Jõesuu Rising: A Thriving, Connected and Sustainable Future

Tori vald

eCONNECTING greener & closer communities

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

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ECONNECTING means...

establishing strategies and actions for rural-urban functional areas, fostering the seamless integration of urban sustainable practices, well-being enhancement, and the cultivation of robust social connections through active citizen participation. This Action Planning Network brings together nine city partners from Italy, Montenegro, Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Estonia, Slovenia, Hungary and Spain to collaborate on shaping their „proximity territories," characterized by intricate urban-rural linkages.

By employing a dialogue-oriented planning process and leveraging the proven URBACT methodology, ECONNECTING aims to harmonize the dynamics between urban and rural areas. The focus is specifically on optimizing mobility and accessibility, while simultaneously fostering vibrant public spaces that cater to the needs and desires of the local populace. All these efforts are grounded in a commitment to environmental consciousness and community engagement, ensuring a sustainable and people-centric approach to development.

Through collaborative efforts, ECONNECTING strives to create a model that not only enhances the connectivity between urban and rural spaces but also promotes a holistic and inclusive vision for the well-being of citizens. The initiative serves as a beacon for innovative strategies that prioritize the intersection of environmental sustainability, community vibrancy, and urban-rural harmony. In doing so, ECONNECTING emerges as a catalyst for positive change, demonstrating the transformative power of collaborative urban planning on a European scale.

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Executive Summary

The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Jõesuu village represents a collective vision for transforming this small rural settlement into a thriving, connected, and sustainable community. This plan outlines strategic actions to address current challenges, such as limited mobility, social fragmentation, and underutilised natural and cultural assets, while leveraging Jõesuu's unique strengths, including its scenic riverside location and strong historical identity.

The development of the IAP has begun with the implementation of a successful small-scale action aimed at engaging the local community and testing potential recreational spaces. This event brought together residents through live music, a small marketplace, and participatory brainstorming sessions to gather ideas for enhancing communal areas. The initiative not only identified key locations for future recreation sites but also fostered a renewed sense of community spirit, encouraging residents to take an active role in shaping Jõesuu's future.

Building on this momentum, the IAP outlines a series of targeted actions to address mobility, accessibility, environmental stewardship, and economic revitalisation. Key initiatives include developing cycling and pedestrian paths, creating eco-tourism opportunities, enhancing digital literacy, and establishing a multi-purpose community centre. Each action is designed with a focus on inclusivity, sustainability, and community ownership, ensuring that Jõesuu evolves into a resilient and welcoming village for residents and visitors alike.

Jõesuu village serves as a pilot and model for future rural development projects in similar small settlements. The lessons learned from this process will inform best practices for other villages, demonstrating how tailored, community-driven approaches can unlock the potential of rural areas. Through collaboration with local stakeholders, regional partners, and European funding programmes, this plan aims to position Jõesuu as an exemplary case of rural regeneration, balancing social, economic, and environmental priorities. The journey has started with small but impactful steps, and the future holds even greater promise for Jõesuu's transformation.

Photo 1. Aerial view of Jõesuu village. Photo by Viktor Tund, 2021.

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Development Context and Needs

2.1 Overall topic

Tori municipality aims to leverage its participation in the ECONNECTING network to discover and implement new and best practices for sustainable mobility and overall rural development. Rural areas distant from urban centres often face declining populations, which leads to reduced services and an ageing demographic. These issues, in turn, trigger economic and social challenges, accelerating the outflow of permanent residents.

The objective is to integrate insights into Tori municipality`s comprehensive planning for the sustainable development of urban and rural spaces. We seek solutions for improving connectivity in sparsely populated areas that are both user-friendly and environmentally sustainable. The municipality also aims to set an example for private enterprises and residents in the region by involving diverse stakeholders, including local people and organisations. This inclusive approach is essential for fostering a broad understanding, instilling trust, and providing the knowledge and opportunities necessary for residents to contribute to their area`s development.

Photo 2. Cornucopia of information.
Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

Through this process, we aim to highlight existing values, growth perspectives, and intervention opportunities that enable tangible changes in both physical spaces and community attitudes towards their home regions. This groundwork also lays the foundation for future developments that local governments and residents can initiate beyond the actions undertaken in this project, extending benefits to other areas of the municipality.

Our vision is to become the most attractive municipality in Pärnu County, offering the best quality of life.

Jõesuu village: A focus for development

The project focuses on Jõesuu village, a community that has experienced outmigration in recent years. Despite this, Jõesuu holds significant potential for development, and the project aims to use its insights to not only benefit the village itself but also provide valuable tools for improving other communities.

The URBACT ECONNECTING project prioritises the creation of sustainable and inclusive mobility solutions while revitalising rural villages and small towns. These objectives align perfectly with the situation in Jõesuu village, a picturesque yet underserved locality in Tori municipality, Estonia. Jõesuu serves as a case study for developing an Integrated Action Plan that addresses the unique challenges and potential of small rural settlements.

The strategic development of Jõesuu village aligns with the core principles of the URBACT ECONNECTING project: 30-minute territories, accessible and welcoming cities, good governance, and green communities. By integrating these principles with targeted local actions, Jõesuu aims to become a sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant community while serving as a model for other rural settlements.

30-minute territories

The goal of 30-minute territories is to ensure that essential services, such as schools, grocery shops, and recreational facilities, are accessible within a 30-minute radius using sustainable transportation. Currently, Jõesuu lacks key amenities such as a local shop and safe pedestrian or cycle paths to nearby towns, making this principle particularly crucial.

Proposed actions to support Jõesuu as a 30-minute territory include:

- Enhancing connectivity: Creating faster and safer connections between rural areas, village centres, and the county hub (Pärnu).
- Improving mobility options: Developing better transport solutions between smaller settlements and essential services to improve accessibility.
- Exploring shared transport systems: Evaluating the feasibility of community-based shared transport options.
- Park-and-ride systems: Analysing the need for park-and-ride facilities for cars and bicycles.
- Establishing multi-functional hubs: Identifying optimal locations for hubs and equipping them with tailored services based on community needs.
- Infrastructure improvements: Upgrading road networks and enhancing safety by separating traffic flows or designing shared-use mobility areas.

Accessible and welcoming cities

Though Jõesuu is a rural village, the principle of accessible and welcoming cities is equally applicable in creating vibrant spaces for residents and visitors. This involves improving public spaces, building recreational infrastructure, and fostering opportunities for social interaction.

Proposed actions for making Jõesuu more accessible and welcoming include:

- Enhancing public spaces: Upgrading the quality of public areas by adding seating, recreational zones, and spaces for active use.
- Encouraging outdoor activities: Attracting people to outdoor spaces through diverse activities and additional services that promote social interaction.
- Developing services for eco-tourism: Introducing features such as rentable office spaces, bike storage, shelters, rest areas, and materials that highlight local nature and history.
- Installing signage and wayfinding systems: Ensuring that services are more accessible and the spatial environment is easier to navigate for both residents and visitors.

Good governance

Engaging the community and fostering collaboration between local authorities and residents are fundamental for Jõesuu's regeneration. Building a sense of ownership and participation is key to restoring the community spirit that thrived during the Soviet era.

Proposed governance improvements include:

- Bringing governance closer to people: Organising village days, discussions, and events where residents can interact directly with local officials.
- Improving communication: Enhancing public awareness through clear and accessible information materials and other passive communication methods.
- Encouraging participation: Hosting inclusive public events and consultations to involve residents in decision-making.
- Adjusting governance goals: Ensuring that the objectives and activities of local authorities align with residents' expectations and needs.

Green communities

Jõesuu's location at the confluence of the Pärnu and Navesti rivers and its proximity to Soomaa National Park make environmental sustainability a priority. Promoting green tourism and eco-friendly infrastructure supports both community well-being and environmental preservation.

Proposed actions to foster green communities include:

- Encouraging alternative transportation: Promoting walking, cycling, and other environmentally friendly modes of transport over private car use.
- Improving energy efficiency: Exploring options for renovating existing homes to enhance energy efficiency and reduce carbon footprints.
- Showcasing natural assets: Developing initiatives that introduce residents and visitors to local nature and biodiversity.
- Advancing green tourism: Building on the area's natural values to attract eco-conscious travellers while preserving its unique environmental character.
- Increasing people's sense of pride in their village and home area by emphasising the uniqueness of the place both through its history and by highlighting new future perspectives.

Challenges and opportunities for Jõesuu village

Jõesuu village faces significant challenges that impede its sustainable development and the quality of life for its residents. These challenges can be grouped into three main categories: mobility and access, community cohesion, and environmental and economic potential. In collaboration with local residents and stakeholders, additional specific issues and opportunities have been identified, which provide a roadmap for addressing these challenges and leveraging Jõesuu's potential.

Mobility and access

One of the most pressing issues is the lack of safe pedestrian and cycle paths connecting Jõesuu to the Tori borough—the area's main centre, located approximately 7 km away. This distance is ideal for walking or cycling, particularly as most of the route runs along a scenic riverside. However, the absence of dedicated paths makes such travel unsafe and unappealing, especially given the high speed of vehicle traffic on the route.

Tori borough provides most essential services, including schools, kindergartens, shops, and cultural facilities. This creates a high demand for regular travel between Jõesuu and Tori. Additionally, providing children with the opportunity to travel independently and sustainably to school or extracurricular activities is a key priority.

To address this, the following have been identified as critical actions:

- Connecting with Tori borough: Developing safe and scenic cycling and pedestrian paths to enhance accessibility while promoting sustainable transport.
- Improving multimodality: Creating seamless connections between modes of transport, ensuring that all residents, including those without personal vehicles, have improved mobility options.

When developing new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, it is essential to ensure seamless integration with the existing road network. Careful coordination is required to avoid conflicts with vehicular traffic and maintain the safety and functionality of all users. In Tori municipality, it is customary to construct new cycle paths along the edges of existing roads, often utilising the existing road embankments. As a result, the planned infrastructure consists of a physically separated cycle path bordered by a curb. In narrower sections within village boundaries, the cycle path is built at the same level as the road surface, ensuring continuity within spatial constraints. This roadside design offers a significant advantage in terms of public transport integration; residents can travel part of the route by bicycle and then switch to public transport, leaving their bicycle at the bus stop. Aligning new mobility corridors with existing road layouts and usage patterns thus supports multi-modal travel, reduces implementation costs, and enhances overall accessibility.

Understanding the everyday mobility behaviour of Jõesuu residents is essential to ensure that planned infrastructure responds to actual needs and habits. In rural areas such as Jõesuu, where settlement patterns are sparse and service centres are distant, mobility is shaped by a combination of necessity, available infrastructure, and long-standing routines. Many residents rely heavily on private vehicles due to the lack of safe alternatives, but there is a growing segment—especially among children, elderly residents, and families—who would benefit from sustainable and independent mobility options, such as cycling and walking.

Within the framework of the IAP and the URBACT ECONNECTING project, we recognise the importance of conducting behavioural mobility analysis through surveys, interviews, community mapping, and observational studies. These methods identify how residents currently travel, which destinations are most frequented (e.g. Tori school, local factory, riverside, bus stop), what times of day are most active, and where the main physical or psychological barriers lie (e.g. lack of lighting, safety concerns, difficult terrain).

This understanding enables the municipality to design more responsive infrastructure, such as positioning resting spots at regular intervals along the cycle path to Tori borough, choosing bus stop locations based on real usage patterns, and adjusting the route of recreational trails to better connect with residential clusters. Moreover, aligning interventions with daily habits builds community trust, strengthens local ownership of the mobility transition, and significantly increases the likelihood that the infrastructure will be actively used and maintained over time.

Community cohesion

Jõesuu's sense of community, once strong during the Soviet era, has weakened over time due to the lack of shared spaces, regular events, and recreational facilities. This has led to social fragmentation and a diminished connection to the village's unique identity and natural environment.

Key priorities include:

- Highlighting local values: Showcasing the area's natural and cultural assets, such as the confluence of two rivers, opportunities for swimming, fishing, and river tours, as well as its historical heritage and beautiful landscape.
- Strengthening settlement cohesion: Enhancing Jõesuu's central area, where its organic structure and convergence of land and water routes naturally create a focal point for the community. This potential can be leveraged to improve local services and the surrounding environment.
- Revitalising local identity: Strengthening the village's identity through spatial improvements and marketing initiatives, such as creating a village logo or slogan.

Environmental and economic potential

Jõesuu's location near Soomaa National Park makes it an important area for eco-tourism, yet its potential remains underutilised. The absence of tourism infrastructure, such as trails, picnic areas, and access points, limits economic opportunities for the local community.

Actions to unlock this potential include:

- Developing tourism and attracting visitors: Supporting seasonal services and expanding the range of tourism-related activities. Improving access to existing attractions and creating new ones will enhance the area's appeal to visitors.
- Improving housing and infrastructure: Identifying opportunities to renovate existing housing, including apartment buildings, to improve living conditions and attract new residents.

Key focus areas for development

To address these challenges and seize Jõesuu's opportunities, the following priorities have been identified through community collaboration:

- Connectivity with Tori borough: Safe and accessible travel between Jõesuu and Tori is essential for ensuring that residents can easily access schools, shops, and cultural services.
- Multimodal transport solutions: Developing a system that facilitates smooth transitions between transport modes, such as park-and-ride facilities for cars and bicycles, to improve overall mobility.
- Local identity and environmental integration: Enhancing the village's spatial environment and highlighting its unique identity to foster pride among residents while attracting visitors.
- Tourism infrastructure: Expanding the eco-tourism spectrum by improving access to natural attractions, supporting seasonal services, and creating opportunities for water-based and cultural tourism.
- Community cohesion: Strengthening Jõesuu's central area as a focal point for social interaction and services to reinforce a sense of belonging and community.
- Sustainable housing: Renovating the existing housing stock to improve energy efficiency and living standards, ensuring long-term sustainability and comfort for residents, as well as finding ways to stand out from typical renovation projects (for example, through wall murals).

Transforming challenges into opportunities

By addressing these challenges with a multi-faceted approach, Jõesuu has the potential to become a model for sustainable rural revitalisation. The URBACT ECONNECTING project emphasises solutions that integrate mobility improvements, community-building initiatives, and eco-tourism development. These actions will not only improve quality of life for residents but also create a vibrant and sustainable village that leverages its natural and cultural assets for long-term growth and prosperity.

Implementation and transforming challenges into opportunities

The integration of the URBACT ECONNECTING principles requires a systematic approach that balances infrastructure upgrades, community involvement, and environmental conservation. By combining improvements in mobility, public spaces, governance, and sustainability, Jõesuu can become a thriving example of rural revitalisation. These solutions offer a scalable framework that can be adapted for other small settlements in the region, ensuring widespread and long-term impact.

Addressing Jõesuu's challenges with a multi-faceted approach provides an opportunity to transform the village into a model for sustainable rural development. The URBACT ECONNECTING project emphasises integrating mobility improvements, community-building initiatives, and eco-tourism development to tackle existing issues effectively. These actions will not only enhance the quality of life for residents but also create a vibrant, sustainable village that is in harmony with its natural and cultural heritage. By aligning with these goals, Jõesuu positions itself as a pioneer in fostering a connected and inclusive community while leveraging its unique assets for long-term growth and prosperity.

2.2 Current situation

Tori municipality was established in 2017 through the merger of Are municipality, Sauga municipality, the town of Sindi, and the former Tori municipality. It is one of seven local governments in Pärnu County and is located in the eastern part of the county. The largest municipality in Pärnu County in terms of population is the city of Pärnu, while Tori municipality is the most populous among the rural municipalities. Tori is also the only municipality in Pärnu County experiencing population growth.

Table 1. Population of major settlements in Tori municipality

Name	Population (as of 01.05.2025)
Are	406
Sauga	1182
Sindi	3753
Tammiste	2032
Tori	411

As of May 2025, the total population of Tori municipality is 12,603 residents, showing a modest but consistent increase from 11,700 at the time of the administrative reform in 2017. For comparison, in early 2024, the municipality had a population of 12,574, consisting of 6,178 men and 6,396 women. The area of Tori municipality covers 611.11 km^2. It includes one town (Sindi), three small boroughs (Are, Tori, and Sauga), and 41 villages. The largest village by population is Tammiste, which is planned to be upgraded to small borough status in the near future. The key local centres within the municipality are Sindi, Are, Tori, Sauga, and Tammiste.

In recent years, Tori municipality has experienced rapid population growth, which has created a visible impact on the need for various services, including education, transport, and recreation. This growth can be attributed to the municipality's proximity to the city of Pärnu and the high quality of life it offers. Among all age groups, the number of school-aged children has grown the fastest. While the working-age population (aged 19–64) has seen a slight decline, the elderly population (65+) has increased.

In the five key centres of the municipality, almost all essential services are provided. These include kindergartens, primary schools, and libraries. The only high school in the municipality is located in Sindi, which also includes a primary school. Are, Tori, and Sauga each have primary schools.

However, despite the overall population growth, the demographic dynamics within the municipality are highly uneven. The growth is concentrated primarily in those settlements that lie closest to the city of Pärnu, such as Tammiste, Sauga, and Eametsa. These areas benefit from short commuting distances, good public transport links, and a high demand for suburban living. For instance, Tammiste village, with a population of 2,032 as of May 2025, continues to grow steadily and serves as a desirable residential area for families working in or near Pärnu.

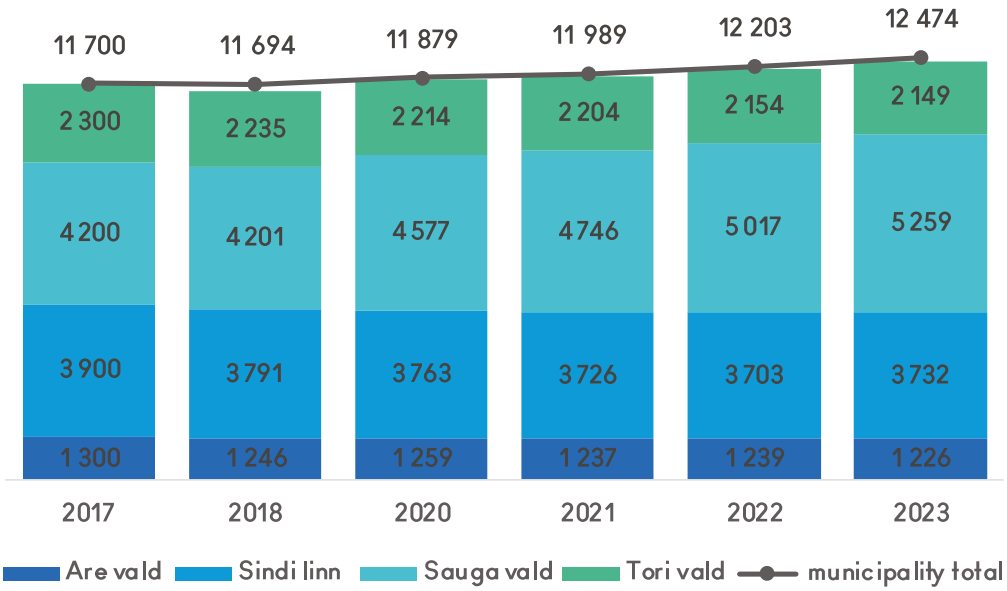
In contrast, most of the smaller and more remote villages continue to experience slow but persistent depopulation. Villages such as Aesoo, Elbi, Kõrsa, and Levi have seen their population numbers decline in recent months, illustrating the challenges faced by rural areas across Estonia and Europe. These settlements often lack direct access to essential services, have limited economic opportunities, and are more affected by ageing populations and youth outmigration.

Jõesuu village, the main focus of this IAP, is representative of this rural fragility. While the village has maintained a relatively stable population over the past year (262 residents as of May 2025), its long-term trend is one of gradual decline—from 298 residents in 2011 to 259 in 2024. This reflects broader structural issues, including limited access to services, insufficient public transport, and a lack of local employment opportunities.

These population trends have had a significant impact on service provision across the municipality. In growth areas, there is an increasing demand for schools, kindergartens, recreational facilities, and mobility solutions, especially from young families moving in from urban areas. In contrast, in villages with a declining population, the challenge lies in maintaining basic infrastructure and services in an economically viable way.

In conclusion, while Tori municipality stands out in Pärnu County for its overall growth, this growth is highly spatially selective. It underscores the need for differentiated policy responses and strategic investments that support both thriving centres and vulnerable peripheral areas. The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Jõesuu is one such effort that aims to strengthen the resilience, connectivity, and quality of life in a smaller village context, ensuring that the benefits of development reach all parts of the municipality.

Table 2. Population of Tori municipality areas according to the Population Register (2017–2023)



Key areas in the municipality

Are area
Centre: Are borough, located 18 km from Pärnu in the direction of Tallinn. The region comprises 11 villages.
Transportation: The area includes 10 km of the Tallinn-Pärnu-Ikla (Via Baltica) highway (Route 4).
Are service office: Provides social work specialists and home care workers. Registration of births and deaths is available one day a week.

Tori area
Centre: Tori borough, located 29 km from Pärnu in the direction of Paide, surrounded by 20 villages.
Transportation: Situated near the nationally significant Pärnu-Rakvere-Sõmeru highway (Route 5).
Tori service office: Houses the municipal economic department, social work specialists, and home care workers.

Sauga area
Centre: Sauga borough, located 2 km from Pärnu in the direction of Tallinn, near the villages of Eametsa, Kilksama, and Nurme.
Transportation: The Tallinn-Pärnu-Ikla highway runs through this area.
Sauga service office: Hosts the municipal development and planning department, environmental advisors, child protection officers, and social work specialists.

Sindi town
Located on the left bank of Pärnu River between the river and the Kõrsa marsh. The Pärnu-Paide highway runs parallel to the river through Sindi.
Logistical location: Proximity to Pärnu (14 km away) and good connectivity via the Pärnu-Paide highway and Via Baltica.
Most of the municipality's population resides within 15 km of Pärnu, making the city the primary hub for services and employment.

