

CENTRAL FINLAND
TOURISM STRATEGY
2021–2025



VISION

To be an unequivocally responsible and internationally successful region of ecological, cultural and experience tourism in Lakeland Finland, renowned for its accessibility and commitment to active cooperation.

MISSION

To work in collaboration with others to turn Central Finland into an expertise-driven, premium-quality, responsible and customer-friendly tourism region, known both domestically and internationally.

FOCUS AREAS

Digitalization, responsibility and sustainability, knowledge and competence, accessibility, networking, international orientation, supervision of interests, living in the here and now, safety.

In the course of formulating the Central Finland Tourism Strategy the need was recognized for a common regional organization acting for Central Finland as a whole, generally referred to as a Destination Management Organisation (DMO). Establishment of a DMO is one of the strategy's prime focuses. The creation, organisation and approaches of the DMO are presented in chapter 4.

GOALS

1. Through cooperation, trust and flexibility of approach, to make Central Finland a customer-friendly, premium-quality, attractive and internationally renowned tourism region.

2. By strengthening knowledge and competence as well as developing the operational environment, to create an accessible, sustainable and responsible visitor destination.

3. To market and sell to domestic and international customers authentic Central Finland characteristics which local tourism enterprises have developed into competitive, economically sustainable and profitable products.

4. To increase domestic market share, with special emphasis on recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and adjusting operations to respond to the challenges of a changing world.



Photo: Tero Takalo-Eskola

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1. DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGY PROCESS

Work on the Central Finland Tourism Strategy was carried out by Visit Jyväskylä Region in cooperation with the Regional Council of Central Finland and approximately a hundred different actors in the tourism business. These included, among others, educational institutions linked to tourism, municipalities, businesses and other stakeholders. Work on the strategy and the progress of the same were regularly reported on at various events, such as meetings of mayors and the Regional Board. Residents of Central Finland also had the opportunity to take part in formulating the tourism strategy via an online campaign on Facebook and Instagram that ran 13.-31.10.2020. Over 2019 and 2020 a total of 10 strategy sessions were held. Publication of the new tourism strategy was scheduled for December 2020, subsequent to which stakeholders had a further opportunity to comment on the strategy.

Photo: Jukka Paakkinen

2. ROOTS OF THE STRATEGY

The Central Finland Tourism Strategy 2021–2025 has its roots in Finland's national tourism strategy "Achieving more together – sustainable growth and renewal in Finnish tourism".

Finland's tourism strategy vision:

Original, curiosity-inspiring Finland is the visitor destination enjoying the most sustainable growth in the Nordic countries.

Finland's tourism strategy mission:

Tourism is a responsible and growing service business sector that generates well-being and employment around the year in Finland.

Finland's tourism strategy goal:

For Finland to be the number one visitor destination in the Nordic countries measured in terms of sustainable growth.

The strategy's four key priorities that will enable sustainable growth and renewal of the tourism sector:

- supporting activities that foster sustainable development
- responding to digital change
- improving accessibility to cater to the tourism sector's needs
- ensuring an operating environment that supports competitiveness

2.1 VISION

The background and fundamentals of the Central Finland Tourism Strategy

Visit Finland has divided Finland into four main tourism regions: the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, the Coast and Archipelago, Finnish Lakeland and Lapland. Central Finland is part of the Lakeland region, which is divided into three sub-regions, altogether comprising nine administrative regions. Central Finland is part of Lakeland West, which also includes Päijänne-Häme (Päijänne Tavastia), Häme (Tavastia) and Pirkanmaa (Tampere Region). Lakeland East includes North Savo, South Savo, Northern Karelia and Southern Karelia. The third Lakeland sub-region is so-called Arctic Lakeland within the Kainuu region.

The vision for the whole of Lakeland by 2030 is that Lakeland is the most interesting lake area in the world, attractive and well-known, the choice for a relaxing holiday all year round. The basis of the vision for Central Finland is the vision for the whole Lakeland region, towards which we are working as part of a nine-region cooperative effort.

Vision for the Central Finland Tourism Strategy

To be an unequivocally responsible and internationally successful region of ecological, cultural and experience tourism in Lakeland Finland, renowned for its accessibility and commitment to active cooperation.

Unequivocally responsible refers to the desire to set an example to others where sustainability is concerned and challenge ourselves in the pursuit of ever more sustainable tourism. Led by Visit Jyväskylä, the region has been among the first to participate in the Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) pilot programme, and several Central Finland businesses have already received STF certification.

Internationally successful refers to the fact that although we are traditionally a strong visitor destination domestically, we also want to continue our international tourism marketing and increase the share of international travellers from the current 15% to 20% by 2025.

A region of ecological, cultural and experience tourism indicates a desire in the strategy to emphasize and showcase the region's unique selling points. The four national parks located in the region, the numerous nature trails, the 3,700 lakes and all the activities that have sprung up around them make our region a magnificent nature travel destination. Experiences also include diverse events across the whole of Central Finland, including concerts, festivals, sporting and wellness events, as well as conferences and congresses. Cultural tourism spans cultural destinations in the region, as well as local life and food.

Accessibility means both physical and digital accessibility. Physical accessibility means logistical arrangements and consideration of the opportunities afforded by tourism infrastructure right from the development and construction stage. Digital accessibility refers to how well the region's services are findable and usable through online channels and with the help of digital solutions. An important aspect of digital accessibility is compliance with the accessibility directive written into Finnish law.

