

We work across borders in the project
Regenerative nature tourism - REGGAE

**TOURISM THAT
STRENGTHENS LOCAL
CULTURE, COMMUNITY
AND ENVIRONMENT**

Want to know more?
www.interregaurora.eu



Interreg
Aurora



Co-funded by
the European Union



Reggae Newsletter 5/2026

Check also: [REGGAE homepage](#)



**REGENERATIVE
NATURE TOURISM**

HAPPY PLACES - HAPPY FACES

Greetings from the project!

Dear REGGAE community,

As the REGGAE project moves into its final phase, it is inspiring to see how much has been achieved together. The project continues to progress according to plan, supported by strong cooperation between partners, active entrepreneur engagement, and practical results that will support regenerative nature tourism beyond the project period.

During this period, entrepreneurs have been involved through workshops, coaching, courses, peer learning and cross-border networking. The last workshop and network trip in Umeå brought together entrepreneurs and project partners around cultural heritage, conservation

and regenerative business development. These exchanges reflect the core of REGGAE: building knowledge, strengthening networks and developing tourism experiences that support both people and places. Our open online courses have also reached a wide audience, covering regenerative nature tourism, marketing and communication, cultural heritage and forest history, and accessible and inclusive tourism. At the same time, the guidebook for tourism entrepreneurs is recently published, bringing together key tools, insights and examples from the project.

Looking ahead, we are pleased to invite you to the REGGAE final event in Kokkola, Finland, on 23rd of September 2026. The event will bring together entrepreneurs, project partners, destination organisations, policymakers, tourism developers, researchers and other stakeholders interested in the future of regenerative nature tourism. We warmly encourage entrepreneurs, DMOs, tourism professionals, researchers, regional developers and decision-makers to save the date. More information about the programme and registration can be found at the end of this newsletter, and will be shared through the REGGAE website, and social media channels.

Thank you to all partners, entrepreneurs and stakeholders for your continued commitment. We look forward to meeting you in Kokkola in September 2026 and celebrating the results of REGGAE together.

Warm regards,

Pia Smeds

Project Coordinator

(banner photo: Backfors Gård)

Project updates



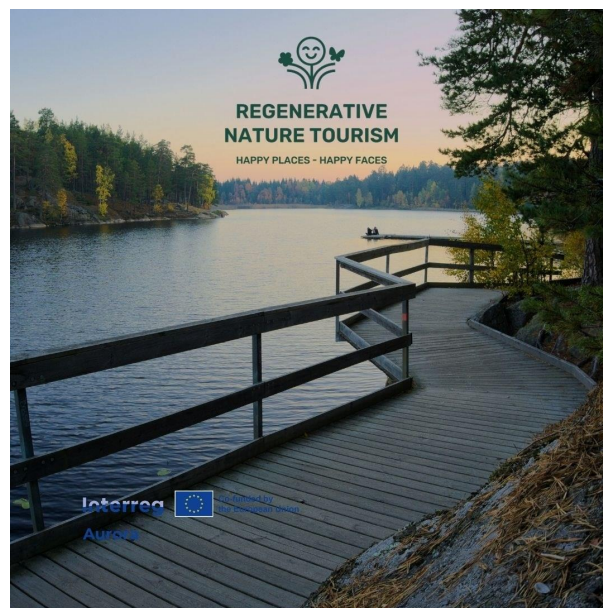
Regenerative Tourism in Practice: Business Networks, Benchmarking, and Tools for Change

The Reggae project brings together companies from Sweden and Finland that are committed to developing their operations based on regenerative principles. Together with these companies, we have organised business workshops and benchmarking trips designed to foster peer learning, exchange of ideas, and strategic networking. These meetings have proven invaluable, offering both inspiration and guidance for companies seeking to develop meaningful and regenerative nature tourism products.

Networks as a Tool for Transformation

For many small businesses, being part of a network is key to initiating and sustaining change. Through the Reggae network, participating companies have gained access to shared knowledge, peer support, and new connections, paving the way for collaboration, innovation, and stronger market positions. The project actively supports the development of these networks and provides practical tools to help companies take concrete steps in their regenerative transformation. We have identified specific coaching and sales support needs among the companies and are currently developing tailored approaches to help address them. The goal is for each company to have a clear, market-ready regenerative tourism product by the end of the project - a product that not only sustains the environment but actively contributes to the restoration of ecosystems and the vitality of local communities.

