# **Application for support**

#### 1.1 General

Project name: ACCESS - Aurora Cross-border Coalition for Eastern Strategy and Solutions

Application call: 4.1 Cross-border capacity building

#### 1.2 Lead partner EU

Name: Itä-Lapin kuntayhtymä

#### Lead partner motivation and contribution

The lead partner, the Local Federation of East Lapland, is an area development organisation owned by five municipalities along Lapland's eastern border. The disruptive Russian invasion of Ukraine has closed the eastern borders, halting trade and cross-border cooperation activities. Additionally, the shift in defence policy is impacting traditional operational models within society. The lead partner is actively seeking new opportunities to strengthen south-north collaboration and secure future development. The ACCESS programme offers groundbreaking approaches to assist in enhancing the cross-border cooperation capacity of local authorities and policymakers, developing cross-border strategies, integrating SMEs into regional value chains, and ensuring widespread visibility and policy recognition of the project's outcomes. We hold overall coordination responsibility through WP I and actively participate in WPs II and III.

#### 1.3 Project partner EU

Name: Koillis-Suomen kehittämisyhtiö Naturpolis Oy

#### Partner motivation and contribution

Naturpolis is, on behalf of Kuusamo and Taivalkoski, to the ACCESS project, to bolster CBC in response to the significant geopolitical and economic transformations impacting Northern Europe and the EUs drive for its strategic autonomy.

We participate to foster economic resilience, sustainability, and strategic collaboration along easter border, emphasising its gritty population and sustainably developing economy as a security asset for all of Europe. This project introduces novel approaches to our region enhancing local authorities capabilities, formulating cross-border strategies, supporting SME integration into regional value chains, and ensuring widespread visibility, and policy recognition, of the projects outcomes. Naturpolis will actively participate in all WPs' implementation. Naturpolis will coordinate WP 3 and therefore is the leading the preparation of the Northern Frontier Declaration final conference.

Name: Lapin liitto

#### Partner motivation and contribution

Regional Council of Lapland (RCL) is responsible for regional development in Lapland, including development and implementation of regional strategies, such as Lapland regional development programme and smart specialisation, and therefore at the core of the activities planned for the ACCESS- project. RCL can use its expertise, special relationships and contacts to local, regional and international authorities as well as EU institutions for the benefit of the whole partnership and objectives of the project. RCL acted, during two programming periods, as a managing authority of the Kolarctic CBC programme and has, via that responsibility, a vast knowledge of the activities implemented before the programme was terminated.

In 2026, RCL will act as a chair region for Northern Finland regions and East and North Finland. Via that responsibility RCL will advance implementation of the ACCESS-project and to spread information of its success. RCL will support all WPs, particularly WP2.

#### 1.4 Lead partner Norway

Name: UNJARGGA GIELDA / NESSEBY KOMMUNE

#### Lead partner motivation and contribution

East-Finnmark Regional Council looks forward to strengthening CBC in response to the significant geopolitical and economic transformations affecting Northern Europe and the pursuit of strategic autonomy. Responsible for regional development, it is highly motivated to join ACCESS. The geopolitical changes significantly influence the region's economy and require new opportunities to collaborate with neighbouring areas in Finland. By participating, Eastern Finnmark aims to foster collaboration. Promoting economic resilience, sustainability, and strategic cooperation along the

eastern border is essential. ACCESS introduces innovative approaches to our region, enhancing the capabilities of local authorities, developing cross-border strategies, supporting SME integration into regional value chains, and ensuring broad visibility and policy recognition of the project outcomes. East-Finnmark Regional Council will actively engage in the implementation of all WPs and will coordinate WP 2.

## 1.5 Project information

#### Project title ACCESS - Aurora Cross-border Coalition for Eastern Strategy and Solutions

#### What are the common territorial challenge(s) that will be tackled by the project?

ACCESS - The Aurora Cross-Border Coalition for Eastern Strategy and Solutions focuses on addressing and resolving the new geopolitical challenges arising from Russia's war against Ukraine and the subsequent emergence of a new iron curtain in the region. Europe is deepening its economic integration, enhancing strategic autonomy, and increasing NATO presence in Northern Europe. This significant shift in the regional security landscape offers strategic and economic benefits while bolstering the ability to respond to changes in the situation. These developments are reshaping the financial landscape in North-Eastern Europe, influencing sectors ranging from trade and energy to defence, tourism, and the everyday lives of individuals.

Regions have been in constant emergency, relying on various ad hoc measures to alleviate the burden. It is time to pursue more resilient and long-lasting approaches to building sustainable societies. We are at the heart of transformation, with immediate and long-term impacts, necessitating a fresh vision and new tools for the future. To influence the future development of our regions, we must act now and collaborate across the Norwegian-Finnish border. Given the shared challenges, it is only natural for municipalities and areas to join forces in finding effective strategies and solutions for adapting to this transition. The changes and challenges must become opportunities to create new openings for cross-border collaboration, benefiting SMEs and local communities.

The project acronym ACCESS signifies both the necessity of gaining entry to new areas (investments, pertinent jobs, resilient communities) and the emphasis on our existing resources (excellent neighbourly relations across the NO-FI border, ports, minerals, educational opportunities, and so forth).

#### Why is cross-border cooperation needed to achieve project objectives and results?

CBC has previously focused on relevant areas with immediate borders. However, this project considers the similarities and experiences of regions facing shared challenges, even if they do not necessarily share land borders. It is essential to redefine collaboration and CBC actions within the context of South-North relations.

The world's geopolitics is changing rapidly, and the alliances we took for granted just a few years ago are shifting dramatically. The impacts are already significantly affecting the regions in North-Eastern Europe, primarily due to a new era resembling an iron curtain, where the Gateway regions between the west and north have become gatekeepers. There is a pressing need for these regions to adapt and evolve, and this transition will be more fruitful if we can develop effective CBC strategies in collaboration with adjacent areas. Northern Ostrobothnia, Lapland, and East Finnmark will be able to tackle common challenges and build on each others strengths to create new tools and a fresh vision for their futures.