2.2 MISSION

The background and fundamentals of the Central Finland Tourism Strategy's mission

Finnish tourism can be divided into domestic and international tourism. Where domestic tourism is concerned there is currently no "official organization" at the national level, but tasks of this nature have been handled primarily by the Association of Finnish Travel Organizations SUOMA ry. The official body for international tourism in Finland is Visit Finland, which operates under Business Finland. Its mission is to **help tourism businesses and regions that are willing and able to develop to grow their international business in all parts of Finland. The goal is to make Finland the most attractive visitor destination in the Nordic countries by the year 2025.**

Central Finland has traditionally been a popular destination for domestic travellers. The aim is for the region to become an even more attractive, premium-quality domestic destination in the future. Increasing the share of international tourism creates new opportunities for the region to develop new tourism products and to increase, in a sustainable manner, the total number of visitors to the area.

An expertise-driven tourism region is one that is managed through knowledge leadership.

Premium quality can be achieved through constant development at both the regional and business level. Quality improvement is based on knowledge, and especially listening to customer experiences. In so doing it is also possible to ensure customer friendliness.

Responsibility is a theme that cuts across all activities. The Sustainable Travel Finland programme and the region's own projects and development work can be harnessed to boost the responsibility of the region and local businesses.

The key words for accomplishing this mission are **cooperation and trust.**



Mission of the Central Finland Tourism Strategy

To work in collaboration with others to turn Central Finland into an expertise-driven, firstclass, responsible and customer friendly tourism region, known both domestically and internationally



Photo: Atacan Ergin

2.3 GOALS

Four main goals have been set for the implementation of the Central Finland Tourism Strategy:

1. Through cooperation, trust and flexibility of approach, to make Central Finland a customer-friendly, premium-quality, attractive and internationally renowned tourism region.

Cooperation, trust and flexibility refer to the DMO created during the strategy period, whose tasks include promotion of regional interests and the dissemination of information.

A Central Finland that is customer-friendly, premium-quality, attractive and internationally renowned can be achieved in cooperation with tourism businesses. Tourism products developed on the basis of genuine customer needs and feedback generate quality and appeal.

2. By strengthening knowledge and competence as well as developing the operational environment, to create an accessible, sustainable and responsible visitor destination.

Strengthening knowledge and competence refers, among other things, to regional education and coaching provided by local educational organizations and the regional organization (DMO).

Development of the operational environment can be achieved in cooperation with the

regional players. This includes, for example, improvement of the tourism infrastructure in order to facilitate tourism businesses' investment and development as well as the improvement of local services, such as maintenance and signage on nature trails as well as harbour services for visitors. Accessibility refers to both physical and digital accessibility. For further elaboration see **section 2.1.**

3. To market and sell to domestic and international customers authentic Central Finland characteristics which local tourism enterprises have developed into competitive, economically sustainable and profitable products.

The DMO markets Central Finland to both international and domestic customers with the aid of genuine and authentic tourism content.

4. To increase domestic market share, with special emphasis on recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and adjusting operations to respond to the challenges of a changing world.

Central Finland's goal is to invest in recovery from the pandemic by paying special attention to visitors from nearby areas and by boosting, especially during the first years of the strategy period, the market share of domestic tourism. Prospects for the future of tourism are covered in greater detail in **chapter 3.**

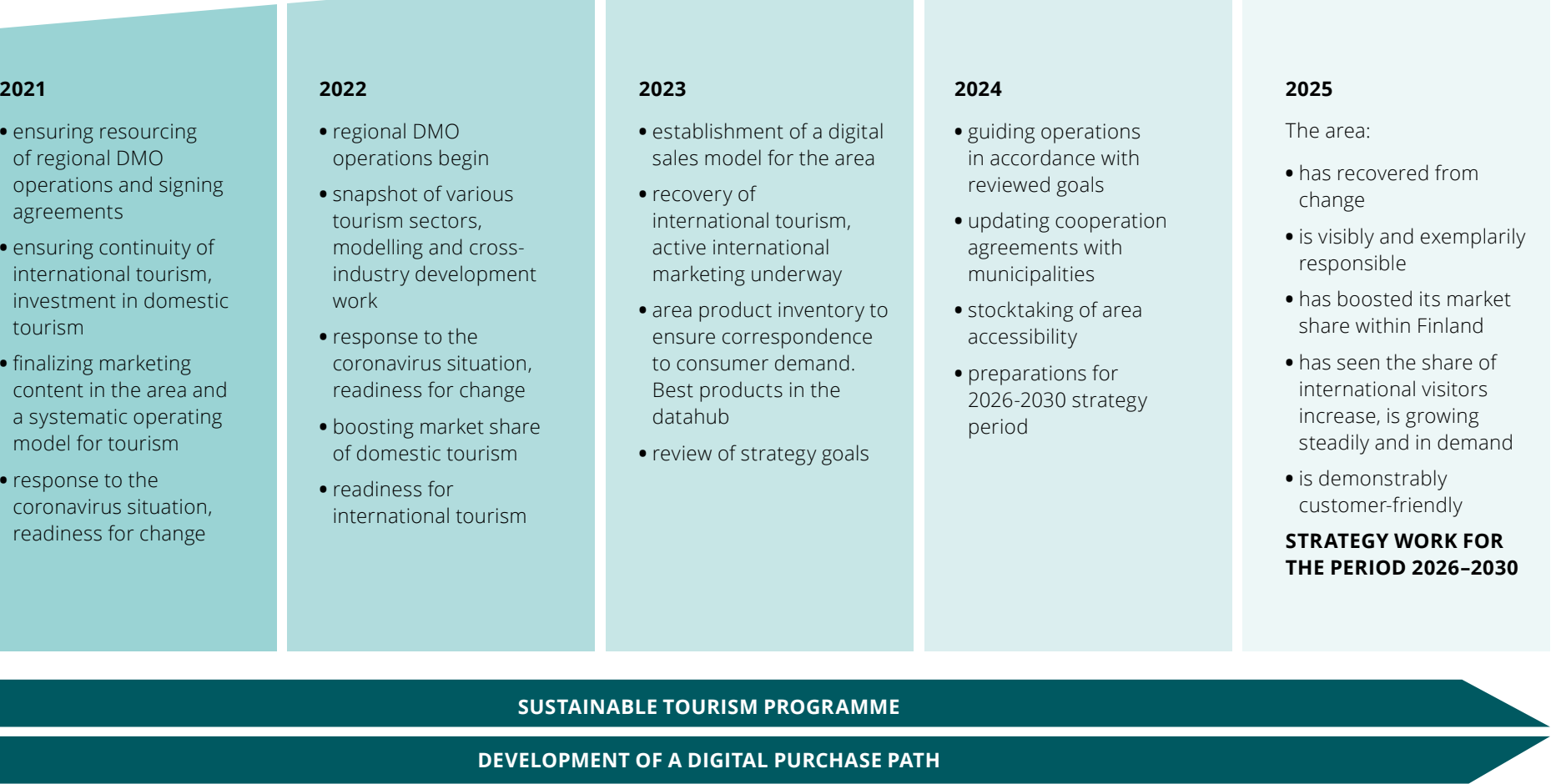
In addition to the goals stated verbally, four quantitative indicators have been selected for the strategy period 2021–2025.

