources. The collaboration enables the creation of service and finance chains which ensure the availability of appropriate service and funding for SMEs’ needs. The enterprises will easily find the suitable support services and solutions for their needs. The project is closely linked to the Arctic Smartness Excellence (ASR) and Lapland – Arctic and International highflier projects, which expands the network and activities to support SMEs. Project is funded by ERDF.

Arctic Smartness Excellence (ASR)

Arctic Smartness Excellence (ASR) project introduces a concrete roadmap that defines operators, cooperation models, roles of research in RDI-activities and a common use of research and development infrastructure. The ASR project develops the Lapland innovation ecosystem based on research and development activities and support. The core actors and beneficiaries of the project are Arctic Smartness Clusters, regional RDI-actors, regional developers and authors.

Project output is a model of innovation ecosystem of Lapland where the Research and Development (R&D) activities and innovation management is amalgamated together with the enterprises and the multi-level interaction and innovation management. The ecosystem Regional RDI actions across the entire innovation ecosystem. The work is supported by means of networking with other European centres of expertise/excellence and thematic innovation development networks.

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Technological, Innovation & Investment Readiness Levels Supporting Business Growth

Development partner (R&D)
Technological Readiness Level (TRL) Service
Development Cycle: Field Testing to Production and to Market Replication
Development Cycle: Idea to Demo – planning and prototyping
Development Cycle: Market Orientation – Business services and integration, specification and market orientation
Technological Readiness Level (TRL) Service
Development Cycle: Market Orientation – Business services and integration, specification and market orientation

Business Growth Path: Innovation Readiness Level & Investment Readiness Level

Further information is
Arctic Smartness Sister projects ASG and ASR

Arctic Smartness Sister projects ASG and ASR

Arctic Smartness Sister projects ASG and ASR

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The Northern Sparsely Populated Areas (NSPA) of Finland, Sweden and Norway face common challenges and share similar opportunities, providing a solid foundation for fruitful cross-border cooperation. These 14 regions have a history of working together to raise awareness for an area with a common population density of 4.9 inhabitants per km², which is lower than anywhere else in the European Union.

In the year 2018, the cooperation started a new chapter, with the Regional Council of Lapland carrying out a pre-feasibility study for launching a structured long-term funding cooperation.

**The challenge?**

The Northern Sparsely Populated Areas (NSPA) of Finland, Sweden and Norway suffer from permanent investment barriers: long distance to markets, sparse populations, harsh climate, cross-border issues etc. We also know that SMSI access to finance is too reliant on traditional banks. Informed asymmetries between companies and potential investors, longer than national average exit strategies and the sub-optimal critical mass visible for national average exit strategies and the finance is too reliant on traditional banks.

**What can we do about it?**

Several EU initiatives (Regional Policy, Cohesion Policy, Thematic Platforms, European Investment Bank services, Interreg...) are available for the regions to tackle the mentioned challenges. The NSPA has been invited by the OECD and the EU to design ourselves the right instruments.

Fragmented efforts in this direction have been made by a number of NSPA regions individually through preparatory projects and reports, which have been produced. However, a structured overview on market failure and demand for new instruments in the region was lacking.

**Why an Arctic Investment Platform?**

With the Arctic Investment Platform, we wish to enhance the strengths and complementary profiles of our regions by tackling together our common challenges. We want to achieve synergies, using the investment platform paradigm as a starting point, while keeping in mind our regional specificities and needs of industrial modernisation.

A more structured investment co-operation can take many different forms depending on the market gap or need it aims to fix. These gaps and the demand for new investment support systems between the NSPA regions need to be explored in depth. For this exploration, the Arctic Investment Platform (AIP) feasibility study and roadmap project will make use of top level European experts and join the forces of the NSPA of Finland, Sweden and Norway.

**Fully-fledged feasibility study and roadmap**

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The process towards an Arctic Investment Platform

The Arctic Investment Platform pre-feasibility study ran through the second half of 2018. It explored the demand for and potential benefits of a structured funding cooperation in the NSPA regions, inspired by the Investment Platform model. The pre-feasibility study was carried out by the Regional Council of Lapland and finished in December 2018. The NSPA regions were consulted throughout the pre-feasibility study.

The promising start to the process, was followed by a successful application for a follow-up project, funded by the Interreg Nord Platform model. During this project, a fully-fledged ex-ante analysis will be carried out, with the Regional Council of Lapland as lead partner. The cross-regional and cross-border aspect will be taken even stronger into consideration in this project, with project partners and local contact people hired in all three regions. The new project started on 1 January 2019 with the aim of launching an Arctic Investment Platform in the latter part of 2020.

**Fully-fledged feasibility study and roadmap project objectives:**

1. **STUDY TARGET GROUP:**
   - Type of SMEs within the SMSI sector
   - Final beneficiaries

2. **STUDY TARGETS:**
   - Investment gaps
   - Full cycle coverage

3. **STUDY OBJECTIVES:**
   - Establish the need for a funding cooperation mechanism across the 14 Regions
   - Develop a suggested structure for an investment platform

The project is founded on the insight that cross-border challenges can be tackled better in cooperation than alone.

Fully-fledged feasibility study and roadmap project objectives:

- Analyse the demand and feasibility of a structured funding co-operation of the NSPA regions to boost the investment capacity of the regions SMSIs.
- Propose a framework for such a support system.
- Provide a tangible roadmap for the set-up of such a support system.

Fully-fledged ex-ante feasibility study and roadmap project objectives:

- Harnessing all available funding streams in a systematic way to foster investment, incl. EFSI
- Creating a one-stop shop for SMSIs to access finance and technical assistance
- Pooling the financial expertise of the NSPA and creating channels to EU-Level expertise
- Attracting financial intermediaries and investors and increasing the firepower of existing ones
- Addressing the most pressing investment gaps, validated through feasibility studies

Learn more about the Arctic Investment Platform: arcticsmartness.eu /arctic-investment-platform

**Why an Arctic Investment Platform?**

- Knowledge and information sharing for the common good of the NSPA
- Fill existing investment gaps
- Provide financial and non-financial support
- Increase awareness of investment needs
- Enable cross-border, cross-sectoral and cross-institutional projects

**Main types of investment gaps were identified:**

1. Expansion financing (lack of equity and debt finance for scale-up companies)
2. From Piloting to Demonstration Support (Piloting 100k-300k and demonstration 1mc-5mc)
3. Large-Scale Demonstration (7-10mc)
4. 4 Regional Technology Platform (3mc-7mc) for setting up the platform, with individual projects of 20k-50k€

**STUDY TARGET GROUP:**

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Picture illustrates the target group, targets, objective and regions studied in the pre-feasibility study.

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