



INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN ROVANIEMI



TOURISM FRIENDLY CITIES

LOCAL COMMUNITY AND
TOURISTS TOGETHER FOR
URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

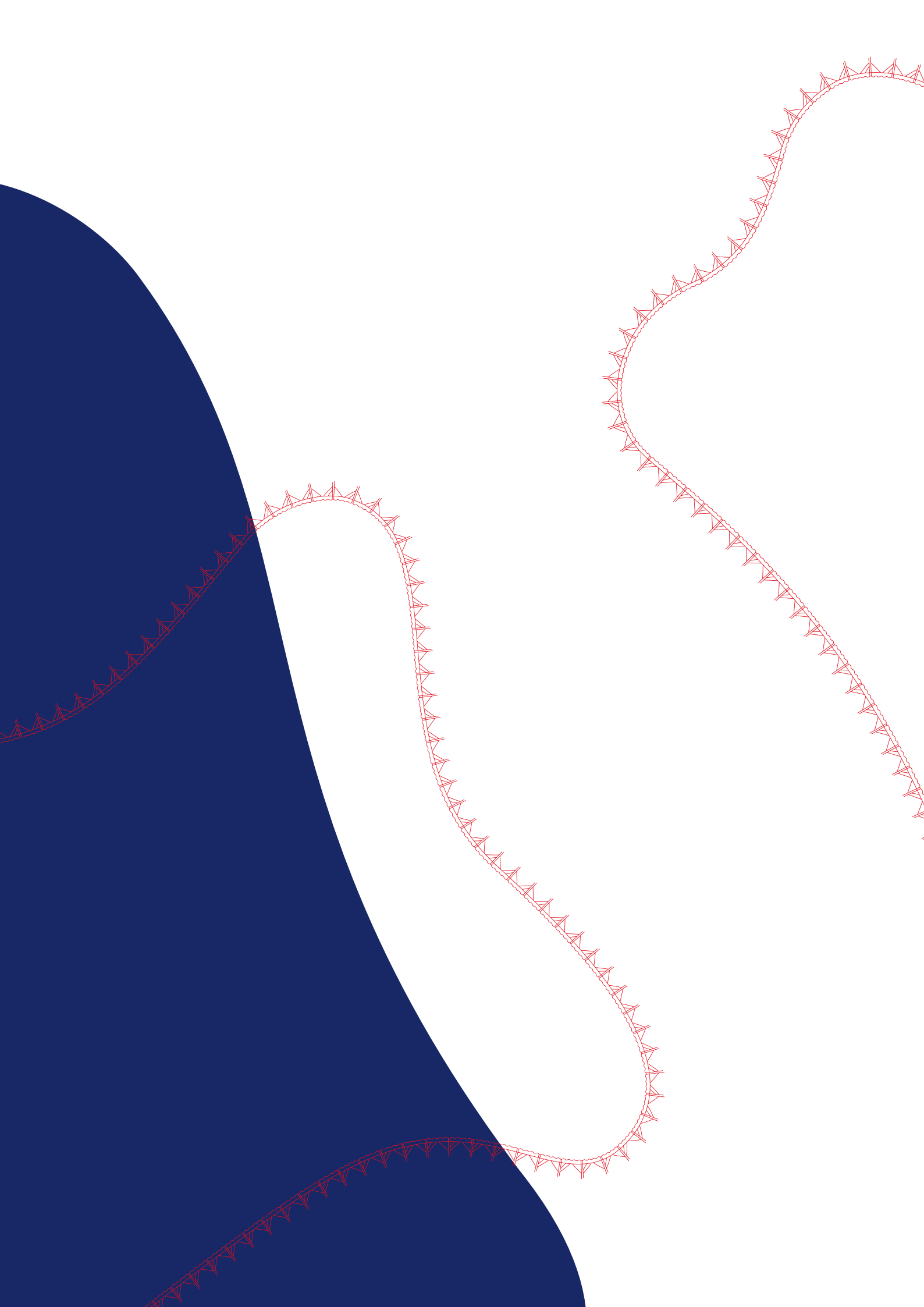
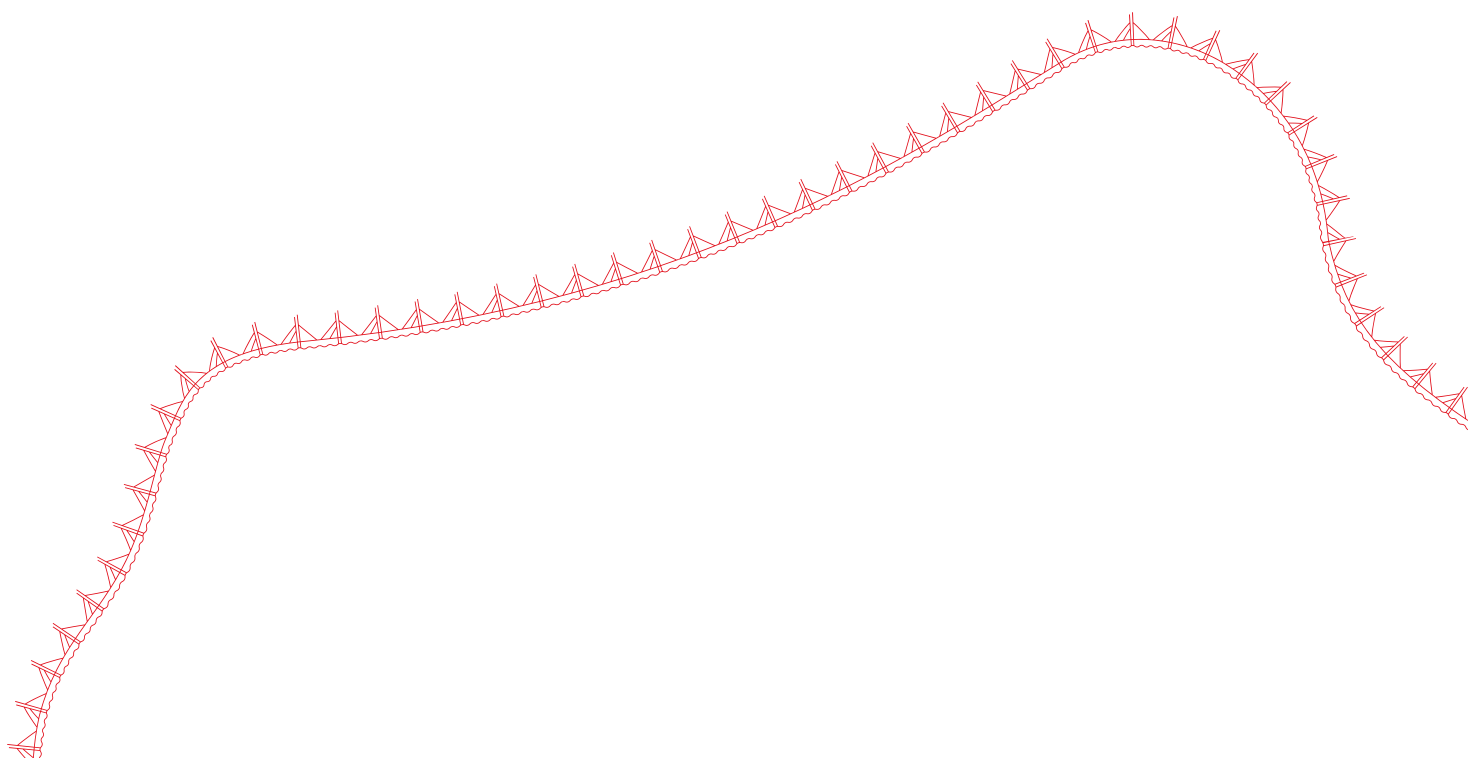