Geographical division and connectivity

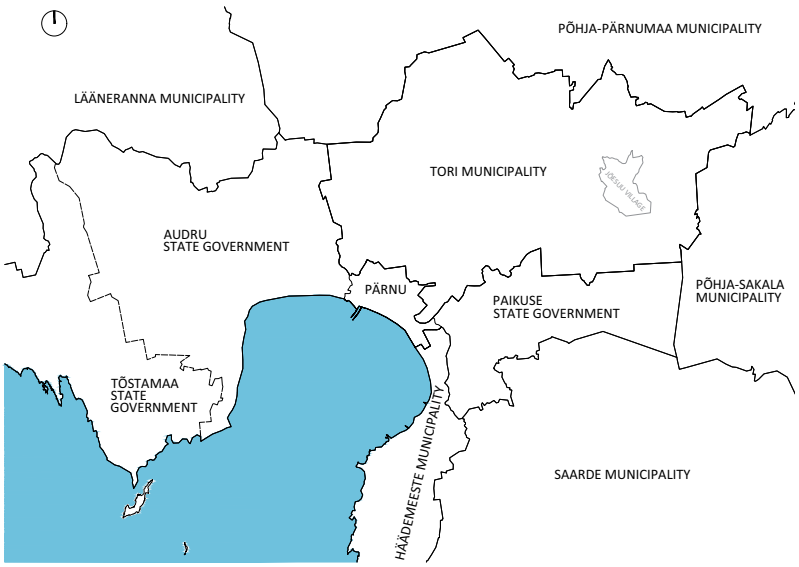
The main movement routes divide the municipality into two parts:

1. Sauga and Are areas: Centred along the Tallinn-Pärnu highway.
2. Sindi, Tori, and surrounding areas: Centred along the Rakvere-Tori route.

These two parts are separated by the Rääma marsh near Pärnu and Pärnu River.

Demography

Jõesuu is a small village that belongs to the Tori borough catchment area within Tori municipality. It has a modest and gradually declining population. Like many rural areas in Estonia and across Europe, Jõesuu faces demographic challenges:



Ageing population
A significant proportion of the village's residents are elderly, reflecting a broader trend of population ageing in rural areas. This demographic shift places additional pressure on local services and transportation needs while reducing the labour force available for economic development.

Youth outmigration
Younger generations often leave for urban areas in search of better educational and employment opportunities. This has resulted in a lack of vitality in the community and fewer residents available to drive local initiatives.

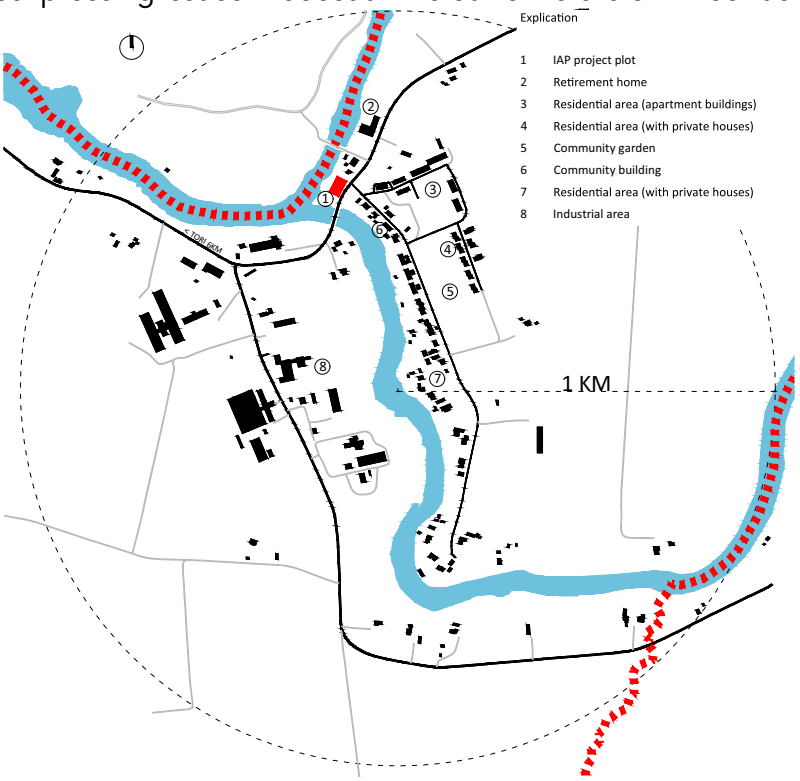
Population density
Jõesuu has a low population density, making the provision of public services and infrastructure economically challenging.

Population trends

The younger population is growing steadily, particularly the 0–18 age group, which increased to 21.4% of the total population by early 2021 (up from 19.5% in 2018). In Jõesuu village, however, the population has decreased, from 298 residents in 2011 to 265 in 2021 and 259 as of June 2024.

Access to services

Access to essential services is one of the most pressing issues in Jõesuu. The current state of infrastructure limits the ability of residents to meet basic needs conveniently and sustainably.



No local grocery shop
The village lacks a shop or any retail establishment, forcing residents to travel to neighbouring settlements for daily necessities. This reliance on private vehicles disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and those without access to cars.

Educational access
The nearest school and kindergarten are in Tori borough, located 6 km away. Without safe pedestrian or cycle paths, children and families must rely on cars or limited public transport options. This creates financial and logistical burdens for families and raises safety concerns.

Healthcare access
Healthcare services are centralised in nearby towns, requiring similar travel arrangements. For elderly residents or those with limited mobility, this lack of proximity to medical facilities poses a significant challenge.

Public transport limitations
Public transportation in the region is infrequent and unreliable, failing to meet the needs of residents who require alternative mobility options.

Proximity to services for Jõesuu village

Schools and kindergartens
The nearest educational facilities are located in Tori borough, including Tori Primary School and Kindergarten.

Church
Tori borough hosts the historic St George's Church, renowned for its cultural and historical value.

Community centre
Tori Rahvamaja (Tori Cultural House) in Tori borough offers a venue for cultural events and community activities, providing residents with opportunities for social engagement.

The current lack of local services, combined with limited mobility options, underscores the need for targeted interventions to improve accessibility and enhance the quality of life in Jõesuu.

Mobility and connectivity

Jõesuu's mobility challenges highlight the broader issues of rural accessibility in Estonia:

Lack of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure
There are no safe walking and cycling paths connecting Jõesuu to nearby settlements, limiting opportunities for active and sustainable modes of transportation. This infrastructure gap restricts residents' access to services and recreational activities while increasing their dependence on cars.

Car dependency
The absence of public transport options leaves most residents reliant on private vehicles. This dependency not only incurs significant costs for individuals but also contributes to environmental degradation through increased emissions.

Limited regional integration
The village is poorly integrated into the wider transportation network, further isolating it from economic and social opportunities in nearby urban areas.

Community and social cohesion

Jõesuu's community spirit, once a defining feature during the Soviet era, has diminished over time. This shift reflects changes in employment structures, social norms, and public investment.

Historical context
During the Soviet period, Jõesuu was home to a successful collective farm. This provided not only economic stability but also a sense of shared purpose and strong social ties.

Current challenges
Today, the absence of common spaces, community events, and recreational facilities has weakened social connections. Residents lack opportunities to engage with one another, which has contributed to a fragmented sense of community.

Low environmental awareness
Despite the village's beautiful natural surroundings, there is limited local appreciation for environmental stewardship. Community members are not actively involved in preserving or promoting the area's natural resources.

Tourism and economic potential

Jõesuu has significant yet untapped potential for tourism and economic growth. However, several barriers prevent the village from capitalising on these opportunities:

Scenic location
Situated at the confluence of two major rivers and near the Soomaa National Park, Jõesuu offers a unique and attractive setting for eco-tourism, water sports, and outdoor activities.

Lack of infrastructure
The village lacks essential tourism infrastructure, such as trails, signage, picnic areas, and recreational facilities. This absence limits its appeal to visitors and prevents it from becoming a destination.

Economic opportunities
Without a robust tourism sector or other local economic initiatives, residents face limited job prospects, further encouraging outmigration.

Environmental and ecological context

The village's natural assets are both a strength and a responsibility:

Rich biodiversity
The nearby Soomaa National Park is known for its unique wetlands and biodiversity, offering opportunities for conservation-focused tourism.

Flooding risks
Being located near rivers, Jõesuu is vulnerable to flooding, particularly during the high-water season in Soomaa. This underscores the need for resilient infrastructure and environmental planning.

Sustainability concerns
Without proper environmental management, tourism development and increased infrastructure could harm the delicate ecosystem of the region.

Key statistics and insights

Population decline
Rural areas in Estonia, including Jõesuu, have seen an average annual population decline of approximately 1–2% due to ageing and outmigration.

Car ownership
Over 80% of rural households in Estonia own at least one car—a necessity due to limited public transportation. However, this figure highlights the exclusion of those unable to afford or operate vehicles.

Tourism potential
Visitor numbers to Soomaa National Park have increased steadily over the years, but Jõesuu remains underutilised as a gateway or complementary destination because the road goes past Jõesuu village. There's no point in entering the village on the way to Soomaa.

Infrastructure gaps
Only 17% of rural areas in Estonia have adequate cycle paths, underscoring the broader accessibility challenge faced by Jõesuu.

Development outlook and conclusion

The rising population, particularly among younger residents, combined with the municipality's ambition to attract more families, suggests continued growth in the coming years. Tori municipality is poised to enhance services, infrastructure, and planning to support its expanding population while maintaining its high quality of life.

The current situation in Jõesuu reflects a microcosm of the challenges faced by rural communities across Europe. With demographic pressures, limited access to services, and weak mobility infrastructure, the village struggles to maintain quality of life for its residents. At the same time, its scenic location and historical legacy present opportunities for sustainable development through eco-tourism and community revitalisation. By addressing these challenges through the URBACT ECONNECTING project, Jõesuu can serve as a model for how small rural settlements can leverage their unique assets to create sustainable, connected, and thriving communities.

2.3 Existing strategies & policies

Jõesuu village, as part of Tori municipality in Pärnu County, Estonia, operates within a robust framework of local, regional, national, and European strategies. These plans aim to address key challenges such as rural mobility, community cohesion, environmental sustainability, and economic development. Understanding and aligning with these strategies allows Jõesuu to create an Integrated Action Plan (IAP) that leverages existing initiatives, maximises funding opportunities, and drives sustainable rural revitalisation.

Strategic alignment with local and regional plans

Local strategies

The **Tori Municipality Development Strategy** emphasises improving infrastructure, fostering social cohesion, and promoting tourism. Specific goals relevant to Jõesuu include:

- Developing safe cycle and pedestrian networks
- Revitalising communal spaces
- Leveraging eco-tourism as a driver of local economic growth

The **Pärnu County Development Strategy** highlights:

- Strengthening rural-urban connections to balance regional development
- Encouraging sustainable tourism tied to cultural and natural heritage
- Supporting SMEs to enhance local economies

National and European strategic context

National strategies

The **Estonian National Spatial Plan 2030+** and the **Rural Development Plan** stress the importance of balanced territorial development, connectivity, and environmental sustainability. Relevant objectives include:

- Promoting eco-tourism as a sustainable economic activity
- Improving transport infrastructure to connect rural and urban areas

European strategies

The **European Green Deal** and the **EU Territorial Agenda 2030** emphasise sustainability, accessibility, and participatory governance. Jõesuu's focus on creating safe transport infrastructure and fostering eco-tourism aligns with these priorities.

Implementation framework and funding opportunities

Operational Programmes:

1. European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): Funding for cycle paths, tourism infrastructure, and SME development.
2. European Social Fund (ESF): Support for educational programmes and community-building initiatives.
3. LEADER programme: Funding for community-driven tourism projects and recreational facilities.
4. Interreg Europe: Resources for sustainable mobility and eco-tourism models through interregional cooperation.

Opportunities from regional and national plans

The **Pärnu County Spatial Plan** identifies Jõesuu as a secondary centre that requires essential local services, including childcare, recreational facilities, and public transportation. Recommendations include:

- Introducing flexible transport solutions for areas without regular services
- Creating shared service hubs for nearby settlements
- Exploring alternative solutions, such as internet-based services or demand-driven transport

The upcoming **Pärnu County Thematic Plan (2024)** highlights the potential for integrating riverside facilities such as floating cafes or cultural spaces into the development plans. Jõesuu's riverside location offers a unique opportunity to align with this strategy.

Vision for 2027 and beyond

The vision outlined in Pärnumaa 2035+ emphasises a region where quality services, sustainable mobility, and vibrant communities are accessible to all. Jõesuu contributes to this vision as follows:

- Becoming a model for sustainable rural revitalisation through eco-tourism and connectivity
- Leveraging its location near Soomaa National Park to promote nature-based tourism
- Creating a cohesive community where residents actively shape their environment

Conclusion

Jõesuu's challenges present significant opportunities for growth and revitalisation. By aligning its Integrated Action Plan with local, national, and European strategies, the village can unlock funding, foster community cohesion, and become a hub for eco-tourism and sustainable development. Through a collaborative and systematic approach, Jõesuu is poised to transform into a vibrant, connected, and resilient rural community.

3

URBACT Local Group

3.1 Stakeholder mapping

The stakeholders involved in the Jõesuu development project represent a diverse range of individuals, organisations, and groups that contribute to a holistic and inclusive approach. By involving key actors across sectors, the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) ensures that all perspectives and needs are addressed while promoting sustainable and innovative solutions.

Key stakeholder groups:

1.Local entrepreneurs (SMEs): Provide insights into economic challenges and opportunities, particularly for eco-tourism and local services.
2.Local community members: Represent the broader population's needs and expectations, including families, landowners, and individuals with varying interests.
3.Elderly residents: Offer perspectives on mobility, healthcare access, and recreational opportunities suited to their needs.
4.School children: Actively participate in workshops to share ideas for improving public spaces, play areas, and mobility.
5.People with disabilities: Advocate for accessible infrastructure and inclusive design.
6.Youth from the Municipality Youth Council: Drive creative and innovative ideas while representing younger demographics.
7.Specialists: Include urban planners, environmental experts, and tourism consultants who provide technical expertise.
8.Municipality staff: Ensure alignment with Tori municipality's goals and provide administrative and logistical support.
9.External expert: Offers independent guidance, ensuring adherence to URBACT principles.
10.Non-profit organisations promoting physical activity: Focus on fostering active lifestyles, advocating for walking, cycling, and recreational facilities.

Stakeholder map

The stakeholder map categorises participants based on their influence and level of interest.

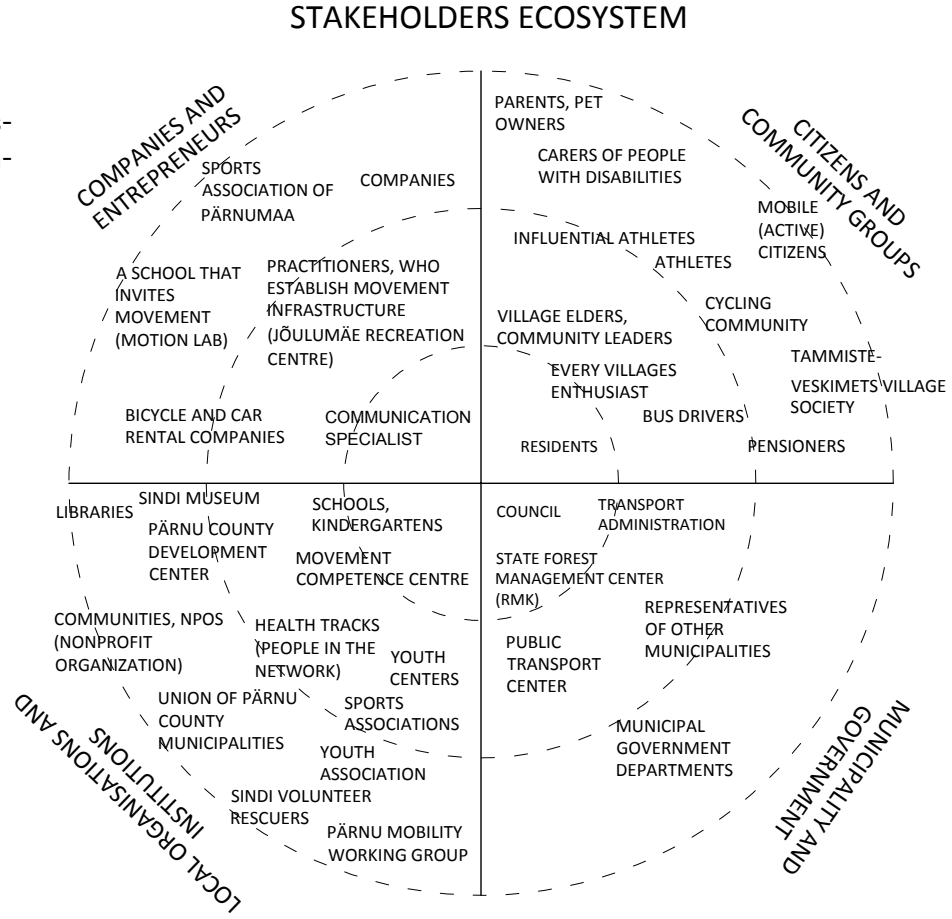


Table 3. Stakeholder map

3.2 Organisation of ULG

Description of ULG

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) for Jõesuu is a multi-stakeholder platform that integrates representatives from all relevant groups to co-create the IAP. This ensures that diverse perspectives and expertise are included in planning and implementation.

Key features of the ULG:

- Inclusivity: Members include local entrepreneurs, community residents, non-profits promoting physical activity, and municipality staff.
- Dynamic membership: Membership has evolved over time through regular outreach efforts. While some members have left, new participants have joined, keeping the group active and engaged.
- Youth engagement: The Municipality Youth Council has been particularly proactive, contributing innovative ideas and fostering participation among younger demographics.
- Strengthened community involvement: The Jõesuu Village Day event during the small-scale action significantly boosted local engagement, with residents, including non-profits, becoming more active in the ULG.

Structure of the ULG

Leader: A designated municipal staff member acts as the ULG coordinator, facilitating meetings and ensuring alignment with URBACT goals.
Core members: Municipality staff, local entrepreneurs, and representatives from physical activity-promoting non-profits.
Support members: Community members, youth council representatives, school children, and specialists.
External advisor: Provides independent feedback and monitors progress.

3.3 Stakeholder engagement strategy and outreach

Engagement strategy

The engagement strategy is designed to ensure active participation from all stakeholders while maintaining flexibility to adapt to changing group dynamics.

Key components:

1. Roles in the project:

Stakeholder	Role	Involvement Level
Municipality staff	Coordination and decision-making	High
Local entrepreneurs	Input on economic opportunities and eco-tourism	High
Local residents	Feedback on mobility, recreation, and local needs	Medium
Non-profits promoting physical activity	Advocacy for active transportation and recreational areas	High
School children	Ideas for public spaces and play areas	Medium
Elderly	Insights into accessibility and health-related needs	Medium
Youth council	Creative contributions and community outreach	High
Specialists	Technical expertise in planning and sustainability	High
External expert	Monitoring and guidance	High

2. Outreach activities

- Workshops and regular meetings: Organised to engage all stakeholders in co-creation and planning processes.
- Public calls for participation: Issued at each meeting to attract new members.
- Community events: Events such as Jõesuu Village Day reinvigorate interest and promote the project's goals.

3.4 Planning process

The planning process is structured and iterative, emphasising collaboration, testing ideas, and incorporating feedback.

Key steps in the process:

1. Stakeholder identification: Identify and engage a diverse range of stakeholders, including non-profits advocating for physical activity.
2. Formation of ULG: Assemble a balanced group representing all relevant interests.
3. Workshops and discussions: Conduct thematic workshops to explore:
   - Mobility solutions (e.g. cycle paths, shared transport)
   - Community spaces (e.g. recreational and inclusive areas)
   - Eco-tourism potential
4. Small-scale actions: Implement Jõesuu Village Day to test ideas, gather feedback, and inspire further participation.
5. Iterative feedback: Incorporate inputs from workshops and events into draft versions of the IAP.
6. Finalisation: Align the IAP with local, regional, and URBACT goals for adoption and implementation.

ULG meetings

The ULG has met seven times in various compositions:

Date	Meeting objective
22.09.2023	Establishing initial objectives, mapping the ULG team
24.01.2024	First ULG meeting
20.03.2024	Refining objectives
03.06.2024	Identifying additional challenges, becoming familiar with Jõesuu village
22.08.2024	Preparing the small-scale action (Jõesuu Village Day)
28.08.2024	Preparing the small-scale action (Jõesuu Village Day)
13.11.2024	Considering potential solutions, summarising the outcomes of the Village Day

22.09.2023 – Establishing initial objectives, mapping the ULG team

Photo 3. Establishing initial objectives. Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

Photo 4. Brainstorming together. Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

24.01.2024 – First ULG meeting

Photo 5. Getting to know URBACT. Photo by Lauri Luide.

Photo 6. First meeting with the Jõesuu village community. Photo Kärt Linder, 2024.