The time to act is now if we wish to influence the future development of our regions, and this action should be taken collectively across the Norwegian-Finnish border. As the challenges are similar, it is logical for municipalities and regions to navigate this new landscape together and devise effective strategies and solutions to adapt to this transition, which must involve decision-makers (local, regional, and national), SMEs, and civil society.

Barents regional cooperation has previously offered tools for regional collaboration. Now, as Finland has withdrawn from the Barents cooperation, the regions need to find new structures for working together, and we believe that this can be advanced significantly with this project In the Interreg Aurora also included joint understanding that activities inherited from external borders CBC programmes are supported within Interreg Aurora as much as possible.

#### Select the project's main target group

Public sector

#### Specification of the target group and their involvement in project planning

The Main Target Group encompasses, but is not limited to, the following public organisations: the Local Federation of East Lapland, the Regional Council of Lapland, Koillis-Suomen kehittämisyhtiö Naturpolis Oy (Subregional Development Agency), and Øst-Finnmarkrådet/East-Finnmark Regional Council, all of which are public entities owned by the municipalities. The consortium equips regional and local authorities, policymakers, communities, and business developers with the tools and competencies necessary to navigate the ongoing geoeconomic transition. By enhancing their understanding and skills, they can effectively steer the local economy to capitalise on the evolving operational environments. Increased cross-border cooperation (CBC) efforts will bolster regional investments, creating opportunities within the regional borders.

In October 2024, the project idea was introduced at Nordnorske Europadager in Tromsø and discussed at a workshop in East Lapland and Olsztyn, Poland, in January 2025. ACCESS partners have conducted regular planning meetings, and each partner has presented the project to their boards to gather feedback from core beneficiaries. Representatives of the main target groups have been involved in the project from an early stage of the planning process. This involvement has enabled them to contribute to defining the expected outcomes and ensuring that the interests of the municipalities are addressed within the project.

In addition to the project consortium, the Barents Road International Association will provide the necessary connection to Sweden and joins the ACCESS events. Discussions with Finnmark county and the Norwegian Barents secretariat have taken place to offer broader support for the project.

# Which synergies with past or current EU and other projects, initiatives, strategies and/or policies will the project make use of?

This project idea is built upon shared discussions and experiences:

- Nordnorske Europadager in Tromsø event
- The Opportunities Brought by Geoeconomic Changes in the Eastern Lapland feasibility, financed by the Regional Council of Lapland (AKKE).
- Interreg Europe workshop in Olsztyn, Poland, in January 2025 (some Finnish and Norwegians joined) to address the specific challenges faced by regions bordering Russia due to the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The working methods from the workshop in Olsztyn will be adopted in ACCESS as a tool to define challenges and reuse existing best practices within the border regions with Russia.

The project also uses the outcomes from the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment Transition Strategy for Eastern and Southeast Finland border regions and areas and funding and implementing the TSI project by the OECD. Furthermore, a Programme for Eastern Finland was launched, providing background information that can be utilised in this project. However, it is also concerning to exclude the eastern border region in Northern Ostrobothnia and Lapland from the planned activities. Simultaneously, a Programme for Northern Finland was initiated to underscore the necessity for CBC. Programmes do not have dedicated funding. Finnish partners have been involved in both.

In Norway, the national Arctic strategy is being updated. Due to geopolitical and economic changes, the North will receive even more attention. That will significantly impact Finnmark, and therefore, the CBC will have even more value.

The project will utilise tools from the Interreg Europe policy learning platform. This initiative plans to implement a new peer review session related to the Kick-Off event for ACCESS in Finland. The project will also need to draw from experiences in other municipalities located in areas bordering Russia.

#### Project overall objective

ACCESS seeks to strengthen collaboration and sustainable development in the eastern border regions of North-Eastern Europe to navigate the geoeconomic transition. The key objectives include enhancing the region's vitality and capabilities, deepening cross-border cooperation, improving local businesses' operational conditions and competencies, and integrating production broader supply and value chains.

Throughout the project, authorities and stakeholders will exchange experiences and gain the tools and skills to manage the transition's impacts. By improving their understanding and abilities to operate within rapidly evolving environments, they will be better equipped to guide sustainable development at regional and local levels.

The Northern Frontier Declaration will underpin the vision, promoting a secure and prosperous future. It will enhance cross-border cooperation and lay the foundation for the Eastern Border Regions to transform geoeconomic changes into opportunities.

#### **Ecological sustainable development**

ACCESS strengthens the ecological sustainability of its territory by adopting sustainable practices to protect the natural environment and local communities for the future. ACCESS is pursuing growth while promoting ecologically sustainable development. The current transition to clean and renewable energy significantly enhances investment potential in the north in numerous ways.

The project aims to help beneficiaries recognise the importance of implementing innovative green solutions that foster environmentally responsible development. It will tackle challenges and empower beneficiaries with the necessary knowledge to guide their decision-making.

The project intends to establish CBC partnerships, improve resource efficiency, and develop recommendations to minimise environmental impacts and footprints.

ACCESS's sustainable practices include webinars, online meetings, and shared transport to reduce travel-related emissions when facilitating meetings.

#### Social sustainable development

ACCESS dissemination and visibility actions primarily aim to promote socially sustainable development while facilitating growth. Establishing fact-based and transparent communication is essential. One of the main objectives of the ACCESS project is to enhance dissemination and visibility, which is aimed at increasing engagement and improving awareness regarding the geoeconomic transition.

ACCESS encourages active participation to ensure that development projects address their needs and preferences while informing them about the economic opportunities that generate jobs and support SMEs to boost local economies. It also promotes cooperation between municipalities and regions to tackle shared challenges and devise effective adaptation strategies.

These initiatives seek to create a balanced approach to development that benefits both the environment and the people residing in the region.

#### **Economical sustainable development**

Economic Integration, Strategic Autonomy, and NATOs enlargement will shift the regional security landscape, providing strategic and economic benefits while enhancing the ability to respond to emerging threats. These are reshaping the financial landscape in Northern Europe and influencing the industries operating in the regions.

The ACCESS aims to improve capacities and expertise to turn changes into financial opportunities. The project studies, strategies, and action plans will help navigate transition and boost regional economic growth by recognising local and regional value chains, providing the best added value for development and financial sustainability. The ACCESS project will implement follow-up strategies and action plans to bolster CBC and capitalise on the changing operational landscapes. These initiatives will support regional investments and create new opportunities within regions and CBC.