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1. INTRODUCTION

LOCAL COMMUNITY & TOURISTS TOGETHER FOR URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

TOURISM-FRIENDLY CITIES is a **URBACT** Action Planning Network aimed at exploring how tourism can be made sustainable in medium-sized cities, reducing the negative impact on neighborhoods and areas interested by different types of tourism and its related aspects through integrated and inclusive strategies keeping a balance between the needs of the local community, in terms of quality of life and services available, and the promotion of sustainable urban development at the environmental, social and economic level.

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Key terms

URBACT the European Territorial Cooperation programme that supports cities through transnational exchange and learning, with the aim of fostering integrated sustainable urban development across Europe.

Integrated Action Plan (IAP) as main output of cities participating in Action Planning Networks, IAPs define the local actions to be carried out in response to the sustainable urban development challenges addressed in the network.

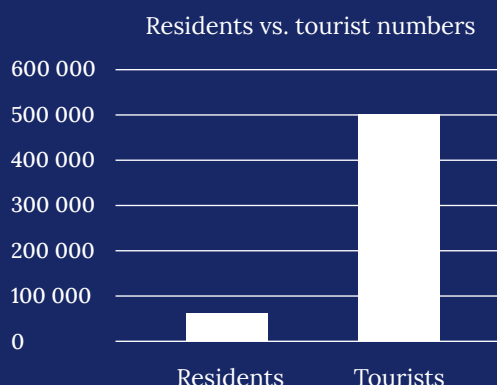
URBACT Local Group (ULG) the local body that is responsible for co-producing the IAP, composed of all relevant stakeholders having an interest in the policy challenge addressed by the city



1.1. INTRODUCTION OF CITY OF ROVANIEMI

Key facts

- Annual revenue from tourism 638 million euros
- Tourism generates 12-14 % of the city's total GDP
- 10 % unemployment rate
- 10 % population employed in tourism



1.1.1. GENERAL INFORMATION

With more than 64, 000 inhabitants, Rovaniemi is the provincial center of Lapland. The city is situated at the meeting point of the rivers Kemi and Ounas, on the Arctic Circle. Crossing the Arctic Circle has become a highly popular initiation ritual for travelers. Santa Park in Rovaniemi is the only place in the world to under cross the magical Arctic Circle.

In terms of geographic area, Rovaniemi is the largest town in Europe with 8017km². This area comprises 7601 km² of land and 415 km² of water. In Finland, Rovaniemi is the 16th largest town and according to visitors, the second most international town right after Helsinki.

Lapland is said to have eight seasons instead of just four. A simple division into spring, summer, autumn and winter would not do the annual cycle justice in the far North, where seasons of transition – spring-winter, summer-spring, autumn-summer and winter-autumn, so to speak – have their own distinct characters. The eight seasons of the North make Rovaniemi an ideal place for cherishing the nightless nights of summer and the unique twilight of winter. On clear nights, the midnight sun is visible in Rovaniemi from 6 June to 7 July. The first snowfalls usually occur in October.

1.1.2. EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

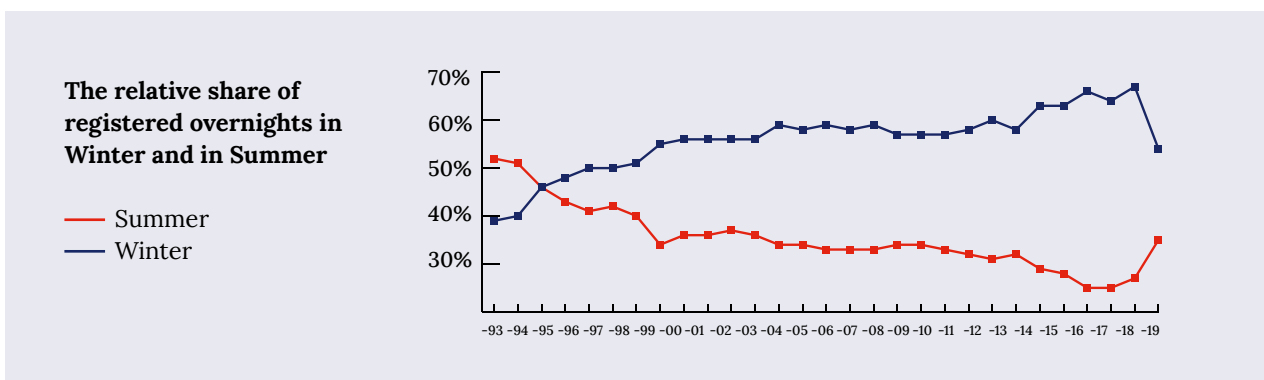
Rovaniemi is an educational center in the region and a well-known university town. It is home to the University of Lapland, the Arctic Centre, the Multidimensional Tourism Institute, and the Lapland University of Applied Sciences. One main field of specialization is Arctic studies. The University of Lapland is the northernmost university in Finland and in the European Union.

The Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI) combines all levels of tourism education as well as innovative research and development activities. This kind of education is unique in Finland, where it is possible to study tourism all the way from vocational education to Ph.D. in the same institution. The goal of the institute is to enhance the operational conditions of the tourism industry in cooperation with companies and public organizations. The institute comprises the tourism research of the University of Lapland, the field of tourism and hospitality management of Lapland University of Applied Sciences and the vocational education at the Lapland Tourism College.

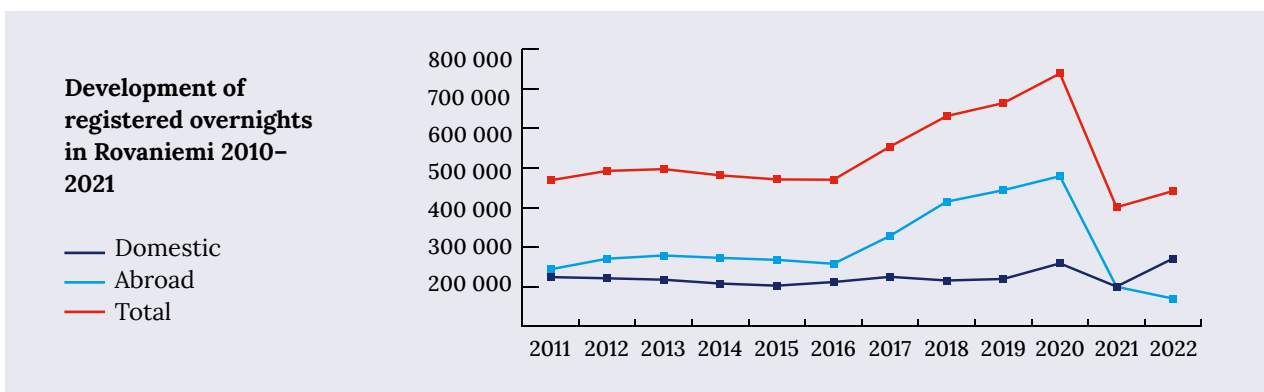
One of the key tasks of the institute is to cooperate with tourism companies and other local stakeholders involved in tourism. A partnership club was set up to promote the regional impact of the institute and the degree to which qualifications and training are based on working life. MTI is an important bridge between students and working life. There is a lot of cooperation through different projects and the students do lot of internships in tourism industry.

1.1.3. TOURISM

Rovaniemi is the Capital of Lapland and the Official hometown of Santa Claus®. The main attraction is the Santa Claus Village on the Arctic Circle, where you can meet Santa Claus every day of the year free of charge. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Rovaniemi received over half a million visitors mainly from abroad annually. The total number of overnight stays was 739,000 in 2019. Most of the international visitors in 2019 came from China (44 000 overnight stays, including Hong Kong), France (41 200), United Kingdom (37 600), Spain (25 900) and Italy (21 300). The Winter season covers most of the tourism, before the pandemic winter season covered 63% of all tourism. Big seasonal differences cause problems in many ways.



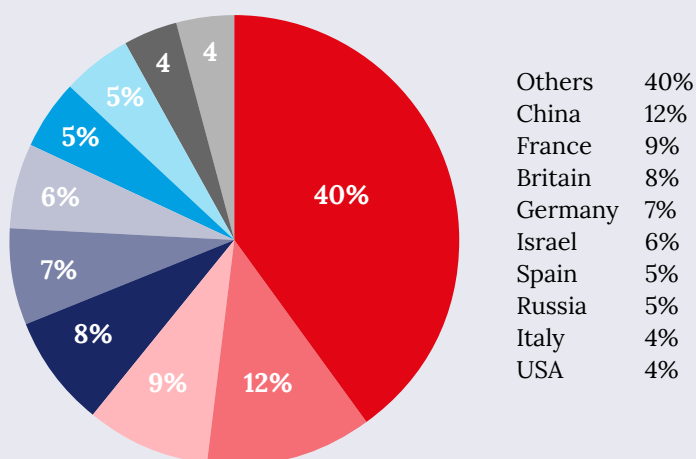
Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, registered overnights dropped significantly in 2020. Recovery to 2019 levels is expected to take place in 2023. The pandemic started in March 2020 so it did not affect the whole winter season in its first year. During the pandemic, we have had a lot of domestic tourists coming to Rovaniemi and Lapland. During the pandemic, the number of domestic tourists has increased in Rovaniemi.



More tourism statistics: <https://visitory.io/en/rovanieni/>



International registered overnights in Rovaniemi, relative distribution by nationality 2019



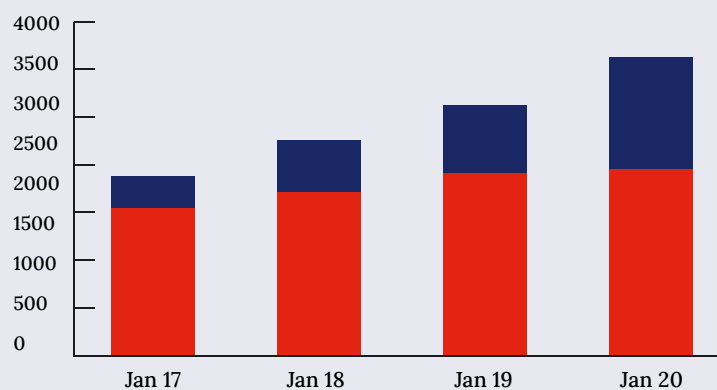
The accommodation sales have gone down since the pandemic. The chart below also shows the seasonal difference in accommodation sales. There is also increase in unregistered accommodation capacity in Rovaniemi. The chart shows what the situation was in 2019 and 2020 before the pandemic.



