

## Peer-to-Peer Learning Exchange Evaluation Report

22.12.2025

This report summarizes the collected reflections from all participants following SUB Peerto-peer learning exchange arranged in January, April and June 2025. Hosted by ILKY, DCC and JHT, the study trips took place in three different cycling tourism environments, highlighting a variety of cycling tourism offers, namely winter cycling (Finland), road biking (Ireland) and mountain biking (Sweden).

Aimed at entrepreneurs operating in the SUB area –Faroe Islands, North-West Iceland, Donegal County, Jämtland-Härjedalen and East Lapland – the study trips enabled transnational benchmarking and knowledge sharing among 27 participants in total.

The purpose of this follow-up document is to capture shared insights, observed impacts on business development, and any new contacts formed during these three exchanges, based on participants survey.

### Insights and ideas gained

Participants brought home a wide range of ideas and inspirations. Many highlighted that bicycle tourism has far greater potential than what is currently offered in their respective destinations.

A recurring insight was that activities considered “everyday” by locals can still be unique and attractive to visitors. Several participants stressed the potential of combining different activities—such as cultural stops, nature experiences, and physical challenges—to create more memorable and well-rounded cycling products.

Further, storytelling emerged as a crucial element, with several participants noting how narrative, context, and emotional value significantly enhance the guest experience. Many noted the passion and knowledge shown by local guides in Finland and expressed a desire to integrate more nature interpretation and local storytelling into their own cycling tours.

Swedish participants were inspired by the possibility of offering cycling experiences yearround, including winter cycling on groomed trails. Innovative marketing strategies—such as promoting remote or “edge of the world” experiences—also sparked interest.

MTB-themed study trip in Sweden provided for great inspiration regarding trail building, bike park design, and rental models, including the growing relevance of e-MTB rentals.

From the Finnish responses, several key themes emerged: the importance of having a wellmaintained trail network, the time-consuming but crucial task of maintaining trails, and the value of networking and broadening one’s understanding of different cycling markets.

High-quality equipment and well-packaged experiences were also recognized as essential in meeting visitor expectations, demonstrated exceptionally well by the experienced service provider from Donegal.

Among Donegal-based participants, the main insights include the potential to offer cycling experiences year-round, inspiration from Salla's bold "middle of nowhere" marketing concept, and the value of incorporating more local nature knowledge into guiding and promotion—inspired by Bliss Adventure in Pyhä. These ideas have influenced stakeholders thinking, particularly around future year-round offers if new greenways are developed, as well as creating more nature-focused marketing.

Other key learnings included the value of facilitating idea sharing, the importance of early seasonal marketing, and the benefits of regional collaboration, especially for smaller communities.

### **Impact on business offers, processes, and future plans**

The impact of the trip varied among participants. Some reported that the new ideas had not yet resulted in concrete changes, while others described significant shifts in their development plans.

A strong theme was the importance of collaboration. Many participants expressed a clear intent to build broader experiences together with local partners rather than working independently. For some, the visit inspired a more focused direction, such as offering year-round guiding services or shifting toward unique, locally rooted products rather than replicating existing activities.

The trip also influenced infrastructure and product planning. One participant became a driving force in preserving and developing winter hiking trails, while others began integrating cultural points of interest into upcoming gravel routes. Exposure to well-designed trails and facilities provided motivation and practical knowledge for ongoing or planned development projects.

Several participants noted changes in their offerings, such as shortening cycling days to include non-cycling activities in order to attract new customer groups and improve the overall guest experience. The visit also encouraged businesses to start their seasonal planning earlier and to think more strategically about future demand.

For some participants the trip did not lead to immediate changes in business plans, however it did provide some useful sales leads. It also encouraged new collaboration efforts regionally, including one stakeholder having ongoing discussions with a restaurant and the management at a National Park to create a school-focused activity and food package.

### **New contacts and collaboration potential**

Most participants reported gaining new contacts during the peer-to-peer experience. While not all of these connections have yet resulted in concrete collaborations, many are seen as promising leads or sources of future inspiration. Overall, the feedback from the peer to peer trips was positive, while the stakeholders did not gain key contacts to develop business with they came away with many ideas of expanding their season and offerings which is a success of the Peer to Peer study visits.

#### **Afterlife of the Peer-to-peer experiences**

Several participants shared images and posts documenting their experience, demonstrating active engagement and a willingness to communicate the value of the trip to their communities and audiences. Some of the social media engagement is published and tagged on SUB Instagram account @bikeperiphery.

These insights are published at the SUB Mini website, and, taken into consideration as we develop Biking Tourism Toolkit and regional Masterplans during the ongoing SUB project.

#### **Peer-to-peer program and Survey produced by**

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