#### **Exit strategy**

ACCESS was initiated to address the need to foster cross-border cooperation (CBC) as a collaborative effort in the eastern border regions of Northern Europe, aiming to navigate the geoeconomic transition effectively. The project seeks to advance further collaboration to support, for example, North Calot and facilitate national-level dialogue. It also intends to connect ACCESS with the EU-level Eastern border dialogue. The project highlights the everyday developmental needs and challenges that must be tackled, where CBC will be crucial in identifying solutions. The Northern Frontier Declaration will chart the course for CBC in the years ahead.

ACCESS's joint capacity-building and strategy work will ensure sustainable outcomes and reinforce the ongoing CBC mechanism. Partners will supervise efforts to bolster collaboration. The action plan and roadmap will aid in securing financial sustainability for the continued implementation of ACCESS recommendations.

ACCESS will also serve as a platform to implement future recommendations on European Eastern borders by adapting policies to address the regional development challenges arising from Russias military aggression against Ukraine in North-Eastern Europe. Additionally, the project will lay a strong foundation for future CBC activities.

### **Project summary**

ACCESS - The Aurora Cross-border Coalition for Eastern Strategy and Solutions project is aimed at North-Eastern Europe. It seeks to equip regional and local authorities, along with relevant stakeholders, with the tools and competencies necessary to enhance their capabilities to manage the geoeconomic transition. By improving

their understanding and skills, they can guide the local economy to capitalise on the evolving operational environments. Increased efforts in cross-border cooperation (CBC) will bolster regional investments, creating opportunities within regional borders.

The key objectives include boosting the region's vitality and capabilities, deepening CBC, improving local businesses' operational conditions and competencies, and integrating production within broader supply and value chains. Throughout the project, authorities and stakeholders will exchange experiences and acquire the skills and tools needed to manage the transition's impacts. By enhancing their understanding and ability to operate within rapidly evolving environments, they will be better prepared to steer sustainable development at both regional and local levels.

The Northern Frontier Declaration will support the vision, promoting a secure and prosperous future. It aims to enhance cross-border cooperation and establish a foundation for the Eastern Border Regions to transform geoeconomic changes into opportunities.

ACCESS will be implemented through three complementary work packages aimed at:

- Building capacity to enhance vitality and capabilities to ensure the sustainable development and safe living of North-Eastern Europe.
- Develop coherent development strategies and action plans to steer CBC in the future by fostering trust within Arctic cooperation and engaging innovation ecosystems to pilot significant CBC initiatives.
- Dissemination and visibility for improving awareness and commitment to ensuring communication on geoeconomic impacts and opportunities.

#### How will the project partnership be structured?

The ACCESS project involves four organisations representing the direct beneficiaries and target groups. WP I facilitates project management on a cyclical basis. ACCESS coordination and management instructions will be developed, covering daily management, administration, and internal communication practices assessing partners in integrating management and coordination tasks into WPs implementation.

The lead partner appoints the project manager, who will be supported by project coordinators (PCs) and/or WP leaders from the other three partner organisations. Together, they form the ACCESS operational working group, which is responsible for the project's overall implementation. Additionally, all partners will have supporting staff for practical project execution. The project agreement will be signed at the project's inception to establish the overall responsibilities of the partners and the progress reporting timelines. Furthermore, the agreement will clarify the organisational structure and monitoring system to track the implementation and achievement of the promised deliverables, outputs, and results, which the ACCESS coordination and management instructions will support.

Implementation will be supported by six in-person coordination meetings, complemented by monthly online working group meetings throughout the project. In-person sessions will coincide with ACCESS events, allowing for exchanging experiences and practices to maximise impact while minimising travel. Moreover, WPs will convene online meetings based on their specific needs.

The ACCESS steering group will oversee the work of the operational working group and assume overall monitoring responsibility. It will meet twice a year (once in person and once online), with additional online meetings organised as necessary. The coordination and implementation responsibilities of the WPs are shared among the partners, as described in more detail in the WP descriptions.

#### How will the financial management of the project be handled?

The project manager will coordinate financial management and reporting with coordinators and/or a financial administrator (FA), whom each partner must appoint to oversee financial matters. The lead partner will provide instructions to partners and ensure that economic progress reporting is consolidated in the Min Ansökan, adhering to the Interreg AURORA rules. The reporting practices, formats, and sequences will be agreed upon and aligned with Interreg Aurora's guidelines. All will be outlined in the ACCESS coordination and management instructions and the ACCESS agreement.

Each partner/WP leader is responsible for continuously monitoring its cost outcomes and ensuring that reporting occurs in accordance with the project agreement. A steering group (via online meetings) must approve the work process, routines, schedules, and regulations for financial procedures.

The ACCESS partners will utilise a digital platform mutually agreed upon for overall administration and daily project management. The project manager will report in the Min Ansökan system in accordance with the program

instructions. Financial management is coordinated through WP1 as part of the overall project management structure and is also guided by the ACCESS coordination and management instructions. Financial management queries and follow-ups are always checkpoints during the working group meetings. The ACCESS steering group will oversee the working group's work. It holds overall monitoring responsibility and will convene twice yearly (once in person during the ACCESS events and once online).

Each partner/WP leader is responsible for continuously following up on its cost outcomes and ensuring that reporting takes place following the project agreement.

#### How will you communicate your project?

At ACCESS, communication activities are categorised into internal project communication, external dissemination, and visibility actions. Internal communication ensures smooth project implementation through transparent and open dialogue. Internal coordination is established according to the ACCESS coordination and management guidelines to facilitate consistent and systematic communication. Internal communication is stipulated in the agreement, with guidelines included as part of ACCESS's coordination and management instructions.

The project aims to benefit from the Community of Practice approach (ACCESS CoP); thus, developing dialogue and communication will be a core objective of ACCESS and is anticipated as part of ACCESS visibility and dissemination WP(3). The actions are designed to engage regional stakeholders by developing and implementing open and transparent communication practices in line with the recommendations of the ACCESS CoP approach. Furthermore, they recognise the specific role of the European Eastern border regions and municipalities in overall policy and decision-making. Consequently, the ACCESS Community of Practice (CoP) guidelines will be established as initial tasks.