The total value of accommodation sales was more than 67 million euros in 2019.

Type of accommodation in Rovaniemi

Registered
Non-registered



1.1.4. VISIT ROVANIEMI

Visit Rovaniemi (Rovaniemi Tourism & Marketing Ltd.) is a regional marketing organization founded in 2007 by the municipalities of Rovaniemi. Its main task is to provide Rovaniemi with image marketing, travel information, MICE marketing and PR services. In addition, Visit Rovaniemi coordinates and operates travel marketing for the region.

Visit Rovaniemi is a subsidiary of Rovaniemi Regional Development Agency Ltd (which owns 51 % of the company). The remaining 49% of the company is owned by over 200 local tourism companies. Financing for regional marketing is mainly derived from the stakeholder companies, the City of Rovaniemi and from profits from business operations. In addition to cooperating with its owners and stakeholders, Visit Rovaniemi works in close co-operation with Lapland's other regional tourism organizations, Visit Finland, Finland Convention Bureau and Business Finland. Further partners include transport companies, international tour operators and media players (Finnish and international). Every year Visit Rovaniemi assists several hundred international media groups. The board of directors in Visit Rovaniemi consists of representatives of the city and the companies. There are two representatives from the city and four representatives from companies. The board defines the policies and measures for the Visit Rovaniemi.

As a separate unit, Rovaniemi Congresses sells and brokers meeting facilities, conference services and related products for domestic and international customers. Travel products and Rovaniemi-brand products and souvenirs are also sold to visitors from Tourist Information.

<https://www.visitrovaniemi.fi/about/who-we-are/>

1.1.5. CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge for tourism in Rovaniemi is the significant differences between different tourist seasons. The winter season covered 63% of all tourism before the pandemic. Seasonal variations in the number of tourists require several different solutions at each level of the tourism industry. Year-round growth of tourism requires new ideas, innovations, product development, service design and many well-targeted marketing measures. All of the challenges must be taken into account in post-Covid recovery.

Lot of skilled workforce have changed the working industry and the challenge of getting workforce for the season is even bigger than before the pandemic. The city employment services is working together with tourism stakeholders to find skilled workforce. There

are many recruitment fairs before the high season every year.

The recovery of tourism started in the autumn of 2022. During the peak winter months, the number of overnight stays registered in December-January was 83 percent of the number of overnight stays in December-January 2019-2020. As tourism recovered, almost all pre-pandemic challenges re-emerged.

The sustainable development of tourism must be attached to every level. Some concrete challenges are for example:

- Traffic arrangements in the city center and in Santa Claus Village during the high season
- Finding a skilled workforce for the season
- Companies coming from other parts of Finland and abroad with a lack of knowledge and commitment to sustainability
- Sustainable ways to make snow and store it
- Climate change and the changes in the Arctic environment



1.1.6. PLANS AND STRATEGIES

There are several relevant strategic plans for the Rovaniemi area, which complement the strategic planning of sustainable tourism development in our area. The IAP however is a more concrete development tool. The aspects in the other strategic plans are quite broad, but the IAP is developing tourism in a more concrete way. The goal is the same in all of them, to make tourism more sustainable.

The following documents are key strategies in tourism development.

Tourism Strategy for Lapland – Lapin matkailustrategia 2020–2023, by regional council of Lapland, has named four main values for tourism in the Lapland area. The first one is Responsible tourism, which emphasizes pro-activity in all actions and every stakeholder's commitment to act responsibly. Second value is Authenticity, which here means clean air, aurora borealis, light summer nights, polar nights, and an arctic atmosphere appealing to tourists. The third value is Smart, which connects to smart thinking in tourism development. All development is based on wide sources of information and all paths are well researched and choices are easy to argue. The fourth one is Cooperation which means tight and dynamic networks in Tourism in Lapland and all actors are working closely together and share a common future.

Rovaniemi City Strategy – Rovaniemen kaupunkistrategia 2025. Vision is to be a safe and vibrant Arctic capital, in the middle of pure nature. Both residents and tourists enjoy the urban environment, and services provided to residents are also available to tourists.

Business Growth Program – Rovaniemen kasvuohjelma 2019–2020, City of Rovaniemi/Business and Development department is based on the city strategy 2025. The growth program sets out key measures to increase vitality. An increase in year-round tourism is one key theme concerning tourism.

Road map for Circular Economy, City of Rovaniemi. The aim is to create a common state of mind through concrete means to become a pioneer in the Arctic circular economy.

1.2. FOCUS

The focus of the Integrated Action Plan is to develop a local plan focused on sustainable tourism and participatory processes. The focus is on governance and good communication and cooperation. This focus supports sustainable tourism development and develops our participatory processes in the city. Sustainable tourism development takes environmental aspects into consideration as well. In our action plan, we focus on environmental aspects as well and develop a plan on how to tackle the changes in the Arctic environment. Below there are all three main categories listed with the objectives of the plan.

1. How to tackle the changes in the Arctic environment.

It includes two objectives. Developing energy efficient storage of snow in the summertime and adjusting to changes in snow cover and other environmental changes.

2. Focus on communication and cooperation.

It includes developing online training for tourism companies and getting them committed to sustainable development and in general communicating in our area of sustainable goals and plans.

3. Create the Destination Development Group (DDG).

It means co-designing a governance structure to Rovaniemi that supports both the city residents, tourists, and the tourism industry. This would also develop the communication between stakeholders, which is also one goal.

1.3. DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS

This action plan was developed together with our URBACT Local Group or ULG. As part of the URBACT method advancing participatory and co-creation practices, the IAP is developed in a diverse group of different stakeholders. The ULG consists of a wide range of tourism professionals and experts. There are academic researchers, tourism entrepreneurs, managers and specialists of different fields linked to tourism. The ULG had several meetings and a workshop where the need for actions was planned. Most of the ULG meetings have been online since the Covid-19 restrictions. The Covid-19 pandemic complicated the project and the actions that were first planned.

ULG Meeting schedule

2020	2021	2022
16.6.2020	19.1.2021	3.3.2022
12.8.2020	3.3.2021	22.4.2022
12.11.2020	8.4.2021	
	17.9.2021	
	10.11.2021	

In addition to above mentioned meetings, a workshop for larger group of stakeholders was organized in June 2022.