Courses





This year we have completed two online courses, Cultural Heritage and Forest History and Accessible, and Inclusive Nature-based Tourism with associated seminars. Earlier two courses were held in 2025, Regenerative Nature Tourism, and Marketing and Communication for Regenerative Nature Tourism.

The courses are still available and can be read independently, at any time. You can find the courses here:

[Reggae Courses](#)

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND FOREST HISTORY

The course was conducted in February. This course explores forest history and cultural heritage, with the goal of showing how knowledge of the past can help us contribute to sustainable forestry and a more sustainable society. You will be introduced to a carefully curated selection of fascinating themes. This is not a course that turns you into a professional historian or cultural heritage expert. Instead, the aim is to spark curiosity and inspiration, so that you gain new perspectives on forest history and cultural heritage, take that knowledge with you, and pass it on to others.

Forest history from a boreal perspective: Lars Östlund guides us through the development of the forest, from ancient old-growth forests to today's industrial forestry. Sámi history is highlighted from a forest perspective, and we learn to recognize and understand historical traces still visible in the landscape.

Life and women's roles in forest cabins in the early 1900s: Women have long been underrepresented in the history of forestry. Just in time, Amanda Löfdahl interviewed several women who worked as cooks in forest cabins in the early 20th century. Their stories shed light on working conditions, but also on respect, relationships, and everyday life in a male-dominated environment.

The history and development of Finland's forests: Jan Kunnas lectures on Finland's forest history and explains why looking back is essential before planning for the future. He

addresses a key question of our time: Is it possible to meet climate goals and raw material demands while also safeguarding biodiversity?

How to read and use our cultural landscapes: Michael Lehorst describes how the Swedish Forest Agency works with cultural landscapes. You will learn how to “read” the landscape to identify remains and cultural traces, and discover what kinds of heritage features can be found in forest and agricultural environments.

Sacred places and folk beliefs: This intriguing section explores supernatural places in rural landscapes. John Björkman, who has written his doctoral thesis on the subject, talks about folk beliefs and magic traditions in Finland.

Local history in practice: Linda Boberg-Santala is a self-employed entrepreneur working with, among other things, storytelling. She shares how she brings local history to life in the Öja archipelago in Finland, including gripping stories of smuggling during the Second World War.

ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE NATURE-BASED TOURISM

The course was conducted in April. The course explores strategies for nature-based entrepreneurs to enhance inclusive access to natural environments. It emphasises the development of destinations, products, and services that are welcoming and accessible to all individuals, including those with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities, as well as people of all ages. However, access to nature remains uneven, with many people with disabilities or temporary limitations facing challenges due to physical barriers, unclear information, or limiting assumptions about their abilities. When access fails for one person, it often affects entire families or groups, leading to missed economic opportunities for nature-based tourism entrepreneurs.

One of the key takeaways from the course was that accessibility does not require large investments. Small, practical adjustments, such as clearer paths, better information, and simple facilities, can make a significant difference. More importantly, accessibility should be integrated into everyday thinking rather than treated as an afterthought. By offering options, listening to users, and collaborating with disability organisations, it is possible to create inclusive experiences that meet diverse needs.

Nature-based tourism holds significant potential to provide individuals with disabilities the opportunity to experience and benefit from nature’s positive effects on health and well-being. Moreover, the growing silver economy, representing older adults as a dynamic and expanding market segment, underscores the importance of designing inclusive offerings that cater to their needs and preferences. The course also emphasises the importance of recognising that accessibility benefits everyone. It enhances visitor experiences, broadens participation, and strengthens the sustainability of tourism. Making nature more inclusive is

not just a matter of fairness; it is a smart, forward-thinking approach that supports a more resilient and regenerative tourism industry.