The methodology and means of communication, including communication channels (Interreg Aurora channels, partner websites, LinkedIn, newsletters, visibility at events, etc.), awareness-raising, and the dissemination of sustainability-related knowledge, will be detailed as part of the ACCESS CoP and governed by ACCESS's coordination and management instructions. Finally, the common indicators to assess the effectiveness and success of the ACCESS communication activities will be outlined. The ACCESS operational working group will serve as the primary communication body, and each partner will be responsible for communicating the activities as agreed.

# 1.6 Project activities

Workpackages / Activities	Description	Start date – End date	Cost
1 - WP I BUILDING CAPACITY ON ENHANCING VITALITY AND CAPABILITIES	This work package will utilise a step-by-step approach to building capacity for navigating the Geoeconomic Transition. The CBC exchange of experience will serve as the foundation and breeding ground for capacity building. As previously outlined in the justification, the current geoeconomic transition significantly affects work, livelihoods, and the operations of society in North-Eastern Europe, regions, municipalities, and communities. Such changes present both challenges and opportunities. It is crucial to capitalise on opportunities whilst addressing these challenges.  To successfully navigate shifting operational environments, it is necessary to enhance knowledge, understanding of the situation, and readiness to respond effectively. This will help ensure sustainable development and safety in the North-Eastern European regions, municipalities and communities. The aim is also to integrate the ACCESS initiative with ongoing European processes to promote collaboration across Europe's eastern border regions. The work package comprises four (4) core activities:  Activity 1.1 Launching the ACCESS project coordination and management scheme.  Activity 1.2 Implementing the institutional capacity-building programme provides the foundation for continuous knowledge development  Activity 1.3 Facilitating the ACCESS exchange of experiences,  Activity 1.4 Strengthening CBC to Build Resilient Societies will summarise the key lessons learned from Activities 1.1 and 1.2. The main findings will be shared at the closing congress in November 2027.  The activities will pave the way for WP 2 and 3, which aim to build CBC relations and trust within Arctic cooperation through institutional collaboration and people-to-people actions.	2025-07-31 - 2028-01-30	443,576
	The Local Federation of East Lapland leads the WP and is supported by the ACCESS consortium.		
1.1 - 1.1 Launching the ACCESS project coordination and management scheme	The ACCESS coordination and management scheme will ensure effective project coordination and management, which is essential for ACCESS's success. To enhance accountability, the ACCESS coordination and management instructions will be established to support the description of project coordination, including clear roles and responsibilities for project team members and stakeholders. Regular check-ins and progress meetings will also be organised to address challenges, share updates, and maintain momentum. In terms of project management, progress will be monitored against the objectives and deliverables, with adjustments made to remain on	2025-07-31 - 2028-01-30	105,600

Workpackages / Activities	Description	Start date – End date	Cost
	track. We will promptly implement a risk management strategy to identify and resolve potential issues. The coordination workload and ACCESS operational working group meetings are organised through this action.  The ACCESS KICK-OFF MEETING and seminar will be held during the initial period. The kick-off consists of two parts: an internal coordination and management workshop with the first steering group and an ACCESS kick-off seminar, which will invite core stakeholders (max 50). The kick-off seminar is scheduled back-to-back with the INTERREG EUROPE POLICY LEARNING PLATFORM's targeted support for adapting policies to address the regional development challenges caused by Russia's war on Ukraine.  ACCESS will cover travel costs for staff and the steering group, arrange transportation and accommodation for the target group (three to five participants/partners, depending on the available budget), venue, catering, facilitation, and one to two external experts (speakers).  Deliverables: ACCESS coordination and management instructions, ACCESS kick-off meeting and seminar, ACCESS operational working group (in-person with A2.1, A2.3 and A3.3) and steering		
1.2 - 1.2 Implementing institutional capacity-building program on geoeconomic changes in the European north	group meeting (in-person with A2.1 & A3.3), and project progress reporting.  Coordinator: The Local Federation of East Lapland, the ACCESS operational working group.  The institutional capacity-building programme aims to assist regional and local authorities leverage their unique position and capabilities in the eastern border areas. Regional and local authorities play a pivotal role in driving inclusive, sustainable geoeconomic changes tailored to the specific needs of their communities. The institutional capacity-building programme on geoeconomic changes in the core components of the European North will focus on regional and local knowledge, adaptability to respond swiftly and flexibly to changing conditions and needs, resource management and planning, community engagement, and policy implementation.	2025-07-31 - 2028-01-30	126,026
	The capacity-building programme is designed based on a needs analysis conducted during the project's initial months, which was discussed in the kick-off meeting and seminar (A1.1) after drawing conclusions. Implementation will commence during the first period (6 months) and will utilise the ACCESS CoP platform for online meetings, communication, and webinars (A3.2). Inperson meetings will be integrated with the ACCESS events (A2.1) and the experience exchange scheme (A1.3). The capacity programme targets the authorities but is also open to participants from regional and local cross-border entities, NGOs, academia, civil society, and intermediary bodies.		