URBACT Local Group (ULG)

- Ms. Minni Haanpää, University of Lapland - University Lecturer, Tourism Institute
- Ms. Maria Hakkarainen, University of Lapland - Researcher, Tourism Institute
- Mr. Matti Kuru, Safartica Ltd, CEO
- Ms. Sanna Kärkkäinen, Visit Rovaniemi, Managing Director
- Ms. Katariina Lehtonen, University of Lapland, student
- Mr. Erkki Lehtoniemi, City of Rovaniemi - Director of Environmental Department
- Ms. Hanna Liisanantti, City of Rovaniemi - Specialist of Waste Management
- Mr. Ilkka Länkinen, Santapark Ltd, CEO
- Mr. Antti Nikander, Santa Claus Village, Development Manager
- Ms. Pirjo Pääkkönen, Santapark Ltd, Project Manager
- Ms. Eija Raasakka, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Project Manager
- Ms. Tuula Rintala-Gardin, City of Rovaniemi, Director of International Relations

We applied different URBACT tools that fit into this situation and used the ones that were suitable. First it was planned to hold workshops to different stakeholders, but due to lack of participants the workshops were canceled. The workshops were planned for both online and offline, but due to Covid-19 restrictions, the workshops would have had to be online. The second plan was to have interviews with some main stakeholders. The interviews were kept during the summer of 2021 and the results were useful when planning the actions. The interviews included community associations and different tourism businesses like safaris, transportation, and accommodation.

The questions were related to sustainability and the position of tourism in Rovaniemi and how they see the future of tourism here. Lot of different opinions and thoughts came up and helped to build a picture of tourism in Rovaniemi. All stakeholders thought tourism as an important part of Rovaniemi and mainly positive thoughts came up related to tourism. Unsus-



tainable growth and mass tourism in Rovaniemi were things that should be avoided according to the interviews.

The interviews were the most important part of our action planning. Due to the pandemic we were unable to do some participatory processes we hoped to implement, but the interviews turned out very well in the action planning process. Some actions are answering straight to the issues pointed out in the interviews, such as the traffic control in the centre and the use of common recreation areas. Most of the other actions as well are something that was discussed in the interviews with the tourism companies and local people.

The transnational meetings are important for the process as well. We have learned a lot from other cities taking part in this project. Others experiences and

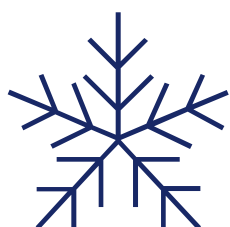
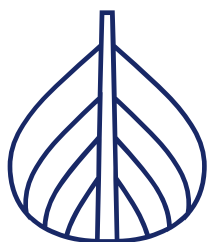
information on how to make tourism more sustainable is valuable for the process and help us to think outside the box. The transnational meetings and other forms of communication with other cities also provide a good open forum for discussion and the opportunity to solve problems together. Learning and sharing knowledge with other cities has been the biggest outcome of transnational learning.

Above: Partner cities met successfully in Rovaniemi 9.-11.2.2022.

Below: In October 2021 we got the chance to get together for the first time since the pandemic in Dun Laoghaire, Ireland.



2. OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS, SCHEDULE



2.1. OBJECTIVES

To reach our goal of sustainable development in tourism we have divided our objectives into four categories. All these categories match our focus on developing tourism in Rovaniemi. The implementation of these actions will be made together with local stakeholders and local residents. Participatory planning methods are used also in the implementation. Opinions and improvements from local people are taken into consideration through the implementation process.

1. Reduce the side effects during tourism high season in winter

These actions meet the need for better communication and better cooperation between stakeholders to get them committed to sustainable development. There are also actions to reduce the negative impacts of tourism experienced by locals like bus traffic in the city.

2. Reduce the impact of tourism on Arctic nature and mitigating climate change

These actions focus on environmental aspects and strategic planning for sustainable development. It includes research and knowledge management on sustainability and also promotion for companies to get the Sustainable travel Finland -certificate.

3. Strengthening the socio-cultural benefits of tourism

These actions focus on communication and cooperation with local people. Developing tourism with them and promoting the tourism industry as an employer is part of these actions.

4. Building up an active Destination Development Group (working name)

This is a comprehensive development plan for a better tourism governance in the city. It will provide a governance structure that will maintain sustainable development also in the future and move on from just destination marketing to a more wholesome destination development.



2.2. ACTIONS

Reduce the side effects during tourism high season in winter

ACTION	Intended result	Resources	Lead Agency	Key Partners	Timescale
Further development of Tourism ABC	New companies operating in Rovaniemi understand better and commit harder to sustainability. Indicator: How many companies complete the online training	EU structural funds/City budget	Lapland University Consortium	Visit Rovaniemi	2022
Traffic control and bus parking in the city centre and at the Arctic Circle	Reducing car idling and improving pedestrian safety Indicator: Number of complaints from residents and tourists regarding traffic	City budget	City of Rovaniemi	Private companies	2022
Agreement of use of common recreation areas and nature sites	Local residents, village associations, landowners and tourism businesses share a common vision and set the ground rules on how the common recreational areas and nature sites are used in a way that it benefits all. Indicator: Number of complaints from residents	EU structural funding/private funding	City of Rovaniemi	Private companies, NGOs	2022

Strengthening the socio-cultural benefits of tourism

ACTION	Intended result	Resources	Lead Agency	Key Partners	Timescale
Enhance the local participation in the planning process for example in land use and planning new tourism sites.	The locals feel and know that they are heard. The local population understands better the benefits of tourism, not just as jobs and tax revenues, but also the effects of tourism on the services that they also use (amount of flights, trains, nature trails, restaurants etc.) Indicator: Less complaints from the residents	City budget	City of Rovaniemi	Visit Rovaniemi	2022
Promote the importance of tourism sector as an employer and the supply of skilled labor	The tourism industry is perceived as a desirable place to work. Companies have good opportunities to hire local skilled labor. Indicator: Availability of labor in the tourism industry, attractiveness of the tourism industry in educational institutions	City budget	City of Rovaniemi	Private companies	2021
Developing tourism and tourism-related businesses in surrounding villages	The local community benefits more from tourism and local products gain more visibility and more sales. Indicator: Development of the number of new tourism enterprises in village areas	EU funding	City of Rovaniemi	Visit Rovaniemi, private companies, NGOs	2022