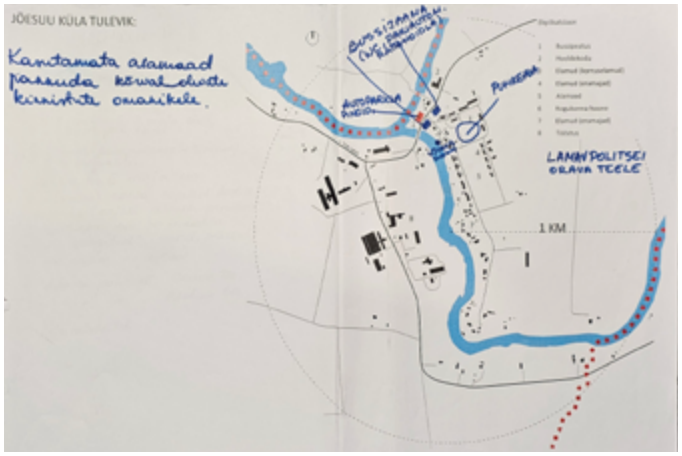


Photo 7. Situation analysis. Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

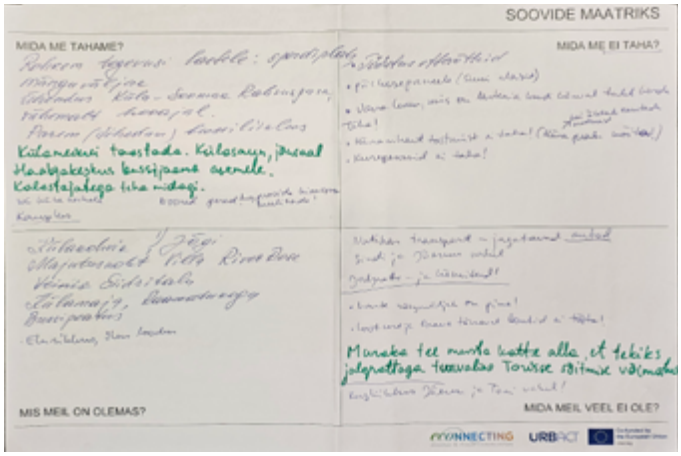


Photo 8. Goal grid. Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024

03.06.2024 – Identifying additional challenges, becoming familiar with Jõesuu village

Photo 9. Mapping our personal perceptions.
Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

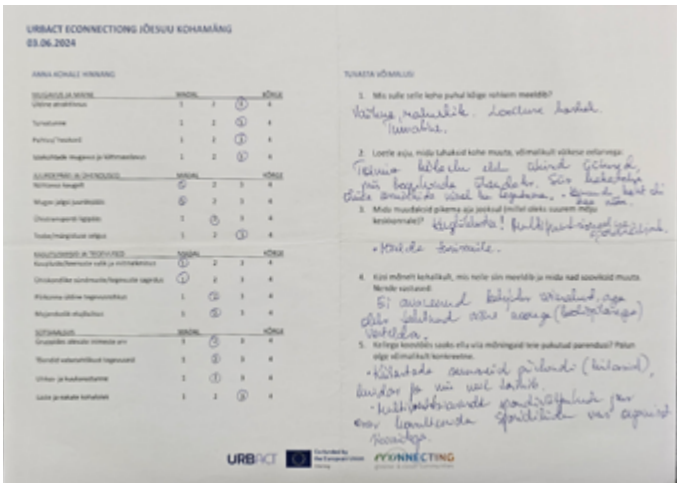


Photo 10. Place game questionnaire.
Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

13.11.2024 – Considering potential solutions, summarising the outcomes of the Village Day

Photo 11. Meeting with ULG members at Tori Cider Farm in Jõesuu.
Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

Photo 12. Garri Raagmaa, the human geography professor from the University of Tartu's Pärnu College was invited to the meeting, adding a pleasant academic contribution to the discussion.
Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

4

The IAP Sites and Analysis

4.1 Description of IAP site

Social and spatial description

Jõesuu village is a small rural settlement located in Tori municipality, Pärnu County, Estonia. It is situated at the scenic confluence of the Pärnu and Navesti rivers, offering both natural beauty and historical significance. The village is part of the functional region of Pärnu, the nearest urban centre, located approximately 30 kilometres to the west. The terrain in Jõesuu is predominantly flat, which is advantageous for walking and cycling. The area is surrounded by forests, marshlands, and agricultural land, and it has proximity to Soomaa National Park, making it an area of high eco-tourism potential.

Despite its picturesque setting, Jõesuu faces accessibility challenges. The nearest settlement, Tori borough (7 km away), provides essential services such as schools, kindergartens, and shops. However, the lack of pedestrian and cycle paths isolates Jõesuu from Tori, forcing residents to rely on private cars or limited public transport. The village bus stop, while central, is underdeveloped, lacking sufficient facilities such as bicycle parking, car spaces, or restrooms for tourists and fishermen.

Basic quantitative parameters

Area
The built-up area of Jõesuu covers approximately 8.5 hectares, with most development concentrated along the riverside.

Population
As of 2024, the village population is 259 residents, a slight decline from 265 in 2021.

Housing stock

- Apartment buildings: Eight two-story Soviet-era apartment blocks, primarily housing workers from a local window manufacturing factory.
- Semi-detached houses: Five semi-detached homes.
- Single-family houses: The remaining residences are standalone homes.

Key social and economic features

1. Employment

- Many residents living in the apartment buildings work at the local window manufacturing factory—a key employer in the village.
- The cider farm operates as both a producer and a tourist attraction, showcasing local craftsmanship and providing seasonal employment opportunities.

2. Public services and infrastructure

- Community spaces: The village has a small community house, primarily used by older residents for gatherings and events. However, the space is underutilised by younger demographics.
- Care home: A small care home serves elderly residents in the area, providing essential services within the village.

3. Points of interest:

- Pärnu and Navesti rivers: These natural assets offer opportunities for eco-tourism activities such as kayaking, fishing, and hiking.
- Cider farm: A local landmark, the cider farm attracts visitors interested in artisanal products and rural tourism.

Mapping and description of the site

The village's spatial and functional structure reflects its dual character as a residential and partially industrial community, with several key elements:

1. Road structure:

- The main road connects Jõesuu to Tori borough, and further to Pärnu, but lacks pavements and cycle paths, making non-motorised travel unsafe.
- Secondary unpaved roads provide access to residential and industrial areas.
- The connection to Muraka village is only via a pedestrian bridge (or otherwise through Tori).

2. Public and functional buildings:

- Bus stop: A central but underdeveloped node that requires improvements such as bicycle and walker parking, car spaces, and restrooms.
- Community house: Serves as a social hub for older residents but has limited appeal to younger community members.
- Care home: Offers essential services to elderly residents, enhancing the village's social infrastructure.

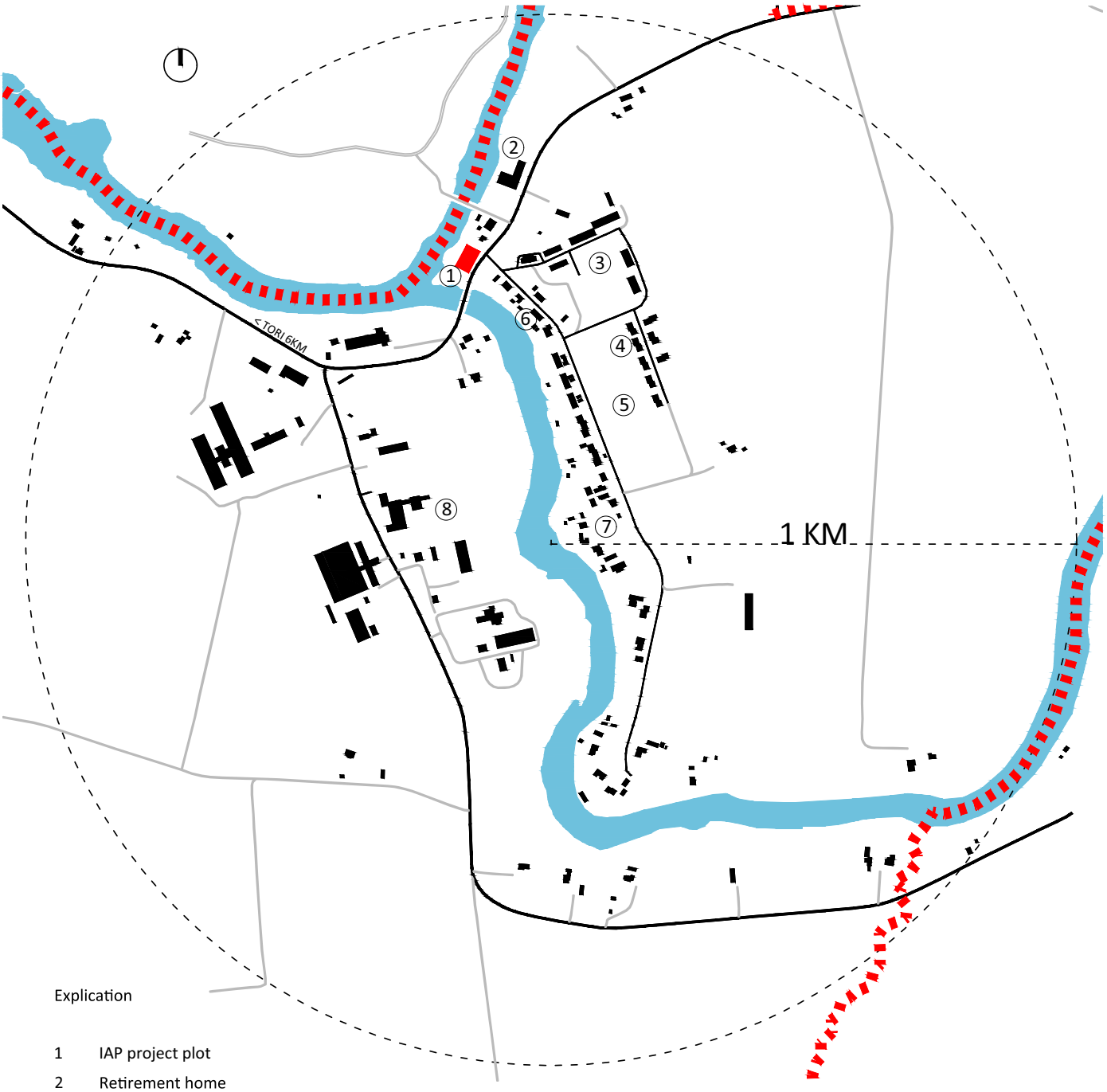
3. Current uses and functions:

- Residential areas: Distributed across Soviet-era apartment blocks, semi-detached homes, and single-family houses.
- Industrial area: The window factory provides stable employment for many local residents.
- Tourism and agriculture: The cider farm combines local production with tourism activities.

4. Dependency in the spatial context:

- The village heavily relies on Tori borough for essential services, such as education and retail, highlighting the need for improved connectivity and local service development.

Jõesuu village presents a mix of challenges and opportunities. Its reliance on TTori borough for essential services, combined with limited connectivity and underdeveloped infrastructure, underscores the need for targeted interventions. At the same time, its natural assets, community spaces, and local economic drivers, such as the window factory and cider farm, provide strong foundations for sustainable rural development. By enhancing mobility, improving public spaces, and leveraging eco-tourism potential, Jõesuu can become a model for small-scale rural revitalisation.



Explication

1 IAP project plot
2 Retirement home
3 Residential area (apartment buildings)
4 Residential area (with private houses)
5 Community garden
6 Community building
7 Residential area (with private houses)
8 Industrial area

4.2 Emerging topics (problem definition)

Swot analysis of Jõesuu's local context

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Picturesque location with unique landscapes (wetlands, bogs)	- Lack of safe pedestrian and cycle paths
- Rich cultural history (archaeology and architectural heritage)	- Insufficient local services (shops, daycare, post office)
- Growing municipality with an increasing number of young residents	- Dependence on cars due to poor public transportation
- Proximity to major European transport routes (Via Baltica, Rail Baltica)	- Inadequate funding for major investments and planning
- Good internet connectivity (mobile and cable)	- Declining and ageing population in rural and peripheral areas
- Established businesses such as the cider farm and window factory	- Deteriorating housing stock and unused Soviet-era buildings
Opportunities	**Threats**
- Eco-tourism development leveraging rivers and Soomaa National Park	- Negative demographic trends (ageing, outmigration)
- Proximity to Tori small town for services and workforce stability	- Economic dependence on a few key employers
- Expansion of cycling and recreational infrastructure	- Difficulty implementing IAP initiatives due to limited resources
- Potential to attract 'pass-through' visitors	- Environmental degradation if tourism growth is unmanaged

The SWOT analysis provides a comprehensive overview of Jõesuu's local context by highlighting its key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This framework identifies the internal and external factors influencing the village's sustainable development.

Strengths

Jõesuu benefits from a picturesque natural setting at the confluence of the Pärnu and Navesti rivers, surrounded by wetlands and bogs. It has strong cultural and historical foundations, including architectural

and archaeological heritage. The municipality as a whole is experiencing growth, especially among young residents, and Jõesuu itself is supported by existing businesses, such as a window factory and a cider farm. Additionally, the village has good mobile and cable internet connectivity, which is a vital asset for modern development.

Weaknesses

Despite its assets, Jõesuu faces significant internal challenges. The village lacks basic services such as a grocery shop, daycare, and postal facilities. Mobility options are limited due to poor public transportation and the absence of safe pedestrian and cycle paths. Many residential buildings are deteriorating, particularly Soviet-era housing, and a number of buildings remain underutilised. Financial resources for large-scale investments are also scarce, making it difficult to implement the necessary changes.

Opportunities

There are numerous development opportunities to build upon. Jõesuu's proximity to Soomaa National Park positions it well for eco-tourism. Its closeness to Tori small town offers access to services and employment, supporting the idea of improved connectivity. Potential also exists for expanding recreational infrastructure, including cycle routes, and for drawing in more visitors by leveraging the area's natural beauty and cultural heritage. With proper investment, unused or neglected areas could be revitalised for both community use and economic activity.

Threats

Jõesuu is exposed to several external threats. These include ongoing negative demographic trends, such as population ageing and youth outmigration. The local economy is dependent on a limited number of employers, creating vulnerability in times of economic downturn. There are also risks related to resource limitations; implementing the Integrated Action Plan may prove difficult without consistent support. Additionally, unmanaged growth in tourism could lead to environmental degradation, threatening the very assets that make Jõesuu attractive.

Emerging topics: challenges and potential

1. Promoting sustainable mobility

Challenge
Jõesuu residents rely heavily on personal vehicles due to the lack of safe pedestrian and cycle paths and underdeveloped public transport. This auto-centric lifestyle is entrenched in cultural habits, making it challenging to change behaviour.

Potential
By developing cycle and pedestrian paths to Tori borough, promoting alternative transportation options, and improving the bus stop infrastructure, Jõesuu can provide viable alternatives to car dependency. Educational campaigns to shift mindsets towards sustainable mobility will also play a key role.

2. Revitalising housing stock

Challenge
Many Soviet-era apartment buildings and semi-detached homes in Jõesuu require significant renovation. Poor energy efficiency and deteriorating conditions discourage new residents and reduce the overall appeal of the village.

Potential
Targeted renovation programmes for apartments and houses, aligned with energy-efficiency standards, can improve living conditions and attract new families. They can also encourage people to take care of their own surroundings, for example, through a 'beautiful home' contest or by providing residents with seedlings (planting material). Support through national and EU funding programmes, such as the ERDF, can address this critical need.

3. Enhancing community spaces

Challenge
Jõesuu lacks vibrant community spaces, especially for younger residents. The current community house is underutilised, with limited appeal to broader demographics.

Potential
Developing multi-functional community hubs could cater to all age groups, providing spaces for recreational activities, cultural events, and social gatherings. Including modern facilities such as coworking spaces could attract remote workers and tourists.

4. Leveraging eco-tourism

Challenge
Despite its proximity to Soomaa National Park and the rivers, Jõesuu has not capitalised on its eco-tourism potential. There is a lack of trails, facilities, and services for visitors.

Potential
Investments in eco-tourism infrastructure, such as river trails, picnic areas, and informational signage (Riverside viewing platform), can attract tourists. Collaborations with existing businesses, such as the cider farm, can create integrated experiences, enhancing local economic opportunities.

5. Overcoming weather-dependent mobility

Challenge
Seasonal weather variations in Estonia pose significant barriers to the year-round usability of cycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Winters are particularly challenging for alternative mobility.

Potential
Introducing all-season infrastructure solutions, such as heated bike paths or well-maintained pedestrian routes, can improve usability and resilience to weather-related disruptions.

6. Addressing regional transport governance

Challenge
Regional transportation planning and funding are beyond the control of Tori municipality, complicating efforts to integrate Jõesuu into a broader mobility network.

Potential
By collaborating with regional and national authorities, Tori municipality can advocate for flexible public transport solutions and align with larger infrastructure projects such as Rail Baltic.

7. Boosting economic resilience

Challenge
Jõesuu's economy is reliant on a small number of employers, such as the window factory and the cider farm. This lack of diversification makes the village vulnerable to economic downturns.

Potential
Encouraging local entrepreneurship and developing new market opportunities, such as tourism-driven businesses or renewable energy projects, can diversify income sources and enhance economic stability.

8. Preserving and enhancing cultural identity

Challenge
Jõesuu lacks a strong local identity, which is essential for building community pride and attracting visitors. Deteriorating cultural landmarks and underutilised historical narratives contribute to this issue.

Potential
Strengthening cultural identity through marketing campaigns, signage, and the restoration of historical sites and placemaking can make Jõesuu a memorable destination while fostering community pride.

9. Engaging passive residents

Challenge
Low levels of civic engagement and pessimism among some residents hinder active participation in development initiatives.

Potential
Hosting inclusive events such as the successful Jõesuu Village Day and increasing awareness of funding opportunities for housing and mobility projects can encourage greater community involvement.

10. Mitigating environmental risks

Challenge
Expanding tourism and infrastructure development risks harming Jõesuu's unique natural environment, including its rivers and wetlands.

Potential
Adopting sustainable planning practices and integrating conservation efforts into development projects can ensure that environmental preservation remains a priority while supporting economic growth.

Interlinked challenges and potentials

The challenges and potential in Jõesuu are deeply interlinked:

- Improving mobility infrastructure (Topic 1) can enhance accessibility to eco-tourism sites (Topic 4) and strengthen community engagement (Topic 9).
- Renovating housing stock (Topic 2) can attract new residents, which supports local businesses and stabilises the population (beautiful buildings strengthen the local identity).
- Preserving the environment (Topic 10) while making it more accessible aligns with eco-tourism goals, ensuring long-term sustainability.

By addressing these interconnected topics holistically, the Integrated Action Plan can transform Jõesuu into a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive rural community.

5

Strategy, Vision and Goals

5.1 Project vision

The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) envisions Jõesuu village as a thriving, accessible, and sustainable rural community. The plan aims to address the pressing challenges of mobility, public space revitalisation, community engagement, and economic development. By fostering connections with the nearby Tori borough and enhancing local infrastructure, the IAP seeks to accomplish the following:

- Promote sustainable mobility solutions that reduce dependency on private vehicles and offer alternative transport modes for all demographics, including pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport users.
- Improve the quality of life for both residents and visitors by creating vibrant public spaces and fostering an inclusive community spirit.
- Strengthen local identity by highlighting Jõesuu's cultural, historical, and natural heritage.
- Support local economic growth through tourism, innovative businesses, and sustainable practices.

The long-term goal is to establish Jõesuu as a model for sustainable rural development, where community-driven initiatives and environmentally conscious strategies harmonise with local needs and regional priorities.

While Jõesuu is the primary pilot location for this Integrated Action Plan, the approach, methodology, and practical tools developed through its implementation are designed to serve as a transferable model for other rural villages across Tori municipality. The challenges faced by Jõesuu, such as population decline in the municipality's peripheral areas (in contrast to the population growth in settlements bordering the city of Pärnu), lack of mobility options, and underused public spaces, are not unique, and the integrated solutions tested here can inform interventions in similar settlements.

Furthermore, the conceptual framework and thematic focus areas established through the IAP will be actively used in the drafting of the municipality's new comprehensive spatial plan. This ensures that the lessons learned from Jõesuu are embedded in long-term strategic planning and that the IAP serves not only as a local action tool but also as a catalyst for broader, municipality-wide rural revitalisation.

5.2 Project goals

To realise this vision, the IAP outlines five strategic goals that align with the four thematic pillars of ECONNECTING: **governance, accessibility, 30-minute territories, and green communities.**

Goal 1: Enhance mobility and connectivity

Objective
Improve connectivity between Jõesuu and Tori borough, making essential services accessible within a 30-minute radius through safe and sustainable transportation options.

Key actions
- Develop a pedestrian and cycle path to Tori borough, ensuring safety for children and families.
- Upgrade the existing bus stop with bicycle racks, walker parking, car spaces, and facilities such as restrooms for tourists and fishermen.
- Explore flexible and sustainable transport solutions, such as shared transport systems or demand-responsive public transit.

Goal 2: Revitalise public spaces

Objective
Transform underutilised areas in Jõesuu into vibrant, multi-functional public spaces that cater to all demographic groups.

Key actions
- Design and develop recreational areas, including playgrounds, outdoor gyms, and picnic spots near the riverside.
- Improve the aesthetics and functionality of the village centre to make it more inviting for residents and visitors.
- Renovate the existing suspension bridge to support safe pedestrian and cyclist use.

Goal 3: Strengthen community engagement and governance

Objective
Foster a stronger relationship between local authorities and residents, encouraging participation in planning and decision-making processes.

Key actions
- Host regular community events, such as workshops and public discussions, to ensure inclusivity and gather diverse inputs.
- Use accessible communication channels to reach all residents, including digital platforms, printed materials, and in-person consultations.
- Establish a local advisory group to ensure community-led decision-making and consistent feedback loops.

Goal 4: Preserve and promote local identity

Objective
Celebrate Jõesuu's cultural, historical, and natural heritage to foster pride among residents and attract eco-tourism.

Key actions
- Create interpretive signage and trails that highlight the village's historical and ecological significance.
- Make a large board that explains the history of the river mouth or the area, e.g. how the river used to be used for transport, how people live in Soomaa.
- Partner with local businesses, such as the cider farm, to integrate cultural heritage into tourism offerings.
- Promote the Pärnu and Navesti rivers as central features of Jõesuu's identity and economic potential.

Goal 5: Support sustainable housing and economic development

Objective
Enhance the quality of housing and encourage economic growth by supporting local entrepreneurs and revitalising unused spaces.

Key actions
- Renovate Soviet-era apartment buildings to improve energy efficiency and living conditions with a distinctive identity (e.g. murals).
- Identify and repurpose unused plots of land for economic and community activities.
- Encourage small businesses and remote work opportunities by improving internet access and creating shared workspaces.

5.3 Integration challenges

Challenge 1: Updating the comprehensive plan

The current comprehensive plan is outdated (from 2009), limiting the implementation of modern urban planning and funding allocation. Developing a new plan that integrates sustainable mobility, community needs, and green principles is a strategic necessity.

Challenge 2: Securing financial resources

Limited municipal budgets restrict the ability to invest in infrastructure and services. Attracting external funding from national and EU programmes is critical to implement the IAP's objectives.