Life with a disability, travelling with barriers and inclusivity as a business opportunity:

Lecturer is Christian Hedberg, who shares over 20 years of lived experience of navigating life as a wheelchair user. Through three short sessions, you will gain insight into everyday life with a disability, the realities of travelling with barriers, and how crucial the right information and social context are for making experiences possible. The lectures then shift to the business perspective showing how accessibility is not only about inclusion, but also a valuable opportunity to reach more people and create stronger, more meaningful experiences.

Accessible nature and health: You will meet Nannie Fredriksson, an accessibility consultant. She tells: "I'm a construction engineer and mountain guide. After a couple of accidents, I've lived with physical disabilities for more than 3 decades. Because of my injuries, I have chosen to work with accessibility. First in the built environment, but over the last 10 years, I have striven to make nature more accessible to all. I firmly believe that everyone should have the possibility to spend time in various types of nature to promote better health, and also just to "feel good & be happy" 😊

Nannie lectures on why it is so important to spend time in nature, the healing properties of nature, and what happens in the body when we're outdoors. She presents the UN Convention on Human Rights for Persons with Disabilities, how it has impacted Swedish laws and regulations, and how it has raised awareness of accessibility. Nannie also talks about what accessibility is, both for people with physical and cognitive disabilities. She presents examples of how to make society and nature more accessible and usable, through adaptation and universal design.

Why accessibility matters in tourism: Magnus Berglund has over 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry and previously led the accessibility programme at Scandic Hotels. Today, he works internationally as a consultant and speaker, helping businesses develop more accessible and inclusive visitor experiences. In his lectures, Magnus will share practical insights and strategies to make tourism more accessible to a wider range of people.

Universal Design – Design Beyond "Us" and "Them": What happens when a space is technically accessible, but still makes you feel like you don't belong? Professor Per-Olof Hedvall draws on his own experience as someone using wheelchair to describe three key concepts: accessibility, usability, and universal design, that together create the conditions for participation. Through concrete examples, he shows why good design is not about accommodating or adapting for "special" cases, it's about designing for human variation from the start.

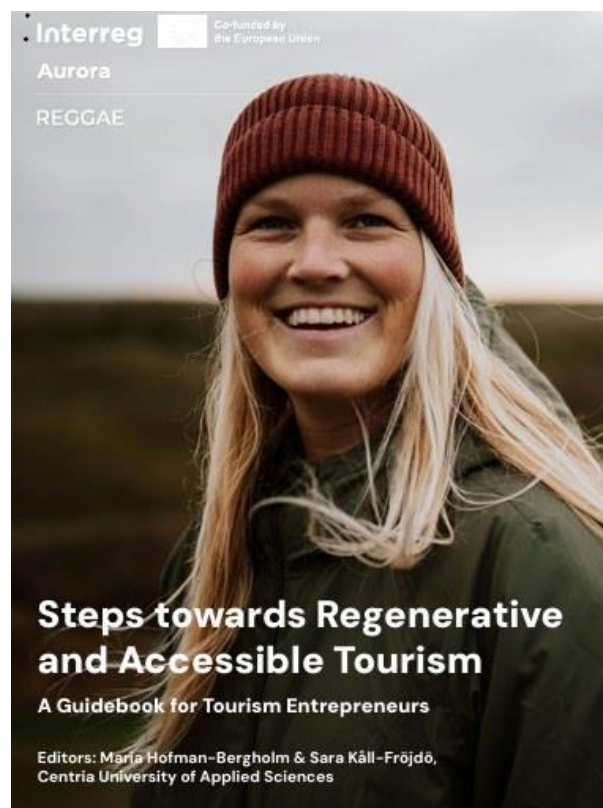
Take part of the courses: In May, we also held a summary seminar where we invited everyone who had registered for or participated in any of the courses. The aim was to give

participants the opportunity to ask questions and discuss what they had learned from the courses. Around fifteen people took part, and it resulted in an engaging session with interesting discussions about regenerative nature tourism.

We will not be offering any more seminars, but as mentioned earlier, the courses remain available online so that you can take part in sections or complete courses whenever you like and at your own pace.