These indicators are:

1. The share of international visitors, to increase from the present 15% to 20%.
2. For at least 30 tourism businesses to achieve a Steady or Go international rating. According to Visit Finland's starting level studies §2018–2019, 10 tourism businesses in the region currently fulfil these criteria.
3. For at least 50 businesses to be on the development path of Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) coaching, with 25 businesses STF certified. At the starting level, 25 businesses are undergoing coaching and three have obtained the STF certificate.
4. Central Finland's market share of domestic overnight stays to increase to 6.5%. The starting level in October 2020 is 6.0%.

By means of these goals, we can achieve the vision set for 2025: **To be an unequivocally responsible and internationally successful region of ecological, cultural and experience tourism in Lakeland Finland, renowned for its accessibility and commitment to active cooperation.**

GOALING STEPS DURING THE STRATEGY PERIOD



Goaling Steps depicts the key elements of each strategy year. An action plan for each specific year is formulated separately

2.4 UNIQUE SELLING POINTS IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

In Central Finland, tourism has historically relied heavily on domestic visitors. Domestic tourism accounts for about 85% of all visitors, the share of international visitors being roughly 15%. The unique selling points (USPs) have been Central Finland's beautiful nature, cottage holidays and the large number of events, especially in summertime. For domestic visitors the unique selling points are virtually the same as those for international travellers, in other words international visitors are attracted, to a large extent, by the same factors which domestic visitors find appealing. However, there are some differences in emphasis: for example, instead of events, the area's cultural offering is highlighted on the international side. In Central Finland, the events have been targeted mainly at a domestic audience, but there are also events with international appeal and potential such as Rally Finland, the City of Light festival and the Sauna Region Week. The following section describes the factors that attract domestic and international visitors to the region in greater detail.

KEY USPS IN DOMESTIC MARKETING

Photo: Jukka Paakkinen



AKK Sports Oy / Toni Ollikainen

EVENTS

- Central Finland is full of events, especially in summer. In the Jyväskylä Region alone, about 6000 events have traditionally taken place annually, from small pop-up happening right through to events at world championship level.
- The local atmosphere, food and drink, as well as oddness, even craziness, make the events interesting.
- Central Finland enjoys a good, central location from the perspective of organizing events and attracting visitors.
- Events are close to services, because these often take place close to the city centre or a holiday resort.



Photo: Jukka Paakkinen

NATURE

- It is said that Central Finland is Finland in miniature. The region features Ostrobothnia-like flatlands, Lapland-like wilderness, rocky Archipelago scenery, and magnificent lake views shared with Eastern Finland.
- There are four national parks in Central Finland, as well as fabulous nature trails for the independent visitor to hike.
- The 3,700 lakes of Central Finland offer cruises, canoeing, swimming, whitewater rafting and many other activities. Finland's longest (about 120 km) and deepest (about 100 m) lake, Päijänne, is to be found in Central Finland.
- The urban environment combines with nature in a manner rarely encountered elsewhere.
- A cottage holiday traditionally features strongly in Finns' summer plans.



Photo: Julia Kivelä

WELLNESS

- Jyväskylä is known as Finland's capital of sport, and it has invested heavily in education, research and development in sport and physical recreation.
- Central Finland is also the Sauna Region of the World, featuring among other things a concentration of sauna industry players, award-winning sauna tourism products and the Sauna Region Week.
- People in the region also draw upon nature, silence, culture and architecture for their well-being.

KEY USPS IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

Photo: Jukka Paakkinen



Photo: Jukka Paakkinen

NATURE

- Central Finland has four national parks, and businesses in the area offer many guided activities within them.
- The 3,700 lakes of Central Finland offer cruises, canoeing, swimming, whitewater rafting and many other activities.
- Nature surrounds the cities and municipalities. It takes only a couple of minutes to be in the middle of the sounds and silence of nature.
- The region's unique accommodation options are close to nature. Even city hotels allow visitors to get out into nature quickly and easily.



Photo: Julia Kivelä

WELLNESS

- Jyväskylä has the only faculty of sport science in Finland, where research into the importance of sport and well-being is conducted.
- The Sauna Region of the World offers unique experiences for all.
- Local tourism businesses have developed fantastic sauna products and regularly stage open sauna evenings, even for individual visitors.
- Jämsä's sauna village showcases the history of smoke saunas from the 18th century right through to the 1940s.
- Wellness is drawn from nature. A path of silence, forest bath and nature yoga are examples of wellness products in Central Finland.