Challenge 3: Connectivity with Tori small town

Building a dedicated cycling and pedestrian path between Jõesuu and Tori borough is expensive and does not meet existing criteria for state-level funding. Alternative solutions, such as multi-use trails or phased development, are needed to address this gap.

Challenge 4: Promoting modal diversity

Encouraging residents to shift from private cars to alternative modes of transport is challenging in a rural setting. Investments in convenient and flexible options, combined with awareness campaigns, are necessary to facilitate change.

Challenge 5: Sustaining new services

Introducing new services, such as markets, outdoor gyms, or coworking spaces, risks underutilisation if community support and demand are insufficient. Developing business models and partnerships can mitigate this risk.

Challenge 6: Aligning with URBACT Cross-cutting principles

Gender equality: Ensure that infrastructure and services cater to all genders and age groups, considering the specific needs of women, children, and the elderly.
Digital innovation: Leverage technology to improve community engagement, such as online consultations and digital tools for mobility planning.
Green practices: Integrate sustainability into all initiatives, from energy-efficient housing renovations to eco-tourism infrastructure.

5.4 Logical framework

The logical framework translates the Integrated Action Plan's vision and goals into a structured matrix, defining objectives, actions, responsibilities, timelines, resources, and indicators of success. Below is the logical framework for Jõesuu's development under the URBACT ECONNECTING project.

Overall goal

Transform Jõesuu into a thriving, accessible, and sustainable rural community by improving mobility, revitalising public spaces, fostering community engagement, and leveraging its cultural and natural assets.

Specific objectives

Objective	Actions	Lead responsibility	Timeline	Resources required	Indicators of success
1. Enhance mobility and connectivity	Develop a pedestrian and cycle path to Tori borough.	Municipality, Regional Transport Agency		EU funding, municipal budget	Safe path completed, reduction in car dependency.
	Upgrade the Jõesuu bus stop with bike racks, walker parking, and restrooms.	Municipality		Local contractors, state grants	Increased bus stop usage, community satisfaction.
	Introduce demand-responsive public transport options.	Regional Transport Agency		Public transport funds	Implementation of flexible transport schedules, higher ridership.
2. Revitalise public spaces	Create recreational areas near rivers and residential zones, including playgrounds and outdoor gyms.	Municipality, local NGOs		Municipal budget, donations	Number of new facilities created, increased use by residents.
	Renovate the suspension bridge to support pedestrian and cyclist use and make it more accessible using signs or by including it as part of the trail.	Municipality, private contractors		EU funds, local budget	Improved bridge accessibility, positive feedback from users.
	Improve the aesthetics and functionality of the village centre with landscaping and seating areas.	Municipality, community groups		Municipal budget	Enhanced village centre appearance, increased social interaction.

Objective	Actions	Lead responsibility	Timeline	Resources required	Indicators of success
3. Strengthen community engagement	Host regular workshops and community events to involve residents in decision-making processes.	Municipality, local NGOs		Event budgets, volunteer efforts	Increased number of events held, diversity of participant demographics.
	Establish an advisory group for continuous feedback on project implementation.	Municipality		Administrative budget	Advisory group formed, regular meetings conducted.
	Use digital platforms for transparent communication and engagement with residents.	Municipality		ICT tools, training funds	Increased digital engagement rates, satisfaction with communication.
4. Preserve and promote local identity	Create interpretive signage and trails highlighting Jõesuu's natural and cultural heritage.	Municipality, Historical Society		EU funds, private sponsorships	Number of trails and signs created, positive feedback from visitors.
	Partner with local businesses to integrate heritage into tourism activities (e.g. cider farm collaborations).	Local entrepreneurs, Tourism Board		Partnership agreements, tourism grants	Increased tourist visits, higher revenue for local businesses.
	Host cultural festivals to celebrate Jõesuu's heritage.	Community groups, local NGOs	Annual	Event sponsorships	Number of festivals held, visitor satisfaction rates.
5. Support sustainable housing and economy	Renovate Soviet-era apartment buildings to improve energy efficiency and living conditions.	Municipality, housing associations		ERDF, state grants	Number of buildings renovated, reduction in energy consumption.
	Identify and repurpose unused plots of land for economic and community activities (e.g. coworking spaces, markets).	Municipality, local entrepreneurs		Land assessment funds, investments	Number of revitalised plots, new businesses established.
	Improve internet infrastructure to support remote work and online businesses.	Internet providers, Municipality		ICT development funds	Improved internet speed and coverage, increase in digital entrepreneurs.

Assumptions and risks

Assumption	Mitigation strategy
Funding will be secured through EU and national grants.	Early application to relevant funding programmes and diversification of funding sources.
Community participation will remain high throughout the project.	Regular communication, transparent decision-making, and incentives for participation (e.g. events, public recognition).
External stakeholders, such as regional transport agencies, will cooperate.	Maintain open communication, align goals, and formalise agreements through MOUs or contracts.
Environmental sustainability measures will align with tourism growth.	Adopt sustainable tourism guidelines and enforce regulations to protect natural and cultural assets.

Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Category	KPIs
Mobility and connectivity	- Number of kilometres of new cycling and pedestrian paths.
	- Increase in bus stop usage and public transport ridership.
Public spaces	- Number of new recreational areas developed.
	- Increased resident and visitor satisfaction (survey-based).
Community engagement	- Number of workshops/events held and average participation rate.
	- Diversity of residents involved (age, gender, socioeconomic status).
Local identity and tourism	- Increase in tourist numbers and revenue for local businesses.
	- Number of heritage-related trails/signs developed.
Housing and economy	- Number of apartment buildings renovated.
	- Increase in new businesses or coworking spaces established.

6

Small-Scale Actions

As part of the Jõesuu development process, a small-scale action was organised to test the proposed ideas and engage the local community in shaping the village's future. The event, named Jõesuu Village Day, provided an opportunity to evaluate potential solutions, gather feedback, and foster collaboration among residents, local stakeholders, and experts. This participatory approach ensured that the Integrated Action Plan would be rooted in the real needs and aspirations of the community.

Testing the actions

Jõesuu Village Day, our selected small-scale action, was designed as a participatory event to test ideas and gather community feedback on potential solutions for Jõesuu's development. This included the exploration of various locations for future recreational areas as well as community-led brainstorming sessions. Specifically, we aimed to test the following:

1. Potential locations for recreational areas: Multiple sites were evaluated to understand their suitability for future use as sports fields, leisure parks, or community gathering spaces.
2. Market viability: A small market was organised to simulate the potential location and setup for a future marketplace, assessing accessibility, interest, and spatial needs.
3. Improvement of the bus stop area: Ideas were tested for enhancing the existing bus stop, including the feasibility of adding facilities such as a bicycle and walker parking area, car parking spaces, and a toilet for tourists and river fishermen.
4. Community participation: The event's structure encouraged diverse engagement methods, including open discussions, written suggestions on posters, and casual observation of activities, to test how to best involve various demographic groups in future planning efforts.

Photo 13. Excellent participation.
Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

The event and results

Jõesuu Village Day was a resounding success, with 200 participants from the village's 250 residents, showcasing exceptional community interest and involvement. The event featured three thematic brainstorming workshops (mõttekojad), each addressing a critical aspect of Jõesuu's development:

Sports and leisure: Focused on ideas for recreational spaces, including sports fields and community parks.
Transport and mobility: Discussed improvements to local transport infrastructure, particularly enhancing the bus stop and introducing facilities such as bike and walker parking.
Tourism and village development: Explored ways to attract visitors, such as eco-tourism opportunities and infrastructure to support local businesses.

The inclusion of live music and a small market created a welcoming and festive atmosphere, encouraging more residents to participate actively.

Photo 14. A very colourful crowd. Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

Key results

High engagement: The majority of the village participated, including elderly residents, families, youth, and local entrepreneurs.

Actionable feedback: Residents who were hesitant to speak during workshops wrote their suggestions on posters attached to thematic 'nests' built for the discussions. This inclusive approach ensured that everyone's voice was heard.

Photo 15. When you are a little afraid to talk... then write. Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

Bus stop improvement plan: Participants supported the idea of enhancing the bus stop by adding parking facilities for bicycles, walkers, and cars, as well as installing a toilet for tourists and fishermen. This plan is now being integrated into future development discussions.

Market location testing: The small market evaluated the potential of the site as a future marketplace, confirming its accessibility and appeal for vendors and visitors alike.

Recreational area selection: The testing of several locations provided insights into which spaces are most suitable for future sports and leisure development.

Photo 16. Not all were hesitant... Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

Summary of the SSA results

Jõesuu Village Day achieved its objectives of engaging the community, testing practical solutions, and gathering valuable feedback. The event reinforced the importance of inclusive planning processes and demonstrated the strong potential for community-driven development in Jõesuu. The insights and results from the event are now informing the next steps of the Integrated Action Plan, ensuring that it reflects the community's needs and aspirations.

One of the key objectives of Jõesuu Village Day was not only to gather input for future spatial developments but also to pilot a new participatory engagement method in a rural context. The event was designed as a learning process for both the municipality and the local community to demonstrate that residents' ideas are heard, valued, and considered in decision-making. By offering various ways to participate (including writing suggestions, small-group workshops, and informal conversations), the municipality aimed to foster a more inclusive culture of collaboration and strengthen mutual trust. The event served as a practical test for how participatory planning can be made both accessible and meaningful in a small village context.

Photo 17. Event poster displayed in apartment building stairwells, at bus stops, and on bulletin boards

Media coverage of Jõesuu Village Day:

Pärnu Postimees (local newspaper):
Jõesuu tested an innovative way to engage locals

Radio interview on TRE radio with Helle-Triin Hansumäe:
Listen to the interview: Aktuaalne Pärnumaal - Helle-Triin Hansumäe on Jõesuu Village Day

Digital tools and broader impact

To support community engagement and broaden participation, several digital tools were used before and after Jõesuu Village Day. The event was promoted through the municipality's Facebook page and local village groups, where active dialogue took place between residents and local officials. Digital communication reached a wider audience and created early interest. Moving forward, the municipality plans to expand the use of online feedback forms and other digital tools to enable follow-up input and keep the conversation going beyond single events.

The feedback and experience gained from Jõesuu Village Day will inform the design of future community events elsewhere in the municipality. The flexible, inclusive, and place-specific approach used in Jõesuu is being evaluated as a prototype for similar actions in other villages, adapting participatory planning methods for the rural Estonian context.

7

Integrated Actions

Below are 11 detailed actions aimed at addressing the challenges and opportunities in Jõesuu village. These actions align with the Integrated Action Plan's vision and strategic objectives and are designed to improve mobility, public spaces, community engagement, and local economic opportunities.

7.1 Integrated Action 1 – Safe Pedestrian and Cycle Path to Tori

Current situation

Jõesuu is located approximately 6 km from Tori small town, the nearest centre offering essential services such as schools, shops, and health care. However, the lack of safe pedestrian and bycicle roads creates a barrier for residents, especially children and those without access to private vehicles, to travel sustainably. The current road infrastructure is designed primarily for vehicles, with narrow shoulders and no dedicated lanes for non-motorised transport. This discourages alternative mobility options and increases dependency on cars, which is not environmentally sustainable or inclusive.

Figure 1. Possible bicycle route options.

Goals of action

Provide a secure, sustainable, and accessible mobility option for residents, especially children and families.

- Improve connectivity: Enable safe and sustainable active mobility between Jõesuu and Tori borough for all residents, including children and elderly citizens.
- Reduce car dependency: Provide a viable alternative to driving, promoting healthier and more environmentally friendly modes of transport.
- Enhance safety: Minimise the risk of accidents for pedestrians and cyclists using the route.
- Support 30-minute territory: Align with the principle of making essential services accessible within a 30-minute travel radius.
- Encourage active lifestyles: Promote physical activity through walking and cycling.

Proposed action
The development of a 6 km paved pedestrian and cycle path will connect Jõesuu to Tori borough.

The project includes the following activities:

1. Design and planning phase:
   - Conduct a feasibility study to identify the most suitable route that balances safety, cost, and environmental considerations. Calculate the impact for residents and evaluate the (bike-)tourism potential to Soomaa and along Pärnu River.
   - Engage local residents and stakeholders to gather input on the path's alignment, resting spots, and amenities.
   - Integrate the design with existing road infrastructure, ensuring minimal disruption to vehicle traffic.

2. Construction phase:
   - Build a paved path suitable for pedestrians and cyclists, ensuring a minimum width of three metres for shared use.
   - Install safety features such as reflective barriers, lighting, and clear signage.
   - Develop resting areas with benches, bins, and small shelters (with river views) at strategic points along the route.

3. Post-construction enhancements:
   - Add greenery along the path, such as native trees and shrubs, to improve the aesthetic and ecological value of the project.
   - Launch awareness campaigns to encourage usage, emphasising the health and environmental benefits of cycling and walking.

The path design will be coordinated with the existing road infrastructure, following the municipality's common practice of constructing new cycle lanes alongside existing road embankments. In denser village sections, the cycle path will be built at the same level as the road to adapt to spatial constraints. This approach enables direct integration with public transport infrastructure, allowing users to cycle part of the route, then switch to bus transport, and leave their bicycles at designated bus stops.

Additionally, resting areas with benches and minimal shelter will be placed at regular intervals based on input gathered during community consultations. This feedback-informed approach ensures that the infrastructure matches real user needs and comfort expectations.

Output
A completed, fully operational pedestrian and cycle path between Jõesuu and Tori borough, supported by necessary infrastructure and safety features.

Timeframe for implementation
- 2024 (Q1–Q4): Feasibility study, community engagement, and design approval.
- 2025 (Q1–Q3): Land acquisition (if necessary) and preparation of construction tenders.
- 2025 (Q4)–2026 (Q4): Construction and implementation of the cycle path.
- 2027 (Q1): Inauguration and public awareness campaign.

Lead agency and stakeholders
- Lead agency: Tori municipality
- Key stakeholders:
  - Regional Transport Agency: Collaboration on integrating the path with regional mobility plans.
  - Local residents: Provide feedback and co-create designs during consultations.
  - Schools and parents: Advocate for safer routes for schoolchildren.
  - Environmental experts: Ensure that the project aligns with sustainability goals.

Potential funding sources

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): Funding for sustainable transport infrastructure.
- National transportation grants: Support for local mobility initiatives.
- Municipal budget: Partial funding for community-based infrastructure projects.
- Private sponsorships: Contributions from local businesses benefiting from improved connectivity.

Risk analysis

1. High risk: Limited funding availability

Mitigation: Apply for multiple funding sources early and scale the project into phases, if necessary.

2. Medium risk: Land acquisition challenges

Mitigation: Engage property owners early and explore alternative routes if negotiations stall.

3. Medium risk: Low usage

Mitigation: Promote the path through local campaigns and community events, such as group cycling days.

4. Low risk: Environmental impact

Mitigation: Conduct an environmental assessment and design the path to minimise disruption to natural habitats.

Link to strategic objectives

This action directly addresses the following key strategic objectives:

1.Mobility and connectivity: It provides a safe, sustainable mobility option for Jõesuu residents, aligning with the 30-minute territory principle.

2.Green communities: By reducing reliance on private vehicles, the action supports environmental sustainability and promotes healthier lifestyles.

3.Inclusion: It ensures that mobility options are accessible to all residents, regardless of age or socio-economic status.

4.Governance: It involves stakeholders in the planning process, fostering transparency and community buy-in.

Expected impact

The completion of the pedestrian and cycle path will have a transformative effect on Jõesuu:

- Increased mobility: Residents will have a safe and efficient alternative to driving, enabling easier access to services in Tori.
- Healthier community: Walking and cycling opportunities will promote active lifestyles and reduce sedentary behaviour.
- Environmental benefits: Lower emissions from reduced car usage contribute to a cleaner and greener local environment.
- Enhanced safety: The dedicated path reduces the risk of accidents for non-motorised road users.
- Economic opportunities: Improved connectivity can attract visitors, boosting local businesses such as the cider farm and encouraging tourism-related developments.

7.2 Integrated Action 2 – Bus Stop Revitalisation

Current situation

The existing bus stop in Jõesuu serves as a critical transportation hub for the village, connecting residents to nearby Tori borough and other regions. However, it is poorly equipped to meet the needs of the community and visitors. It lacks essential facilities such as bicycle racks, walker parking spaces, car parking, and restrooms. Tourists and locals alike find the stop uninviting, while the lack of infrastructure limits its potential as a hub for modal shifts, such as cycling-to-bus connections.

Residents have expressed a desire for an upgraded bus stop that provides modern facilities and accommodates diverse needs, including improved accessibility for elderly residents and tourists using the riverside.

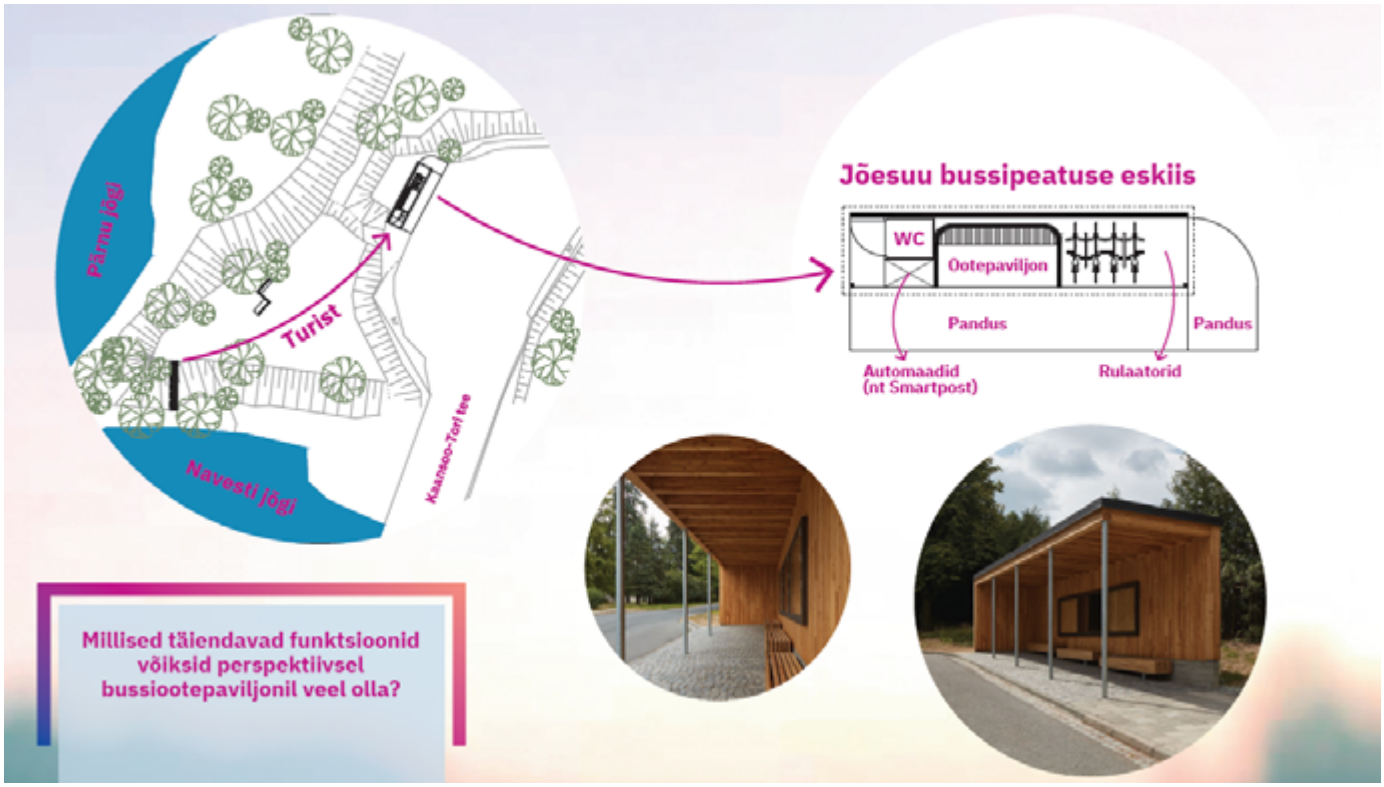


Figure 2. Bus station revitalisation proposal.

Goals of action

1. Enhance accessibility: Transform the bus stop into a welcoming and functional space for all users, including elderly residents, tourists, and cyclists.
2. Support modal shifts: Facilitate the integration of cycling and public transportation by providing secure bicycle parking.
3. Improve visitor experience: Offer amenities such as restrooms and tourist information boards to cater to visitors and tourists.
4. Encourage public transport usage: Increase the attractiveness and utility of public transport by making the stop more convenient and accessible.
5. Sustain local tourism: Create infrastructure to support the growing number of eco-tourists in Jõesuu.

Proposed action

Given that the Jõesuu bus stop sits within the construction-ban buffer of the Pärnu and Navesti rivers, the first step is to install a temporary pilot canopy attached to the existing bus shelter. The purpose is to test the siting of the future permanent solution, measure real-world use (bicycles, walkers, waiting passengers), and assess visual impact and community acceptance. The pilot is designed as a light, removable system (timber posts with bolted connections; small post footings) that does not extend beyond the existing shelter's footprint and does not require excavation or a permanent foundation.

After the comprehensive plan (general plan) amendment reduces the construction-ban buffer and the necessary environmental approvals are secured, the municipality will build the full bus shelter and forecourt, including bike/walker parking and related visitor amenities.

Key activities include:

1. Infrastructure development:
    - Install secure bicycle racks to promote cycling-to-bus travel.
    - Create walker and stroller parking spaces to improve accessibility for elderly residents and families.
    - Provide designated car parking spaces for park-and-ride options.
    - Build public restrooms to accommodate the needs of tourists and fishermen using the nearby rivers.
    - Upgrade the shelter to provide weather protection and seating.
2. Visitor-friendly enhancements:
    - Add informational signage with bus schedules, local attractions, and nearby services.
    - Install tourist information boards showcasing Jõesuu's eco-tourism opportunities and cultural heritage.
3. Sustainability features:
    - Integrate solar-powered lighting to enhance energy efficiency.
    - Use recycled materials where possible for construction.
4. Community engagement:
    - Host workshops to gather feedback on desired features.
    - Include local artists to design aesthetically pleasing elements, such as murals or signage, that reflect Jõesuu's cultural identity.

