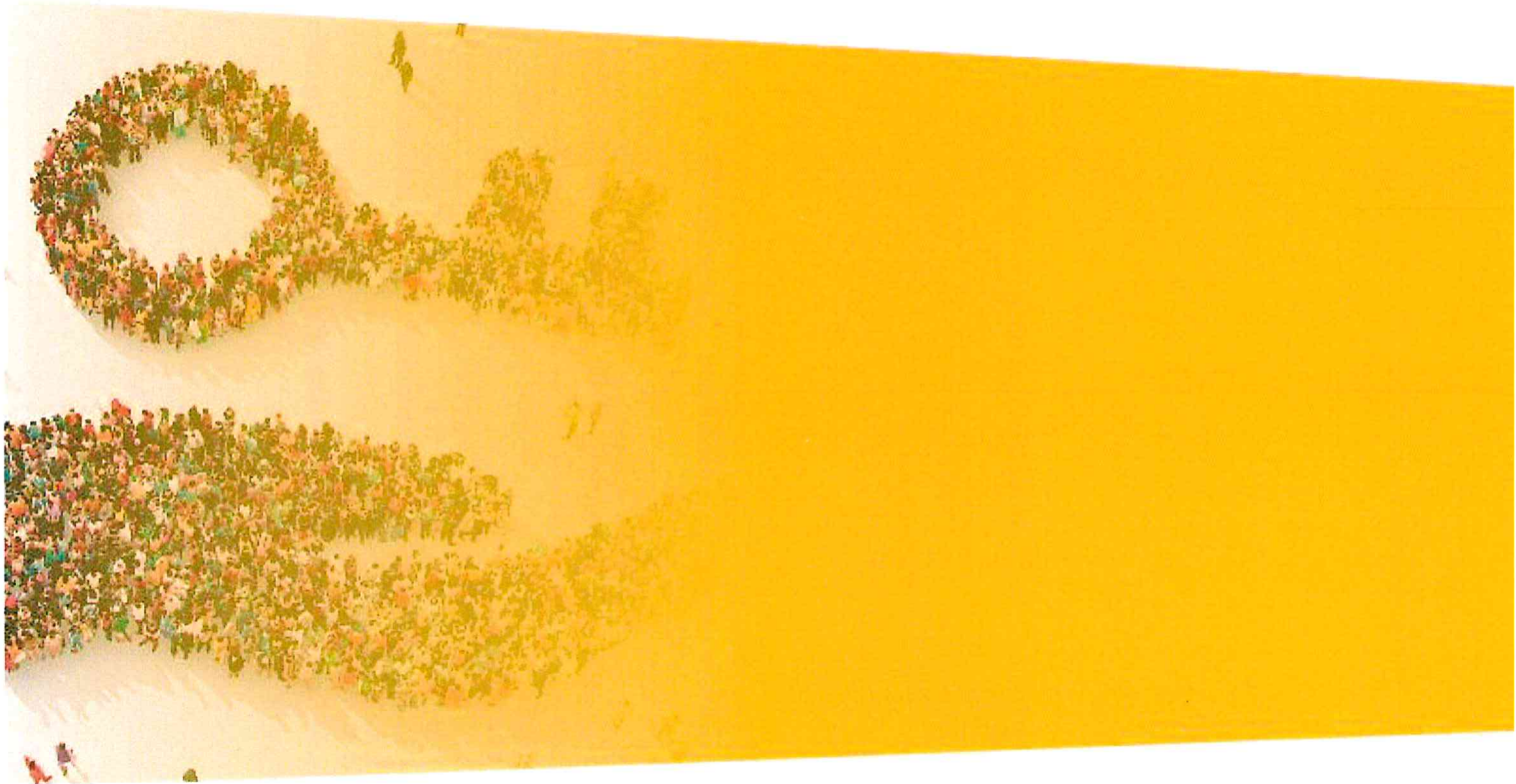


ACTION PLAN



North Karelia
FINLAND



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



Regional Council of
NORTH KARELIA



**Key tools to assess and improve
soft innovation policies**

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Part I – General information