Photo: Tero Takalo-Eskola

CULTURE

- Jyväskylä is known as the capital of architect Alvar Aalto thanks to the 29 buildings designed by him.
- There are two UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the region; Petäjävesi Old Church and Oravivuori triangulation tower.
- There are several unique churches.
- The region possesses some unique museums. These include the Alvar Aalto Museum, the Craft Museum of Finland and the Finnish Air Force Museum.
- Local life with its own special traits – local people, local food and local customs – are of interest to international visitors.

2.5 KEY FOCUSES AND CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The key focuses of the strategy period include digitalization, responsibility and sustainability, knowledge and competence, accessibility, networking, international orientation, promotion of interests, living in the here and now, and safety. Digitalization and sustainability are crosscutting focuses, influencing to some extent all the subsectors of tourism. Responsibility is part of the sustainable tourism programme, mentioned in section 2.3. Steps to achieving strategy period goals

Readiness to change, flexibility and trust were designated critical success factors of the Central Finland Tourism Strategy.

Readiness to change means responding to and preparing for a situation such as that caused by the coronavirus, where we are faced by daily uncertainty. For this reason, both the DMO and tourism businesses must be prepared for a variety of challenges in the future.

Flexibility is a crucial part of readiness to change. From the point of view of tourism businesses, this can mean quickly reformulating old products and methods to meet new challenges.

Trust is the key to successful business and a successful business model. Trust does not appear out of nowhere or by itself; it must be earned through actions, communication and transparency.

3. TOURISM TRENDS AND PHENOMENA, FUTURE PROSPECTS

During work on the strategy an unexpected challenge in the form of COVID19 arose, changing tourism radically and creating challenges that will demand new solutions in the future as well. During the strategy period it is crucial to invest in recovery from the coronavirus, while simultaneously building resilience should further pandemics and similar catastrophes occur.

3.1 DIGITALIZATION

Digitalization has become an inexorable part of tourism. In the vision of the Digital Roadmap of Finnish Tourism (Visit Finland 2019) Finland is presented as an intelligent travel destination, which offers a smooth purchase path from contemplation to embarking on the journey. Tourism is developed using knowledge management and leaning on the platform economy.

From the visitor's point of view, online services must cover, via a multitude of channels, the entirety of the service path and travel chain. Digital channels and platforms make it easy for the traveller to compare offerings and alternatives.

Digitalization enables increasingly visible competition between Finnish visitor attractions and services in the international market.

Where marketing and sales are concerned, the key drivers are, among others, an increase in online sales and the number of Online Travel Agent (OTA) offices, growth in the importance of recommendation and content marketing, and data-based analytics. New technologies permit the collection of automatic customer data and the use of data in targeting marketing efforts.

The DMO boosts the region's digital visibility and presence on platforms, for which it, in collaboration with businesses, produces meaningful content. Customers are encouraged to share their experiences and recommendations on different platforms and social media channels. In the years to come further development of digital skills and tools in the region and its associated businesses will form the cornerstone of success and competitiveness.

3.2 RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Responsibility and sustainability will assume increasing importance in tourism as travellers and tour operators make their choices on ethical grounds. Climate change will have an impact on choices while the carbon footprint will receive ever greater attention.

In sustainable tourism, the economic, ecological and sociocultural impacts of travelling are taken into account, and the needs of travellers, tourism businesses and destinations, the environment and the local population re-examined. Responsible tourism business is founded on sustainability and profitability, with an emphasis on minimizing the harmful impacts of activities on the local environment.

According to studies, customer satisfaction and the experienced quality level associated with businesses acting responsibly are high. Themes where an invest in sustainability can be made include: water and energy efficiency, waste disposal, local products and services, upholding cultural heritage, local employment and consideration for the local population. Responsible practices and sustainable choices must be made visible in both communication and contact with customers. Sustainability and responsibility are important competitive advantages which can generate cost savings through reduced energy consumption, for instance.

From a regional perspective it is vital that businesses obtain certificates attesting to their responsibility and sustainability, take an active part in different development projects and pro-

grammes (e.g. Sustainable Travel Finland) and systematically communicate their commitment to responsibility.

3.3 FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

Individual interests, themes and hobbies are having more and more influence on the visitor's choice of destination. Digital tools enable the visitor and tourism businesses to customize their products in an individual manner. Volumes in traditional group tourism are expected to diminish – in the future people will travel more and more in small groups and as families. So-called individual or FIT (Free Independent Traveller) tourism will increase in the post-pandemic period. Visitors increasingly want to travel in safety, with lots of space for a small group, couples, families or just themselves.

Themed tourism and product development relying on themes will be of central importance. For example, where domestic tourism is concerned, it may not be profitable to define a strict target group but try to reach customers by highlighting the unique selling points of the region. Using digital channels and themes it is possible to reach fragmented customer segments even.

3.4 CHALLENGES IN A CHANGING WORLD

The coronavirus, with its wide-ranging impacts, came as a surprise to the tourism sector also at the time the strategy was being drawn up, and the global pandemic has changed the business irrev-

ocably. Digitalization will finally make a complete breakthrough, and investment in development of the same must be an even higher priority than before. Visitors pay more attention than previously to the quality of services and to responsibility – the hygiene level, cleanliness and safety of potential destinations are especially important. Soft values are also on the rise, since travelling has assumed greater importance due to the imposition of restrictions. Interest in eco-tourism and experiences involving food has risen, and the coronavirus has boosted domestic tourism and the demand for cottage accommodation. Mobility and accessibility services – their ease and safety in particular – are still important.

Similar global challenges may also occur in the future. It is therefore more important than ever to be aware of the vulnerabilities and risks associated with regional tourism in regard to new infectious diseases, natural disasters and other catastrophes. Constant awareness and anticipation are necessary, as well as the readiness to draw up contingency measures nimbly if needed, and to plan short-term and long-term measures that promote recovery and minimize harmful effects. Such measures include new emphases on product development and marketing. The development of virtual tourism has been a rising trend during the coronavirus pandemic. It may very well continue to occupy a position parallel to traditional tourism, or even partially replace it.

