

# **“Sustainable Tourism and Mobility in Rural Areas: Environmentally-Friendly Transportation Options”**

## **Meeting 3: hosted by Municipality of Podstrana, Croatia 15–18 th of October 2025**

### **Sustainable tourism in Järva County, ESTONIA**

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# Tourism Profile of Järva Municipality

- Järva Municipality offers a **rich tapestry of cultural and natural attractions**, including medieval churches, historic manors, museums, and pristine bogs and nature reserves.
- The tourism experience is rooted in **authenticity** and **tranquility**, appealing to visitors seeking a slower, more **meaningful connection** with nature and heritage.
- While **domestic tourism dominates**, there's a noticeable rise in foreign interest, especially from neighboring countries.
- Summer is **the busiest season**, but efforts are underway to promote shoulder seasons. Winter tourism remains limited.
- The municipality's **commitment to sustainability** is reflected in its Green Destinations Silver Award, highlighting its eco-conscious approach.



Photos: Heli Illipe

# Top 3 Mobility Challenges



Foto: Dmitri Kotjuh, "Järva Teataja"

**Public Transport Limitations:** The absence of a railway and infrequent bus services make it difficult for both tourists and residents to travel efficiently within the municipality.



**Cycling Infrastructure Gaps:** Although cycling is encouraged, the lack of repair stations and weather-related challenges hinder its practicality.



**Distance Between Attractions:** Many points of interest are spread out, making car travel almost essential. This reliance on personal vehicles limits accessibility for those without one and increases environmental impact.

# Addressing Environmental Impacts

- Järva Municipality promotes **clustered tourism routes** to minimize travel distances and reduce emissions.
- Infrastructure **for walking and cycling** is being developed to encourage **low-impact mobility**.
- Local businesses are incentivized to adopt **eco-certification standards**, aligning with broader sustainability goals.
- The region also advocates for **slow tourism**, which emphasizes longer stays, deeper engagement, and reduced travel frequency—helping **to lower the carbon footprint** of tourism.

# Existing Eco-Friendly Transport Options



Photo: Kristo Kivisoo, "Järva Teataja"



The municipality supports initiatives like the **Hundi Ratas** cycling tour, which raises awareness about **sustainable mobility**.



There are **12.5 km of pedestrian and cycling paths**, though this is modest compared to the 493 km of car roads.



While the infrastructure is limited, **ongoing development** aims to expand these options.



The region's natural landscape and quiet roads make it **ideal for cycling** and **walking**, especially in warmer months.

# Innovative Sustainable Mobility Project

Järva's road strategy includes the construction of new bike paths, such as the **Kaalepi–Lehtmetsa route**, which connects key areas and encourages non-motorized travel.

The strategy is **publicly reviewed**, allowing residents and stakeholders to provide feedback.

Updated every five years, it reflects **evolving mobility needs** and **sustainability goals**.

This participatory approach ensures that infrastructure development **aligns with community values** and **tourism trends**.



Photo: Kuido Saarpuu, "Järva Teataja"

# Barriers to Adoption



Photo: Heli Illipe

- **Financial constraints** are a major hurdle, with limited funding available for upgrading roads and expanding eco-friendly infrastructure.
- Logistically, the municipality's **sparse population** and **long distances** between attractions make it difficult to implement centralized transport solutions.
- Culturally, there is a **strong reliance on personal vehicles**, and changing these habits requires time, education, and incentives.
- These barriers collectively **slow the transition** to sustainable mobility.

# Local Business Involvement

- Local businesses **actively support** sustainable tourism through event-based transport solutions and visitor engagement.
- For example, **Church Days** use shuttle buses to connect multiple venues, reducing car usage and enhancing accessibility.
- Restoran Tikupoiss provides **tourism information** via a digital kiosk, helping visitors plan **eco-friendly activities**.
- These efforts showcase how businesses can **contribute to mobility solutions** while promoting local culture and heritage.