Project: PASSPARTOOL
Partner organisation(s) concerned: Regional Council of North Karelia
Country: Finland
NUTS2 region: North and East Finland
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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed

POKAT 2025 – North Karelia's Regional Strategic Programme for 2022–2025 (new regional strategic programme that was drafted during project implementation)

Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instrument:

The Regional Strategic Programme of North Karelia (called also POKAT) is a statutory regional development programme. It states the regional development objectives, which are based on the characteristics and opportunities specific to the region and describes and consolidates EU, national, sub-regional and regional level strategies as well as the municipal and local level strategies. Programme steers the use of EU funds and other resources allocated to the region. The implementation time of Regional Strategic Programme is four years.

North Karelia has started an ambitious plan to improve the monitoring system of the performance of Regional Strategic Programme POKAT2021. Since the implementation time of POKAT2021 ended and the new Regional Strategic POKAT2025 came to in force in the middle of project, part of the name of the policy instrument had to be changed. This improvement work will be continued at the new Regional Strategic Programme POKAT2025, which will be implemented 2022-2025. Basic set of indicators do not include soft innovations and change in organisational level. This is especially important aspect to study in development processes that take longer than project's implementation period. Approach on innovation ecosystems is often based on technological point of view and it lacks broader vision and indicators of social processes of innovation.

Responding to societal challenges requires systemic innovations that are often born through cooperation between public and third sector organisations and between universities, research institutes and businesses. The starting point for ecosystem thinking is to bring together people and organisations that have previously operated in their own isolated bunkers and to increase the amount of knowledge so that innovation generation is more likely and more rapid than before.

Innovation work directed on sustainable society in the region could be boosted up by the improvement of the regional strategic programme and its implementation by creating new form

s of cooperation and new indicators that take soft innovations into account.

Passpartool project was implemented during pandemic time and project had to solve challenges to carry on international project without in person meetings. Partner group as well stakeholders in regions needed to find new ways of working e.g., learn to use multiple digital workspaces and tools.

Action Plan “New methods to enhance youth participation” is based on the findings of the work carried out in the Passpartool project, e.g. good practises, organisational learning and surveys.

This Action plan improves policy instrument Regional Strategic Programme POKAT2021 and 2025 of North Karelia in the field of well-being by introducing new enhanced tools to improve youth participation. Improvement must be carried on in two levels: municipal and regional. Since the implementation time of POKAT2021 ended and the new Regional Strategic POKAT2025 came to in force in the middle of project, part of the name of the policy instrument had to be changed. This shall improve the governance of the strategy in question.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1

Name of the action: new indicators to monitor the level of youth participation in North Karelia

1. **Relevance to the project** *(please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)*

According to the Local Government Act, every municipality in Finland must have a youth council or equivalent participation organ for young people. Youth councils represent the youth's voice in municipal decision-making and by law they must be given the opportunity to influence planning, preparation, implementation, and follow-up activities in different sectors that are relevant for residents' well-being, health, studying, environment, living and public transport, as well as other matters that the youth council considers relevant.

Some municipalities hold elections for youth council members, whereas some youth councils are open to all young people living in the municipality. Many youth councils have a representative in the municipal council and/or representatives in committees appointed by the municipal council.

The establishment of regional youth councils is rooted in the draft law of regional reform of the Finnish Government and regional youth council of North Karelia was established in 2017, one of the first in Finland and hosted by Regional Council of North Karelia. The task of the regional youth councils is to be involved in the planning, preparation, implementation, and monitoring of region's activities. The leading idea is that young people must also be able to influence decision-making at regional level. The members of regional youth councils come from municipal youth councils and through enforced collaboration between municipal youth councils stimulate vitality in different parts of region where possibilities for young people varies a lot.

