

SUB - Sustainable Arctic and Peripheral Biking Tourism

Three Years of Turning the Wheels: What We Achieved Together

For three years, the wheels kept turning – and look how far we have come!

The SUB project kicked off in May 2023 with a shared ambition: to strengthen biking tourism by learning from one another, sharing good practices and turning ideas into action. Over three years, partners and stakeholders worked together to explore opportunities, build skills and find new ways to develop sustainable biking tourism. Here is a look back at what we achieved.

Starting with a shared understanding

We began by exploring the current state and future potential of biking tourism in each partner region. Through interviews and regional analyses, we identified challenges, opportunities and development needs. Finnish partner LUKE brought the findings together in a series of fact sheets, providing a shared foundation for the project's activities.

Each partner region also prepared a toolkit for local stakeholders, bringing together useful insights and good practices to support the development of biking tourism. The toolkits are available on the project's mini-website, making the knowledge accessible to others who want to learn and put it into practice.

Learning from each other – and taking ideas home

One of the highlights of the project was the **Peer-to-Peer networking programme**. Biking tourism businesses had the opportunity to apply for study visits to three different destinations: Eastern Lapland in Finland, focusing on winter cycling; Jämtland in Sweden, with its mountain biking opportunities; and Donegal in Ireland, known for cycle touring and road biking.

The visits offered more than inspiration. Participants could see how things worked in practice, exchange experiences with local businesses and discover ideas to adapt to their own regions and businesses. Feedback showed the value of learning by doing: experiencing good practices first-hand makes it easier to understand how they could work elsewhere.

Just as importantly, the visits created new connections between people working in biking tourism. These relationships and networks have the potential to support collaboration and development long after the project ends.

Turning ideas into action

The **Voucher Programme** was designed to help stakeholders take practical steps towards developing their businesses and services. Based on applications outlining their needs, selected stakeholders could access joint training or expert services worth up to €5,000.

Implementation varied across the partner regions. While the concept was well received, differences in rules and regulations made it challenging to put into practice in the same way everywhere. This provided a valuable lesson: shared solutions need enough flexibility to work in different local contexts.

Building skills and stronger connections

The **Capacity Building Programme** brought together national and international stakeholders through face-to-face meetings and online sessions. Workshops led by an external expert helped participants identify their strengths, recognise development opportunities and map existing and potential partners. This encouraged stakeholders to look beyond their own businesses and consider how collaboration could create new opportunities for the wider biking tourism sector.

Cooperation was just as important among the project partners. Meeting face to face during every project period gave partners valuable opportunities to share progress, exchange ideas and learn from one another. These encounters strengthened trust and helped keep the joint work moving forward.

The journey continues

So, what changed over three years?

SUB created a stronger shared understanding of biking tourism, made practical knowledge available to stakeholders, offered businesses opportunities to learn from other regions and helped build connections for future cooperation. It also highlighted both the potential of joint solutions and the need to adapt them to different local circumstances.

The project's results are relevant to biking tourism businesses, destination management organisations, tourism developers and other stakeholders working to improve services and strengthen collaboration. Ultimately, cyclists and visitors stand to benefit when businesses are better equipped, destinations offer stronger services and the different players work together.

The impact of SUB does not end with the project. The fact sheets and toolkits remain available for future use, while the skills, experiences and networks developed during the project provide a foundation for continued growth. The next step is for businesses, destinations and regional networks to build on what they have learned and turn these connections into lasting action.

Three years of turning the wheels have shown that progress happens when people share knowledge, learn from experience and work together. The project may be reaching its finish line, but the journey towards stronger and sustainable biking tourism continues.