Link to the courses: [Reggae Courses](#)

GUIDEBOOK



The guidebook is published. It offers inspiration and practical guidance for tourism entrepreneurs looking to develop regenerative nature-based experiences. It introduces key concepts such as regenerative, transformative, and accessible tourism, supported by a clear theoretical framework to deepen understanding and support implementation.

A central theme is accessibility, emphasizing that nature should be inclusive and available to everyone. The guidebook provides insights into disabilities within nature-based tourism, along with real-life examples and hands-on advice for improving accessibility in practice.

Readers will also explore how regenerative tourism can positively influence well-being, strengthen nature connectedness, and encourage pro-environmental attitudes among visitors. Additional topics include regenerative communities, as well as the unique

opportunities offered by boreal forests and cultural landscapes as settings for tourism experiences. Practical sections cover digital visibility, communication strategies, and pricing, offering examples of how to maintain a regenerative mindset while developing and marketing tourism products.

The guidebook is a collaborative effort by experts from Sweden and Finland within the REGGAE. It highlights the value of cooperation between researchers and entrepreneurs, providing knowledge and tools to help businesses create, market, and sell regenerative tourism experiences in the Aurora region.

More information: <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2026052958004>

EVALUATION



According to the preliminary questionnaire evaluations, participation in Reggae services as a customer reduced perceived stress and increased nature connectedness as well as environmental self-efficacy (e.g., confidence in making sustainable choices).

We also saw some meaningful shifts in perspectives towards the appreciation for nature, sustainability, and simple living. Many reported enhanced well-being and a stronger connection to nature.

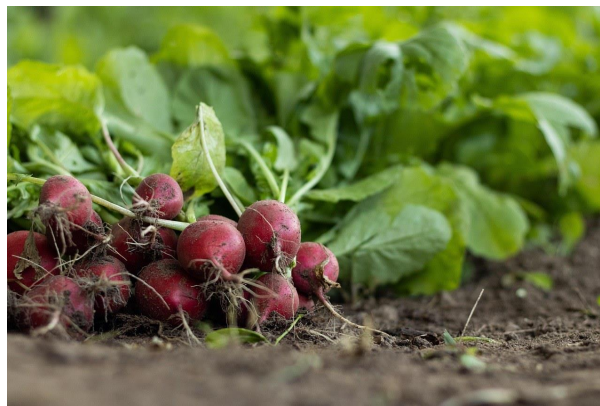
Three months later, participants' interest in local and sustainable tourism had increased. Participants valued nearby destinations more and realized that meaningful experiences can be found close to home with minimal environmental impact.

We also examined the entrepreneurs' Reggae journey and observed some interesting findings over a one-year period, comparing before and after the process. Entrepreneurs highlighted that, although sustainability is often written into documents in the tourism sector, it is rarely discussed in a truly meaningful way in practice. They also recognized that their own business activities can genuinely influence the well-being of the local environment and, through that, their own well-being as well.

Project companies -

*Meet a couple
of the reference companies taking part in the project!*

Company presentation - Ecogai



Ulrica runs a Market Garden in Älvbyarna, Veikars, Ostrobothnia. The garden is a small-scale organic vegetable farm with permanent beds, based on the principles of permaculture and the no-dig method. Ulrica experiments with new and interesting crops and explores collaboration with various actors and the local community to create a sustainable and creative environment for learning, development, and togetherness.

Locally grown vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruits can be purchased by arrangement, through the local shop Älvboden, or at local markets. Ulrica also supplies products to local restaurants. The garden is open to visitors from spring to autumn.

Ulrica also offers a variety of cultivation-related courses and lectures. Through Ecogai, you can book tailored packages with gardening activities designed according to your wishes.

More information: <https://ecogai.fi/>

Company presentation - Lapland Adventures

Basti, Jenny, and Ylvie share a unique life surrounded by animals, nature, and a deep commitment to giving back to nature and aim to have completely regenerative accommodation in the future. The company is located in Dragnäs, Swedish Lapland. Their work combines eco-friendly stays, animal care and guest education. Always with the goal of giving back more than they take.

Together with their sled dog team, made up largely of rescue and relocated dogs, alongside mini ponies and chickens, they have created a warm and authentic farm environment rooted in purpose and dedication.