Regional youth council's task is to promote and support the activities of local youth councils in the region of North Karelia and to achieve this goal development is required.

This Action plan improves policy instrument Regional Strategic Programme 2025 of North Karelia in the field of well-being by introducing new enhanced tools to improve youth participation. Improvement must be carried on in two levels: municipal and regional

In both levels it is very important to strengthen young people's competences and find better opportunities for them to develop new projects and activities which are based on their own ideas. also we must find new solutions how youth can participate in decision making more efficient than at the moment.

In municipal level youth councils need support to activate local youth. This will be done by example of Luoghi Comuni project. Youth are encouraged to create actions and events and put them in practise in their own living area. They search for suitable public places (indoor, outdoor) to organise them. Doing this they at the same time form a "register" of suitable places in further use. As in Luoghi Comuni the indirect effects will occur. These effects (strengthening their competences, improving cooperation, finding new opportunities to develop new projects and careers in region) are crucial for youth empowerment.

In regional level the operating environment of regional youth council is in change. The hosting of regional youth council will be transferred from RCNK to the governance of Wellbeing Services Counties formed by reform of healthcare, social welfare and rescue services. This will affect into nature of regional youth council. In this change the voice of youth is very important to hear.

2. Good Practices that have inspired the action

In Passpartool project, Apulia Region Agency for Technology and Innovation (ARTI) introduced initiative Luoghi Comuni as a good practice. Luoghi Comuni is an initiative which aim is to support youth organisations to carry out social innovation projects and use public spaces which are in underuse. Its broad objectives are valorisation of public buildings, development of youth organisations, spread of co-design culture, youth empowerment, social innovation and strengthening of territorial networks. These objectives, especially youth empowerment, development of youth organisations and strengthening of territorial networks inspired RCNK which was planning to start renewing work of regional youth council to strengthen activity of local youth councils in the region and youth empowerment. The project NUVA+ started in 1.9.2021.

Like Luoghi Comuni, NUVA+ has cultural, social, economic, collaborative and innovation dimensions. Nuva+ aims mapping the situation of local youth councils, as well as the operating models related to youth councils. From the expected impacts from Luoghi Comuni (create a catalogue of public spaces available for social activities, strengthen abilities and improve skills of young people, support ideas of young people to reuse spaces involving local communities in order to transform them into common places, foster new solutions that meet social needs and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships, counteract brain drain), NUVA+ -project is inspired by strengthen abilities and improve skills of young people and foster new solutions that meet social needs and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships. The spaces for different activities are always an important issue and adapting the example of Luoghi Comuni to list the possible public spaces, not only the inside spaces but also spaces for different types of outdoor activities is considered possible actions. Also, the monitoring system of Luoghi Comuni will be adjusted in regional needs.

3. Nature of the action and steps for implementation *(please precisely describe the content of action 1. What are the specific activities to be implemented?)*

Actions will be directed into improving the policy instrument Regional Strategic Programme POKAT 2025 of North Karelia in the field of well-being. Youth empowerment and participation in the area where the population is ageing is a matter to be concerned. The need of the working age population is obvious already now, but it will increase in near future. The existence of influence opportunity is a method to improve area attachment. The existence of this possibility must be experienced at an early age. Simultaneously through increasing the empowerment and well-being, the youth experience the area as their own and of course they can influence on the direction of the regional development.

This action plan introduces new enhanced tools to improve youth participation and monitoring of impact. NUVA + project develops new methods and possibilities to increase the participation and empowerment of youth. As the project comes to the end, project presents the good practices and examples of how to evaluate them by the end of June 2022. Main expected result of the NUVA + project is the common understanding of the most relevant good practices and possible indicators for monitoring youth well-being, participation and empowerment. The good practices and indicators will be monitored. Also, a comparison to Luoghi Comuni is made and the findings of both are adjusted to the regional operational environment so that the best possible solution for new action model for monitoring is found. At practical level, after this decision is made, which all the indicators can be put in practice and which need further development. This work will be finalized in the end of March 2023.