# Community-Led Mobility Project

- Uddewa's apple juice days at Udeva Manor exemplify **community-driven tourism**.
- The event blends local traditions, nature, and sustainable practices, attracting visitors while **reinforcing regional identity**.
- It **encourages walking** and cycling to the venue, reducing transport emissions.
- The project **fosters community pride** and demonstrates how **grassroots initiatives** can support both mobility and tourism in a sustainable way.

UDEVA MÕISA PARK

Õunamahla  
talgud 2025

LAUPÄEV, 20. SEPTEMBER

KELL 12.00

# Mobility Exclusion Demographics

- Elderly residents, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals often face mobility challenges due to **limited transport options** and **poor infrastructure**.
- Improvements could include **bookable transport services**, better **accessibility features**, and community **ride-sharing programs**.
- **Enhancing infrastructure** for walking and cycling, especially in residential areas, would also help bridge the mobility gap and ensure inclusivity.



Photo: Heli Illipe

# Cultural Tourism & Mobility Demands



- Events like Church Days and the Hund Ratas cycling tour **increase mobility needs** by drawing visitors to multiple sites.
- **Shuttle buses and coordinated transport** help manage this demand sustainably.
- While the overall tourist volume is modest, these events highlight the **importance of flexible and responsive transport solutions** that can scale with seasonal and event-based fluctuations.

Photo: Heli Illipe

# Unique Cultural Asset

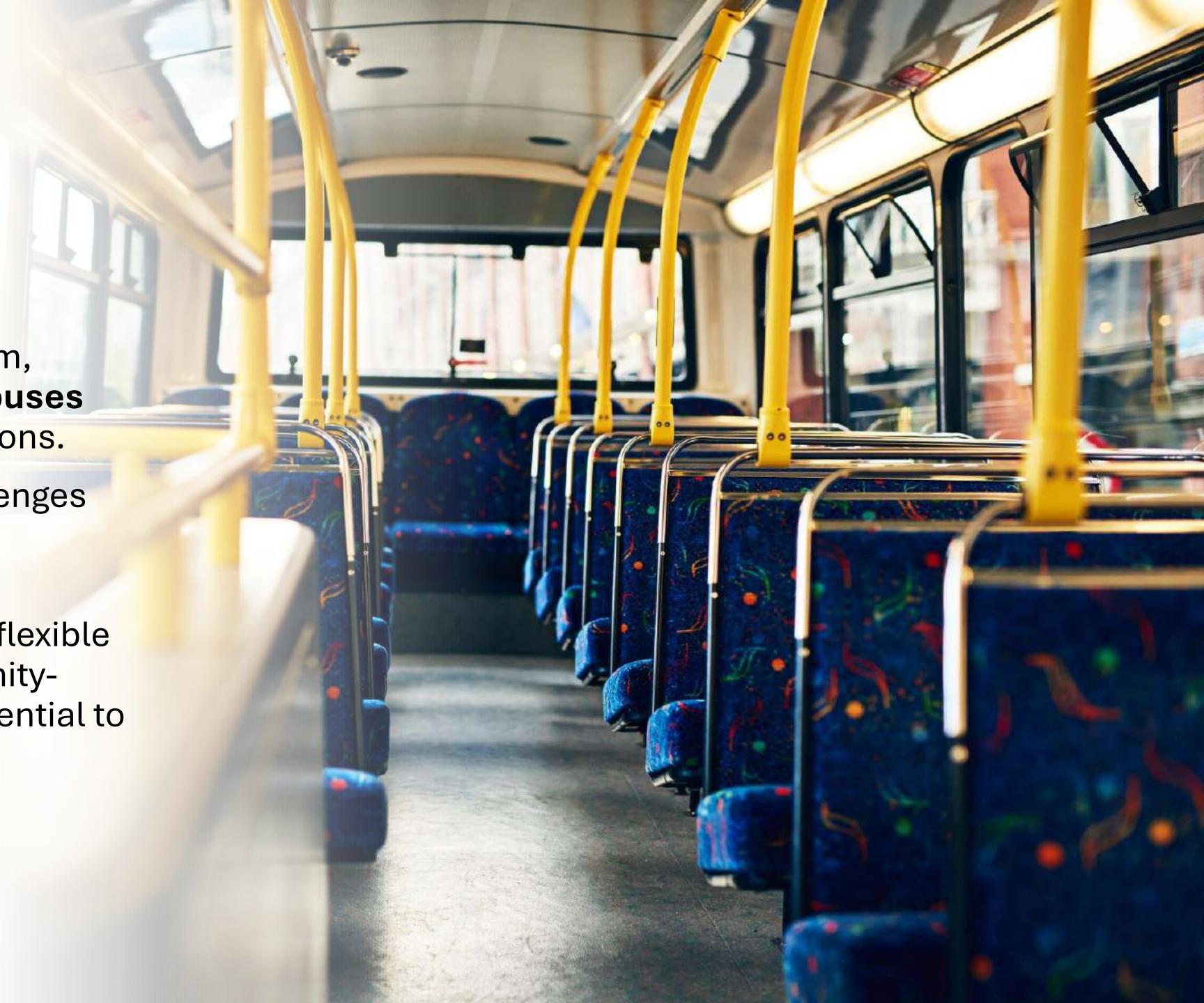
- The **A. H. Tammsaare Museum** in Vargamäe is a literary and **cultural gem**, offering interactive exhibits, nature trails, and a mobile app for self-guided tours.
- Despite its national significance, **limited transport access** restricts visitor numbers.
- Improved connectivity—such as **shuttle services** or **bike paths**—could unlock its full tourism potential and strengthen its role in regional identity.