Reduce the impact of tourism on the Arctic nature and mitigate climate change

ACTION	Intended result	Resources	Lead Agency	Key Partners	Timescale
Carry out a study of the impact of air traffic on Rovaniemi's carbon neutrality	Information on how much air traffic is weakening Rovaniemi's current state of carbon negativity. Finding solutions to maintain current state of carbon negativity Indicator: Result of the study	EU funding	Lapland University Consortium	City of Rovaniemi	2024
Developing the sustainability and energy efficacy of snow making	More energy efficient and less-costly snow production. Reduce emissions from snow removal from one place to another. Reduce the impact of use of snow guns on airport operations.	EU funding	Lapland University Consortium	Private companies	2023
Promoting the understanding and applicability of the basics of the circular economy also to visitors	Clear instructions and standards for waste disposal. The guidelines apply to accommodation, sights, nature trails, recreational areas etc.. Indicator: The information material is used by tourists. Reduction of litter and waste	City budget / City Consortium	City of Rovaniemi, Visit Rovaniemi	Private companies and private citizens	2023
Promoting the implementation of the Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) program	More than 50 % of tourism companies have STF certificate. Thus Rovaniemi will get the certificate as sustainable destination. Indicator: Number of companies that have the STF certificate	Investments of private companies	Visit Finland / Visit Rovaniemi	Private companies	2021

Building up well functioning Destination Development Group (DDG)

ACTION	Intended result	Resources	Lead Agency	Key Partners	Timescale
Co-designing a governance structure that supports both the city residents, tourists, and tourism industry	A wide range of stakeholders whose activities are important for the development of tourism and who are impacted by tourism. The network looks at tourism from many perspectives and coordinates the various aspects related to the sustainable development of tourism. The aim is to strengthen the competitiveness of companies at a time when tourism demand is changing. Indicator: Regular meetings of the network and its impact on the overall development of tourism	City budget	City of Rovaniemi	Urbact Local Group, Visit Rovaniemi, companies, national level stakeholders	2022



2.3. SMALL SCALE ACTIONS (SSA)

The goal is to implement the small scale action next winter season. The ULG decided in September that the Small scale action would be the development of an app for both tourists and locals.

The App would provide information on important aspects such as safety, waste disposal, and recycling. It would also provide information on local specialties like how to dress in the cold climate and different tourist attractions in the city.

Especially during the winter seasons, the risks have increased, as tourists are increasingly applying to Lapland's natural sites on their own initiative. Risk situations have arisen when tourists have set out to wander with the wrong equipment, and even rescue measures have been needed.

The first task for the development is a questionnaire for tourists leaving Rovaniemi asking what they would have wanted to know when in Rovaniemi. The idea of the questionnaire is to test what information tourists lack when visiting and if our hypotheses on this information are correct. As part of the information gathering, it is intended to interview tourism operators who have close contact with tourists, such as tourist advisers, hotel reception staff, and safari guides. This survey research will be done by the students from Lapland University of Applied Sciences.

The questionnaire is then analyzed and the final content of the app is decided based on the questionnaire and discussions during the process. The questionnaire and its results are discussed together with local tourism companies to see if they have something to add to it as well to get a wholesome picture of the need for information.

The App itself will be developed later on. At this point the small scale actions purpose is to gather the right information from tourists and local companies.

2.4. FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERY

The Department of Competitiveness and Urban Planning is the responsible party for the progress of the implementation of the Rovaniemi Integrated Action Plan. This will be done in close cooperation with other city departments and units. The progress will be reported to the Board of Competitiveness and Urban Planning.

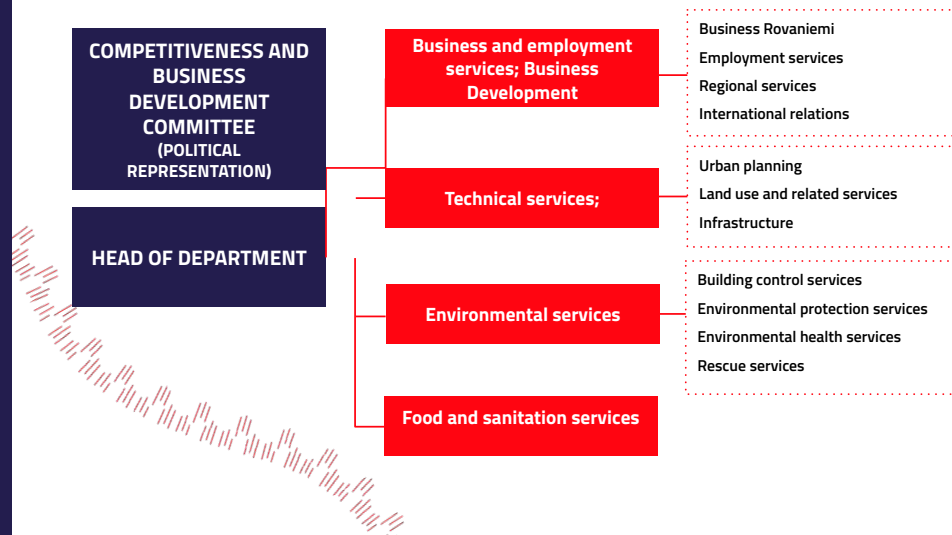
The actions listed in the Integrated Action Plan will be prioritized and scheduled in more detail. A person in charge and a team to support the work will be appointed to carry out each action. Depending on the action, consultations will be held with various parties including residents, associations and other stakeholders.

The tourism industry plays an important role in the practical implementation of the principles of sustainable tourism development. Visit Rovaniemi has about 200 companies as shareholders and Santa Claus Village Co-Operative has more than 40 member companies. Those networks are essential in succeeding in this work.