Their journey with rescue dogs has always been central to who they are. For years, they supported local shelters in finding homes for dogs in need, and since 2017, they've extended this passion into dog sledding and dragsports. By building their team with rescued dogs, they champion the idea of second chances proving that every dog, regardless of background or ability, deserves love and a meaningful life.

In 2023, they took a step to fully embrace their dream by inviting guests to experience life on their farm. Visitors from around the world are welcomed not only to explore the surrounding nature but to become part of daily life; meeting the dogs, learning about their care, and experiencing sled dogs in a genuine and respectful way.

At the heart of their work is a commitment to sustainability and regenerative tourism. They are working toward fully ensuring their impact is positive for both the environment and their community.

More information: <https://www.lapland-adventures.com/>

Photos: Malin Grönborg



Events, ideas, research, and good practices

ReThink

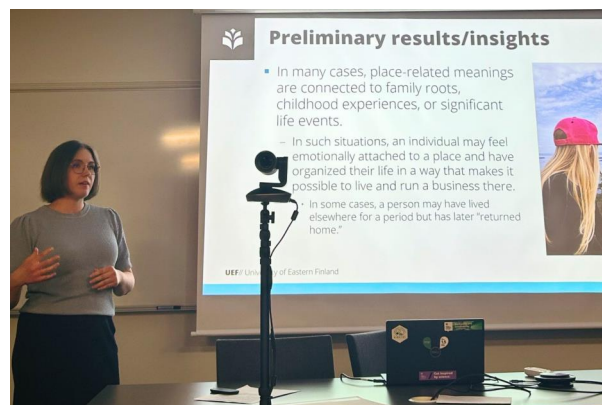
An Interreg NPA project *ReThink* started in March 2026 to help share and expand the results of the REGGAE and other regenerate projects.

ReThink focuses on supporting national and regional destination organisations by developing practical tools, guidelines, and a strategy for regenerative business travel. The work builds on REGGAE and will continue to spread its ideas and results.

ReThink will also grow the network created by REGGAE, connecting it with new projects and partners across Europe. This helps ensure that the knowledge and outcomes reach more people and contribute to the ongoing development of regenerative tourism.

Check for more: [ReThink](#)

Conferences

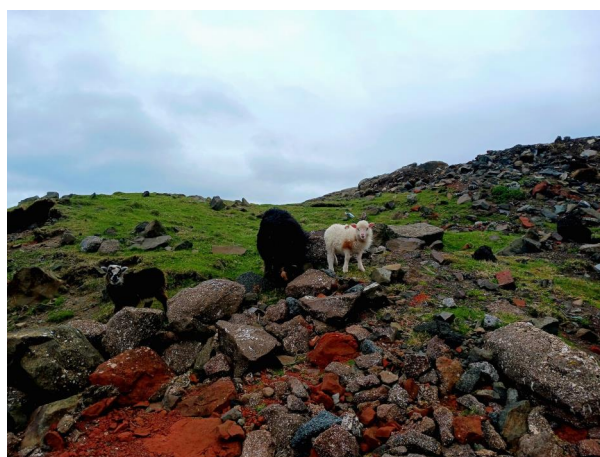




Researchers from the University of Eastern Finland have recently presented findings from the REGGAE project at two academic conferences. Henna Konu and Pinja Leino presented the research at the XV Symposium of Finnish Tourism and Leisure Research, *"The Experience Economy Revisited: Towards Meaningful, Sustainable and Transformative Value in Tourism and Leisure"*, held in Tampere in April 2026. Elli Vento presented the same research a month later at the UArctic Congress 2026 in the Faroe Islands, in a session focusing on sense of place and value-driven tourism development in small rural and coastal communities.

The presentations explored the role of place-related meanings and place attachment in the development of a regenerative mindset among small tourism businesses operating within the REGGAE project area. Preliminary findings suggest that when a place becomes meaningful to individuals and subjective bonds are formed with it, motivation to act in ways that benefit the place increases. Such actions may include environmental stewardship and nature conservation, civic engagement, and efforts to preserve and promote local cultural heritage.