Output

1. Temporary canopy installed and evaluated (functionality, comfort, usage counts).

2. Siting and programme for the permanent shelter refined based on user data and community feedback.

3. Permanent shelter design-ready package prepared following buffer reduction and approvals.

Timeframe for implementation

- 2025 Q2–Q3: Concept and permit checks for the temporary canopy; community outreach and on-site observations.

- 2025 Q4: Install temporary canopy; begin 3–6 months of usage and satisfaction monitoring.

- 2026 Q2–Q4: Complete comprehensive plan amendment (buffer reduction); prepare preliminary and main design for the permanent shelter; secure funding.

- 2027 Q1–Q4: Construct the full bus shelter and forecourt (subject to plan adoption and approvals).

Lead agency & stakeholders

- Lead agency: Tori municipality
- Key stakeholders:
  - Local residents: Provide input on design and facilities.
  - Public transport operators: Ensure integration with transport schedules.
  - Tourism Board: Collaborate on signage and visitor information.
  - Local NGOs: Advocate for accessibility and community-friendly features.
  - Environmental specialists: Advise on sustainable materials and energy-efficient solutions.

Potential funding sources

- EU Green Mobility Fund: Support for sustainable transport infrastructure.
- National transport grants: Funding for rural mobility initiatives.
- Municipal budget: Partial funding for community-specific enhancements.
- Private sponsorships: Contributions from local businesses benefiting from increased traffic and tourism.

Risk analysis

1. Risk: Insufficient funding (medium)

Mitigation: Secure multiple funding sources early and prioritise features based on available budgets.

2. Risk: Low usage (medium)

Mitigation: Conduct awareness campaigns and integrate the stop into broader transport and tourism strategies.

3. Risk: Maintenance challenges (medium)

Mitigation: Partner with local businesses or NGOs to share maintenance responsibilities.

4. Risk: Delays in construction (low)

Mitigation: Develop a clear timeline and engage reliable contractors with proven track records.

Link to strategic objectives

This action aligns with several strategic objectives:

1. Accessibility and welcoming cities: The enhanced bus stop will serve as an inclusive and user-friendly space, promoting sustainable travel options.
2. Green communities: Solar lighting and recycled materials contribute to environmental sustainability.
3. Tourism development: Visitor-friendly features make the bus stop a gateway for eco-tourists exploring Jõesuu's natural assets.
4. Community engagement: Residents play an active role in shaping the design and functionality of the space.

Expected impact

The upgraded bus stop will provide long-term benefits for Jõesuu:

- Increased public transport usage: More residents will opt for buses over cars, contributing to reduced emissions.
- Enhanced connectivity: The stop will bridge the gap between local mobility and regional transport systems.
- Tourism boost: The improvements will attract more tourists, benefiting local businesses and boosting the economy.
- Community pride: The revitalised stop will serve as a symbol of progress and innovation for Jõesuu residents.

The Jõesuu bus stop revitalisation will transform a basic infrastructure element into a multi-functional asset, fostering sustainable mobility and enhancing the village's appeal.

7.3 Integrated Action 3 – Recreational Area Development

Current situation

Jõesuu lacks designated recreational spaces, leaving residents without adequate facilities for outdoor activities, sports, or leisure. There are no playgrounds for children, fitness areas for adults, or communal spaces for families to gather. While the village is surrounded by natural beauty, such as the Pärnu and Navesti rivers, these assets remain largely underutilised for recreation and social interaction. This lack of infrastructure reduces the quality of life for residents and limits the village's appeal to visitors, particularly eco-tourists drawn to the region's natural environment.

Figure 3. Potential location and design of a children's playground.

Goals of action

1. Enhance quality of life: Create spaces for physical activity, relaxation, and community gatherings to improve the well-being of residents.
2. Foster social cohesion: Provide communal areas that encourage interaction among residents across different age groups.
3. Attract tourists: Leverage the village's natural assets to establish Jõesuu as a destination for eco-tourism and outdoor recreation.
4. Promote environmental awareness: Integrate educational elements into the recreational space to highlight the importance of local biodiversity and sustainability.

Proposed action

Develop a multi-functional recreational area near the riverside and residential zones, tailored to the needs of Jõesuu's residents and visitors.

The project will include the following activities:

1. Community consultation:
   - Conduct workshops to gather input on desired features, ensuring that the design reflects the needs and preferences of local residents.
2. Design and planning:
   - Collaborate with landscape architects to create a layout that blends with the natural surroundings.
   - Allocate space for different age groups and activities, ensuring inclusivity.
3. Recreational features:
   - Playground: Install modern, safe equipment for children.

- Outdoor fitness area: Set up fitness stations suitable for adults and the elderly.
- Picnic areas: Create shaded spots with tables and benches for families and visitors.
- Walking trails: Develop trails along the riverside, with signage highlighting local flora and fauna.

4. Sustainable landscaping:
   - Use native plants to enhance biodiversity and reduce maintenance needs.
   - Incorporate environmentally friendly materials in construction.
5. Educational elements:
   - Add interpretive signage about the region's natural and cultural heritage.
   - Include installations that promote environmental awareness, such as information boards on sustainable practices.

The location of the recreational area has been selected in alignment with the village's broader development plans and the proposed bicycle route network, ensuring high accessibility for residents and visitors alike. To support multifunctional and seasonal use, the area will include removable and reconfigurable elements, such as modular seating, event tents, or lighting installations, which enable flexible adaptation for temporary markets, cultural events, or community gatherings after dark.

Output

A vibrant, accessible, and multi-functional recreational area that serves both residents and tourists.

Timeframe for implementation

- 2024 (Q1–Q2): Community consultations and design finalisation.
- 2024 (Q3–Q4): Secure funding and finalise tenders.
- 2025 (Q1–Q4): Begin construction of recreational facilities and trails.
- 2026 (Q1): Open the completed area to the public with a launch event.

Lead agency & stakeholders

- Lead agency: Tori municipality
- Key stakeholders:
  - Local residents: Provide input on design and features.
  - Landscape architects: Develop eco-friendly and inclusive designs.
  - Tourism Board: Integrate the area into regional eco-tourism strategies.
  - NGOs: Assist in environmental and community engagement efforts.

Potential funding sources

- LEADER programme: Support for rural community development projects.
- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): Funding for green infrastructure and public spaces.
- Municipal budget: Partial funding for local infrastructure improvements.
- Private sponsorships: Contributions from local businesses and organisations.

Risk analysis

1. Risk: Insufficient funding (medium)

Mitigation: Secure multiple funding sources, prioritise features, and implement the project in phases if needed.

2. Risk: Low usage (low)

Mitigation: Involve the community in the design process to ensure relevance and organise events to promote the space.

3. Risk: Environmental impact (low)

Mitigation: Conduct environmental assessments and use eco-friendly materials and methods during construction.

Link to strategic objectives

This action aligns with multiple strategic objectives:

1. Public spaces: Provides vibrant, multi-functional areas for recreation and social interaction.
2. Green communities: Promotes sustainability through eco-friendly design and landscaping.
3. Tourism development: Enhances Jõesuu's attractiveness as a destination for eco-tourists and outdoor enthusiasts.
4. Community engagement: Fosters local involvement in planning and design, strengthening social cohesion.

Expected impact

The recreational area will have wide-ranging benefits for Jõesuu:

1. Improved quality of life: Residents will have accessible spaces for exercise, play, and relaxation, leading to better physical and mental health.
2. Stronger community ties: The area will serve as a hub for social interaction, fostering a sense of belonging and community pride.
3. Economic growth: The enhanced recreational infrastructure will attract tourists, benefiting local businesses and creating opportunities for new ventures.
4. Environmental awareness: Educational elements will encourage residents and visitors to appreciate and protect the region's natural assets.
5. Increased visitor engagement: Tourists will have more reasons to visit Jõesuu, enhancing its reputation as a rural eco-tourism destination.

The recreational area will serve as a cornerstone for Jõesuu's transformation into a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable community.

7.4 Integrated Action 4 – Apartment Renovation Programme

Current situation

Jõesuu village has eight Soviet-era apartment buildings that are structurally sound but outdated and energy-inefficient. These buildings house a significant portion of the local population, many of whom work in the nearby window factory. However, deteriorating facades, poor insulation, and outdated systems significantly reduce the comfort, energy efficiency, and visual appeal of these homes. The outdated appearance of these central housing blocks also negatively impacts the overall image of the village.

At the same time, local residents often lack the technical knowledge and financial resources to undertake major renovation projects independently. Awareness of national support schemes is limited, and navigating the process of renovation planning, funding application, and implementation can be daunting without external support.

Photo 18. View of one of the existing apartment buildings in Jõesuu village. Photo by Helle-Triin Hansumäe, 2024.

Figure 4. Excerpt from the apartment building renovation project. The project was prepared by Termopilt OÜ.

As of now, a renovation project to improve the energy efficiency of one apartment building in Jõesuu has already been developed with the support of the Estonian Business and Innovation Agency (EISA). However, the resulting design is highly functional and architecturally pragmatic, focusing mainly on technical aspects rather than visual or spatial quality. To complement this, the municipality's facade improvement initiative aims to enhance the visual appeal and identity of renovated buildings through thoughtful design and aesthetic upgrades. This would improve not only the attractiveness of the renovated buildings but also the overall appearance and atmosphere of the village, making Jõesuu a more inviting and cohesive environment for residents and visitors alike.

Goals of action

1. Improve living conditions: Renovate housing to ensure modern comfort and safety standards.
2. Increase energy efficiency: Reduce heating costs and environmental impact by applying sustainable renovation practices.
3. Promote community ownership: Empower residents and housing associations to lead and manage the renovation process.
4. Enhance the visual identity of the village: Encourage facade art (murals) to improve the environment and strengthen the village's cultural and aesthetic identity.
5. Raise awareness of available support: Inform residents about relevant renovation grants and technical support services.

Photo 19. Examples of murals. Local flora and fauna motifs could be used, for instance.

Proposed action

The Apartment Renovation Programme supports the self-initiative of residents and housing associations by facilitating access to funding and expert advice. The action also proposes aesthetic enhancements to apartment building facades through mural paintings, supported by the municipality, to improve the overall visual quality of the village and express local identity.

The focus of the Apartment Renovation Programme is to significantly increase the energy efficiency of Soviet-era multifamily buildings in Jõesuu. The action primarily involves deep renovation rather than minor refurbishment. This includes the insulation of facades, basements, and roofs, the replacement of outdated windows and doors with modern energy-efficient units, and the installation of a mechanical ventilation system with heat recovery.

Where economically feasible—depending on the financial capacity of the apartment association—additional improvements such as rooftop solar panels may be included to further enhance energy performance and reduce utility costs. The programme aims to not only improve comfort and living conditions but also contribute to the municipality's broader climate goals by reducing the carbon footprint of the residential sector.

Key activities include:

1. Community mobilisation: Encourage residents to initiate renovation discussions within their housing associations and take ownership of the renovation process.
2. Information sessions and workshops: Tori municipality will organise awareness events, providing information on available support schemes such as those managed by the Estonian Business and Innovation Agency (EISA, formed in 2022 by merging KredEx and EAS), which offers continuous funding for apartment building renovations.
3. Technical guidance: The municipality will connect residents with certified professionals for building audits and renovation planning.

4. Visual enhancements: The municipality can provide financial support for mural paintings on the side facades of apartment buildings, thereby enriching the local environment and enhancing community pride.

Output
Renovated apartments with improved energy efficiency, aesthetics, and living conditions.

Timeframe for implementation
This action is continuous and long-term in nature. Renovation efforts depend on the readiness and initiative of each building's residents. Awareness campaigns and technical support should be available on an ongoing basis, while mural projects can be initiated in collaboration with interested housing associations once renovations are completed.

Lead agency & stakeholders
- Lead agency: Local residents and housing associations of Jõesuu (the community) should take the lead role in initiating and managing the apartment renovation process. Their direct involvement ensures community ownership and the relevance of actions.
- Key stakeholders:
  - o Building associations: Coordinate renovation projects and manage funding applications.
  - o Energy consultants: Conduct audits and recommend energy-efficient solutions.
  - o Local contractors: Execute renovation work.
  - o Residents: Provide input and participate in decision-making processes.
  - o Tori municipality will act as an information provider and advisor, offering guidance on funding schemes, technical requirements, and best practices. Additionally, the municipality may offer support in the form of grants for mural paintings on the side facades of apartment buildings, aiming to improve the village's overall visual environment and strengthen local identity.

Potential funding sources
- EISA (former KredEx) apartment renovation grants
- Municipal funds for mural support
- European Structural Funds for energy efficiency measures (via national programmes)
- Residents' own contributions (co-financing as required)

Risk analysis
1. Risk: Low resident participation (medium)
Mitigation: Raise awareness through community workshops, share inspirational examples, and offer ongoing advisory support from the municipality to simplify the renovation process. Where feasible, facilitate connections between housing associations that have successfully renovated their buildings and those just starting.

2. Risk: High initial costs (medium)
Mitigation: Encourage the use of national and EU-level support schemes (e.g. EISA grants) and promote phased renovations where feasible. Emphasise long-term savings through lower energy bills and increased property value.

3. Risk: Limited understanding of technical and administrative requirements (medium)
Mitigation: Tori municipality will act as an information intermediary, providing clear guidance, checklists, and referrals to competent experts.

4. Risk: Resistance to renovation or aesthetic improvements (low)
Mitigation: Highlight the benefits through pilot murals and energy savings examples. Support from local artists and community participation in mural design can also increase ownership and reduce resistance.

5. Risk: Contractor delays or quality issues (low)

Mitigation: Encourage the use of certified service providers, offer lists of vetted professionals, and advise on establishing clear contracts, deadlines, and quality controls.

Link to strategic objectives

This action strongly supports the goals of the Integrated Action Plan:

1. Green communities: Promotes sustainable renovation and energy-efficient housing that reduces carbon footprints and improves resilience.
2. Inclusion and empowerment: Enables all residents, regardless of income, to benefit from healthier, safer living conditions.
3. Good governance: Builds capacity at the grassroots level and fosters meaningful collaboration between citizens and the municipality.
4. Cultural and spatial identity: Encourages visual improvements (murals) that reinforce Jõesuu's unique character and boost community spirit.
5. Economic resilience: Stimulates the local construction sector and increases the market value of housing in the area.

Expected impact

The Apartment Renovation Programme is expected to bring widespread and lasting benefits to Jõesuu:

1. Improved quality of life: Residents will live in safer, warmer, and more visually appealing homes.

2. Reduced household expenses: Better insulation and modern systems will significantly cut heating costs.

3. Population retention and growth: Upgraded housing will make the village more attractive to new families and professionals.

4. Enhanced visual environment: Mural-painted facades will uplift the overall look of the village and foster a sense of pride.

5. Community empowerment: Residents will gain the confidence and knowledge to lead future development efforts.

6. Model for others: Jõesuu can inspire other small villages to take ownership of their housing and public realm improvements.

By combining environmental, economic, and cultural benefits, this action ensures that Jõesuu's housing stock will become a cornerstone of its sustainable future.

7.5 Integrated Action 5 – Jõesuu Village Market and plaza

Current situation

Jõesuu lacks a local market where residents can buy fresh produce, local crafts, and essential goods. This absence forces residents to rely on nearby Tori small town or Pärnu city for daily necessities, increasing dependency on cars and reducing local economic activity. Additionally, local producers, including the cider farm and other small-scale entrepreneurs, have limited opportunities to showcase and sell their products. The lack of a market space also means there is no communal area for economic and social exchange, which could otherwise strengthen community ties.

Figure 5. Proposed view of the market area.

Goals of action

1. Promote local entrepreneurship: Provide a platform for local producers and small businesses to sell their goods and increase their visibility.
2. Improve access to fresh goods: Offer a convenient source of fresh produce and daily essentials for Jõesuu residents.
3. Strengthen community engagement: Create a vibrant space for social interaction, fostering a sense of community and belonging.
4. Boost tourism: Attract visitors to Jõesuu, leveraging the market as an additional draw for eco-tourists and day-trippers.
5. Support circular economy: Encourage the consumption of locally produced goods, reducing the environmental footprint of transported goods.

Proposed action

The Jõesuu Village Market will be a semi-permanent, multi-functional market space located in the village centre (active mostly during events ('OTT' (directly from farmer to consumer) or berry vending machine)).

Key steps in implementing this action include:

1. Site selection and preparation:
   - Identify a central location for the market, preferably near the bus stop or village centre, ensuring

accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, and cars.
- Clear and prepare the site with basic utilities such as water, electricity, and waste management systems.

2. Design and construction:
   - Build semi-permanent stalls or pavilions that can be easily assembled and dismantled for weekly market days.
   - Include a covered area to allow year-round operation, regardless of weather.
   - Create additional seating and shaded areas to encourage social interaction.
3. Market organisation:
   - Develop a schedule for weekly market days, rotating themes (e.g. food market, artisan crafts, second-hand goods).
   - Engage local producers, such as the cider farm, and craftspeople to participate regularly.
   - Coordinate with local businesses to create promotional packages, such as 'Market Day Deals'.
4. Community involvement:
   - Host workshops and consultations with residents to gather ideas and ensure the market reflects community needs.
   - Partner with schools and NGOs to organise educational events, such as cooking classes or sustainability workshops, during market days.
5. Tourism integration:
   - Promote the market through regional tourism boards and online platforms.
   - Collaborate with eco-tourism operators to make the market a stop on local tours.

To ensure adaptability and maximise usability, the market infrastructure will be based on removable stalls that allow the square to be repurposed for different activities, including open-air concerts, workshops, or temporary exhibitions. The municipality will also explore partnerships with local NGOs and civic groups to animate the space through small-scale events and testing temporary uses that promote evening activity and social inclusion.

Output
A fully functional market space that operates regularly, serving residents and attracting visitors.

Timeframe for implementation
- 2024 (Q1–Q2): Site selection, stakeholder engagement, and design approval.
- 2024 (Q3–Q4): Construction and installation of market infrastructure.
- 2025 (Q1): Launch of the market with promotional events and workshops.
- 2025 (Q2–Ongoing): Regular operation and continuous evaluation for improvement.

Lead agency & stakeholders
- Lead agency: Tori municipality
- Key stakeholders:
  - o Local entrepreneurs: Participate as vendors and contribute ideas during planning.
  - o Cider farm: Showcase local produce and promote regional identity.
  - o Community groups: Organise events and workshops.
  - o Tourism Board: Market the initiative to tourists and visitors.

Potential funding sources
- LEADER programme: Support for rural economic development projects.
- European Social Fund (ESF): Funding for community-building initiatives.
- Local sponsorships: Contributions from businesses benefiting from increased foot traffic.
- Municipal budget: Partial funding for initial construction and setup.

Risk analysis
1. Risk: Low vendor participation (medium)

Mitigation: Provide incentives such as discounted stall fees for local entrepreneurs and promote the mar-

ket extensively within the community.

2. Risk: Low visitor turnout (medium)

Mitigation: Launch with a high-profile event, collaborate with tourism operators, and ensure the market offers a diverse range of products and experiences.

3. Risk: Operational challenges (low)

Mitigation: Assign a dedicated market coordinator to oversee logistics and vendor relations.

4. Risk: Maintenance issues (low)

Mitigation: Establish a maintenance plan funded by stall fees and municipal support.

Link to strategic objectives

This action supports key objectives:

1. Economic growth: Provides a platform for local entrepreneurs and boosts economic activity.
2. Public spaces: Enhances the village centre as a vibrant community hub.
3. Inclusion: Encourages participation from all demographics, creating a sense of community.
4. Tourism development: Draws visitors to Jõesuu and supports the local tourism economy.

Expected impact

The Jõesuu Village Market will have a transformative effect on the community and local economy:

1. Economic benefits: Local producers and businesses will gain visibility and revenue, fostering economic growth within the village.
2. Community engagement: The market will serve as a focal point for social interaction, strengthening ties among residents.
3. Tourism development: The market will attract visitors, adding a unique feature to Jõesuu's eco-tourism offerings.
4. Access to fresh goods: Residents will have a convenient source of local, fresh produce and other goods, improving their quality of life.
5. Sustainability promotion: The market will encourage local consumption and reduce reliance on imported goods, supporting environmental goals.

The Jõesuu Village Market will become a vibrant centrepiece of village life, combining economic, social, and environmental benefits to create a lasting impact on the community.

7.6 Integrated Action 6 – Eco-tourism Trail Development

Current situation

Jõesuu is situated at the confluence of the Pärnu and Navesti rivers, offering stunning natural landscapes and proximity to the renowned Soomaa National Park. Despite this, the village has not fully capitalised on its eco-tourism potential. Currently, there are no formalised trails, informational signage, or infrastructure to attract and accommodate eco-tourists, such as hikers, cyclists, or nature enthusiasts.

The absence of eco-tourism trails limits the opportunities to showcase Jõesuu's unique biodiversity, cultural heritage, and recreational potential. Residents miss out on economic benefits from increased tourism, and visitors to nearby Soomaa National Park rarely extend their trips to Jõesuu.

Figure 6. A possible future solution for the bus stop, including a bicycle parking area, car parking, a toilet, and various vending machines (e.g. parcel lockers).

Goals of action

1. Enhance visitor experience: Provide well-marked trails and informational materials to enrich the experience of tourists and nature enthusiasts.
2. Promote environmental education: Create awareness about the region's biodiversity, cultural heritage, and sustainable practices.
3. Boost local economy: Attract more tourists, leading to increased revenue for local businesses such as the cider farm and potential tourism-related enterprises.
4. Strengthen community pride: Showcase the village's natural and cultural assets to foster a sense of pride among residents.
5. Encourage sustainable tourism: Develop eco-friendly infrastructure that minimises environmental impact and promotes sustainable practices.

Proposed action

The Eco-tourism Trail Development project will establish a network of trails that caters to hikers, cyclists, and nature lovers while highlighting Jõesuu's unique features. Develop and market the Pärnu River area as an integrated tourism and hiking destination. Turn it into a distinct brand, similar to the 'Romantic Coastline', connecting various tourism farms, viewpoints and rest areas, camping and accommodation spots, etc.