4. ORGANIZATION OF TOURISM AND APPROACHES IN CENTRAL FINLAND

4.1 DMO, REGIONAL COOPERATION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In Finland, every large tourism region has a DMO (Destination Management Organization), which has assumed the tasks of the regional organization and is typically responsible for the promotion of tourism within its own area as well as marketing, sales promotion and supervision of interests. The DMOs also act as the Visit Finland network's liaison organizations for the regions as well as operative partners.

In the autumn of 2019 Visit Finland commissioned a survey of the models employed by Finland's tourism organizations which provides a comprehensive picture of the state of the tourism branch in Finland, the approaches of regional organizations promoting and developing tourism, and the roles of different tourism actors within the field. The report also highlights the guidelines of UNWTO, the worldwide tourism organization, according to which a regional tourism organization should play an essential coordinating role in promot-

ing cooperation between, and reconciling the strategies of, tourism organizations at various levels.

During formulation of the tourism strategy for Central Finland there was clear and mutual recognition of the need for a common DMO to act for the region as a whole. Future DMO operations in Central Finland will take the form of cooperation between municipalities, where one actor takes the lead role in pushing tourism affairs forward employing a nationally recognised model and acting as the official regional organization.

Regarding DMO operations the intention is to pool resources so that every municipality and city does not need to do the same work separately. Rather, work is performed in a co-ordinated and agreed fashion through one main player, with each partner contributing resources for joint activities. In practice, the cooperating municipalities share the annual

costs of DMO operations and can monitor realization of the tourism strategy through a tourism steering group coordinated by the DMO. The goal is to systematically increase the appeal of Central Finland as a tourism region both domestically and internationally. The DMO will cooperate closely with local tourism businesses and actors.

A DMO player must have a diverse set of competences in the tourism sector, a regionally important position and sufficient background resources for carrying out the task. In Central Finland, Visit Jyväskylä was considered to be best placed to perform the necessary DMO operations since it has been engaged in tourism branch cooperation with surrounding municipalities for a long time now. Visit Jyväskylä also represents the capital of the region and acts as the region's official partner in dealings with Visit Finland.

4.2 CREATION OF THE DMO

Creation of a joint DMO for Central Finland is scheduled to take place in the second year of the strategy period – in other words, the DMO will commence operations at the beginning of 2022. The Visit Jyväskylä name will be changed to Visit Jyväskylä Region from the beginning of 2021, the change of name providing a clear signal that the tourism area has expanded. Visit Jyväskylä Region will conduct preparatory contract negotiations with the municipalities in the spring of the first strategy year (2021). The objective is to engage all the municipalities in Central Finland in joint tourism promotion.