Workpackages / Activities	Description	Start date – End date	Cost
	The partners' budget will cover stakeholders' travel expenses (integrated with project events and experience exchange travel) and costs for external experts providing support to implement the programme. Material development is a core responsibility of the ACCESS operational working group, supported by external experts.		
	Deliverables: Needs analysis and the Institutional Capacity-Building Programme on Geoeconomic Changes in the European North - materials.  Coordinator: The Local Federation of East Lapland, the ACCESS operational working group, and external experts to provide specific content.		
<b>1.3</b> - 1.3 Facilitating the ACCESS exchange of experiences	One the success factors of ACCESS rely on the exchange of experiences, aiming to transfer good practices, identify commonalities, focus on creating CBC peer-review practices and a CBC learning approach, strengthen networking, and discover opportunities for collaboration. Authorities will exchange experiences and be provided with the tools and competencies to manage ongoing geoeconomic changes. They will be better equipped to guide regional and local sustainable development by improving their understanding and skills in rapidly evolving environments.	2025-07-31 - 2028-01-30	155,060
	This activity supports the implementation of A1.2 and is explicitly targeted at the authorities and their representatives who are directly involved in the projects. The project aims to organise peer-to-peer learning visits to each target area: Lapland, Koillismaa, and East-Finnmark (in total, 20-24 authorities or their representatives will be directly involved). The peer-to-peer visits will take place during project periods 2 to 4 (project months 7-12, 13-18, and 19-24).		
	Peer-to-peer learning will complement the Institutional Capacity-Building Programme on Geoeconomic Changes in the European North, which covers topics such as using regional and local knowledge, adapting rapidly and flexibly to changing conditions and needs, governing resource management and planning, methods for community engagement, and practices for efficient policy implementation. Through the exchange of experiences, authorities will enhance their understanding and practices in decision-making and governance. Deliverables will also be used to develop the deliverables on WP 2.		
	Deliverables: peer-to-peer visits, preparation and lessons-learned meetings, peer-to-peer instructions and reporting		
	Coordinator: The Local Federation of East Lapland, partners responsible for hosting will have organisational responsibility		
<b>1.4</b> - 1.4 Strengthening CBC to Build Resilient Societies	This activity aims to summarise the core findings and lessons learned from activities 1.1 and 1.2, culminating in a comprehensive learning package that supports future development. This will	2025-07-31 - 2028-01-30	56,890

Workpackages / Activities	Description	Start date – End date	Cost
	facilitate the transfer of good practices in the territory and assist in mapping the commonalities and complementarities that are crucial for building resilient societies in the northernmost eastern border areas. Resilient societies are characterised as strong regions and municipalities that are well-prepared to adapt and thrive amid geoeconomic challenges and changes impacting living environments and conditions.		
	The Strengthening CBC to Build Resilient Societies conclusions will aid the implementation of A2.3 and A3.4. The findings will be presented at the final meeting and the Northern Frontier Declaration Congress. The staff will share the conclusions among the partners and engage with target groups to maximise effort. The ACCESS CoP approach is also employed in the communication and dissemination activities.		
	Deliverables: Strengthening CBC to Build Resilient Societies -report with specific analysis and best practices of each target area		
	Coordinator: The Local Federation of East Lapland, jointly developed by the ACCESS operational working group		
2 - WP II ACCESS CBC STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS TO STEER CBC IN THE FUTURE	This WP fosters a shared understanding and mutual agreement to promote sustainable development along the European Northernmost Eastern border areas. The WP builds upon previous experiences and will further enhance institutional capacity to guide CBC collaboration in selected thematic areas or sectors. The thematic framework of this WP involves development strategies and action plans based on shared needs to assist authorities in navigating geoeconomic changes that directly affect the territory. To recognise the significance of geoeconomics in regional and local development, a feasibility analysis is conducted to summarise the core sectors of collaboration and identify areas of cross-fertilisation that provide complementarities for economic growth in the target area.	2025-12-31 - 2027-11-29	325,749
	ACCESS strategies and action plans will present guidance for the resilient development of the European Northernmost Eastern border areas at the local, regional, and CBC levels. The WP is implemented through the following actions: Activity 2.1 Steering ACCESS midterm meeting Activity 2.2 Conduct feasibility studies of the regional ecosystems to integrate SMEs and innovation ecosystems into supply and value chains for significant cross-border regional investments. Activity 2.3 Formulate cross-border strategies that enhance regional capacity and action plans. Activity 2.4 Seeking the best ways to pilot the Innovation Ecosystem engagement.		

Workpackages / Activities	Description	Start date – End date	Cost
	The East-Finnmark Regional Council, leads the WP and is supported by the ACCESS consortium.		
2.1 - 2.1 Steering ACCESS midterm meeting	The ACCESS midterm meeting at Eastern-Finmark will consolidate the project achievements in all WPs. The two-day ACCESS midterm meeting and seminar bring together partners and relevant stakeholders to discuss the project's achievements and next steps. The midterm workshop will also serve as a bigger arena for ACCESS:  - Knowledge Sharing: Exchange best practices, insights, and experiences to enhance their collective understanding.  - Problem Solving: to address common challenges and seek practical solutions.  - Engagement to encourage active participation from the target group  - Professional Development to support the CBC capacity building.  - Networking to provide opportunities to connect and build relationships supporting collaboration  - Innovation to foster creativity and the development of new ideas and approaches within ACCESS piloting (A2.4)  The practical organisation takes the advance of the CoP to create a supportive environment where partners and target groups can learn from each other and advance ACCESS objectives.	2025-12-31 - 2027-11-29	78,000
	ACCESS will cover travel costs for staff and the steering group and arrange transportation and accommodation for the target group (three to five participants/partners according to the available budget), venue and catering, facilitation, and one to two external experts (speakers). The seminar is organised with the expectation of 50 relevant participants.  Associated partners will be invited to join the event, discussion and workshops.  Deliverables: ACCESS midterm seminar, preparatory materials and conclusions (WP status reports)  Coordinator: East-Finnmark Regional Council, the ACCESS operational working group, external		
	experts to provide specific content	0005 46 54	
<b>2.2</b> - 2.2 Conducting feasibility analysis of the regional ecosystems	The activity aims to provide an updated understanding of how regional and local ecosystems operate at the eastern border regions and how they are interconnected with other areas of the North and Europe. Conducting a feasibility study of regional ecosystems involves a robust process to evaluate the viability and impact of the regional ecosystems. The aim is to understand the key factors needed to strengthen the regions vitality and capabilities, deepen cross-border cooperation, improve local businesses' operational conditions and capabilities, and integrate production into broader supply and value chains in ACCESS territory. The feasibility analysis	2025-12-31 - 2027-11-29	55,989

