

## BEST PRACTICE: JURMALA, LATVIA

### Key Challenge



Limited financial resources to support sustainability activities in tourism.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Investments in infrastructure and product development.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Coastal

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 101.23 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 50,190 in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; Business; Health and wellness.

**DMO** | Department of the municipality and Tourist Information Centre, which is a public-private partnership.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/ government; Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Local businesses; Transport companies.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Sustainable and smart mobility solutions; Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism; Lack of stakeholder management.

### Context & Background

Jurmala is a traditional holiday resort and tourism is a significant economic sector. Over the last decade, tourism has grown by almost 170% and in 2023 about 240,818 tourist arrivals were recorded (almost 80% from the Baltic countries).

### Key Challenge

In the community's effort to promote sustainable tourism development, it is crucial to encourage and support tourism businesses in this regard. Since most tourism businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises, which often also face financing problems, financial support is particularly needed to enable the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism.



**Implementation of Solutions:** A broad stakeholder approach and innovative participatory and financial support measures for local residents and businesses promote the adoption of sustainable and smart behaviours and actions in the city and the tourism sector.

## SOLUTIONS

- Since 2018, Jurmala Municipality has been organizing the [\*"Inspiration" grant program\*](#) to implement new business ideas and develop existing businesses, such as creating new digital services and products, developing new entertaining outdoor or indoor activities for Jurmala residents and visitors, and creating new and innovative handicraft or art products.
- Since 2017, the municipality has been [\*financially supporting tourism entrepreneurs\*](#) in digitizing their operations (e.g. booking services) or expanding their offer to include environmentally friendly activities (kayaking, individual sports) or facilities with a focus on sustainability (e.g. new cafes), with 50% of the total project budgets.
- In addition, the municipality invested in tourist infrastructure, such as energy-efficient lighting and solar and wind energy systems on beaches, and monitored traffic intensity with sensors and improved road safety by establishing safety zones with the support of the [\*European Investment Advisory Hub \(EIAH\)\*](#).
- To attract younger people to work in the tourism sector and support the local tourism industry during the summer months, since 2017, the municipality has been [\*co-financing the wages of young people\*](#) working in tourism during their summer holidays with 50% of the minimum wage.
- To promote *sustainable mobility*, free city buses are offered to city residents and low-priced tickets to tourists in cooperation with the local transport system. Since 1996, a fee has been charged for entering the city by car, but at the same time free parking at the entrance points is offered. In addition, since 2024, residents can take the train to the nearby capital Riga twice a day for free. Boats, cycle paths and rental bicycles are also available for tourists as an alternative sustainable mobility option.
- The local population and companies are involved in these development processes through regular events, where their ideas for the development of the city and tourism are collected. Special workshops are held to encourage young people to develop solutions to improve their living environment.

**Replicability potential:** Very high (requires political will, and stakeholder collaboration).

**Cost & funding source:** 10,000 euros annually for financial support of companies; 15,000 euros yearly to cofinance the wages for young-people; 4 million euros budget in 2024 for mobility measures. Funding by the municipality.

## Success Factors & Barriers Regarding the Implementation

*Success factors:* A political strategy for sustainable transformation; Strong involvement and good relations between the municipality and local entrepreneurs and residents; Financial support; Support by European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH); The tourism industry's commitment to shift toward sustainability; Digitalisation of companies; The perception that tourism infrastructure represent a common good for residents also.

*Barriers:* Geopolitics and the associated financial losses (the Russian aggression led to the loss of one of the most important source markets).

## Results and Impacts

- Around 40 summer jobs are supported by the municipality in 15 companies every year.
- High use of public transport (3.2 million trips, of which 2.5 million were made by the local population and 0.7 million by tourists).
- Increased sustainability performance in terms of energy efficiency, waste, clean beaches, etc. and a greener environment that is recognized and appreciated by residents and tourists.
- The seasonality is more balanced, as in the [low season and in winter](#), more tourist offers (e.g. restaurant weeks), sometimes with discounts, are promoted jointly by the DMO and tourism companies.

### Takeaways

- It is very useful to involve the local community in decisions regarding infrastructure, as they are the main users and therefore the experts.
- The funding programs are very effective and highly recommended: they are not expensive but create more stability in the offer.
- Even if the bureaucratic processes in a municipality seem complicated, this should not stop you from developing projects further.
- It is always useful to look for funding at national or European level.

## Useful Links

- [Jūrmala State City Development Program 2023-2029](#) | Municipality of Jūrmala

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