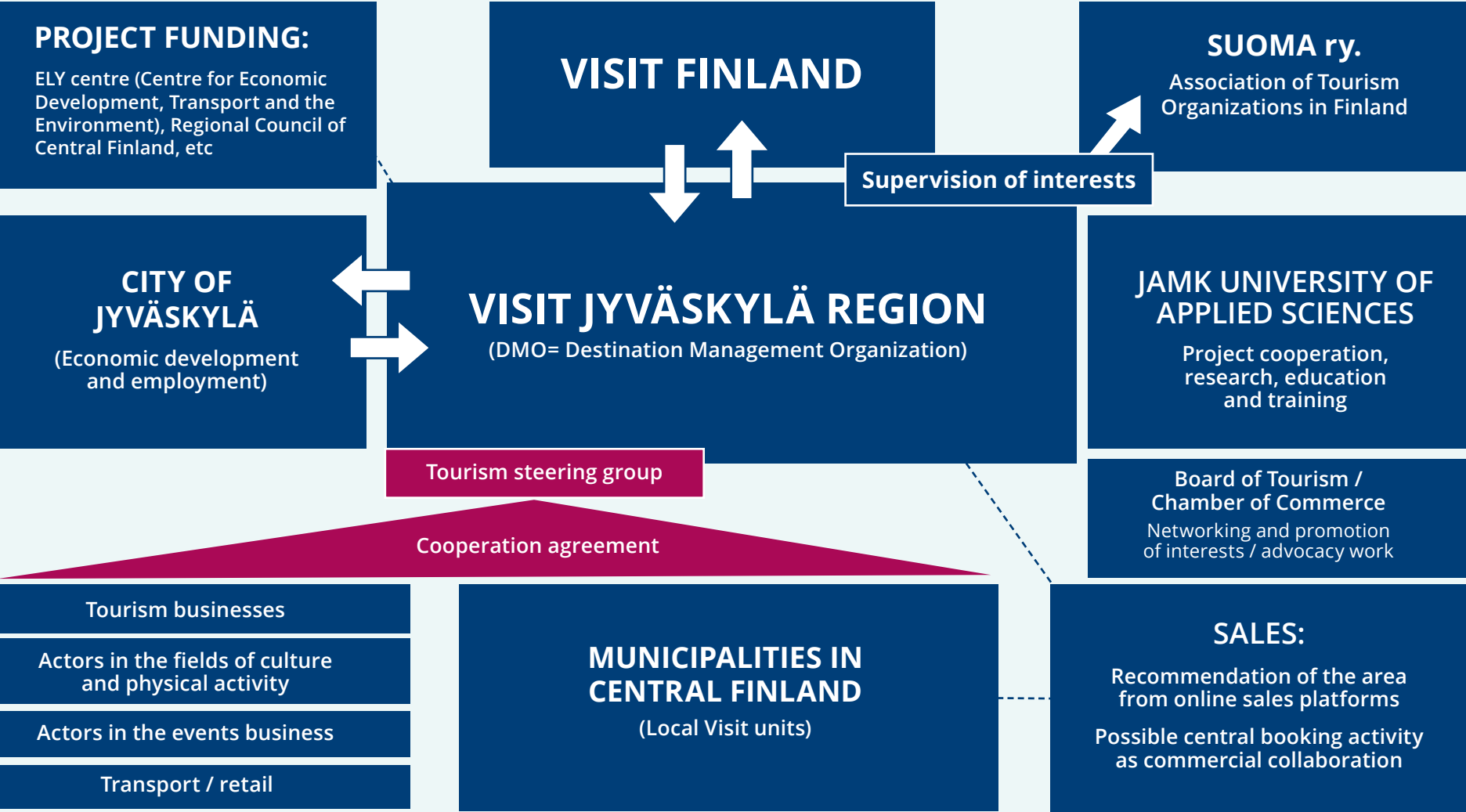
PROGRAMME FOR CREATION OF THE CENTRAL FINLAND TOURISM DMO IN BRIEF

Start: January 2022	Name of the tourism organization and the name in domestic marketing: Visit Jyväskylä Region	Name in international marketing: Lakeland – Jyväskylä Region
Regional cooperation model: Cooperation agreement between municipalities. The objective is to engage all the municipalities in Central Finland.	Administration: City of Jyväskylä, lead unit: Visit Jyväskylä Region	Agreement period: In the DMO start-up phase, three-year fixed-term contract, following which a move to an open-ended agreement model (6-month period of notice for both parties).
Tourism steering group: Representatives of signatories to the cooperation agreement. Tasks: strategy work monitoring, possible changes to the strategy, resources, project planning.	Basic funding of the operation: City of Jyväskylä and cooperating municipalities. Individual businesses and holiday resorts will also have an opportunity to participate with a contribution based on turnover should their municipality not be taking part. Funding to cover both operational activities and staff expenditure. Annual funding should also cover projects' annual self-financing shares.	

Photo: Tero Takalo-Eskola

4.2.1.
CENTRAL FINLAND COLLABORATION MODEL
AND TASKS OF KEY PLAYERS

Photo: Collaboration model



• The Central Finland collaboration model depicts the region’s key players and linkages in the field of tourism development. In order to guarantee successful, efficient and effective cooperation, the tasks of every key player or player group have been defined. The goal is to avoid overlaps, operate efficiently internally and outwardly as coherently as possible.

Division of tasks between the regional organization and cooperating municipalities as regards the DMO

TASKS OF THE DMO:	TASKS OF THE COOPERATING MUNICIPALITIES AND LOCAL VISIT ORGANIZATIONS:
Responsibility for implementing the tourism strategy and monitoring	Official partner in the locality in dealings with the DMO (coordinating role)
International tourism marketing: Visit Finland official liaison point and cooperation across Lakeland region as a whole	Development and maintenance of the tourism network within the municipality
National domestic tourism campaigns (seasonal) and joint measures	Local campaigns and projects
Image marketing for regional tourism	Highlighting topical events (local events through local channels, those with national and international appeal communicated to the DMO)
Maintenance of main digital distribution channels and tools in the region, development of digitalization	Local information services
Training, events, regional network cooperation and stakeholder communication	Regional online service and brochure production
Tourist information	Tourism statistics for the municipality in question
National supervision of interests and dissemination of information	Traditional business counselling
Tourism development, projects and project cooperation	

NB! The Central Finland DMO will not conduct for-profit business or act as a sales point.

Tasks of the tourism players:

- Operating their business and responsibility for development
- Sales
- Marketing related to sales
- Willingness to cooperate and network with others

Tasks of the Regional Council of Central Finland

- Tourism-sector supervision of interests with regard to regional programmes
- Regional tourism information
- Tourism statistics and studies at regional level
- Funding for tourism projects
- Upkeep of Regional Tourism Representative activity

Tasks of Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (JAMK):

JAMK is a significant research, development and educational organization in the field of tourism with over 20 years’ experience of coordinating tourism projects in the region. According to the Universities of Applied Sciences Act, the key tasks of JAMK are education, research and regional development. Tourism is one of JAMK’s strategic areas of strength.

JAMK is increasingly concentrating on improving the competitiveness of tourism enterprises in Central Finland, and on responsible tourism and ecotourism, as well as wellness, cultural and countryside tourism. As a major, permanent player in the region, JAMK conducts and maintains development work both nationally and internationally together with an extensive network of partners. Crosscutting themes include responsibility, digitalization and international orientation.

4.3 VALUE PROPOSITION OF THE DMO AND TOURISM REGION

With the help of a value proposition, the region wishes to send a message to visitors about the issues it considers important – about the way it wants to be seen by visitors and what kind of experiences it can offer visitors. The value proposition also says who we are and what goals we will be steadfastly striving for in the future. The value proposition thus guides the region's choices and actions at different levels. Concretely the value proposition must find realization in the region's communications, marketing, development, services, products, and customer contacts.

VALUES OF THE DMO

- customer-oriented and cooperative
- positive and reliable
- authentic and professional
- agile and ambitious
- responsible

The value proposition of Central Finland tourism can be summed up easily: **responsibility, a customer-oriented approach and authenticity.**



The value proposition also serves as the value base for the DMO's activities. Its internal values include five points which guide the regional organization's task and methods of operation.

5. EXPANSION OF TOURISM SUBSECTORS

This chapter outlines several central tourism themes that are under development in the region during the strategy period. In addition to the DMO, JAMK, development companies, tourism-related projects and tourism businesses, among others, are participating in the development of the themes in question.

5.1 BOOSTING EVENT ACTIVITIES IN CENTRAL FINLAND

Events have a positive influence on the economy of the region and also reinforce its image. Events are seen as significant pull factors in Central Finland, especially in Jyväskylä and Jämsä. Jyväskylä's major events, especially Rally Finland, are visible in a variety of ways in the surrounding municipalities. Several events are significant from a tourism point of view, so continuing to develop them at area and local level is worthwhile. One way in which Finland is gaining visibility in the international market is through its special and strange events. Almost every municipality in Central Finland has summer events which bring together both the locals and visitors enjoying a holiday there.