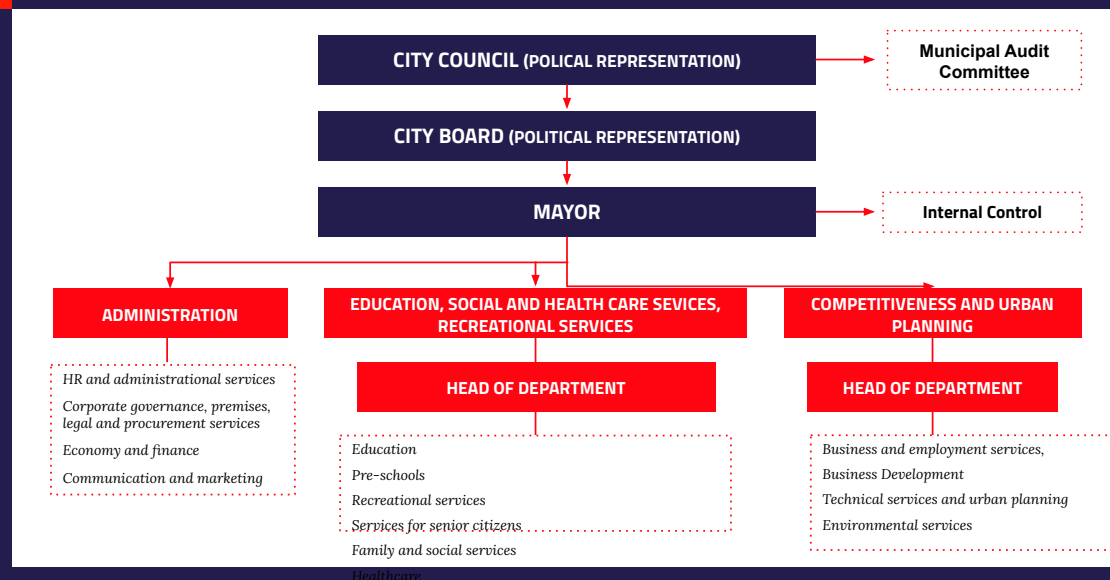
The action in the Integrated Action Plan will be taken forward as part of the normal work of city officials. If necessary, additional people can be hired through project activities. The responsible party is the department of competitiveness and urban planning.



DEPARTMENT OF COMPETITIVENESS AND URBAN PLANNING



CITY OF ROVANIEMI; ORGANIZATION



2.5. RESOURCING

The City of Rovaniemi has the required resources for the beginning of the implementation of the Rovaniemi Integrated Action Plan for the sustainable development of tourism. Many of the listed actions do not need extra financial resources in the beginning but taking the actions further will require external funding.

The basic budget of the city of Rovaniemi will play an important role in the further implementation of the actions. Some of the actions will be implemented as projects and funding will be sought mainly from the European Union's Structural Funds. Depending on the action, funding requested directly from the Commission will also be reviewed. Actions that will be implemented as projects are expected to also get private funding.

Rovaniemi is located in the northern part of Finland and is entitled to receive special support for sparsely populated areas and so-called general support based on population density following the Finnish Accession Treaty. The approved EU regional and structural policy program, "Innovation and Skills in Finland 2021-2027", is the guideline for regional development for the next seven years. The program supports industrial, energy, climate, innovation, education, and employment policies as well as the work against exclusion and poverty. The program includes the measures of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). The measures of the Just Transition Fund (JTF) will be included in the program separately through a later program amendment. The policy program applies to continental Finland.

As part of the European Union's 2021-2020 programming period, the Finnish state has agreed on ecosystem agreements with Finnish university cities that will strengthen innovations. Rovaniemi is one of those cities.

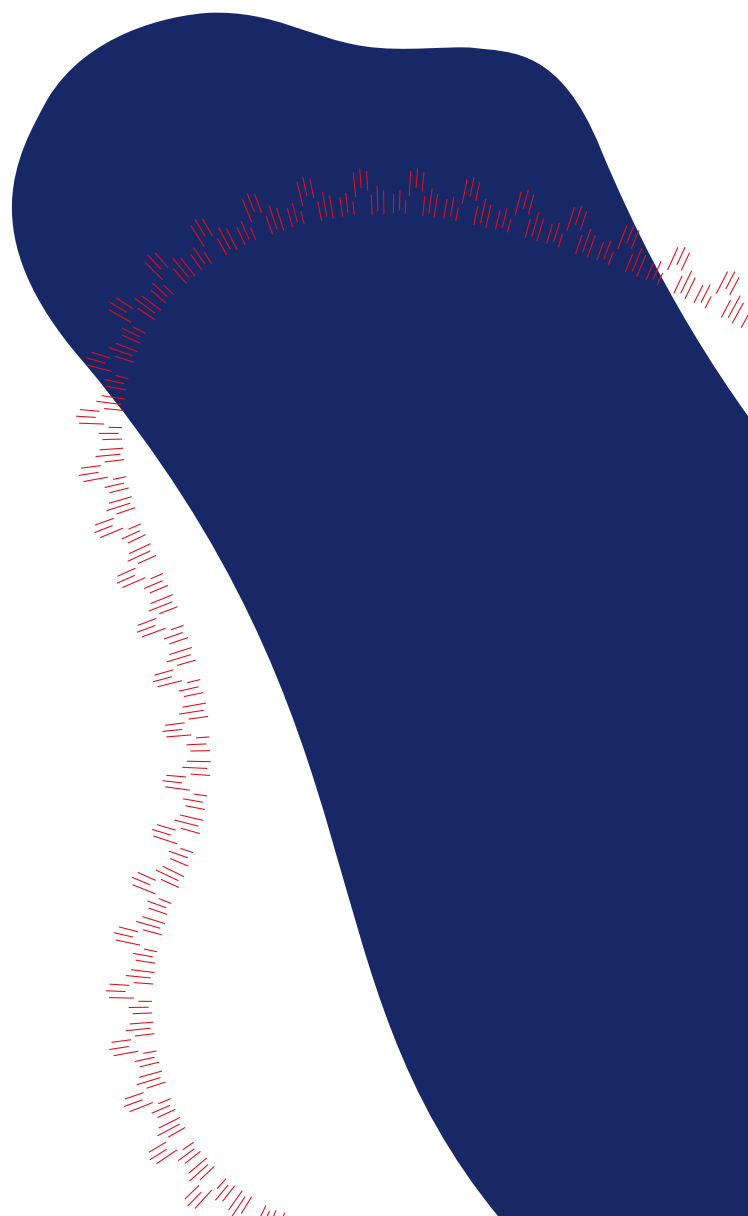
This agreement, Innovation and Skills in Finland, is concluded between the state and university cities on ecosystems that enable closer cooperation between cities and the state to drive research, development and innovation.