At the moment the monitoring plan of NUVA+ includes following indicators:

- how the expected and defined results about improved basic activities have been realized
- how the information campaign reached audience (includes social media, small events and possible study visits)

- implementation the measures of municipal action plans developed during project

The qualitative indicators will be based in questionnaires directed to the members of youth councils and their supervisors. Now the next impacts to monitor are defined:

- the support that project NUVA+ has offered to the youth councils
- new ideas and innovations implemented by the supervisors
- increased knowledge of ways to influence in policies of municipalities
- increased activity of youth councils
- how the collaboration between youth councils has increased or reinforced.

In this phase of NUVA+ project, the questions are still under the development. Development work will be done in stakeholder group of Nuva+ and in regional youth council during the project. After the project ends, this work is continued by RCNK, Regional Council of North Karelia and the Wellbeing Services County in North Karelia. The monitoring system of good practice Luoghi Comuni will be utilized. The indicators developed in NUVA+ measures the social innovations and selected indicators will be utilized in the monitoring of the regional strategic programme 2025 to strengthen the aspect of social innovations and improve the existing monitoring and evaluation model by establishing new improved indicators.

The selection of indicators will be implemented first by regional youth council. Their succession is viewed by the well-being group of regional strategic programme. The well-being group will make the final decision concerning the valid indicators that will be added to the North Karelia welfare strategy action plan. North Karelia welfare strategy action plan is a sub-strategy of regional strategic programme The task of Well-being group is to monitor and report on the development of indicators. Based on the analysis, the content of the North Karelia regional programs welfare section is evaluated and redirected.

4. Stakeholders involved

The Regional Council of North Karelia is a host organisation of regional youth council and project NUVA+. It is responsible in designing and monitoring the action. Produced data will be shared and utilized in developing work of local youth councils and through them activate young people in municipalities across the region. RCKN oversees Regional strategic programme which is a policy instrument to be developed in Passpartool -project and by this action new monitoring indicators will be developed.

The role of the Division of youth work of a Regional State Administrative Agency is to develop youth services and to implement the objectives of national youth programmes and policy. It develops youth work and services provided to the youth together with local authorities and the third sector. The tasks are

- Regional implementation and development of nationwide youth work and youth policy
- State aid awards and state aid impact assessment
- In-service training and communication of information concerning the youth work sector to youth workers
- Collection of information about youth work and youth policy and evaluation of the adequacy, standard and accessibility of services for young people
- Promotion and implementation of international youth work on a regional level
- Promote the international education of young people and provide international partnership and networking opportunities for youth work professionals.

The information and experiences gained from the Nuva + project will be utilized in information guidance, raising awareness of youth involvement and gaining experience and information about youth involvement in municipalities and new wellbeing services counties. Inclusion is a key theme

in the state's youth policy development program for 20-23, and funding for such projects contributes to the implementation of the state's youth policy program in the region.

The regional Well-being Group consists of following organizations:

- Akava Special Branches (labor market organization)
- Business Joensuu
- Center of Economic Development, Transport and the Environment
- Eastern Finland Police Department
- Karelia University of Applied Sciences
- Municipalities: Joensuu, Liperi, Heinävesi
- North Karelia Center for Public Health
- North Karelia Chamber of Commerce
- North Karelian Society for Social Security
- Regional State Administrative Agency
- Siun sote – Joint municipal authority for North Karelia social and health services
- The Finnish Confederation of Professionals
- The Social Insurance Institution of Finland
- University of Eastern Finland
- Municipal consortium of vocational education of North Karelia

5. Risks and mitigation strategy of the action

The youth councils are in constant change. Their members are between 13-20 years and in this period life of young people includes a lot of changes like moving away from home because of studies and work. This makes youth councils member turnover rate high especially in smaller municipalities. This can lead dramatic changes in activity of local youth councils.