Photos: Heli Illipe

# Seasonal Transport Sustainability

- Summer sees a surge in tourism, prompting the **use of shuttle buses** and temporary transport solutions.
- In contrast, winter poses challenges due to isolation and **reduced infrastructure use**.
- **Seasonal planning**, including flexible transport options and community-based mobility services, is essential to **maintain accessibility** and **sustainability** year-round.



# Policy Support

- **EU-funded programs** have supported the development of pedestrian and cycling paths, benefiting both residents and tourists.
- These policies **encourage active mobility** and reduce reliance on cars.
- For example, the path to the **Estonian Dairy Museum** enhances access while promoting eco-friendly travel.
- Such initiatives align with **broader sustainability goals** and improve regional connectivity.



# Lessons for GreenMove Network

- Järva's experience shows that **free transport** alone **doesn't guarantee** increased usage.
- Accessibility, convenience, and **integration with tourism activities** are crucial.
- Rural areas must focus on **holistic solutions** that consider user behavior, infrastructure quality, and cultural attitudes toward mobility.
- These insights can guide the GreenMove Network in developing **effective strategies**.

# Measuring Impact

- Tourism statistics from SA Järvamaa provide **insights into visitor trends**, while traffic counts help assess road usage and mobility patterns.
- These metrics inform infrastructure **planning** and **policy decisions**.
- Regular data collection ensures that mobility **solutions are responsive** to actual needs and **contribute** to sustainable development.



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# EU Project Participation and Funding Gaps

- Järva Municipality **has not** yet engaged in **Interreg** or **Horizon Europe** projects but has benefited from **national support** for light traffic infrastructure.
- This highlights **the potential for future collaboration** and the need for capacity-building to access broader EU funding opportunities.
- Small municipal teams and limited co-financing capacity **restrict access** to EU funds.
- These gaps underscore the need for **simplified application processes**, technical support, and regional partnerships that can pool resources and expertise.
- Addressing these barriers would **enable more rural areas to benefit** from EU mobility initiatives.