Workpackages / Activities	Description	Start date – End date	Cost
	evaluates the potential for fostering the economy and innovation within the ACCESS territory. The key points will be:  - Identifying the core industrial and innovation supply and value chains to identify areas where growth can thrive, such as emerging industries, technologies, and market needs  - Assess economic viability and growth to determine the possibility of involvement in large and small industrial projects (for example, clean energy transition, refining natural resources, tourism investments, defence investments, and security of supply-related investments). This also includes estimating the creation of jobs and enhanced competitiveness  - Guiding Policy and Investment will provide insights for ACCESS to take follow-up steps and use in the A2.2.  Feasibility analysis findings will be shared and discussed at the Midterm meeting.  Deliverables: Feasibility analysis of the ACCESS regional and local ecosystems		
	Coordinator: East-Finnmark Regional Council, supported by the ACCESS operational working group, using external experts to help in conducting the analysis		
2.3 - 2.3 Formulating the cross-border strategy and action plans that enhance regional capacity	This activity aims to bind the ACCESS lessons learned and discoveries to a common strategy that paves the way for sustainable growth and supports the development of stronger local and regional ecosystems working better together. The ACCESS partners want to jointly build a resilient society and an attractive operating environment for companies to operate and grow. Openness and collaboration encourage innovative solutions that cross traditional boundaries and bold choices. The ACCESS strategy core points will be:  - Economic and social development to promote economic growth and improve social conditions  - Addressing shared challenges to tackle jointly  - Enhancing CBC mobility to improve the conditions for movement  - Support businesses in encouraging cooperation on jointly recognised supply and value chains.  - Education and innovation to encourage better collaboration on education and RDI needed to support	2025-12-31 - 2027-11-29	99,800
	Action plans will distinguish the practical implementation of the ACCESS strategy. They will also include the roadmap for using available financial support in both the public and private sectors.		
	Strategy and action plan(s) will lay the groundwork for the Northern Frontier Declaration at the final congress. The strategy and action plan work will be launched at the Midterm meeting. Necessary in-person meetings are foreseen in the process. However, the core is in the facilitated		

Workpackages / Activities	Description	Start date – End date	Cost
	online meetings. The process is communicated and discussed according to the ACCESS CoP (WP 3).		
	Deliverables: ACCESS strategy with the complementary action plan		
	Coordinator: East-Finnmark Regional Council, and Regional Council of Lapland, supported by the ACCESS operational working group, using external experts are foreseen to support the facilitation.		
2.4 - 2.4 Identifying optimal approaches for piloting the innovation ecosystem engagement	This activity will be implemented during the final two periods of the project. Several thematic and sectoral arenas for deeper CBC collaboration have been identified during the execution of WP 1 and WP activities 2.1-2.3. However, it is essential to find the appropriate measures and actors to advance the identified potentials. This will require engaging the innovation ecosystem actors (identified in A2.1) to bring them together. The pilots will illustrate how CBC value chains can leverage each region's strengths to create synergies, drive sustainable development, address common security challenges, and enhance the overall safety and stability of North-Eastern Europe.	2025-12-31 - 2027-11-29	91,960
	The aim is to recognise at least eight pilots categorised as follows:  - CBC governance supports enhancing specific capacities or trust-building through collaboration with education and RDI.  - The regional investments CBC values include engaging policymakers, municipal business support and development, and business development agencies.  - Cross-sectoral industrial supply and value chains entire innovation ecosystem.  - Financial landscape - entire innovation ecosystem.		
	The pilot experiences will be used to finalise A2.3. The pilot exercise idea will be launched at the midterm meeting. The aim is for the touch the ground matchmaking arena for the targeted stakeholders to already be present at the midterm meeting and seminar.		
	Deliverables: ACCESS pilot cases describing the selected pilots, their potential, and suggestions for follow-up. The pilot reports will complement A2.3 and be introduced at the Final Congress.		
	Coordinator: Easter-Finnmark, supported by the ACCESS operational working group, with assistance from external experts anticipated to facilitate the process.		
3 - WP 3 ACCESS DISSEMINATION AND VISIBILITY	The ACCESS dissemination and visibility actions are initially designed to engage regional stakeholders by developing and implementing open and transparent communication practices, following the recommendations of the Community of Practice (ACCESS CoP) approach. Regular open dialogue and feedback will be encouraged to foster a sense of ownership and inclusivity,	2025-08-01 - 2028-01-30	286,000

Workpackages / Activities	Description	Start date – End date	Cost
	enhance partner engagement and collaboration, and support the achievement of ACCESS objectives.  Secondly, the aim will be to open a broader dialogue in the national and European context about the importance of stability in the North and upholding the values of stable and sustainable development in the Northern frontier territory. The ACCESS Northern Frontier Declaration final meeting and congress will invite regional, national, and European policymakers to debate the newly redefined collaboration in the European North.  ACCESS leverages open platforms and social media channels, supported by regular fact-based interventions and newsletters. The ACCESS closing congress, titled The Northern Frontier Declaration, will serve as a binding guiding vision for a secure and prosperous future, enhancing cross-border cooperation (CBC) and establishing the ACCESS CoP. The work package (WP) is built on three core activities:  - Activity 3.1 Developing the ACCESS communication and visibility plan to guide stakeholder engagement and increase awareness (ACCESS CoP guideline).  - Activity 3.2 Ensuring transparent communication on geoeconomic impacts and opportunities. This activity aims to increase regional and social awareness about the geoeconomic transition and improve acceptance of the changes.  - Activity 3.3 Organising the closing congress: The Northern Frontier Declaration, a guiding vision for a secure and prosperous future.  Naturpolis leads the WP and is supported by the ACCESS consortium.		
3.1 - 3.1 Developing the ACCESS dissemination and visibility plan	A community of practice (CoP) shares a common interest that unites the communities (ASSECC) and outlines the shared foundation for their activities. The essence of the CoP lies in communication through various channels to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing; these channels will also enhance overall visibility. ACCESS aims to establish open CoP practices that support project implementation and help achieve its objectives. The dissemination and visibility plan:  - Will set the objectives based on CoP principles - Defines the targets of communication and visibility - Provides the ACCESS visualisation - Indicates the optimal online forum and social media to be utilised in ACCESS - Recommend the use of webinars and virtual meetings and suggest the most suitable collaborative tools - Guides the organisation of in-person meetings and events.	2025-08-01 - 2028-01-30	46,700