Covid 19 has had dramatic changes in activity of young people. It stopped organising the bigger events and restricted meetings in person. If pandemics will continue during implementation period of action all planned activities might not succeed as planned.

There are also risks concerning the operational environment: the hosting of regional youth council will be transferred from RCNK to the governance of wellbeing services counties formed by reform of healthcare, social welfare and rescue services.

To prevent these risks the planning and guidance of activity based on continuous monitoring. An active documentation is important, too. It ensures the transfer of data and information if changes occur. To ensure the activity of regional youth council agreements are one way to ensure its future.

6. Timeframe

Step 1. Analysis of good practices 8-12/22

- Nuva+ - projects results (good practices and indicators) are analysed. Comparcy with Luoghi Comuni is made, Discussion of valid indicators. Analyzed with stakeholders from well-being group of North Karelia and North Karelia Youth Council. Meetings accure 4-6 times a year. Estimated meeting times for Youth Council are August and September. Well-being group November or December

Step 2 Decision of new practices 1-4/23

- Validation of new indicators. Collecting test monitoring data and analysing its usability and content 1-3/23. Stakeholder are involved: Youth Council and Well-being group meeting April.

Step 3 Follow up 5- 7/23 ongoing process

- The monitoring of indicators and their value in use. Introduction new monitoring model to stakeholder and siun sote

7. Indicative costs

Passpartool resources for this action are salaries for 5 working days, 2 000 euros in total. Personal costs covered by organisation itself are around 0,5 months' work, 2 200 euros, meeting costs around 4 meetings, 200 euros per meeting so 800 euros in total.

8. Indicative funding sources

The pilot (Nuva+) has received a funding 48 000€ from local authorities.

- Staff costs 25 355€ (project manager)
- Travel and transport 4 300€
- Courses and educational costs 2 000€
- equipment 2 500€
- other costs 13 845 €

In the future the activities will be financed from the budgets of the Wellbeing Services County in North Karelia and municipalities, and possibly partly through some small, regionally funded projects.

ACTION 2

Name of the action: Revising the Innovation Initiative Survey of North Karelia

1. Relevance to the project *(please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)*

In accordance with Finnish practice, the smart specialisation strategy focusing on the promotion of RDI activities is part of the Regional Strategic Programme.

Regional Strategic Programme is a statutory regional development programme that is conceived for the period of four years but consist of development foci that are formulated from the long term strengths (S3) and development needs of the region. Regional Strategic Programme in early stages of Passpartool was called POKAT2021 (for the years 2018-2021) and the current, POKAT2025 (2022-2025) was drafted during its implementation using the experiences gained.

As part of the implementation and monitoring of the regional strategic programme, a separate pilot called "innovation initiative" was launched in autumn 2017. Its aim was to increase RDI activity and build up the innovation ecosystem in the region. Key part of the action is the innovation initiative survey (later referred as innovation survey).

The appropriate measures were searched through discussions with stakeholders which lead to the identification of challenges, weaknesses as well strengths and opportunities of innovation activities of North Karelia. The original (2017) innovation initiative included the survey of state of innovation in North Karelia. It formed an early version of a knowledge management process to support in regional decision-making. Results of the first innovation initiative gave a common understanding of the competitiveness of regional innovation system and development measures that are needed to develop it further. One of the most important issues is to find out how to raise interests and opportunities of companies to invest in R&D innovation.