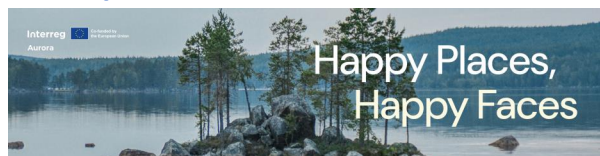
Photos: Zsolt Kazai, Alöna Roitershtein & Elli Vento





Seminars and Workshops

Reggae's final seminar in september 2026



We are delighted to welcome you to join REGGAE – Regenerative Nature Tourism project's Final Seminar!

The seminar is taking place on Wednesday 23 September 2026 at Öjan Kyläkeskus in Kokkola and the webinar-session of it will be also available online.

The seminar will bring together tourism industry specialists and researchers, tourism entrepreneurs, development organisations, and other stakeholders to share key insights from the REGGAE project and reflect on the future of regenerative nature tourism.

Participation is possible either onsite or online (only the webinar session). Onsite participation is limited to the first 50 registered participants.

Date: Wednesday 23 September 2026

Time: Full day (including webinar) onsite 9:30-15:00

Webinar session online 10:00-12:00 (UCT+2)

Location: Öjan Kyläkeskus (Öjavägen 454, 68550 Öja)

Cost: Free of charge

Programme

09:00 Transportation from Kokkola train station to Öja for onsite participants

09:30 Morning coffee and registration in Öja

10:00–12:00 REGGAE Final Webinar (hybrid)

- Welcome and introduction to the REGGAE project
- Key findings and reflections from project partners
- Moderated dialogue between a researcher and an entrepreneur experiences
- Service development
- Mindset development
- Accessibility
- Looking ahead: future collaboration, tools, and networks

12:00–13:00 Lunch and networking

13:00–14:00 Regenerative local activities for onsite participants

Participants will have the opportunity to experience local regenerative tourism activities and cultural environments in Öja.

14:00–14:45 Closing session, networking, coffee

The afternoon programme includes final reflections, informal networking, and closing words for the REGGAE project.

14:45 Transportation back to Kokkola railway station

More detailed programme information and participation instructions will be shared closer to the event.

Please register for live by the 21st August.

Please register for online by the 14th September.

Kindly register by this link below or scan the attached QR code.

Here: [Registration to Final Seminar](#)





The project - Regenerative Nature Tourism

The project - Regenerative Nature Tourism

Aims to promote accessible and regenerative tourism and to enhance the well-being of entrepreneurs in the project area by building networks and clusters, developing courses, guidebook, and novel thematic tourism experiences. By the increased competence of entrepreneurs and developing thematic tourism experiences co-created together with customers, researchers, local community, and entrepreneurs, tourism firms can attract new customers. Finally, the competitiveness of the tourism firms is enhanced while bringing wider benefits to the travel destination. Cross-border products through cross-branch networks and clusters support the understanding of valuable joint culture and rich history as well as how our prosperous but vulnerable nature is as a resource for all. Thus, the acceptability of sustainable tourism services increases, and tourists take home lessons on how to give back to nature. Regenerative tourism will increase well-being and prosperity for nature, society, culture and a more stable income for entrepreneurs. The project started 09/2023 and ends 10/2026.

Project details and contacts

Social Media Channels of the Project

[LinkedIn](#) [Facebook](#)

Interreg



Co-funded by
the European Union

Aurora

REGGAE

Contact details for the Project Working Group can be found on the [project website](#)

Project Administration Personnel at Luke

Pia Smeds

Project manager

pia.smeds@luke.fi

+358 40 1795309

Lena Enlund

Research & Development, Communication

lena.enlund@centria.fi

+358 44 7250594

The project Regenerative Nature Tourism, is also called Reggae. The project is funded by Interreg Aurora, with co-financing by:

Interreg



Co-funded by
the European Union

Aurora

REGGAE



NATURAL RESOURCES INSTITUTE FINLAND - CENTRIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES -
BUSINESS KRISTINESTAD - MID SWEDEN UNIVERSITY - SWEDISH UNIVERSITY OF

AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES - UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND - GOLD OF LAPLAND -
REGIONAL COUNCIL OF LAPLAND - REGION VÄSTERBOTTEN