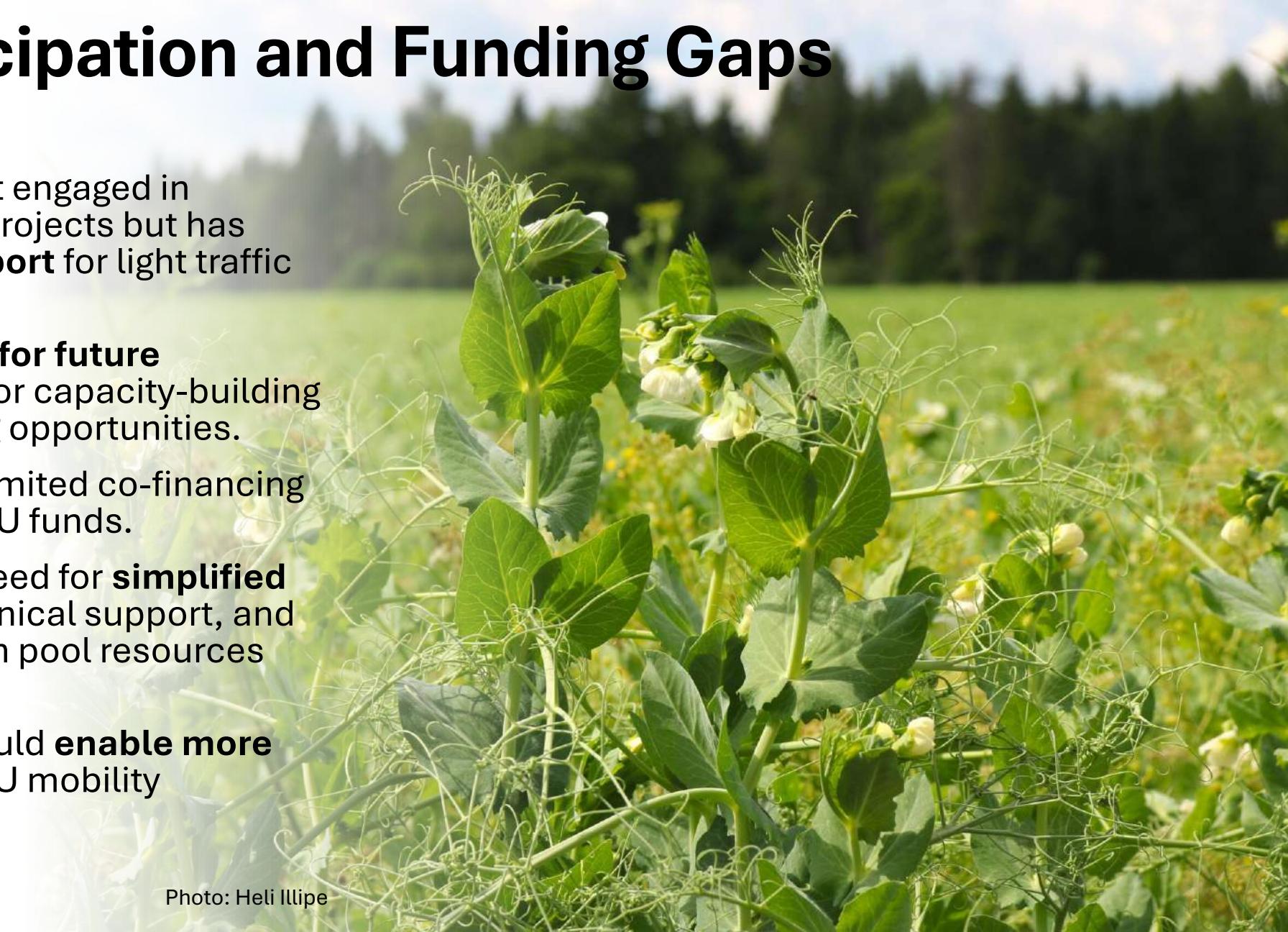


Photo: Heli Illipe

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Transforming rural mobility  
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# GreenMove Collaboration Potential

- GreenMove could facilitate **data sharing, pilot innovative mobility solutions** like e-shuttles and e-bikes, and support mobile app development for tourism.
- Collaboration with existing projects would **enhance** knowledge exchange, build local capacity, and **accelerate** the adoption of sustainable transport models **across rural Europe.**