

City-to-City Exchange: City of Rovaniemi (Finland) looking for peer cities on the sustainable and year-round tourism

The City of Rovaniemi, officially founded in 1960, is the vibrant capital of Finnish Lapland with approximately 63,000 inhabitants. Situated at the Arctic Circle, Rovaniemi is not only a world-famous travel destination but also a dynamic center for education, research, and innovation. The city is home to the University of Lapland and Lapland University of Applied Sciences, which drive Arctic expertise, sustainability research, and creative industries. Rovaniemi actively fosters collaboration between businesses, research institutions, and public actors, making it an ideal environment for developing innovative solutions in tourism, wellbeing, and Arctic technologies.

Rovaniemi, the capital of Lapland, is home to over 3,000 businesses across sectors such as tourism, services, creative industries, trade, construction, and manufacturing. Our city is internationally recognized as a hub for Arctic expertise and sustainable tourism development. Rovaniemi's business environment combines vibrant urban services with the surrounding natural environment, creating unique opportunities for companies and entrepreneurs. The tourism sector plays a key role, with the winter season from November to March being the peak period, but increasing efforts are made to strengthen year-round attractiveness. Sustainability, responsibility, and innovation are central to Rovaniemi's development strategy. We invest heavily in building sustainable infrastructure and supporting green growth, ensuring future competitiveness. Rovaniemi benefits from excellent connectivity by road, rail, and air, with direct flights to Helsinki and several international destinations. Collaboration between the city, research institutions, and the private sector further strengthens the city's role as a dynamic Arctic business and innovation hub.

Challenges

Rovaniemi's tourism sector has experienced strong growth over the past decade, driven especially by international visitors seeking authentic Arctic experiences. However, this rapid growth also brings several challenges that we are actively addressing. One major challenge is the strong seasonal fluctuation, with a heavy concentration of visitors during the winter months, leading to pressure on



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infrastructure, services, and the environment, while leaving capacity underutilized during other seasons.

Many tourism destinations face the challenges and the multidimensional impact of climate change. As many other central- and northern-European destinations, Rovaniemi faces the challenges of inevitable lengthening of the snow-free season and need new innovative solutions to adapt climate change and the challenges that it brings with it to destinations, such as Rovaniemi, that traditionally are reliant on winter tourism. The rapidly changing conditions and the extension of the snow-free season demands new innovations and solutions from the tourism sector, development of year-round activities, and the responsible use of natural resources. Adapting to the changing conditions requires developing alternative tourism services and products that reduce seasonality and ensure that northern destinations remain vibrant and appealing in a changing climate.

Another key issue is ensuring sustainable growth that balances economic development with the preservation of the unique Arctic nature, local culture, and community well-being. Labor availability, particularly skilled workforce for the tourism and service sectors, is another critical concern, alongside the need to develop diversified offerings that attract visitors throughout the year.

We are actively seeking new solutions to extend the tourism season, enhance year-round tourism experiences, promote sustainable practices across the sector, and strengthen collaboration between businesses, educational institutions, and the city. Additionally, we are looking for innovative models to integrate responsibility, digitalization, and smart infrastructure into the development of future tourism areas.

Looking for peers:

We are looking for European partner cities that have successfully developed sustainable solutions for managing tourism growth. Ideal partners are those operating in sensitive natural or culturally unique environments, who have balanced increasing visitor numbers with local well-being, environmental protection, and business development.

We are particularly interested in learning from cities that have developed innovative models for:



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- Extending the tourism season and promoting year-round tourism.
- Integrating sustainability and responsibility into tourism services and infrastructure.
- Managing visitor flows to avoid overcrowding.
- Utilizing digital tools and smart solutions to enhance tourism management.
- Ensuring that tourism benefits are widely distributed across the local economy and community.
- Strengthening collaboration between the public sector, businesses, and educational institutions. In particular, perspectives and know-how on promoting cluster-type cooperation on tourism to bring new innovative solutions to the market.

We seek to learn practical methods for managing visitor flows, promoting year-round tourism, fostering public-private collaboration, and using smart solutions to enhance tourism sustainability. Our goal is to adapt proven best practices to Rovaniemi's Arctic setting.

Ideally the exchange would start in late Autumn 2025 or January-February 2026. City-to-City Exchange programme: The EUI City-to-City Exchange supports exchange between an urban authority ('the applicant') facing a specific implementation challenge related to Sustainable Urban Development and another urban authority from a different EU Member State with expertise which could help tackle this challenge ('the peer') for a short-term, quickly implemented visit. The programme covers costs for bilateral study visits and supports the expert costs of the peer city.

The Call for Applications for city-to-city exchanges is continuously open. Applications can be submitted and approved for implementation on a rolling basis. More information about the City-to-City Exchange program: <https://www.urban-initiative.eu/capacity-building/pilot-call-c2c-exchanges>

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