The cross-cutting priorities of the Innovation and Skills in Finland are sustainable development, gender equality, non-discrimination, digital development, internationalization, climate change and innovation. The objective of the agreement is to intensify cooperation within networks, strengthen key competencies and increase effectiveness.

The agreement also aims to bring researchers and businesses together into larger, mutually reinforcing competence clusters. Specifically, the agreement seeks to make effective use of the cities' future investments as platforms for innovation development.

Each university city has negotiated with the state the priority areas of developing ecosystems. The priority areas of the city of Rovaniemi are Arctic tourism and future wellbeing services. Cross-cutting themes of the agreement are the principles of the European Union's Green Deal program, digitalization, new technologies and internationalization.

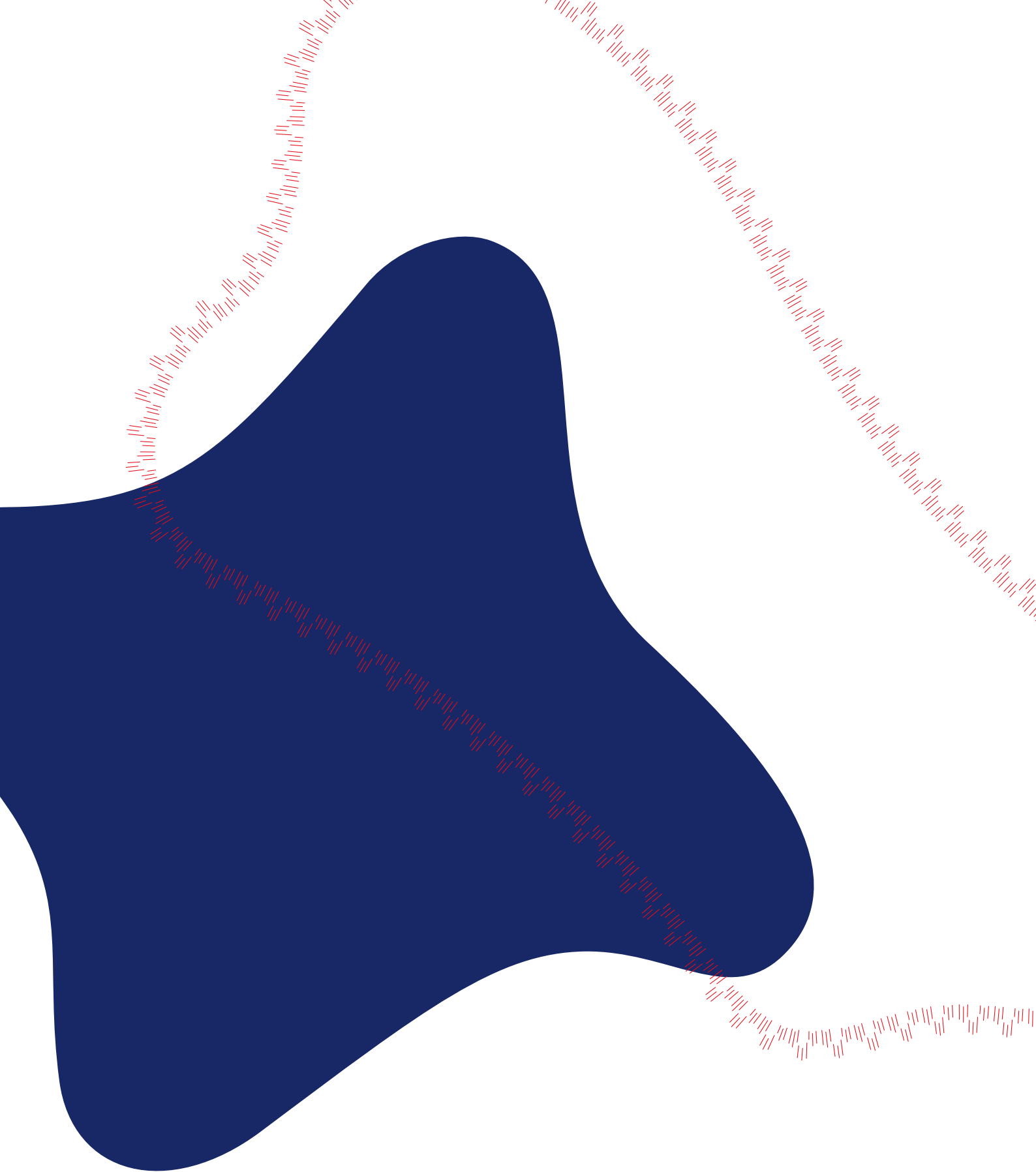
The ecosystem agreements will be implemented as part of the EU's new regional and structural policy program 2021-2027. The actions related to this agreement drive the achievement of the EU's sustainable urban development objectives in Finland.



2.6. RISK ANALYSIS

Type of Risk	Description of Risk	Risk Level	Risk Management
Operational/ Technical	Extension of implementation dates and deadlines – Due to public procurement procedures, lack of human resources, bad timing	Medium	Clear implementation plan and well defined deadlines and rescheduling them if needed, examine the human resources available in advance
Behavioral	Lack of commitment for the implementation – Lack of interests of different stakeholders	Medium	Good communication between stakeholders, building trust and understanding
Financial	Increase in investment costs	Low	Creating good project documentation and a budget for investments
Strategic	Uncertainty on how pandemic will affect – Wrong knowledge or misguided conclusion regarding future trends	Low	Knowledge management, research, following trends







ROVANIEMI



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