



# ARCTIC URBAN REGIONAL COOPERATION

Arctic towns and cities exchanging sustainable development experiences, inspiring positive local change



Funded by  
the European Union



## WHAT IS ARCTIC URBAN REGIONAL COOPERATION?

Arctic Urban Regional Cooperation (AURC) is the first initiative of its kind enabling local authorities from Arctic countries to collaborate through peer-to-peer learning and sharing on sustainable urban and regional development challenges and solutions.

Launched by the European Union in January 2024, AURC brings together Arctic towns and cities from Canada, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the USA.

Through AURC, local authorities work together in a structured action planning process to transfer knowledge and best practices – and share solutions to the issues most important to them.

## HOW IT WORKS

AURC promotes cooperation among Arctic local and regional authorities, communities, universities and other organisations, working closely with the Arctic Mayors' Forum. It does so through regular activities throughout the year, including:



**Online technical sessions, and deep dive sessions**, on topics such as climate resilience, Indigenous reconciliation, participatory budgeting, and evidence-based sub-national decision-making, exploring good practices from Arctic and non-Arctic communities.



**Workshops, sharing techniques** for example on enhancing citizen engagement, and attracting people to the North.



**Study visits**, highlighting local solutions in Arctic towns and cities including: Whitehorse and Yellowknife (Canada); Luleå and Umeå (Sweden); and Oulu (Finland).



**Participating in other events** such as the EU Arctic Forum, Indigenous People's Dialogue and Arctic Youth Dialogue (Brussels and Kittilä), Arctic Frontiers (Tromsø) and Arctic Circle Assembly (Reykjavik).

**This unique opportunity has been very inspiring, giving many new perspectives, especially in promoting active society, participation and engagement, community building, culture and youth.**

Anne Rännäli-Kontturi, International affairs manager, Oulu

**We're struggling with the same problems. We get to see how other cities are working, we also know who we can connect with.**

Ølvinnd Arvola, Communications manager, Harstad

**To have a reference group of like-minded people with so much knowledge and experience is really valuable for me and for our municipality.**

Julia Seljeseth, International advisor, Tromsø

## MUNICIPAL TEAMS' CAPACITY & GOVERNANCE



**Umeå** brought diverse departments together to develop an Arctic position paper on priorities such as climate change, democracy, mobility, innovation and social sustainability.

AURC is boosting cross-sectoral cooperation, and valuable practical learning, in cities across its network.

## CLIMATE RESILIENCE & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



AURC sparked a new U.S.-Canada academic partnership to develop an evacuation plan for **Fairbanks NSB** using lessons from Yellowknife's wildfire evacuation.

Around the AURC network, cities are reinforcing sustainable tourism, cooperating on preparedness, and creating links with Arctic Six universities.

## CULTURE, IDENTITY & SOCIAL COHESION



AURC showed **Rovaniemi** new ways to support locally driven cultural events for tourists and residents, such as simplifying requests for pop-up events.

Meanwhile, **Luleå** was inspired by Yellowknife to highlight Indigenous culture in city planning. They are also creating a local film festival, and – with **Oulu** and **Tromsø** – building a Schools of Culture youth exchange programme.

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, EDUCATION & WELLBEING



Inspired by peers, **Luleå** launched a youth engagement programme alongside a two-year Youth Municipal Council pilot project.

Other AURC results include cultural exchanges, and new links between youth and local government – such as **Rovaniemi's** strategic youth priority, and **Fairbanks'** Citizen Academy.



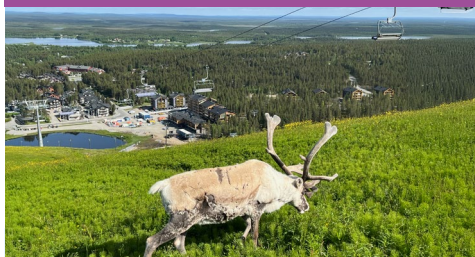
## LOCAL PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT



**Salla** launched its first participatory budget, inspired by AURC exchanges. Residents submitted about 150 ideas: the winning proposal – a new community gym – is now being built.

Other examples include the launch of a Citizen Academy in **Fairbanks**, and new approaches to participative budgeting in **Harstad** and **Tromsø**, and community engagement in **Oulu**.

## LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Using AURC lessons in placebranding, **Yellowknife** secured funding to boost investment attraction. Actions included creating a set of 25 ready-to-go local investment opportunities to share with potential investors.

Other results are **Salla's** €1M+ cross-border training project, **Gällivare's** support for employers, and **Tromsø's** tourism cooperation.

## TALENT ATTRACTION, RETENTION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



*Photo credit: Fredrik Larsson/Visit Umeå*

**Gällivare** opened a Welcome House inspired by Oulu's International House, with services for newcomers, jobseekers and international talent.

Meanwhile, Welcome Hub **Luleå** is being planned, **Tromsø** created the role of 'International House Coordinator' and **Yellowknife** enhanced recruitment campaigns.

AURC is a great learning experience. It's very beneficial, and incredibly inspiring to exchange with other Arctic cities working on sustainability issues, with similar challenges.

Annika Dalén,  
Gender equality and  
strategic development  
officer,  
Umeå

## LOOKING FORWARD

New cross-sectoral initiatives are sparking positive changes in Arctic communities, thanks to AURC's inspiring exchanges and joint action planning. The network continues to focus on key local priorities, such as **inclusive economic development, talent attraction and retention, and youth engagement.**

Highlights for AURC towns and cities in 2026 include a **study visit to Fairbanks North Star Borough, Alaska.** Technical Working Groups will conduct in-depth reviews of how towns and cities are progressing on specific urban challenges. There will

also be workshops at the EU Arctic Forum, Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue and Arctic Youth Dialogue in Brussels.

In addition to local actions, many joint projects are growing from AURC. These include "TALENT NORTH: Attracting and Anchoring Global Talent in the Arctic" – an exciting Interreg Aurora proposal built with the Arctic Six universities alliance and Arctic Mayor's Forum. Partners include city administrations and universities in Oulu, Bodö, Tromsø, Luleå and Umeå, with Finnish cities of Rovaniemi and Joensuu as associate partners.

## LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH!

Find out about the EU's wide range of activities in and for the Arctic



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