

REPORT

Shared Learning Sessions on Regional Context: Learnings in the project ASTRIC from Sweden, Finland, and Ireland with focus on innovation ecosystems and our demography challenges and opportunities.

**Output 2.1 – Transnational organisations jointly building capacity and cooperatively developing solutions**

Programme Output Indicator: RCO87_3.1 – Organisations cooperating across borders

Target value: 7 organisations

Organisations participating: 16

(Altogether we had 26 people)

Finland:

Ely-centre

Savo Consortium of Education (Sakky)

North Savo Regional Council (2 people)

Navitas Business Services

Savonia University of Applied Sciences (2 people)

Sweden:

Region Västerbotten (6 people)

Skellefteå Municipality

Novelty Quest

Region Academien AB

Umeå Municipality (2 people)

Ireland:

Western Development Commission (WDC)

AIM Centre (3 people)

Portershed

WestBic

Regionals Skills West

IDA Ireland



Exploring Regional Innovation Through Data: Reflections from the ASTRIC Workshops

Around twenty participants from the North Savo region in Finland, Västerbotten region in Sweden, and North-West Ireland gathered online to exchange ideas for the final seminar, to explore how data can drive regional innovation and support long-term development. The event, organized as part of the ASTRIC project, offered both inspiration and practical insights into how regional actors can use data more effectively and how the METRIC tool could evolve to serve these needs even better.

The workshop began with a short introduction to the ASTRIC project and the METRIC tool, followed by regional examples from North Savo and Västerbotten. Regional development involves countless dimensions, from indicators and data sources to geographical boundaries and innovation networks. Understanding how these elements interact is essential for achieving sustainable, long-term progress.

In small group discussions, participants emphasized the importance of making better use of existing data. Instead of constantly collecting new data, valuable insights can often be found by looking at the existing information from a new perspective. The conversation also touched on how METRIC indicators interconnect, meaning how they can influence one another, suggesting the potential for deeper, community-based analyses. Participants

emphasized that all indicators should be linked to long-term goals and contribute to the meaningful, measurable change each region seeks.

The METRIC tool itself sparked active discussion. Participants saw great potential in developing it further and agreed that clear ownership and coordination would help unlock that potential. The shared conclusion was that the regions benefit greatly from cross-border collaboration and networking with peers facing similar challenges. Such cooperation strengthens regional capacities and fosters a shared understanding of what sustainable innovation means in different contexts.

Another key theme was usability. While annual data reports are valuable, they are often too long to be read in detail. Participants suggested making data more interactive and accessible, “user-friendly”, allowing users to explore it and ask their own questions, perhaps even with the help of AI. They also proposed transforming the release of new data into engaging community events, such as seminars or “bonfires,” to bring people together around key findings.

Data availability remains a challenge, particularly when it comes to primary data from companies. While secondary data is generally easy to access, company-level insights are more difficult to obtain. Participants from Sweden shared that in smaller regions it is often possible to gather company insights through direct conversations, but having aggregated data on specific topics would still make comparisons and analysis easier across different regions.

The workshop once again demonstrated the value of collaboration across regions and the importance of open dialogue in shaping shared tools and approaches. The insights gathered will guide the next steps in developing the METRIC tool, with the aim of making it both practical and inspiring for those working to strengthen innovation ecosystems across the Northern Periphery and Arctic regions.

Thank you to all participants from Finland, Sweden, and Ireland for the insightful discussions and shared commitment to developing data-driven regional innovation.

Learn more about ASTRIC and the METRIC tool here:
<https://www.interregnpa.eu/projects/astric/>