Workpackages / Activities	Description	Start date – End date	Cost
	Effective communication within an ACCESS CoP relies on selecting the right combination of channels that cater to members' preferences and needs.		
	Deliverables: ACCESS dissemination and visibility plan (1st project period)		
	Coordinator: Naturpolis, supported by the ACCESS operational working group		
<b>3.2</b> - 3.2 Ensuring transparent dissemination on geoeconomic impacts and opportunities	This activity aims to increase regional and social awareness about the geoeconomic transition and improve understanding and acceptance of the changes. Today's polarised discussion hinders open debate regarding development. Geoeconomic changes are causing uncertainty, and it is very challenging to follow and handle the torrent of information. This activity will focus on openly implementing the systematic dissemination and visibility of the ACCESS work, engaging the regional stakeholders, and facilitating constructive people-to-people dialogue at the local, regional, and CBC levels.	2025-08-01 - 2028-01-30	134,000
	The activity will be implemented according to the ACCESS CoP approach to improve societal acceptance and understanding of the impacts of geoeconomic changes. With transparent dissemination and visibility practises, the activity will support disseminating accurate information, increasing transparency and public trust, legitimacy, and open sustainability factors, including balancing economic, social, and environmental perspectives and adding value for growth.		
	The ACCESS dissemination and visibility plan will provide the basis for the activity. The ACCESS CoP practice will be put into the practice indication as the 6-month cycle clock to set the ground for dissemination and increase visibility. Actions follow the ACCESS event cycle, including exchange-of-experience meetings, webinars, and related events. Social media platforms and info letters will be systemically utilised. Although the common language is English, ensuring the discussion when needed in Finnish and Norwegian will be necessary.		
	Deliverables: 6-month cycle clock on dissemination and visibility, documentation and monitoring Coordinator: Naturpolis, supported by the ACCESS operational working group		
3.3 - 3.3 Organising the Northern Frontier Declaration Congress	The final meeting of ACCESS will be organised as a two-day NORTHERN FRONTIER DECLARATION CONGRESS. To safeguard the stability of North-Eastern Europe and uphold the values of democracy, security, and sustainability, local, regional, and national leaders must adopt a new attitude of fortitude, transforming cooperation into collaboration. This necessity is distilled into the Northern Frontier Declaration, serving as a guiding vision for a secure and prosperous future. The congress will summarise the project's achievements, present key lessons learned and outline future actions. It will also introduce the Northern Frontier Declaration. The congress will	2025-08-01 - 2028-01-30	105,300

Workpackages / Activities	Description	Start date – End date	Cost
	occur in Kuusamo, near the eastern border, with approximately 200-250 participants expected to attend.		
	The congress organisation will commence ten months in advance to ensure that objectives and quality standards are met. These objectives will be communicated to ensure that the identified target audience is reached. The development of the programme, communication with speakers and panellists, and the preparation of necessary background materials require appropriate timing. Congress materials will be developed collaboratively across ACCESS WPs and aligned with the project deliverables. The venue and logistics arrangements must also be established early enough. Although the congress has been announced from the project's outset, systematic promotion and marketing should begin in advance (10 months).		
	In addition, the ACCESS will cover the travel costs for staff, steering group, regional panellists/speakers, local transportation, the venue, congress facilitation, and the travel costs of external speakers (FIN, NOR, SWE, and Europe). Finally, the core implementation will cover all its nuances, including post-marketing and reporting.		
	Deliverables: Congress planning and organisation kit, NORTHERN FRONTIER DECLARATION and congress materials		
	Coordinator: Naturpolis, in collaboration with the ACCESS operational working group		

# 1.7 Indicators

**Output indicators** 

Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified	The ACCESS will focus on helping the find the solution to go over the administrative The WP I intends to implement the ACCESS institutional capacity-building programme on geoeconomic changes in the European North and facilitate the exchange of experiences scheme. It plans to involve 20-24 authorities or their representatives. Together, these will enhance the core components of the European North, focusing on regional and local knowledge, adaptability to respond swiftly and flexibly to changing conditions and needs, resource management and planning, community engagement, and policy implementation in response to geoeconomic changes.	Startvalue: <i>N/A</i> Targetvalue: 2 Unit: Solutions
	WP 3 aims to develop the ACCESS Community of Practice (CoP) to support dissemination and visibility during and after the project, thereby continuing the territorial dialogue. The	

	ACCESS CoP will serve as the arena for sharing information and maintaining a transparent flow of communication and dialogue. The target value is one solution to which the project consortium will commit, in addition to engaging other relevant territorial partners from regional ecosystems. The exchange of experiences, strategy and action plan development, dissemination, and visibility form the ACCESS learning cycle that will provide the foundation for the Community of Practice. As part of the approach, three events are organised.	
Strategies and action plans jointly developed	One of the project's primary goals is to formulate a CBC strategy and action plan (WP2) that will align with the unified future development of North-Eastern Europe. Feasibility analyses and thorough piloting exercises support this initiative. The strategy and action plans will weave in lessons learned and insights from ACCESS into a unified framework that promotes sustainable growth and bolsters the effectiveness of local and regional ecosystems. This includes clarifying organisational roles and responsibilities, identifying shared interests, and scheduling meetings to ensure practical cross-border cooperation and strengthen national collaboration among the regions.  These strategies will set a structured framework for ongoing knowledge transfer and broaden networks that benefit both local and regional industries. The ACCESS pilot cases elucidate key domains for the CBC strategy, highlighting their potential and providing recommendations for future actions. Enhancing cross-border governance at local and regional levels is crucial. Emphasis should be placed on reducing border barriers and boosting regional cross-border capacities. These are supported by the CBC strategy and action plans with supporting information.	Startvalue: <i>N/A</i> Targetvalue: 2 Unit: Joint strategies or action plans
Organisations cooperating across borders	The four project partners are the Local Federation of East Lapland, the Regional Council of Lapland, Naturpolis, and Eastern Finnmark. Furthermore, the associated partners, the Barents Road International Association from Sweden, the Finnmark Council of Norway and the Barents Secretariat will play a significant role in fostering collaboration. The ACCESS consortium includes all the municipalities' development agencies, establishing a strong foundation for the future.  Additionally, the ACCESS events and the exchange of experiences will set the stage for the participants within the regional innovation ecosystem to come together and encourage collaboration.	Startvalue: <i>N/A</i> Targetvalue: 7 Unit: Organisations

## **Result indicators**

Joi	nt strategies and action plans taken	$\mid$ Access the CBC strategy and action plan (WP2) that aligns with the unified future $\mid$	Startvalue:
up	by organisations	development of North-Eastern Europe, which will be tested through Action 2.4, Identifying	Targetvalue: 2
		optimal approaches for piloting the innovation ecosystem engagement through eight	Unit: Joint strategies or action
		demonstrations. These will serve as a testbed to initiate the strategy and ensure that, after	plans
		the project, the CBC will continue and have a solid foundation.	