Key activities include:

1. Planning and community engagement:
    - Conduct a mapping exercise to identify suitable routes that balance accessibility and environmental conservation.
    - Collaborate with residents, local NGOs, and the Soomaa National Park management to align the trails with regional tourism strategies.
2. Trail development:
    - Create well-marked trails with durable, eco-friendly materials (e.g. gravel paths, boardwalks over wetlands, riverfront viewpoints, picnic spots, and rest areas (platforms)).
    - Establish resting areas with benches, bins, and shelters to ensure visitor comfort.
    - Install interpretive signage that educates visitors about local flora, fauna, and cultural landmarks.
3. Supporting infrastructure:
    - Develop parking areas at trailheads and ensure bike-friendly access.
    - Include an outdoor visitor centre or kiosk at the starting point with maps, guides, and safety information.
4. Cultural integration:
    - Incorporate historical and cultural elements, such as storytelling boards about the village's history, local legends, and traditions.
    - Partner with the cider farm to organise guided tours or tasting sessions as part of the trail experience.
5. Marketing and promotion:
    - Create digital and print materials to promote the trail network, including maps, apps, and brochures.
    - Collaborate with regional tourism boards and tour operators to include Jõesuu in their itineraries.

In addition to physical trail infrastructure, the municipality will collaborate with local tech partners and start-ups to test digital tools that enhance visitor experiences. Potential applications include interactive digital trail maps, audio guides, augmented reality (AR) features for ecological or historical storytelling, and AI-assisted recommendations for points of interest. The trail network will also serve as a testing ground for innovative nature-tourism tools that can be scaled to other regions.

Output

A fully developed eco-tourism trail network with amenities and promotional materials, positioned as a key attraction in the region.

Timeframe for implementation

- 2024 (Q1–Q3): Mapping and route selection, stakeholder engagement, and design finalisation.
- 2024 (Q4): Secure funding and tender contracts for trail development.
- 2025 (Q1–Q4): Construction of trails and installation of supporting infrastructure.
- 2026 (Q1): Launch of the trails with an inaugural eco-tourism event.

Lead agency & stakeholders

- Lead agency: Tori municipality
- Key stakeholders:
    - o Soomaa National Park management: Provide expertise on biodiversity and sustainable tourism practices.
    - o Local businesses (e.g. cider farm): Develop partnerships for guided tours and related activities.
    - o Environmental NGOs: Ensure that trails comply with conservation standards.
    - o Local residents: Contribute knowledge of the area and participate in maintenance efforts.

Potential fund source

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): Funding for eco-tourism infrastructure and regional development.
- LEADER programme: Support for community-led rural development initiatives.
- Tourism grants: National and EU-level funding for sustainable tourism projects.
- Private sponsorships: Contributions from local businesses and tourism operators.

Risk analysis

1. Risk: Environmental impact (medium)

Mitigation: Conduct thorough environmental assessments and design trails to minimise disruption to natural habitats.

2. Risk: Low visitor numbers (medium)

Mitigation: Invest in robust marketing campaigns and partnerships with regional tourism boards.

3. Risk: Maintenance challenges (low)

Mitigation: Establish a maintenance fund supported by trail usage fees or contributions from local businesses.

4. Risk: Delayed implementation (low)

Mitigation: Develop a clear timeline and hire experienced contractors for timely completion.

Link to strategic objectives

1. Tourism development: Strengthens Jõesuu's position as a destination for eco-tourists and outdoor enthusiasts.
2. Green communities: Promotes sustainable practices and enhances the region's environmental awareness.
3. Economic growth: Creates opportunities for local businesses and generates revenue from increased tourism.
4. Public spaces: Expands accessible recreational options for residents and visitors alike.

Expected impact

The Eco-tourism Trail Development project is expected to deliver the following benefits:

1. Increased tourism: Attract eco-tourists and day-trippers, boosting local businesses and encouraging the establishment of new enterprises.
2. Enhanced environmental awareness: Visitors will gain a deeper appreciation for Jõesuu's biodiversity and cultural heritage.
3. Stronger community identity: The trails will highlight Jõesuu's unique natural and cultural assets, fostering pride among residents.
4. Economic opportunities: New tourism-related activities, such as guided tours and local product sales, will diversify the village's economy.
5. Sustainable growth: The trails will serve as a model for balancing tourism development with environmental preservation.

By integrating nature, history, and sustainability, the Eco-tourism Trail Development project will position Jõesuu as a standout destination in the region, offering enriching experiences for visitors while preserving its unique character for future generations.

7.7 Integrated Action 7 – Community Events Programme

Current situation

Jõesuu has limited cultural and social events, resulting in low levels of community engagement and cohesion. The village's population, which includes elderly residents, families, and younger individuals, lacks shared spaces and opportunities for meaningful interaction. While the success of Jõesuu Village Day demonstrates the potential for community involvement, such events are rare and do not currently have a structured framework for sustainability or growth. There is an urgent need to create regular opportunities for residents to come together, celebrate their heritage, and actively participate in shaping the future of the village.

Figure 7. The currently empty lot between the apartment buildings is an ideal area for hosting public events and developing sports fields.

Goals of action

1. Strengthen community bonds: Foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose among Jõesuu residents through regular events.
2. Celebrate local culture: Highlight the village's unique cultural and historical heritage through festivals and educational workshops.
3. Encourage resident participation: Provide platforms for residents to contribute their ideas, skills, and resources to village development.
4. Enhance well-being: Promote mental and social well-being by creating vibrant, inclusive spaces for interaction.
5. Attract visitors: Position Jõesuu as a lively and welcoming destination for tourists and nearby residents.

Proposed action

The Community Events Programme will establish a regular calendar of diverse activities and events in Jõesuu, catering to all demographics and leveraging local resources and talents.

Key components include:

1. Annual flagship events:
   - Village Day (expanded): Build on the success of the existing event, adding features such as cultural performances, sports competitions, and themed markets.
   - Harvest festival: Celebrate local agricultural heritage with food stalls, workshops on sustainable farming, and cider tastings at the local cider farm.

2. Monthly social activities:
    • Cultural evenings: Host storytelling nights, film screenings, and musical performances in the village community house.
    • Outdoor gatherings: Organise picnics, hiking tours along the eco-tourism trail, and group fitness sessions in recreational areas.
3. Workshops and learning opportunities:
    • Skill-sharing workshops: Invite local experts to teach traditional crafts, cooking, or modern skills such as photography or technology use.
    • Educational talks: Focus on topics such as local history, environmental sustainability, and health and well-being.
4. Youth-centric activities:
    • Establish a 'Youth Innovation Club' to engage younger residents in activities such as coding workshops, art competitions, and sports tournaments.
    5. Tourism-oriented events:
    • Partner with regional tourism boards to create seasonal events (e.g. birdwatching festivals, canoe races) that attract eco-tourists.
6. Inclusive and accessible formats:
    • Ensure all events are designed to accommodate diverse needs, including accessibility for the elderly and those with disabilities.
    • Offer multi-generational activities that encourage participation from families.

Output

A structured and diverse annual events calendar, with increasing resident participation and visitor engagement.

Timeframe for implementation

- 2024 (Q1): Establish a steering group to coordinate event planning and execution.
- 2024 (Q2): Pilot smaller events to gather feedback and refine the programme.
- 2024 (Q3–Q4): Launch the first full calendar of events, including the enhanced Village Day and monthly activities.
- 2025–Ongoing: Evaluate and expand the programme based on community feedback and resource availability.

Lead agency & stakeholders

- Lead agency: Tori municipality
- Key stakeholders:
    - Local residents: Act as participants, volunteers, and organisers.
    - Schools and youth groups: Engage in workshops, sports, and cultural events.
    - Local businesses: Sponsor events and participate as vendors.
    - NGOs and cultural organisations: Provide expertise and resources for workshops and festivals.
    - Tourism Board: Promote events to regional and national audiences.

Potential fund source

- LEADER programme: Support for rural community-building initiatives.
- European Social Fund (ESF): Funding for social inclusion and cultural activities.
- Event sponsorships: Contributions from local businesses and organisations.
- Municipal budget: Partial funding for infrastructure and event management.

Risk analysis

1. Risk: Low participation (medium)

Mitigation: Use targeted marketing and inclusive programming to encourage diverse attendance.

2. Risk: Limited resources (medium)

Mitigation: Secure funding early, leverage volunteer networks, and partner with local businesses.

3. Risk: Event saturation (low)

Mitigation: Space events appropriately and ensure that each has a unique theme and target audience.

4. Risk: Weather-dependent challenges (low)

Mitigation: Provide indoor alternatives or covered spaces for key activities.

Link to strategic objectives

1. Inclusion: Foster participation from all demographics, creating a stronger and more cohesive community.
2. Public spaces: Activate underutilised areas for community use, making them vibrant and inviting.
3. Governance: Encourage collaboration between residents, NGOs, and the municipality.
4. Tourism development: Create events that attract visitors and showcase Jõesuu's unique culture and heritage.

Expected impact

The Community Events Programme will deliver lasting benefits for Jõesuu:

1. Stronger social connections: Regular events will help residents forge stronger ties with one another, reducing social isolation.
2. Enhanced local identity: Celebrating Jõesuu's history, culture, and natural beauty will instil pride in the community.
3. Improved well-being: Accessible and inclusive events will enhance the physical and mental well-being of residents.
4. Economic growth: Events will attract tourists, boosting local businesses and creating opportunities for entrepreneurs.
5. Sustainable growth: The programme will set the foundation for long-term engagement and participation, ensuring the village remains active and vibrant.

The Community Events Programme will transform Jõesuu into a lively hub of activity, showcasing its unique character and strengthening its community fabric and economic prospects.

7.8 Integrated Action 8 – Municipal Bicycle Circulation Programme

Current situation

Tori municipality has made significant investments in cycling infrastructure and currently holds the distinction of having the most extensive network of bicycle paths in Pärnu County. However, despite this achievement, a number of local children and families are unable to fully benefit from these amenities due to the lack of access to personal bicycles, especially in lower-income households.

As cycling is both a sustainable and healthy mode of transportation, the municipality sees a need to support equal access to bicycles and promote a cycling culture from an early age. Ensuring that all children are equipped with a suitable bicycle according to their age not only improves their daily mobility but also encourages lifelong sustainable habits. This approach aligns with broader goals of environmental awareness, equity, and active lifestyles.

Goals of action

1. Promote social equity by ensuring that every child in the municipality has access to a bicycle.

2. Encourage sustainable mobility and reduce future dependency on private cars.

3. Strengthen the use of existing cycling infrastructure across the municipality.

4. Foster a culture of active transportation among residents from an early age.

5. Lay the groundwork for a future universal bike access programme that includes all residents, not just children.

Proposed action

The action proposes the launch of a Municipal Bicycle Circulation Programme, starting with the provision of free, age-appropriate bicycles to all children residing in Tori municipality. In the long term, the programme could be expanded to offer bicycles to all residents, regardless of age or income level.

The action plan includes the following activities:

1. Mapping needs and inventory:
   - Create a database of all children aged 2–17 living in the municipality.
   - Identify the specific size and type of bicycle needed for each age group.

2. Procurement and recycling:
   - Set up procurement procedures for new bicycles.
   - Establish partnerships with local businesses and NGOs to include repaired and recycled bicycles as part of the supply model.
   - Integrate maintenance and repair workshops as educational activities.

3. Distribution and usage system:
   - Organise bicycle distribution events by school district or village.
   - Consider models where bicycles are registered to families and updated as the child grows.
   - Include helmet safety and maintenance training as part of the rollout.

4. Monitoring and expansion:
   - Track usage and impact to inform future decisions.
   - Assess the feasibility of extending the programme to adults, seniors, and those with special needs.
   - Link to existing state or EU-funded grant schemes that support mobility equity and sustainable transport.

Output

- All children in Tori municipality have access to a suitable bicycle.
- A functioning logistical model for future expansion of the programme to other population groups.
- Improved visibility and usage of the municipality's cycling infrastructure.
- Greater environmental awareness and physical activity levels among youth.

Timeframe for implementation

- 2025 (Q2–Q3): Needs assessment and stakeholder consultation.
- 2025 (Q4): Procurement and pilot rollout in selected schools or villages.
- 2026 (Q1–Q4): Full implementation for all children.
- 2027 onwards: Evaluation and phased expansion to other age groups.

Lead agency & stakeholders

- Lead agency: Tori municipality
- Key stakeholders:
  - Local schools and kindergartens
  - Families and parent associations
  - Bicycle retailers and repair shops
  - Social services and child welfare officers
  - National mobility equity programmes
  - Youth council and community NGOs

Potential funding sources

- Environmental Investment Centre (KIK)
- Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs (social equity programmes)
- European Social Fund+ (ESF+)
- LEADER programme for rural inclusion
- Private donations or public-private partnerships

Risk analysis

1. Risk: Insufficient funding (medium)

Mitigation: Combine funding sources from local, national, and EU levels. Start with a phased implementation – prioritise the youngest age groups first and gradually scale the programme.

2. Risk: Logistical and storage challenges (medium)

Mitigation: Use municipal buildings and schools as interim distribution and storage points. Partner with local NGOs and community organisations for decentralised logistics.

3. Risk: Low use or neglect of bicycles (low)

Mitigation: Implement a bicycle registration and accountability system, offer training on safe use and maintenance, and involve schools in promoting daily cycling routines.

4. Risk: Limited maintenance and repair capacity (medium)

Mitigation: Establish partnerships with local bicycle repair shops, vocational schools, and volunteer programmes. Include repair workshops as educational and community-building activities.

Link to strategic objectives

1. Green communities: Reduces reliance on motorised transport and promotes environmental responsibility.
2. Accessibility and inclusion: Supports low-income families and ensures mobility access for all children.
3. 30-minute territories: Enhances short-distance mobility options, particularly for accessing school and local services.
4. Governance: Encourages cross-sector collaboration and community participation in an inclusive mobility programme.

Expected impact

1. Universal bicycle access for children
All children living in Tori municipality, regardless of their family's income, will have access to a properly sized bicycle that supports their physical development and mobility needs. This ensures that every child can participate equally in daily activities, including commuting to school, visiting friends, or simply enjoying the outdoors.

2. Higher rates of daily cycling and reduced car dependency
By establishing bicycle use as a normal and supported part of childhood, the programme encourages cycling as a primary means of transportation. Over time, this habit is expected to reduce short-distance car usage, lowering overall traffic congestion and emissions, especially for school runs and village-level commuting.

3. Stronger cycling culture and use of existing infrastructure
The initiative strengthens the local cycling culture and maximises the use of the already well-developed network of bicycle paths in Tori municipality. It also justifies further investment in safe and connected cycling routes, creating a positive feedback loop between infrastructure and usage.

4. Improved health and well-being among children
Regular cycling supports children's physical and mental health, promoting daily movement, independence, and time spent outdoors. This can reduce sedentary lifestyles, improve cardiovascular health, and enhance focus and emotional resilience—benefits that positively affect school performance and overall quality of life.

5. Foundation for a long-term community-wide mobility programme
Starting with children, the programme sets a precedent for expanding access to bicycles across the entire population, including working-age adults, the elderly, and people with limited mobility. This creates a roadmap for a comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable local transport system, in line with climate goals and social equity policies.

7.9 Integrated Action 9 – Educational Workshops for Sustainability

Current situation

Jõesuu residents have limited awareness and knowledge about sustainable practices, despite the village's proximity to rich natural resources and its potential as an eco-tourism destination. Environmental challenges such as waste management, energy efficiency, and the sustainable use of local ecosystems remain unaddressed. There is also a lack of opportunities for residents to learn about and participate in sustainability-related initiatives, which could foster a deeper appreciation for the environment and promote collective action.

Goals of action

1. Raise environmental awareness: Educate residents about the importance of sustainability and how it applies to their daily lives and community.
2. Empower residents: Provide practical knowledge and skills that enable individuals to adopt sustainable practices.
3. Foster community engagement: Create opportunities for residents to collaborate on sustainability initiatives.
4. Promote eco-tourism: Educate residents about how sustainable practices can enhance the village's appeal to tourists.
5. Support local governance: Align community efforts with municipal and regional sustainability goals.

Proposed action

The Educational Workshops for Sustainability initiative will consist of a series of interactive workshops tailored to Jõesuu residents, focusing on practical applications of sustainability.

The action will include the following activities:

1. Community engagement and needs assessment:
   - Conduct surveys and interviews to identify key sustainability topics of interest to residents (e.g. waste reduction, energy efficiency, eco-tourism).
   - Involve local NGOs, experts, and schools in the planning process to ensure diverse and relevant content.
2. Thematic workshops:
   - Sustainable living at home: Teach residents about energy-saving techniques, reducing household waste, and composting.
   - Eco-tourism opportunities: Educate participants on how eco-tourism can benefit the village and how they can contribute (e.g. creating nature-based experiences or services).
3. Biodiversity conservation: Highlight the importance of local ecosystems and provide guidance on how to protect native flora and fauna.
   - Smart agriculture: Introduce sustainable farming practices, including permaculture and organic farming, for local landowners.
   - Circular economy principles: Focus on upcycling, recycling, and creating local economic opportunities from waste materials.
4. Hands-on activities:
   - Tree planting events: Teach the importance of afforestation while actively improving local greenery.
   - DIY sustainability projects: Engage participants in building compost bins, rainwater harvesting systems, or energy-efficient home features.
   - Clean-up drives: Organise events to clean the riversides and other public spaces, incorporating waste sorting and recycling lessons.

5. Youth-focused initiatives:
    - Collaborate with local schools to develop sustainability modules and organise eco-camps for students.
    - Create a 'Junior Eco-Champions' programme to reward youth who contribute to sustainability efforts.
6. Partnerships and collaboration:
    - Work with the Soomaa National Park management to bring in experts for biodiversity and eco-tourism workshops.
    - Partner with local businesses such as the cider farm to showcase sustainable practices in production and tourism.

Output

A well-rounded series of workshops and community events that build knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm for sustainability among Jõesuu residents.

As part of the user experience improvement, new bus stops will be equipped with digital timetables and real-time arrival information. These digital panels enhance usability for all age groups and provide up-to-date information in remote rural contexts, making the system more reliable and attractive to a broader segment of the population.

Timeframe for implementation

- 2024 (Q1): Conduct needs assessment and finalise workshop themes.
- 2024 (Q2–Q3): Develop workshop materials and confirm partnerships with experts and NGOs.
- 2024 (Q4): Launch the first series of workshops and community activities.
- 2025 (Q1–Q4): Expand and refine the programme based on participant feedback.

Lead agency & stakeholders

- Lead agency: Tori municipality
- Key stakeholders:
    - o Residents: Act as participants in and contributors to the workshops.
    - o Local schools: Partner to implement youth-oriented activities and curriculum.
    - o NGOs: Provide expertise on environmental issues and sustainability practices.
    - o Soomaa National Park management: Collaborate on biodiversity and eco-tourism workshops.
    - o Local businesses: Integrate sustainable practices into their operations and participate in workshops.

Potential funding sources

- LEADER programme: Support for rural community-building and educational projects.
- European Social Fund (ESF): Funding for education and social inclusion initiatives.
- Environmental grants: National and EU-level funding for sustainability and biodiversity projects.
- Private sponsorships: Contributions from local businesses and environmentally conscious organisations.

Risk analysis

1.Risk: Low participation (medium)

Mitigation: Use targeted outreach campaigns to engage residents and highlight the benefits of attending workshops.

2. Risk: Limited expertise availability (medium)

Mitigation: Partner with regional organisations and recruit a diverse pool of experts to cover various sustainability topics.

3. Risk: Lack of continuity (low)

Mitigation: Establish long-term partnerships and train local leaders to continue organising workshops.

4. Risk: Funding shortages (low)

Mitigation: Secure diverse funding sources and align workshops with grant eligibility criteria.

Link to strategic objectives

1. Green communities: Educates residents on adopting sustainable practices, fostering a culture of environmental stewardship.
2. Governance: Encourages collaboration between residents, schools, businesses, and local government.
3. Tourism development: Empowers residents to develop eco-tourism opportunities that align with sustainability goals.
4. Inclusion: Ensures that all demographic groups, including youth and the elderly, have access to knowledge and resources.

Expected impact

The Educational Workshops for Sustainability will deliver tangible benefits for Jõesuu:

1. Increased environmental awareness: Residents will have a deeper understanding of sustainability and its local relevance.
2. Practical behaviour changes: Participants will adopt energy-efficient practices, reduce waste, and contribute to community initiatives.
3. Stronger community ties: Workshops will provide a platform for residents to collaborate and take pride in their shared efforts.
4. Eco-tourism growth: Knowledge gained from the workshops will help residents develop sustainable tourism offerings.
5. Future-ready community: By equipping residents with skills and knowledge, the initiative will make Jõesuu more resilient to environmental and economic challenges.

To support public awareness and ensure high uptake of the programme, Tori municipality will implement a targeted digital communication strategy. The initiative will be promoted via the municipality's Facebook pages, local village groups, and a new digital newsletter that delivers location-specific updates to subscribers. An online registration form will streamline participation and ensure accessibility across demographic groups. To maintain a feedback loop, residents will be invited to participate in online surveys and in-person workshops that assess the usability and impact of the programme. These outreach tools build trust, promote participation, and enable continuous improvement based on real user experience.

By integrating education with action, this initiative will transform Jõesuu into a sustainability-conscious community that leads by example in preserving its natural and cultural heritage.

7.10 Integrated Action 10 – Revitalisation of the Riverside Area

Current situation

The riverside area in Jõesuu, situated at the confluence of the Pärnu and Navesti rivers, holds immense potential but remains underutilised. Currently, there are no designated spaces for recreation, tourism, or community activities along the riverside. The area lacks basic infrastructure, such as pathways, lighting, and seating, making it inaccessible and unattractive to residents and visitors. While the riverside could be a focal point for tourism and social gatherings, its current state limits its contribution to the community and local economy.