This Action Plan will lead to the improvement of an existing tool – innovation initiative survey – by creating new indicators for RDI monitoring that contribute to the improved governance of the regional innovation ecosystem and the policy instrument in question – Smart Specialisation Strategy (which is included as part of the Regional Strategic Programme POKAT2025)

North Karelia is also part of the North and East Finland joint innovation initiative called ELMO. The regions of East and North Finland (ENF) have long traditions in co-operation. A new phase in the collaboration was launched in early 2018 when the ENF regions were chosen as one of European Commission's pilot areas to develop new approaches based on smart specialisation. The pilot was called Regions in Industrial Transition or ELMO. ELMO collaboration is about shaping the future of the ENF regions together. The core of the collaboration consists of smart specialisation that leads the way to identifying regional strengths and competences. The goal is to develop new practices that help enterprises to utilise the expertise and versatile network of innovation platforms in the ENF area. In the second phase, we put the strategy to use to support industries, growth, and employment in the ENF regions. Second phase of the ELMO initiative will be implemented during 2022-2024 and shall partly contribute into implementation of this Action Plan as it is also improving governance of the regional innovation ecosystem.

2. Good Practices that have inspired the action

The two good practices which have inspired to improve the survey of state of innovation were 1) Northern Netherlands Innovation Monitor presented by University of Groningen and the Northern

Netherlands Alliance (SNN) and 2) Regional Innovation Survey presented by Spanish partner FUNDECYT-PCTEX.

Unlike the North Karelian monitoring survey, target group of these surveys were SMEs and other enterprises. In North Karelia questionnaire was sent to innovation experts from educational, research and business support organizations. Currently these organizations conduct most of the RDI activities in the region.

Northern Netherlands Innovation Monitor was established in 2015 when University of Groningen and the Northern Netherlands Alliance (SNN) took the initiative for the Innovation Monitor. From that it is expanded in cooperation with a coalition of strategic partners. Innovation Monitor is an annual event.

FUNDECYT-PCTEX's Regional Innovation Survey was established already in 2008 and the in collaboration with University of Extremadura (UEX) it aimed at describing and analysing innovation processes of regional SMEs. Another aim was to develop research actions to get a better understanding of business innovation processes at regional level.

3. Nature of the action and steps for implementation *(please precisely describe the content of action 1. What are the specific activities to be implemented?)*

In the end of 2018, the first evaluation survey of the current state of innovation in North Karelia as e-survey and it was supplemented by some SME interviews. The first survey was divided in the three parts : 1) Attitudes and abilities, 2) Structure, 3) Tools for innovations. Survey was targeted to key actors of RDI actions - educational and research organisations and business support organisations. Its purpose was to gain general information about state of innovation activities in region. Results of the innovation survey were published in special event and press release was also made. The results are utilised in direction the development measures of innovation policies and strengthen the development actions based on needs of SME's and public stakeholders.

The survey was repeated in spring 2021. The second survey included four parts 1) attitudes and abilities 2) purpose and 3) actions and impact and 4) future and new initiatives. Survey was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic which affected to the operating environment of enterprises and forced them to "survive" in new unpredictable situation. For this reason, extra questions about future and new initiatives were added into survey.

In the future the survey will be carried out every second year so next time will be in 2023. For the third survey in 2023, questionnaire needs to be modified and here the good practices include adaptable content.

The surveys Northern Netherlands Innovation Monitor (The University of Groningen and the Northern Netherlands Alliance (SNN)) and Regional Innovation Survey (FUNDECYT-PCTEX, Spain) will be analysed, and the aim is to choose ones, which support the implementing the actions of regional strategic programme (which includes smart specialization strategy) and its monitoring. The new indicators for monitoring the innovation activities will be defined. From chosen good practise questions concerning barriers to innovation will be added. Another important group of adopted questions will concern implementation of the green transition. These two topics shall form a whole new set of questions for the questionnaire. These will be created during the implementation phase. Innovation survey of 2023 shall Include: 1) attitudes and abilities 2) purpose and 3) actions and impact and 4) future and new initiatives 5) barriers of innovation 6) green transition

Milestones of implementation

Step 1, Drafting of new innovation survey 8-9/22

Analysis of conduct the of two previous surveys, their results and identification of challenges and well-functioning parts. Adding the learnings from the Passpartool Good Practices.

