



Good practice

A social innovation for increased attraction and receiver capacity in Norrbotten/Arctic Sweden

Working Group: Territorial

Member State, Region: Sweden, Region Norrbotten

Thematic areas: Jobs and Skills, Quality of Life and Equal Access to Services

Basic project details

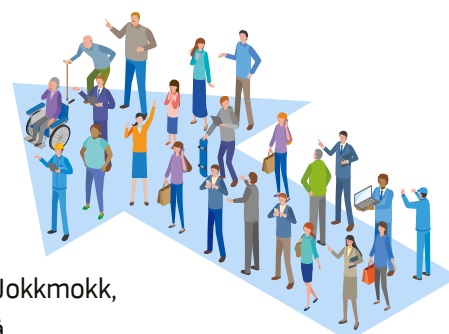
Lead organisation:

Region Norrbotten - Sweden

Partner organisations:

- Municipalities of Arvidsjaur, Arjeplog, Boden, Gällivare, Haparanda, Jokkmokk, Kalix, Kiruna, Luleå, Pajala, Piteå, Älvsbyn, Övertorneå and Övertorneå
- EURES (EUROpean Employment Services)
- Swedish Lapland Visitors Board
- Driftwind (Consultant)

Project duration: January 2022 - November 2024



Overview and objectives

The initiative's core objective was to boost regional population by attracting and retaining newcomers. It focused on empowering municipalities with the necessary skills, infrastructure and services to welcome and integrate new residents. The ultimate goal was to attract new citizens and create a sustainable model for population growth, ensuring that newcomers have access to services and feel welcome and supported in their new communities.

Key strategies include:

- Establishing a network and a mobile co-creation lab for the relocation services in all the municipalities of Region Norrbotten;
- Conducting innovation design cycles to develop digital solutions for attracting talent;
- Implementing various methods and tools to enhance the capacity and attraction of the receiver municipalities, with focus on creating an appealing lifestyle;
- Marketing and showcasing the region's lifestyle appeal to potential migrants, through various marketing channels;
- Participating in international fairs to raise the region's profile and manage emerging interest from potential migrants.

Facilitating shared learning and knowledge exchange among the municipalities, the Swedish Public Employment Service EURES and Region Norrbotten, among others through the setting up of a mobile co-creation lab, which enabled the main stakeholders and diverse societal actors to engage in processes of social learning, joint meaning-making, exploration and experimentation.

Context

The receiver capacity in the municipalities of the Region Norrbotten faces challenges, including a lack of housing and apartments, high governmental demands for minimum salaries for new citizens, and a “fly in and fly out” movement that yields no income taxes for the local municipalities. The receiver municipalities therefore face a lack of working-age people and Norrbotten needs to attract 100 000 new workers until 2035. The absence of national-level financial and legislative support also places a heavy burden on municipalities, particularly in navigating challenges.

Target groups

Potential migrants, newcomers, relocation services, local citizens and officials in the municipalities, private companies and public organisations.



Actions

The initiative:

- Created a mobile co-creation lab in Region Norrbotten;
- Organised design cycles and workshops to prototype digital solutions and addressed the migrant value change;
- Worked with local residents and businesses to assess their capacity to support newcomers;
- Launched marketing campaigns that highlighted the unique lifestyle benefits of living in Region Norrbotten;
- Attended key international job and migration fairs, showcasing Region Norrbotten's opportunities and lifestyle;
- Shared best practices, success stories, and resources with the location services and other professions involved in the municipalities, EURES (EUROPEAN Employment Services), and Region Norrbotten;
- Hosted local events that promote cultural exchange and integration.

Financial allocation

Total budget: EUR 1 800 000

EU co-funding: Yes

Sources of funding:

- EU funding: EUR 1 456 762 for the project North Sweden Green Deal (co-funded with 50% i.e. EUR 728 381 from the European Regional Development Fund - ERDF)
- National funding: EUR 325 725 for the project Attraction and Receiver Capacity (funded via the Regional Development Fund for Upper Norrland)

Working Group Insights

“In agreement with the other members of the Territorial WG, I selected this good practice because it addresses the critical challenge of increasing a region’s population, specifically focusing on international target groups. To bring in new citizens, a mobile co-creation lab was established, involving 14 municipalities and EURES to enhance their receiver capacity and attraction skills, while addressing various governance challenges. The strategy, methods applied, and findings could be adapted to other regions facing similar challenges.

By using a bottom-up approach with the involved municipalities, the project managed to establish a positive trend in international migration. Each municipality strengthened its own capacity and self-esteem, contributing to a regional alliance for addressing talent attraction and retention, with an emphasis on lifestyle appeal. The project has established a mindset and capacity to address further challenges for long-term sustainable development and growth, both locally and regionally”.

STINA ALMKVIST

Strategist and Innovation Leader at Driftwind

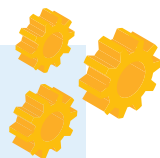
Results

Statistically, the project enhanced the capabilities of municipalities to attract newcomers, leading to a positive impact on international migration to the region. This has increased the region’s attractiveness and strengthened the self-esteem of the location services and the municipalities.

Success factors

Success factors for the initiative included: a) the combination of digital tools with targeted outreach activities which helped the Norrbotten Region attract and retain highly skilled workers, b) the close collaboration between the local, regional and national level, c) the inclusion and consultation of local residents and businesses to assess their capacity to support newcomers, and d) the physical presence where the target audience was, through the mobile co-creation lab for the relocation services. The good practice also demonstrated how regional alliances and local self-empowerment can help regions address demographic challenges and talent retention, emphasising lifestyle appeal and inclusive governance.





Implementation challenges

The level of support in the governance system for attracting and retaining new residents varies across the municipalities. The absence of national-level financial and legislative support places a heavy burden on municipalities, particularly in navigating challenges. Building trust and relationships with potential new residents requires significant time and effort. It is also a challenge both in the private and public sector when it comes to hiring people who only speak English, even if it is sufficient for the job sought.

The conclusion of our expert Stina Almkvist, Strategist and Innovation Leader at Driftwind

“What really made the change in this project was the creation of the mobile co-creation lab for the relocation services, as it allowed us to be present in the places where our target audience was”.

Useful sources

Official website: www.movetoarcticsweden.se

<https://northswedenbusiness.com/news/2024/december/new-innovation-centre-in-norrbotten/>

<https://arbetsformedlingen.varbi.com/en/?jobtoken=176452332d3cbfc5eab3278c1a910b9cf638c93fc>

<https://europeanjobdays.eu/en/company/arctic-sweden>

<https://www.swedishlapland.com/live-work/>

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