Photo 20. View of the Pärnu River — at present, within Jõesuu village, the river is an underused valuable resource with very high tourism and recreation potential.

Goals of action

1. Enhance accessibility: Transform the riverside into a safe and welcoming area for all residents, including the elderly and families with children.
2. Promote recreation and tourism: Develop the riverside as a destination for outdoor activities, eco-tourism, and cultural events.
3. Celebrate natural heritage: Highlight the ecological and cultural significance of the rivers and their role in Jõesuu's identity.
4. Foster community interaction: Create spaces where residents can gather, interact, and participate in events.
5. Support local economy: Attract tourists and visitors to boost local businesses and create new opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Proposed action

The Revitalisation of the Riverside Area involves transforming the currently underdeveloped riverside into a vibrant, multi-functional space.

The action includes the following steps:

1. Community engagement and planning:
   - Host workshops with residents to gather ideas for the riverside's transformation, ensuring that the design reflects local needs and aspirations.
   - Collaborate with environmental experts to integrate sustainable practices into the design.
2. Infrastructure development:
   - Construct walking and cycle paths along the riverbanks, connecting key points of interest.
   - Install lighting to enhance safety and extend usability into the evening.
   - Develop viewing platforms for scenic overlooks and birdwatching opportunities.
   - Create picnic areas with tables, benches, and bins to encourage family outings (platforms with river views).
3. Recreational features:
   - Build a small dock or pier to support water-based activities such as canoeing, kayaking, and fishing.
   - Establish an outdoor fitness area and playground for children to encourage active lifestyles.
   - Introduce green spaces with native plants to enhance biodiversity and aesthetic appeal.
4. Cultural and educational elements:
   - Install interpretive signage about the ecological and historical significance of the rivers.
   - Organise guided nature walks and educational tours.
   - Create art installations that celebrate the village's heritage and relationship with the rivers.
5. Event integration:
   - Use the revitalised riverside as a venue for annual events, such as the expanded Village Day or eco-tourism festivals.
   - Host seasonal markets, music performances, and outdoor movie nights to maximise community and visitor engagement.

Output

A revitalised riverside area featuring pathways, recreational spaces, and cultural elements, transforming it into a hub for tourism and community life.

Timeframe for implementation

- 2024 (Q1–Q2): Community engagement, planning, and feasibility study.
- 2024 (Q3–Q4): Secure funding and finalise design plans.
- 2025 (Q1–Q4): Construction of infrastructure and installation of recreational features.
- 2026 (Q1): Launch with an inaugural community event.

Lead agency and stakeholders

- Lead agency: Tori municipality
- Key stakeholders:
  - Local residents: Provide input during planning and actively use the space.
  - Tourism Board: Promote the revitalised area to attract visitors.
  - Environmental NGOs: Advise on sustainable design and biodiversity preservation.
  - Local businesses: Benefit from increased foot traffic and potentially sponsor elements of the project.

Potential funding sources

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): Funding for green and recreational infrastructure.
- LEADER programme: Support for rural community development initiatives.
- Tourism and environmental grants: National and EU-level funding for eco-tourism and conservation projects.
- Private sponsorships: Contributions from businesses and philanthropic organisations.

Risk analysis

1. Risk: Environmental impact (medium)

Mitigation: Conduct environmental assessments to minimise disruption and prioritise eco-friendly designs.

2. Risk: Maintenance challenges (medium)

Mitigation: Develop a maintenance plan involving the municipality and community volunteers.

3. Risk: Insufficient usage (low)

Mitigation: Promote the space through marketing campaigns and integrate it into local events and tourism itineraries.

4. Risk: Funding shortages (low)

Mitigation: Secure multiple funding sources and prioritise elements for phased implementation.

5. Depending on the activity, it may be necessary to reduce the construction prohibition zone, but this may not succeed. Preparing a new comprehensive plan takes a lot of time.

Link to strategic objectives

1. Public spaces: Provides accessible, inclusive, and functional spaces for recreation and events.
2. Green communities: Emphasises sustainability through native landscaping and eco-friendly infrastructure.
3. Tourism development: Positions the riverside as a unique attraction, increasing visitor numbers and supporting local businesses.
4. Community engagement: Fosters a stronger connection between residents and their natural and cultural heritage.

Expected impact

The Revitalisation of the Riverside Area is anticipated to yield significant benefits:

1. Increased tourism: The riverside will attract eco-tourists, day-trippers, and outdoor enthusiasts, boosting the local economy.
2. Improved quality of life: Residents will gain a safe, accessible space for recreation and social interaction.
3. Stronger community identity: Highlighting the rivers as a central feature will reinforce Jõesuu's unique identity.
4. Economic growth: Increased foot traffic will benefit local businesses, while new tourism-related opportunities may emerge.
5. Environmental stewardship: Educational elements and sustainable designs will promote awareness and preservation of the natural environment.

This action will transform the riverside into a key asset for Jõesuu, bridging the gap between community life and tourism development, while preserving the area's natural beauty for future generations.

7.11 Integrated Action 11 – Branding Jõesuu's Identity

Current situation
Jõesuu lacks a cohesive identity or branding that reflects its unique character, history, and natural assets. While the village is known for its picturesque location at the confluence of two rivers and its proximity to Soomaa National Park, these features are not widely recognised or promoted. The absence of a distinct identity limits the village's appeal to visitors, potential residents, and investors. Additionally, residents lack a strong sense of pride or connection to their community, which has contributed to low participation in local initiatives and events.

Photo 21. Aerial view of Pärnu River. Photo by Viktor Tund, 2021.

Goals of action

1. Strengthen local identity: Develop a unified narrative that celebrates Jõesuu's cultural, historical, and natural assets.
2. Boost tourism: Create a recognisable brand that attracts visitors and positions Jõesuu as a key eco-tourism destination.
3. Enhance community pride: Foster a sense of belonging and pride among residents by emphasising the village's unique qualities.
4. Attract investment and new residents: Use branding to highlight Jõesuu as a desirable place to live, work, and invest in.
5. Integrate branding with development: Align the village's visual identity with ongoing projects to ensure consistency and visibility.
6. Create an information board (outdoor exhibition) about the village's development, history, and the most important and interesting events to increase people's awareness of the place and of themselves.

Proposed action

The Local Identity and Branding Initiative will establish a distinct identity for Jõesuu through strategic branding efforts. The plan includes the following activities:

1. Identity development:
    - Conduct workshops with residents, local businesses, and historians to define the village's key attributes and narratives.
    - Identify symbols, themes, and messages that reflect Jõesuu's heritage and aspirations (e.g. the rivers, eco-tourism, or Soviet-era history).
2. Brand design:
    - Create a logo, colour palette, and tagline that encapsulate Jõesuu's identity.
    - Develop branding guidelines for consistent use across promotional materials, signage, and public communications.
3. Signage and wayfinding:
    - Install branded signs at key entry points to the village, recreational areas, and tourist attractions.
    - Design maps and wayfinding tools that incorporate the village's brand and highlight points of interest.
4. Marketing and promotion:
    - Launch a professional website and social media channels to promote Jõesuu as a destination.
    - Collaborate with regional tourism boards to include Jõesuu in broader marketing campaigns.
    - Produce brochures, videos, and online content that showcase the village's attractions and events.
5. Community involvement:
    - Host events, such as a logo design contest or storytelling nights, to engage residents in the branding process.
    - Encourage local businesses to adopt the branding in their own marketing efforts.
6. Merchandising and partnerships:
    - Develop branded merchandise, such as tote bags, mugs, or postcards, to create a sense of identity and generate revenue.
    - Partner with local businesses to co-brand their products (e.g. cider farm packaging featuring the Jõesuu logo).

Output

A fully developed local identity and branding toolkit that includes a visual identity, promotional materials, and a marketing strategy.

Timeframe for implementation

- 2024 (Q1–Q2): Conduct workshops and define the village's core identity.
- 2024 (Q3): Finalise branding materials and guidelines.
- 2024 (Q4): Launch branding campaign and start promoting Jõesuu.
- 2025 (Q1–Ongoing): Integrate branding into local events, tourism activities, and development projects.

Lead agency & stakeholders

- Lead agency: Tori municipality
- Key stakeholders:
    - o Residents: Contribute to defining the village's identity and serve as ambassadors for the brand.
    - o Local businesses: Adopt the branding and promote it through their products and services.
    - o Tourism Board: Integrate Jõesuu's brand into regional tourism campaigns.
    - o Graphic designers and marketing experts: Develop branding materials and promotional strategies.

Potential funding sources

- LEADER programme: Support for rural branding and community-building projects.
- Tourism development grants: National and EU-level funding for marketing and promotional initiatives.

- Municipal budget: Partial funding for branding workshops and materials.
- Private sponsorships: Contributions from local businesses and stakeholders.

Risk analysis

1. Risk: Lack of community buy-in (medium)

Mitigation: Ensure that residents are actively involved in defining the identity and brand, making it reflective of their values.

2. Risk: Limited marketing reach (medium)

Mitigation: Partner with regional and national tourism boards to amplify the branding campaign.

3. Risk: Inconsistent branding use (low)

Mitigation: Provide clear guidelines and training for stakeholders on how to use the brand effectively.

4. Risk: Funding shortages (low)

Mitigation: Secure multiple funding sources and scale the project as needed.

Link to strategic objectives

1. Inclusion: Involve all community groups in shaping the brand, ensuring that it represents the diversity of Jõesuu.
2. Tourism development: Use branding to position Jõesuu as a must-visit destination for eco-tourists and cultural enthusiasts.
3. Economic growth: Support local businesses by creating a recognisable brand that attracts more visitors and customers.
4. Governance: Foster transparency and collaboration between residents, businesses, and the municipality throughout the branding process.

Expected impact

The Local Identity and Branding Initiative is expected to deliver significant benefits for Jõesuu:

1. Increased visibility: A cohesive and appealing brand will raise awareness of Jõesuu among tourists, investors, and potential residents.
2. Stronger community bonds: Engaging residents in the branding process will foster pride and ownership of the village's identity.
3. Enhanced tourism appeal: A professional brand will attract more visitors, boosting the local economy and creating opportunities for tourism-related ventures.
4. Economic development: Local businesses will benefit from increased recognition and foot traffic driven by the branding campaign.
5. Sustainability: By focusing on eco-tourism and natural heritage, the branding will align with Jõesuu's long-term goals for environmental conservation and sustainable growth.

This initiative will position Jõesuu as a dynamic and attractive village, with a clear identity that resonates with residents and visitors alike. Through branding, Jõesuu will connect its historical roots and natural beauty to a forward-thinking vision.

7.12 Integrated Action 12 – Improved and Flexible Bus Service

Current situation

Tori municipality has planned the revitalisation of the central bus stop in Jõesuu village, equipping it with bicycle and walker parking, car parking spaces, and public amenities. However, despite these planned physical improvements, the actual bus service—its schedule, frequency, and convenience—remains unclear and potentially insufficient for the current and future mobility needs of the village.

Given that many residents, especially the elderly and children, lack private vehicles and rely on public transport for access to schools, shops, and healthcare in Tori borough or Pärnu, the effectiveness of the revitalised bus stop depends directly on how frequent, reliable, and user-friendly the bus service itself is.

Currently, the bus serves Jõesuu only seven times per day at the following times: 06:36, 07:29, 07:50, 15:10, 15:17, 16:22, and 18:23. These limited options may not meet the diverse mobility needs of residents, particularly outside of school and work commuting hours.

Photo 22. View of the current bus schedule at the Jõesuu bus stop. Photo Helle-Triin Hansumäe

Goals of action

1. Ensure that the renovated bus stop is supported by a meaningful and well-used public transport service.
2. Encourage greater use of public transport by making it more accessible, predictable, and adapted to community needs.
3. Reduce car dependency by offering reliable alternatives, especially for low-mobility and low-income residents.
4. Explore innovative solutions, such as on-demand or flexible-schedule services, that suit rural population patterns.

Proposed action

The action involves conducting a feasibility study and pilot implementation of improved public transport connections, focusing on Jõesuu–Tori–Pärnu mobility needs.

Key activities include:

1. Needs assessment:
   - Collect data on current travel habits, peak hours, and unmet transport needs.
   - Engage residents (e.g. via surveys or village meetings) to gather qualitative feedback.

2. Model development:
   - Explore options such as:
     - o Fixed-schedule routes with increased frequency during school/work commute hours.
     - o 'On-demand' or semi-flexible transport models that respond to bookings via phone or app.
     - o Minibus or shared-taxi solutions in low-demand periods.

3. Pilot programme:
    - Select a 3–6-month period to test a flexible or demand-responsive route in Jõesuu, linking it to schools, shopping areas, and events.
    - Partner with regional transport agencies and service providers to test feasibility.

4. Evaluation and scaling:
    - Measure ridership, cost-efficiency, and user satisfaction.
    - Adjust routes and schedules based on feedback and usage.
    - Create guidelines for integration with other modes (bicycles, ridesharing, park-and-ride).

The flexible bus service will be designed to complement the existing regional and municipal public transport lines. It will serve as a feeder system that connects remote settlements like Jõesuu with main public transport corridors in the Tori borough and the city of Pärnu. Timetables and routes will be coordinated with existing scheduled services to ensure smooth transfers and minimise waiting times. The aim is to create a coherent multi-modal network that increases accessibility for residents without duplicating existing services.

Fleet and operational model

The service will operate with a small fleet of 8–16-seat minibuses equipped to accommodate elderly passengers, children, and people with reduced mobility. The operational model will include a mix of fixed-time departures during peak hours and on-demand rides during off-peak hours and weekends. Users will be able to request rides via a mobile application, by phone, or online through the municipality's website. The system will allow for flexible pick-up and drop-off points within designated service zones, enhancing convenience while optimising routes dynamically (private car involvement, demand-responsive public transport or robotaxis (possible future development)).

Service area and frequency

During the pilot phase, the flexible bus service will operate five days per week, including a Saturday service. Weekday operations will cover morning and afternoon peak periods aligned with school and work commutes, while Saturdays will focus on leisure travel and access to weekend events.

A visual network map and timetable breakdown for weekdays and weekends will be developed and shared with the public prior to service launch. This material will also be added to the annex section of the final IAP or its implementation package.

Output

- A more accessible and attractive bus service for Jõesuu residents.
- Piloted and evaluated a demand-based or adjusted-schedule transport concept.
- Strengthened integration between the bus stop infrastructure and the actual service.
- Increased public transport ridership and reduced car use for daily trips.

Timeframe for implementation

- 2025 (Q2–Q3): Resident engagement, survey, and baseline data collection.
- 2025 (Q4): Feasibility study and service design.
- 2026 (Q1–Q3): Pilot launch of flexible or on-demand bus solution.
- 2026 (Q4): Evaluation and planning for permanent model.

The digital backbone of the flexible bus system will be developed in two phases. In the first phase, a simple web-based booking interface and phone reservation service will be established to ensure universal access. In phase two, a more advanced mobile application will be introduced, enabling ride requests, real-time vehicle tracking, route suggestions, and feedback submission. Route optimisation software will support back-office operations, balancing efficiency with service equity. The municipality plans to collaborate with Estonian mobility tech companies and regional IT providers to ensure a robust, scalable solution.

Lead agency and stakeholders

- Lead agency: Tori municipality (Mobility and Transport Department)
- Key stakeholders:
  - Regional public transport centre (Pärnumaa Ühistranspordikeskus)
  - Local residents and schools
  - Local employers and service providers
  - Bus and minibus operators
  - IT and mobility innovation experts (if digital solutions are used)

Potential funding sources

- Estonian Transport Development Plan (2021–2035)
- Environmental Investment Centre (KIK)
- EU programmes supporting rural mobility innovation (e.g. Interreg or Horizon Europe)
- Local municipal budget

Risk analysis

1. Risk: Low participation in pilot (medium)

Mitigation: Build trust through clear communication and ensure the service schedule matches local daily routines.

2. Risk: High operational costs (medium)

Mitigation: Test cost-efficient models (minibus, ride-sharing) and consider scaling only if financially sustainable.

3. Risk: Technical barriers to 'on-demand' system (low)

Mitigation: Use simple booking systems (phone-based, not app-only) and offer assistance in using the service.

4. Risk: Limited institutional capacity (low)

Mitigation: Partner with regional transport centres and external service providers for implementation and oversight.

Link to strategic objectives

1. 30-minute territories: Makes essential services reachable even for those without a car.
2. Accessible and welcoming communities: Ensures transport is inclusive and responsive to real-life needs.
3. Green communities: Encourages sustainable transport modes and reduces emissions.
4. Good governance: Based on resident input, testing, and transparent adaptation.

Expected impact

- Improved access to services in Tori and Pärnu for Jõesuu residents.
- Higher satisfaction with public transport, especially among youth and the elderly.
- Increased use of the new bus stop and its associated infrastructure.
- Reduced car dependency, resulting in lower household costs and environmental footprints.
- A tested and scalable flexible transport model that could serve other rural villages in the municipality.

8

Implementation Strategy

8.1 Implementation strategy

The successful implementation of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Jõesuu requires clear governance, well-defined roles and responsibilities, prioritised phasing, a realistic funding strategy, and ongoing monitoring to ensure community involvement and alignment with the strategic goals. Building on the inclusive and participatory planning process, the same collaborative approach will guide the implementation phase.

Governance & responsibilities

Tori municipality will serve as the lead coordinating body, responsible for the overall management, coordination of funding applications, and alignment with municipal and national strategic frameworks. A designated IAP Implementation Coordinator (a municipal staff member) will be appointed to oversee daily operations, act as the main point of contact, and ensure the timely execution of all actions.
Each integrated action (e.g. cycle path, recreational area, renovation programme) will have an assigned project manager or lead unit within the municipality or among partners (e.g. Tourism Board, local NGOs). These leads will coordinate the technical work, contractor engagement, community involvement, and reporting for their respective projects.
A steering group, consisting of municipal representatives, ULG core members, and an external expert, will meet quarterly to monitor progress, resolve bottlenecks, and guide strategic decisions.

Stakeholder engagement and the future of the ULG

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) has been an essential forum for co-creation, enabling a wide variety of stakeholders, including residents, local entrepreneurs, youth, NGOs, and municipal staff, to contribute ideas and shape the IAP.
Going forward, the ULG will be formalised as a community advisory and monitoring group, continuing to meet at least twice per year. Its new role will include the following activities:

- Reviewing project progress and outcomes
- Providing feedback on upcoming implementation steps
- Facilitating dialogue between the community and the municipality
- Promoting transparency and accountability
- Supporting community-led initiatives that align with the IAP

To maintain momentum and broaden participation, the municipality will organise regular community workshops, info days, and participatory planning events, especially at key implementation milestones. Digital channels (such as the municipal website and social media) will complement in-person events to ensure accessibility and reach.
In addition, specific stakeholder groups, such as youth councils, senior representatives, and local entrepreneurs, will be invited to co-lead thematic activities or pilot initiatives. This layered approach allows for both broad community ownership and targeted collaboration.

8.1.1 Scaling strategy to other villages in Tori municipality

Although Jõesuu village serves as the primary pilot area for this Integrated Action Plan, the challenges it faces, such as limited access to services, car dependency, and low community engagement, are common among several other rural settlements in Tori municipality. These include villages such as Levi, Aesoo, and Kõrsa, which share similar demographic and infrastructural characteristics.

The IAP's methodology, actions, and participatory mechanisms are designed to be scalable. As part of the municipality's ongoing planning efforts, including the new comprehensive plan, the core concepts from this pilot will be adjusted to the specific context of other villages. The stakeholder engagement process, mobility solutions (such as bike access and flexible bus services), and small-scale community-driven improvements tested in Jõesuu can provide a blueprint for future interventions. The municipality intends to gradually apply this integrated model in other settlements based on needs, available funding, and readiness of local communities.

8.2 Project prioritisation, Gantt chart and milestones

To ensure the realistic and phased implementation of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP), all proposed actions have been assessed and prioritised based on a set of transparent criteria. These include urgency of need, expected impact, feasibility, resource availability, and alignment with strategic goals such as sustainable mobility, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability.

To support objective and transparent decision-making in prioritising actions, a multi-criteria assessment framework will be introduced. This framework will evaluate each proposed action based on dimensions such as anticipated impact, feasibility, implementation cost, community support, and alignment with strategic goals. The methodology will be piloted in the upcoming action cycle, and a more detailed toolset, including a scoring matrix, will be included in the annex or provided as a supplementary document during the next phase of implementation.

The bus stop action will proceed in two stages: a 2025 temporary pilot canopy for testing, followed by a 2027 permanent shelter after the comprehensive plan reduces the rivers' construction-ban buffer.

Prioritisation criteria:

1. Urgency & community demand

Actions that respond to critical needs (e.g. safe access to school, lack of community space) are higher priorities.

2. Transformative impact

Projects that have the potential to trigger wider changes, such as increased mobility or improved quality of life, are given preference.

3. Feasibility & readiness

Initiatives that are technically and legally ready, or can be quickly launched with existing resources, are prioritised in the short term.

4. Funding opportunities

Priority is given to projects that have a higher chance of securing national or EU funding.

5. Contribution to the URBACT pillars

Projects that directly support the principles of 30-minute territories, green communities, good governance, and accessibility are ranked higher.

Priority phasing of actions

Priority	Action	Justification
High	1. Safe Pedestrian and Cycle Path to Tori	Strong community demand; daily access to school and essential services; aligns with 30-minute territory and sustainable mobility goals.
High	2. Bus Stop Revitalisation	Physical infrastructure already planned; critical node for multimodal transport; community feedback from Village Day confirms its necessity.
High	3. Recreational Area Development	Tested and validated through the small-scale action; improves quality of life and social cohesion; supports youth and elderly needs.
Medium	4. Apartment Renovation Programme	Addresses energy efficiency and housing quality; one pilot project already exists; funding is available but requires coordination.
Medium	5. Eco-tourism Trail Development	Builds on natural assets and proximity to Soomaa; potential for economic activation but requires environmental planning.
Medium	6. Jõesuu Village Market	Supports local economy and community interaction; space available; low-cost activation but depends on seasonal interest.
Medium	7. Bicycle Circulation Programme	High potential for social equity, youth engagement, and long-term behavioural change; supports the use of existing cycling infrastructure.
Low	8. Educational Workshops for Sustainability	Enhances awareness and local capacity; low investment needed; strong long-term value but limited short-term impact.
Low	9. Branding Jõesuu's Identity	Strengthens place identity and tourism appeal; dependent on outcomes of other spatial and community actions.