Organizing conferences and corporate events is important for many tourism businesses and other firms in Central Finland. Client acquisition for domestic conferences as well as conference marketing are handled direct by the firms concerned. The DMO can take part in conference marketing through campaigns jointly agreed in the region as a whole. Jyväskylä Convention Bureau, which operates in network fashion, concentrates only on acquiring new conferences and congresses.

5.2 BOOSTING EVENT ACTIVITIES IN CENTRAL FINLAND

Jyväskylä is a popular city of events, in which 6,000 different events are organized yearly ranging from small pop-up happenings to major events attracting hundreds of thousands of people. Festivals, sports events, fairs, congresses and conferences constitute a familiar part of Jyväskylä's events palette. The compact size of the city and broad range of venues permit the organization of even the largest events.

The events business is at a crossroads. In future, virtual and hybrid events will present a significant alternative to face-to-face meetings. In consequence it has been predicted that both direct and indirect income from tourism will decrease. For this reason, even greater investment must be made in enabling events to be organized.

Events are divided into four different categories from a development point of view.

Sporting events

World, European and Finnish championships and other events related to sports, physical recreation and wellness

Festivals and cultural events

Events at the international, national and regional level

Conferences, congresses and fairs

International congresses, national conferences and fairs

Unique events

Local events that attract international interest

As an event city, Jyväskylä's guiding principle is to let businesses, organizations and associations stage and develop events. The City of Jyväskylä maintains and develops the facilities.

Main focuses and goals of development

Favourable conditions for organizing events experiential in nature and of different sizes

- Further improvement to conditions, processes and tools

Ease of organizing events

- For event organizers, Jyväskylä is a functional, equality-focused and accessible venue for events

Local and national visibility for the Event City brand

- Turning positive spirit and cooperation into national trump cards
- Local expertise and services at the disposal of organizer

As an Event City Jyväskylä's goal, besides attracting new events, is to help local events become of interest nationally and internationally. The goal is for the city to develop a diverse palette of events that are interesting for domestic and international visitors alike. These must be high-quality events that are staged safely and responsibly. Event visitors boost the volume of overnight stays in both the city and the surrounding area and make use of a wide variety of tourism services. Responsibility and knowledge management guide the development of event activity.

Jyväskylä Convention Bureau (JCB) is the network covering the City of Jyväskylä, the University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Jyväskylä Educational Consortium and various businesses. It helps educational institutions, scientific associations and academia to bring an international conference or congress to Jyväskylä. When the decision on organizing a congress in Jyväskylä has been taken, the organizer can purchase the services necessary for organizing a congress from the convention bureau or organize it independently, e.g. by using the internal services of the educational institution concerned.

The goal is to bring to Jyväskylä

Congresses of high quality, and of a high standard in terms of scientific substance, the staging of which proceeds smoothly employing facilities appropriate to the event in question.

Congresses appropriate to the city's size and services with an average of 100–500 participants and which are organized all year round.

Congresses that reinforce the fields of interest of local research institutes and boost their visibility internationally.

Congresses are organized responsibly; information is shared in a transparent and equal manner. The network serving congresses also places an emphasis on responsibility. Familiar, long-term and enduring partners are also a guarantee of quality.



Kuva: Ingmar Wein

5.3 BOOSTING CULTURAL TOURISM

The strengths of cultural tourism in Central Finland are strongly connected with the architecture of Alvar Aalto, UNESCO world heritage sites and local culture. Alvar Aalto's architecture is famous worldwide and an international unique selling point. The Jyväskylä Region has a total of 29 significant Aalto building complexes from different periods, the largest number in the world. Jyväskylä is therefore called the capital of Alvar Aalto's architecture and it is also a founding member of the network of Alvar Aalto cities as well as an active player in the Alvar Aalto Route Association.

Of the seven **UNESCO world heritage sites in Finland** two are in Central Finland, Petäjävesi Old Church and the Oravivuori triangulation tower, part of the Struve chain, in Korpilahti. In addition to these two unique selling points, there are many other cultural players and events in Central Finland that are interesting from a tourism perspective.

In addition to the above-mentioned cultural focal points, Central Finland is characterized by rich local culture. Local special traits include, among others, sauna culture, local food, architecture, sports and physical recreation, unusual small-scale events, and student life.

As regards cultural tourism, there is active cooperation at the regional level with various development programmes, plans and projects associated with culture. The DMO is strongly involved with Visit Finland's Culture Finland Programme, for example. In the upcoming strategy period the aim is to intensify cooperation between tourism and cultural players through the creation of a common, more long-term approach.

5.4 BOOSTING CULINARY TOURISM

Boosting culinary tourism is one of the main focuses of Central Finland's Food Chain Coordination 2 plan (KEKO2). Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (JAMK) has been responsible for managing this project.

The goal of boosting culinary tourism is to involve businesses, developers and other stakeholders in the food chain and tourism branch and cross sectoral boundaries. This involvement is aimed at influencing customer-oriented development of Central Finland's culinary tourism, its productization, and efforts to make it visible and available.

Ambitions for Central Finland's culinary tourism in 2025 include the following:

- Sustainably produced food is an important and visible part of tourism in Central Finland.
- Food and tourism players in Central Finland have become networked.
- Various Central Finland food paths are on offer

Main focuses of efforts to boost culinary tourism in Central Finland:

- 1. On the food paths of Central Finland:** Putting together diverse area-, theme- or target group-related packages; what, where and when they are available. Quality.
- 2. Networking and cooperation** Reinforcing networked collaboration between food and tourism businesses as well as joint development of the same. Utilizing the competence and skills of young entrepreneurs. Strengthening cooperation between developer organizations.
- 3. Accessibility:** Joint marketing. The same ease as with package holidays abroad; both customers and entrepreneurs can find each other.
- 4. Communication:** Gathering information into one "home base" and boosting awareness between enterprises. Remembering to consume regional products oneself. Healthy pride in what the region has to offer.
- 5. Projects with public funding:** Businesses cannot do all this alone. Support, coordination, and coaching are needed. Image building. Networks.