	The outcome can be observed during the final six-month period of the project's implementation. The NORTHERN FRONTIER DECLARATION CONGRESS will represent the final commitment for follow-up.	
Legal or administrative obstacles		Startvalue:
addressed or alleviated		Targetvalue: 0
		Unit: Legal and administrative obstacles
Organisations cooperating across	The culmination of the ACCESS initiative is the publication and signing of the Northern	Startvalue:
borders after project completion	Frontier Declaration at the final meeting and Congress. This declaration represents a	Targetvalue: 7
	collective commitment to the principles and goals established throughout the project.	Unit: Organiations
	Declaration will safeguard the stability of North-Eastern Europe and uphold the values of democracy, security, and sustainability, local, regional, and national leaders must adopt a	
	new attitude of fortitude, transforming cooperation into collaboration.	
	Key Elements of the Declaration:	
	- CBC Strategy and Action Plans: Implement the shared CBC strategies and action plans	
	to address shared challenges and leverage regional strengths. This includes coordinated	
	efforts in security, economic development, and environmental sustainability.	
	- Exchange of Experiences: Sharing knowledge and best practices among stakeholders to foster mutual learning and improvement.	
	- Shared Initiatives: Implementing projects to test and refine innovative solutions in real-world settings.	
	- Community of Practice: To continue on building a network of professionals dedicated to	
	continuous learning and collaboration at North-Eastern Europe.	
	By signing the Northern Frontier Declaration, participants pledge to uphold these principles	
	and work together to ensure the region's sustainable and prosperous future	
	More organisation will be invited to sign the declaration.	

# 1.8 Budget EU Costs

Cost categories	Itä-Lapin kuntayhtymä	Koillis-Suomen kehittämisyhtiö Naturpolis Oy		Total
Staff cost: Staff cost: Project manager 100%, salary 4500 + social cost 26,44% 1 189,80	168,804	0	0	168,804
Staff cost: Staff cost: Project assistant 30 months 10%, salary 3610/month + social costs 30% 1 1080€/month	0	0	14,067	14,067

Cost categories	Itä-Lapin kuntayhtymä	Koillis-Suomen kehittämisyhtiö	Lapin liitto	Total
	Kuntayinyina	Naturpolis Oy		
Staff cost: Staff cost: Project coordinator 30 months 50%, salary 4000€/month + social costs 25,04% 1001,6€/month	0	75,024	0	75,024
Staff cost: Staff cost: Project coordinator 24 months 80%, salary 3500€/month +social cost 26,44% 925,4€/month	84,027	0	0	84,027
Staff cost: Staff cost: Project expert 30 months 20%, salary 6900€/month + social costs 30% 2070€/month	0	0	54,017	54,017
Staff cost: Staff cost: Project Secretary 30 months 10%, salary 3000€/month + social costs 25,04% 751,20€/month	0	11,254	0	11,254
Staff cost: Staff cost: Project communicator 24 months 100%, salary 3400€/month + social costs 25,04%				
851,36/month	0	102,033	0	102,033
Staff cost: Staff cost: Project coordinator 30 months 10%, salary 5100€/month + social costs 30% 1530€/month	0	0	19,506	19,506
Other costs 40%	101,132	75,324	35,036	211,492
Sum costs	353,963	263,635	122,626	740,224
Sum total costs	353,963	263,635	122,626	740,224

Co-financing

Financier	ltä-Lapin kuntayhtymä	Koillis-Suomen kehittämisyhtiö Naturpolis Oy	Lapin liitto	Total
Public co-financing				
Finland national co financing::	86,721	64,590	0	151,311
Itä-Lapin kuntayhtymä	37,166	0	0	37,166
Koillismaa, regional development fund:	0	27,682	0	27,682
Lapin liitto:	0	0	42,914	42,914
Total public co-financing	123,887	92,272	42,914	259,073
Total all public co-financing methods	123,887	92,272	42,914	259,073

Support

Financing	Itä-Lapin kuntayhtymä	Koillis-Suomen kehittämisyhtiö Naturpolis Oy	Lapin liitto	Total
Total financing	230,076	171,363	79,712	481,151

Support and financing

	Itä-Lapin kuntayhtymä	Koillis-Suomen kehittämisyhtiö Naturpolis Oy	Lapin liitto	Total
Total financing	353,963	263,635	122,626	740,224

# 1.9 Norwegian budget

## Costs

Cost categories	UNJARGGA GIELDA / NESSEBY KOMMUNE	Total
Staff cost: Project manager 30 months 100%, salary 5 493€/month + social cost 4,5% 259€/month	172,555	172,555
Staff cost: Project coordinator 24 months 50%, salary 4179€/month + social cost 4,5% 197/month	52,517	52,517
Other costs 40%	90,029	90,029
Sum costs	315,101	315,101

Financing

Financier	UNJARGGA GIELDA / NESSEBY KOMMUNE	Total
Public financing	·	
Norwegian Barents secretariat :	110,285	110,285
Local Financing (Regional Fund):	47,265	47,265
Total public financing	157,550	157,550
Total all public financing methods	157,550	157,550
Private financing		
Total private financing		0
Total all private financing methods		0
Total public and private financing	157,550	157,550

## Support

Finan	ing	UNJARGGA GIELDA / NESSEBY KOMMUNE	Total
Applie	support	157,551	157,551

Support and financing

	UNJARGGA GIELDA / NESSEBY KOMMUNE	Total
Total financing	315,101	315,101