Step 2, Testing and finalizing the new innovation survey with coordination group of North Karelia´s smart specialisation strategy 10-11/22

Coordination group of S3 is part of the monitoring of the regional programme and it is responsible especially for coordinating the implementation of the smart specialisation strategy in the region. The group represents the key RDI actors in region and its expertise is utilised in finalising the survey and choosing the method of implementation. Coordination Group of the S3 programme shall help to prepare and test the new innovation survey and at later stage (11/22) approve it.

Step 3, Implementation of the new survey 2023 12/22-4/23

The revised survey will be conducted electronically in the beginning of -23 and will be supplemented with interviews of key RDI companies.

Step 4 Analysis of survey results and functionality 4/23-7/23

-The results will be analysed, its functionality (new added indicators) will be monitored and validated with the coordination group of S3. The results shall form a picture of the current stage of the innovation ecosystem and be valuable for the monitoring of the implementation of the Smart Specialisation Strategy of North Karelia (part of the Regional Strategic Programme POKAT2025)

4. Stakeholders involved

The Regional Council of North Karelia is responsible in designing, realisation and monitoring the action. Produced data will be shared and utilized in developing work. RCNK oversees Regional Strategic Programme (inc. S3) and its monitoring shall be improved by this Action Plan. This AP provides new monitoring indicators for RDI ecosystem. Coordination group of S3 (consists of key RDI actors) will conduct the practical work.

Regional partners:

Business Joensuu, owned by City of Joensuu, offers services for businesses, entrepreneurs and investors. It provides expertise and knowledge about networks, local conditions and opportunities. Business Joensuu offers services for launching companies, growth and internationalisation, investing and setting up operations, and facility and event services of the Joensuu Science Park. Business Joensuu provides growth and competitiveness programmes for different sectors to create the best operating conditions for companies in the Joensuu area. Business Joensuu will utilise the gained information supporting to start new businesses and add growth of already existing businesses.

The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) promote regional development by managing the central government's implementation and development tasks in the areas coming under them. There are 15 Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment in Finland and one of them is situated in Joensuu. Relevant tasks of the ELY Centres in this context include:

- advisory, financing and development services for enterprises
- promotion of competence and lifelong learning
- employment-based aid and labour market training
- EU's structural fund projects

ELY Centre of Joensuu will utilise the information gained from survey in their services and targeting the fund to the initiatives and organisations (educational, research, enterprises) which will promote innovativeness of actors in North Karelia region.

5. Risks and mitigation strategy of the action

There is a risk that survey won't arise interest and the number of answers is too small to be relevant. Not reaching the right target group is risk too. In these cases, the results are not totally reliable and relevant. Also, there can be changes in operation environment like reform of organisations.

These risks can be minimised strengthening the cooperation between stakeholders so that survey is possible to implement by other organisations. Investments in the resilience of the innovation ecosystem aid to overcome these challenges.

6. Timeframe

The revised monitoring survey based of this Action plan will be executed in early 2023 and analysed by July 2023. Innovation initiative (that includes the monitoring survey) development work of survey is an ongoing process, next time the survey will be conducted in 2025. Detailed timeframe is presented in section 3.

7. Indicative costs

The survey and its development are financed by Regional Council of North Karelia as part of the implementation and monitoring of the S3 in North Karelia.

Passpartool resources for this action are salaries for 5 working days, 2 000 euros in total.

Personal costs covered by organisation itself are around 1 months' work, 5 200 euros, meeting costs around 5 meetings, 200 euros per meeting so 1 000 euros in total. Survey itself will be conducted via e-platform Webropol.

8. Indicative funding sources

Own resources that are the normal operational budget of the Regional Council of North Karelia. Funding comes from the municipalities of North Karelia.

Date: In Joensuu on 21st of June 2022

Name of the organisation(s): **Regional Council of North Karelia**

Signature(s) of representative of the relevant organisation(s):



Mr Markus HIRVONEN, Region Mayor
Regional Council of North Karelia