Photo: Julia Kivelä

5.5 BOOSTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

In 2019 Visit Jyväskylä was chosen as a pilot area for Visit Finland's Sustainable Travel Finland programme (later known as STF) along with six other areas. This provided the impulse for systematic development of sustainable tourism, which is now being carried forward throughout Central Finland as a part of permanent tourism development work.

Sustainable tourism is a crosscutting theme which can be divided into four sectors: ecological, economic, sociocultural and ethical sustainability. The STF programme takes account of all these sectors and helps both regional tourism players and Visit Jyväskylä Region in the role of regional DMO to develop their activities across the sectors as a whole.

During the strategy period tourism players in the region are encouraged in a variety of ways to make sustainability the focus of their operations. For example, regional tourism players who have invested prominently in sustainability are featured in regional image marketing, which in turn encourages the development of sustainable practices.

5.6 BOOSTING EDUCATIONAL TOURISM

At the beginning of the strategy period Finland will experience strong demand for educational tourism. Where Central Finland is concerned, the potential of educational tourism is regarded as significant. Actual educational tourism products and services can, however, be found in the service package of only a few regional providers at the beginning of the strategy period. During the strategy period 2021–2025 the aim is to apply for project funding and use it to start systematic development of educational tourism.

5.7 DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM

Finland has an image as a country of national parks, clean waterways and forests and quiet experience of nature. The large lake areas in Central Finland, the numerous quiet areas marked on the regional land use plan as well as the national parks respond to this demand in the best possible way. Central Finland has the country's highest density of national parks, since from any of its municipalities it only takes a couple of hours to reach as many as four national parks. It is only a short distance to Central Finland from neighbouring regions and the big population centres in southern Finland. Domestic visitors often enjoy nature in an independent fashion but for international visitors the experience of nature must be productized and packaged. On the international market the themes with the biggest potential according to Visit Finland are hiking, cycling, mountain biking, canoeing and observing animals.

Ecotourism always needs public funding to keep its infrastructure up to date, safe and accessible to visitors of different kinds. Where ecotourism is concerned municipal and regional boundaries should be forgotten, because the main destinations such as national parks and visitor routes often extend over geographical boundaries. Today, the development of ecotourism is advanced in a cooperative manner by means of projects run by different players, as well as Metsähallitus (the body responsible for forestry management, parks and wildlife) and the regional DMO.



5.8 BOOSTING WELLNESS AND SPORTS TOURISM

Wellness comprises many subfields. Among these are sauna, food, nature and activities that promote well-being. As hurry and stress have increased, so too international wellness tourism has grown. According to the Global Wellness Tourism Economy Report the international wellness tourism sector is growing by 9 % annually – roughly half as fast again as the tourism branch overall. One of the subfields of wellness tourism is health tourism, which makes use of cross-disciplinary cooperation with a range of actors including specialized health care.

In 2015 Central Finland declared itself the Sauna Region of the World. Since then, regional tourism businesses have developed different sauna products for visitors. Every visitor coming to Finland should get to enjoy a comprehensive multisensory sauna experience, either by taking a cottage holiday, or by paying a visit to a hotel or public sauna in a city setting. The annual Sauna Region Week at the turn of July/August offers all visitors the

opportunity to try out saunas of all kinds, sauna treatments and special and excitingly “strange” sauna events such as the World Championships in Sauna Heating and the Sauna Marathon.

Sports and fitness travel occupies a prominent position both in Finland’s tourism strategy and the activities of Visit Finland. Finland is the promised land for sporting events, and many international events -particularly in winter sports such as cross-country skiing - have traditionally been organized here. Sports and fitness travel in Finland is mainly focused on those towns and cities with sports institutes or facilities developed for different disciplines. In Central Finland, the Himos area of Jämsä as well as the future Hippos complex and Laajavuori area in Jyväskylä are ideal locations for this. The latest study conducted about sports travel is from 2020: The Distribution Channel Survey in UK Market For Sports Travel Theme.



6. STRATEGY MONITORING INDICATORS

The Central Finland tourism strategy has been divided into annually monitored and strategy period-specific primary indicators. National comparability and tourism sector legislation have been taken into account in the choice of indicators. In addition to the primary indicators, it is possible to use other supplemental measures as specified separately every year.

ANNUALLY MONITORED INDICATORS:

Accommodation statistics (TAK research)

- Registered overnight stays, market share
- Unregistered overnight stays (AirBnB and Vrbo)
- Visitor numbers and spending (TAK border research and domestic tourism research)

Events’ impact

Increase in media attention and hashtag monitoring (Meltwater)

Monitoring the chief distribution channels and functions:

- Websites and social media
- Campaign reports
- Operational key figures (customer numbers, guidance volume, event numbers)

INDICATORS MONITORED BY STRATEGY PERIOD:

Income and employment research (TAK Oy)

Level of internationalisation of the region (Visit Finland’s initial level study, share of international visitors)

Responsibility level of the region

Quality level of the region (Mystery Shopping 2021 and 2025)

Accessibility analysis 2021 and 2025



Photo: Eemeli Nättinen

VISIT
Jyväskylä
REGION



KESKI-SUOMEN LIITTO

REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CENTRAL FINLAND

Leverage from
the EU
2014–2020



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



MORE INFORMATION REGARDING CENTRAL FINLAND TOURISM STRATEGY 2021–2025:

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