Phased implementation timeline

2025–2026: Focus on mobility and public space actions (cycle path, bus stop, recreational area, bicycle circulation programme)

2026–2027: Scale up housing renovation, eco-tourism infrastructure, and launch market pilot

From 2027 onwards: Educational programmes and branding initiatives based on the foundation established in earlier phases

This prioritisation ensures that early successes build momentum and confidence among stakeholders and funding partners while setting the stage for deeper structural and cultural change in the long term.

To support strategic implementation, a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) was conducted to prioritise the 12 proposed actions of the Integrated Action Plan. The evaluation was based on several dimensions, including environmental and social impact, cost-efficiency, feasibility, community relevance, and alignment with the overall goals of the ECONNECTING framework.

Each action was scored using a weighted system developed in collaboration with municipal stakeholders and experts. While the detailed calculations are not shown here, the final ranking reflects the balanced consideration of impact, readiness, and resource requirements.

The table below presents the top five prioritised actions based on their total scores:

	Project Name	Final Score
1	Bus Stop Revitalisation	890
2	Educational Workshops for Sustainability	830
3	Bicycle Circulation Programme	770
4	Flexible Bus Service Pilot	735
5	Eco-tourism Trail Development	730
6	Safe Pedestrian and Cycle Path to Tori	715
7	Revitalisation of the Riverside Area	685
8	Branding and Identity Development	670
9	Recreational Area Development	620
10	Jõesuu Village Market (pilot phase)	565
11	Community Events Programme	550
12	Apartment Renovation Programme (support scheme)	475

These results highlight strong alignment between sustainable mobility and community-driven actions. The top-ranked project—Bus Stop Revitalisation—emerged as a clear priority due to its transformative potential, relatively low cost, and alignment with both mobility and place-based objectives. Educational and cycling-related actions also scored highly, reflecting a shared local desire for inclusive, healthy, and future-oriented development.

The MCA framework will continue to be used as a decision-support tool throughout the implementation period. It provides a transparent basis for planning and allows for periodic reassessment should conditions or funding scenarios change.

8.3 Cost estimation and funding strategy

The implementation of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Jõesuu requires a realistic and multi-layered funding strategy, combining local, regional, national, and European resources. The overall investment needed to realise all nine integrated actions is estimated at approximately €1.6–1.8 million, depending on procurement outcomes, inflation, and project phasing. While some actions require relatively modest funding, others—particularly infrastructure projects such as the pedestrian and cycle path or apartment renovations—demand more substantial investments.
An overview of costs and funding sources is presented in Table 7.3, including brief notes on each project's specific needs and characteristics.

While the current cost estimation reflects a realistic and achievable scenario for initial implementation, it is acknowledged that the proposed budget is conservative and may be on the lower side for full-scale execution. The municipality is actively exploring opportunities to secure additional funding through national and EU programmes, partnerships with private actors, and participation in upcoming innovation calls. The budget framework is flexible and will be updated as funding opportunities become available or when project scaling is required.

Action	Estimated Cost (€)	Notes	Main Funding Sources
Safe Pedestrian and Cycle Path to Tori	600,000	Includes design, permits, construction, safety features, and landscaping. Most complex and costly action; phased implementation recommended	ERDF, national transport grants, municipal budget
Bus Stop Revitalisation	120,000	Includes infrastructure, solar lighting, shelter, and info signage. Design work completed; construction planned for 2025	EU Green Mobility Fund, state grants, local budget, private sponsors
Recreational Area Development	150,000	Includes playground, outdoor gym, picnic area, and walking trail. Strong community support; suitable for phased implementation	LEADER, ERDF, local budget, community co-funding
Apartment Renovation Programme (support scheme)	500,000	Shared cost with residents; focus on insulation, energy systems, façades. First project drafted; aesthetic upgrades could be added	EISA grants, ERDF, state housing programmes
Eco-tourism Trail Development	80,000	Wayfinding, interpretive signage, and river access improvements. Relatively low cost but requires environmental assessment	Interreg, tourism development funds, private donations
Jõesuu Village Market (pilot phase)	40,000	Modular structures, utility connections, and event setup	LEADER, municipal budget, local sponsorship

Action	Estimated Cost (€)	Notes	Main Funding Sources
Bicycle Circulation Programme	50,000/ year	High social return; scalable by age group and settlement cluster	ESF+, KIK, municipal budget, social equity initiatives
Educational Workshops for Sustainability	15,000	Speaker fees, materials, and outreach activities. Low-cost; can be combined with other actions.	ESF+, LEADER, environmental education funds
Branding and Identity Development	20,000	Visual identity, marketing materials, signage. Depends on completion of other core actions to define identity focus.	Interreg, municipal budget, tourism branding funds

Total estimated budget: €1,575,000

Funding strategy

The funding strategy is based on the principle of blending funding sources and leveraging external resources to reduce pressure on the municipal budget. Tori municipality has experience managing EU-funded projects and is well-positioned to coordinate applications, co-financing arrangements, and implementation partnerships.

Funding decisions will prioritise the following:

- Project readiness and planning maturity
- Availability of matching funds
- Synergy with ongoing regional or national initiatives
- Expected long-term return (social, environmental, economic)

Projects will be phased where necessary to align with annual budget cycles and funding windows.

1. EU funding sources:

Several EU-level instruments align well with Jõesuu's development goals:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): Supports infrastructure such as cycle paths, public spaces, housing renovation, and tourism-related development.
- European Social Fund Plus (ESF+): Can support the bicycle circulation programme, awareness-raising, and workshops targeting children, families, and vulnerable groups.
- Interreg Europe: Relevant for cross-border learning, eco-tourism strategies, and branding activities.
- LEADER (via local action group): Well-suited for small-scale community-led investments such as the village market or recreational features.
- URBACT/Green Transition funding: May support small, innovative pilot actions such as sustainability workshops or smart mobility pilots.

Tori municipality will monitor open calls and prepare applications in cooperation with regional and national contact points.

2. National and regional sources:

Estonian and Pärnu County funding programmes will also play an important role:

- Environmental Investment Centre (KIK): Funding available for both bicycle programmes and energy efficiency measures.
- State housing and climate resilience programmes: Managed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications or EISA, these can cover apartment building renovations.
- Pärnu County development funds: Flexible support for local mobility and small-scale rural revitalisation.
- Ministry of Social Affairs: Programmes to address child and family well-being, which align with the bicycle distribution initiative.

Close cooperation with regional stakeholders will ensure the alignment of the IAP with county-level development priorities and funding windows.

3. Local and private contributions:

Tori municipality is committed to co-financing priority actions from its annual investment budget. While the municipality cannot fully fund large-scale infrastructure alone, its role in land preparation, design commissioning, and procurement coordination will serve as vital in-kind contributions.

Private sector and civil society are also expected to contribute:

- Local SMEs (e.g. the cider farm or building associations) may support events, workshops, or branding.
- Construction and landscape firms could be engaged in low-cost or co-funded implementation.
- Community volunteering and NGO participation will deliver lower-cost actions (e.g. signage, workshops, local events).

Funding timeline and strategy:

Year	Key activities	Expected funding milestones
2025	Design, procurement, grant preparation	ERDF/LEADER/State grants submitted
2026	Construction (paths, bus stop, recreation), programme launches	Disbursement of national and EU grants begins
2027	Branding, workshops, bike scheme expansion	LEADER/ESF+ support for social & community actions

- Grant applications will be prepared in advance (e.g. autumn 2024 for 2025 calls).
- Phased implementation will allow cost spreading and easier co-financing.
- High-priority projects (cycle path, bus stop) will be submitted to the most competitive early funding calls.

Financial sustainability

To ensure that projects are sustainable over time:

- Maintenance costs will be calculated during the design phase and included in the municipal operational budget.
- New services (bike programme, bus stop facilities) will be implemented with community partners to share upkeep responsibilities.
- Where feasible, revenue-generating elements will be explored (e.g. market stalls, tourism info points).
- Projects will be monitored for impact, and underperforming actions can be adapted or paused to avoid unnecessary spending.

In summary, the funding strategy relies on a flexible, diversified, and responsive approach to ensure the long-term viability of Jõesuu's transformation.

8.4 Overall timeline

The implementation of the Jõesuu IAP is structured into three main stages from 2025–2027, with each stage building upon the results and momentum of the previous one. The phasing allows for a balanced combination of planning, execution, and evaluation, while also taking into account the availability of funding, seasonal constraints, and community capacity.

Stage I: Preparation and launch (Q1–Q4 2025)

This stage focuses on project groundwork, including preparatory studies, design work, and funding applications.

Key activities:
- Finalising detailed designs for the pedestrian and cycle path and the recreational area
- Launching communication campaigns about the IAP
- Submitting funding applications (ERDF, KIK, LEADER, etc.)
- Procuring contractors and materials for priority infrastructure actions
- Mapping families for the bicycle programme and developing logistics
- Consulting residents on bus service improvements
- Establishing project governance: assigning managers and activating the ULG

Expected outputs:
- Completed technical designs and procurement documentation
- Signed cooperation agreements with project partners
- Initial community involvement in the planning process
- Ready-to-implement funding packages

Stage II: Core implementation (Q1–Q4 2026)

The second stage is the most intensive in terms of physical transformation and visible results.

Key activities:
- Construction of the safe pedestrian and cycle path connecting Jõesuu and Tori borough
- Reconstruction of the Jõesuu bus stop with added facilities
- Launch of the first phase of the apartment renovation programme
- Construction of the new recreational area and community gathering space
- Pilot implementation of the Municipal Bicycle Circulation Programme
- Development of the eco-tourism trail and interpretive elements
- Beginning the Jõesuu village market pilot with seasonal structures

Expected outputs:
- At least 6 km of new mobility infrastructure completed
- Fully equipped and accessible bus stop in operation
- Renovation of at least one apartment building started
- Distribution of free bicycles to school-aged children
- Improved outdoor environment supporting physical activity and social life
- First visitors attracted by the nature trail and market events

Stage III: Consolidation and expansion (Q1–Q4 2027)

In the final stage, focus shifts to evaluation, impact measurement, and extending successful pilots.

Key activities:

- Evaluation of all actions (user satisfaction, usage data, visual impact)
- Expanding the bicycle programme to include additional age groups or families
- Launch of branding and identity-building campaign (signage, digital platforms)
- Organising sustainability and heritage education workshops
- Refinement of the flexible public transport model based on pilot feedback
- Producing the final IAP implementation report

Expected outputs:

- Documentation of results and lessons learned
- Community capacity strengthened through workshops and engagement
- A functional, inclusive, and sustainable model of rural mobility is in place
- Recognition of Jõesuu as a forward-looking and resilient village

Gantt chart overview (2025–2027)

Action	2025	2026	2027
Safe Pedestrian & Cycle Path	P	I	-
Bus Stop Revitalisation	P	I	-
Recreational Area Development	P	I	-
Apartment Renovation Programme	P	I	E
Eco-tourism Trail	-	I	E
Jõesuu Village Market	P	I	E
Bicycle Circulation Programme	P	I	E+
Branding & Identity Development	-	-	I
Educational Workshops	P	-	I
Flexible Bus Service Pilot	P	I	E

Legend:
P – Preparation
I – Implementation
E – Evaluation/Expansion
E+ – Expanded to wider population

Key milestones:

Timeframe	Milestone description
Q2 2025	Finalisation of technical designs for cycle path, bus stop, and recreational area
Q3 2025	Submission of main funding applications (ERDF, KIK, LEADER)
Q4 2025	Procurement of contractors; pilot launch of bicycle programme planning
Q1 2026	Start of construction: cycle path and bus stop revitalisation
Q2 2026	Apartment renovation pilot begins; recreational area under construction
Q3 2026	Launch of eco-tourism trail and Jõesuu village market
Q4 2026	Bicycle distribution to all school-aged children; first evaluation workshops
Q1 2027	Expansion planning for bike programme; flexible transport model review
Q2 2027	Identity and branding materials published; signage installation begins
Q3 2027	Final public workshop and community review session
Q4 2027	Completion of implementation phase; final report and external communication

8.5 General risk assessment

The successful implementation of the Jõesuu Integrated Action Plan depends on a range of external and internal factors. A general risk assessment has been carried out to identify potential threats to the timely and effective delivery of the actions and to propose appropriate mitigation strategies.

Risk description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation strategy
Delays or gaps in funding	Medium	High	Apply to multiple funding programmes; phase implementation; prepare a local contingency budget.
Community engagement fatigue or low participation	Low–Medium	Medium	Maintain regular communication; use inclusive and engaging formats; celebrate visible milestones; offer incentives.
Weather or seasonal delays in construction	Medium	Medium	Schedule site work for spring–autumn; build time buffers into the Gantt chart; plan procurement and design in winter.
Cost increases (inflation, market fluctuations)	Medium	Medium	Use cost buffers (10–15%); split contracts where possible; revise lower-priority actions if needed.
Low usage of infrastructure or services	Low–Medium	Medium	Promote user-inclusive design; launch awareness and education campaigns; link physical upgrades with programming.
Institutional capacity limitations	Low	Medium	Assign clear responsibilities; involve external experts and NGOs; document internal processes; activate ULG support.
Environmental or heritage conflicts	Low	Medium	Engage environmental and heritage authorities early; apply light-touch and reversible interventions; raise awareness locally.

Risk management principles

- Early identification – Risks will be regularly reviewed at ULG and steering group meetings.
- Transparent communication – All stakeholders will be kept informed about challenges and adaptations.
- Flexible project design – Most actions are designed to allow phased or modular implementation.
- Community as a partner – Residents will not only be informed but also involved in finding solutions when risks emerge.

This proactive approach to risk management ensures that implementation remains realistic, adaptive, and resilient to changes over time.

8.6 Indicators and monitoring strategy

A clear and consistent monitoring strategy is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness, inclusiveness, and sustainability of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) in Jõesuu. This chapter outlines how progress will be tracked, which indicators will be used, and how data will inform adjustments and future planning.

Monitoring approach

The monitoring approach combines quantitative indicators (e.g. infrastructure completed, user numbers) and qualitative feedback (e.g. satisfaction surveys, resident stories). The aim is to understand not only what is delivered but also how it is received and used by the community.

Monitoring will be carried out by the following partners:

- The municipal implementation team, responsible for baseline data, contractor reporting, and financial tracking
- The ULG, responsible for resident feedback collection and community validation
- External partners (e.g. mobility or energy specialists), assisting with impact assessment of specific actions (e.g. apartment renovations, cycling)

Monitoring framework

To ensure clarity in roles and consistency in data collection, a structured monitoring framework is established for each indicator group. The framework identifies responsible actors, data collection methods, reporting frequency, and feedback channels.
This framework ensures that both technical performance and community impact are measured in a transparent and structured way. All data will feed into biannual implementation reports and inform decision-making by the steering group and municipality leadership.

Monitoring framework for Jõesuu IAP

Indicator group	Responsible actor(s)	Data source/method	Frequency	Reporting line
Cycling & pedestrian paths	Municipal infrastructure unit	Contractor reports, usage counts (manual/sensor)	Quarterly	IAP Steering Group, ULG
Bus usage	Public transport operator & municipality	Ticket data, observations, user feedback	Quarterly	Pärnu Transport Centre, ULG
Apartment renovations	Project manager, building associations	Energy audits, construction reports	Annual	Municipal Council, Residents
Recreation area	Community Office	Event records, photo documentation	Biannual	ULG, Local NGOs

Indicator group	Responsible actor(s)	Data source/method	Frequency	Reporting line
Bicycle program	Social Services, Education Dept.	Distribution logs, user surveys	Biannual	IAP Coordinator, Youth Council
Community workshops	ULG coordinator	Attendance lists, post-event surveys	Biannual	Municipal Planning Unit
Branding actions	Project designer, tourism contact	Visual audit, digital presence monitoring	Annual	Local Tourism Cluster
General satisfaction	ULG + external partner (if needed)	Resident survey (online + paper)	Annual	ULG, Municipal Management

Key performance indicators (KPIs) for the implementation of the IAP

Strategic area	Indicator	Baseline (est. 2024)	Target (by end of 2027)	Data source/method	Frequency
Sustainable mobility	Kilometres of safe pedestrian and cycling paths built	0 km	≥6 km	Construction logs, GIS mapping	Annual
	Average daily users of new paths	~~0~~	50–100 users/day	Manual/sensor counts, spot surveys	Seasonal
	Bicycle programme implemented for children	Not in place	All children (ages 2–17) included	Distribution lists, school/municipality records	Biannual
	Bicycle programme expansion plan developed	No	Yes	Council records, approved plan	Annual
	Functional, upgraded bus stop in Jõesuu	Basic stop only	1 fully equipped facility	Site inspection, photo documentation	Once at completion
	Monthly ridership at Jõesuu bus stop	<100	200–250 passengers	Operator data, ticket counts	Quarterly
Housing and energy	Apartment buildings renovated	0	≥4 buildings	Construction documentation, EPCs	Annual
	Average energy savings in renovated buildings	Not measured	25–30%	Energy audits, EPC reports	At completion

Strategic area	Indicator	Baseline (est. 2024)	Target (by end of 2027)	Data source/method	Frequency
Public space & life	New recreational area constructed	No	1 completed area	Municipal reports, visual monitoring	Once at completion
	Number of events in recreational space	0	≥5 events/ year	Event logs, community calendars	Annual
	Seasonal local market established	No	Operational and active	Market schedules, participation tracking	Seasonal
Community engagement	Community events and workshops held	Irregular ad hoc events	≥10 meaningful events	Event reports, sign-in sheets, photographs	Biannual
	Resident satisfaction with village environment	Not syste-matically measured	≥70% positive feedback	Annual survey (paper and digital)	Annual
Place identity	Visual branding elements created (e.g. signs, maps, logo)	None	≥5 elements	Design files, site inspection	Once at completion
	Informational or tourist signage installed	No	Yes	Field check, visual documentation	Once at completion

Monitoring methods

To ensure that the implementation of the IAP is both transparent and adaptive, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods will be applied. Monitoring is not only a matter of tracking outputs (e.g. kilometres of paths or number of renovated buildings), but also of capturing how residents interact with these changes and how the local environment evolves as a result.

The following monitoring methods will be used across the different actions:

1. Administrative data collection

All contractors and project managers will be required to submit regular progress reports. These will include physical progress (e.g. construction completion), financial expenditures, and technical specifications.

2. Direct observation and field documentation

Municipal staff and ULG members will conduct periodic site visits to verify physical outputs, such as signage installations, bus stop upgrades, or new paths. Photographic documentation and GIS tools will support this.

3. User counts and sensor data

For infrastructure such as cycling and walking paths or public transport stops, usage will be tracked through manual counts (performed seasonally) and sensor-based data collection, where feasible. Bicycle racks and recreational areas will be monitored for occupancy and usage intensity.

4. Surveys and interviews

Annual resident satisfaction surveys will measure perceptions of change, quality of life, and service availability. Focus group discussions or semi-structured interviews may be used for deeper qualitative understanding (e.g. with youth, seniors, or apartment residents).

5. Feedback tools and digital platforms

Feedback mechanisms will be included where possible, such as QR codes placed on new public infrastructure, interactive maps, or forms embedded in the municipal website. This will be especially important for actions such as the bicycle programme or flexible transport pilot.

6. Community event logs

A simple system will be established to track workshops, village events, and their attendance. Organisers will submit brief reports and photos, which will be archived centrally.

7. Modal split tracking

Annual assessment of the proportion of trips made by different transport modes (car, bicycle, walking, public transport), disaggregated by demographic group and settlement.

8. Mobility-linked CO~emissions

Estimation of mobility-related emissions per capita, correlated with changes in modal split.

All data collected will feed into biannual monitoring reports, which will be presented to the IAP Steering Group and the Municipal Council. This process will allow for course corrections, the early identification of problems, and the celebration of visible successes with the community.

Long-term impact monitoring

While the IAP covers the period until the end of 2027, many of its goals, such as shifting mobility patterns, increasing energy efficiency, or strengthening village identity, are long-term processes that extend beyond the implementation horizon. Therefore, a long-term monitoring plan will be established to capture change over time and inform future municipal planning.

Key features of long-term impact monitoring include:

1. Integration into municipal planning frameworks

IAP indicators will be aligned with those used in the municipality's development plan, allowing continued tracking through regular planning cycles. Data collected for this plan can be reused to inform updates to the comprehensive plan, transport plans, or environmental strategies.

2. Extended use of resident surveys

The municipality will continue annual or biennial resident satisfaction surveys to observe trends in quality of life, mobility behaviour, housing conditions, and civic engagement.

3. Sustainability of services and infrastructure

Maintenance needs and operational costs for new facilities (e.g. recreational areas, bicycle circulation, bus stop services) will be tracked annually. Service effectiveness will be reviewed with users and adjusted, if necessary.

4. Monitoring the expansion of pilot programmes

Actions such as the free bicycle programme or flexible transport model are designed to expand in future phases. Monitoring will capture how these pilots evolve into permanent services, and whether usage scales accordingly.

5. Continued role of the ULG or Local Advisory Group

Even after URBACT support ends, the ULG (or a successor local group) will remain active in reviewing local development issues. This body can provide continuity, maintain institutional memory, and advocate for necessary adjustments.

6. Knowledge sharing and peer learning

Tori municipality will document the lessons learned from Jõesuu's IAP and share insights through networks such as URBACT, LEADER, or national planning associations. This ensures that the impact is not only local but also contributes to wider learning on rural regeneration.

In summary, long-term impact monitoring ensures that the IAP is not treated as a one-off project but as a foundation for ongoing, evidence-based development in Tori municipality.

Credits

This Integrated Action Plan has been shaped by the active involvement and valuable input of many individuals and organisations who have strongly supported the project's development. Tori municipality warmly recognises and thanks everyone for their contribution.

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