

# A JOB WELL DONE

IN SKI RESORT AREAS

Future of Snowsport Industry  
-project publication



The tourism industry is undergoing a transformation and is facing a severe labour shortage. Ski and tourism centers are struggling to find the workforce, and training programs in the tourism industry are not attracting enough participants. New and flexible solutions for ensuring the availability of skilled labour are needed in Finland and internationally – right now and in the future.

**Future of Snowsport Industry project** is funded by Regional Council of Lapland, jointly implemented by the Municipality of Kittilä and Rovaniemi Municipal Federation of Education (REDU), and is a preliminary survey project running from November 2022 to January 2024. The project has mapped, among other things, the views of those working in ski resort area services and industry organizations on future workforce development needs. The new information produced within the framework of the project is essential for anticipating future challenges and addressing problems together with stakeholders, such as development organizations, education providers and employers.

#### FEATURED IN THE PROJECT

Rovaniemi Municipal Federation of Education (REDU)  
Santasport Lapland Sports Institute  
Municipality of Kittilä  
Regional Council of Lapland

**Edited by:** Tuukka Sutinen & Jarkko Komulainen  
**Graphic design:** Mainostoimisto Puisto Oy  
**Cover Photo:** Visit Levi  
**Photos:** Visit Levi or Ski.fi

Lapland, January 2024



Data collection and  
Worklife Experience is  
Everything survey

Page **6**

Implementation  
of the survey

Page **7**

Presenting  
the group of  
respondents

Page **8**

Attractiveness of the  
tourism and ski resort  
industry

Page **11**

Changing  
work life

Page **15**

Developing  
ski resort industry  
education

Page **16**

Summary of  
workforce issues in the  
ski resort industry

Page **20**

The emerging  
of cooperation  
initiatives

Page **22**

Employment and  
business services  
for ski resorts

Page **24**

Shapers of the  
future in ski  
resort areas

Page **26**

Education responding  
to the workforce  
challenges in the  
tourism industry

Page **29**

The snow sports  
trail as a regional  
attraction

Page **31**

Future and next steps  
- what happens after  
the project?

Page **32**

Reliability of the  
publication

Page **33**



# ***PROJECT BACKGROUND AND AIM***



**In a seasonal industry, new approaches are needed to attract both domestic and international talent. There's a need for developing tailored solutions for skills development that secure an adequate workforce for the needs of the business sector. The ski resort industry is highly seasonal, which is why it is important to identify the factors affecting commitment to work and opportunities for year-round employment.**

**Traditionally, ski and tourism centers attract young and adventurous seasonal workers. Tourism and ski resort areas have plenty of factors that attract talent. There is a need for more committed long-term experts in these regions; learning through education and experience is crucial in ski resort tourism areas, and strategies for employee engagement need to be considered more carefully.**

**New solutions are needed for the development of training paths in various industries and for year-round employment solutions, such as combining seasons and industries and through international cooperation. Educational programs in English are needed to attract and retain foreign labour in the area as the working language changes. Ensuring and developing skills are key to addressing innovations and labour shortages.**

**The Future of Snowsport Industry project aims to find and initiate flexible solutions to ensure the availability of skilled labour in a changing world and proactively respond to the challenges posed by the structural changes observed in the ski resort and tourism service sectors. This publication examines the outputs of the project.**

**In the first part of the publication, we outline the current situation regarding workforce issues in the tourism and ski resort industry. In the second part, we discuss the new collaborative initiatives implemented during the project to overcome the challenges that have arisen.**

**Key stakeholders in the project include businesses, educational institutions, training providers, as well as development and regional organizations both domestically and internationally. The purpose of this publication is to serve future development work as well. We thank all who worked on the project!**

# ***DATA COLLECTION AND WORKLIFE EXPERIENCE IS EVERYTHING SURVEY***





As part of The Future of Snowsport Industry Project, a survey was conducted among ski resort industry operators. The aim of the survey was to gather insights from domestic and international experts working in various roles within ski resorts, as well as in tourism and activity service sectors, regarding the industry's skill levels, education offerings, and the development needs and challenges related to attracting and retaining talent in the field.

In the context of this survey, the ski resort industry refers to the services provided at ski resorts and the surrounding tourist areas. Finland has nearly 70 ski resorts, each with its own unique characteristics. Many ski resorts in Southern and Central Finland are located near urban centres, serving not only tourists but also local residents. In contrast, ski resorts in Northern Finland often play a significant role in the regional economy of the tourism industry. The diverse range of tourism services offered alongside ski resorts collectively forms a comprehensive service package for both domestic and international tourists.

In addition to the survey, data collection for the project has also taken place during various events and through collaborative efforts. The project participated in international events like Interski2023 held in Levi and meetings with the Finnish Ski Area Association. Throughout the project, there has been ongoing interaction with key stakeholders such as educational institutions, the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, as well as public employment and business services. This has contributed to data collection and is considered part of the information-gathering process.

Next, we will review the results of the survey conducted as part of the project and integrate them into an overview of broader workforce development trends.



# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SURVEY

The survey was designed to gather responses not only from ski resort employees but also from those working in accommodation, restaurant, and activity services. Additionally, representatives from educational institutions, development organizations, clubs, and associations were invited to participate. An international perspective was taken into account, as the survey was conducted in the context of the Interski 2023 event held in Levi in March.

The data collection for the survey was carried out online using the Questback Essentials platform, accessible through an open link. The survey was promoted directly to individuals, for example at events, and was shared electronically through employers, development and advocacy organizations, educational institutions, and associations.

The survey questions were formulated based on tourism development strategy papers and in collaboration with key stakeholders of the project. The questions were thematically divided into three parts:

- **The attractiveness of the ski resort industry.**
- **Changing work life.**
- **The development of ski resort industry education.**

In total, the survey consisted of 40 questions, most of which were statements. In addition to statements, open-ended questions were also included. The survey questionnaire can be found in the attachment (Appendix 1, content of the survey questionnaire).

Data collection began during the Interski conference in 2023 on March 24th and continued until September 12th, 2023. A total of 381 individuals responded to the survey. There were 358 (94%) fully completed responses and 23 (6%) partially completed responses. Incomplete responses were included in the final dataset if they contained relevant answers to open-ended questions, among other criteria.

# PRESENTING THE GROUP OF RESPONDENTS

Most of the respondents live in Finland. The second-largest group of respondents was from the United States. There were a few respondents from other countries per country. For this reason, countries were categorized into groups as shown in Figure 2 below. This allows for a directional examination of regional results.

Respondents' home country (n=381)

Finland	<b>254</b>	
United States	25	Norway 3
Sweden	9	Austria 2
Switzerland	8	France 2
Canada	7	Hungary 2
South Korea	7	Netherlands 2
Poland	7	New Zealand 2
Australia	6	Slovenia 2
United Kingdom	5	Spain 2
Czech Republic	4	Argentina 1
Japan	4	Belgium 1
Latvia	4	Ireland 1
Romania	4	China 1
Bulgaria	3	Montenegro 1
Croatia	3	Russia 1
Denmark	3	San Marino 1
Germany	3	Serbia 1

Respondents' home countries categorized (number of respondents). Argentina is excluded from the regional results analysis.

Finland	<b>254</b>
Rest of Europe (excluding Scandinavia)	59
North America	32
Asia & Oceania	20
Scandinavia	15
Argentina	1

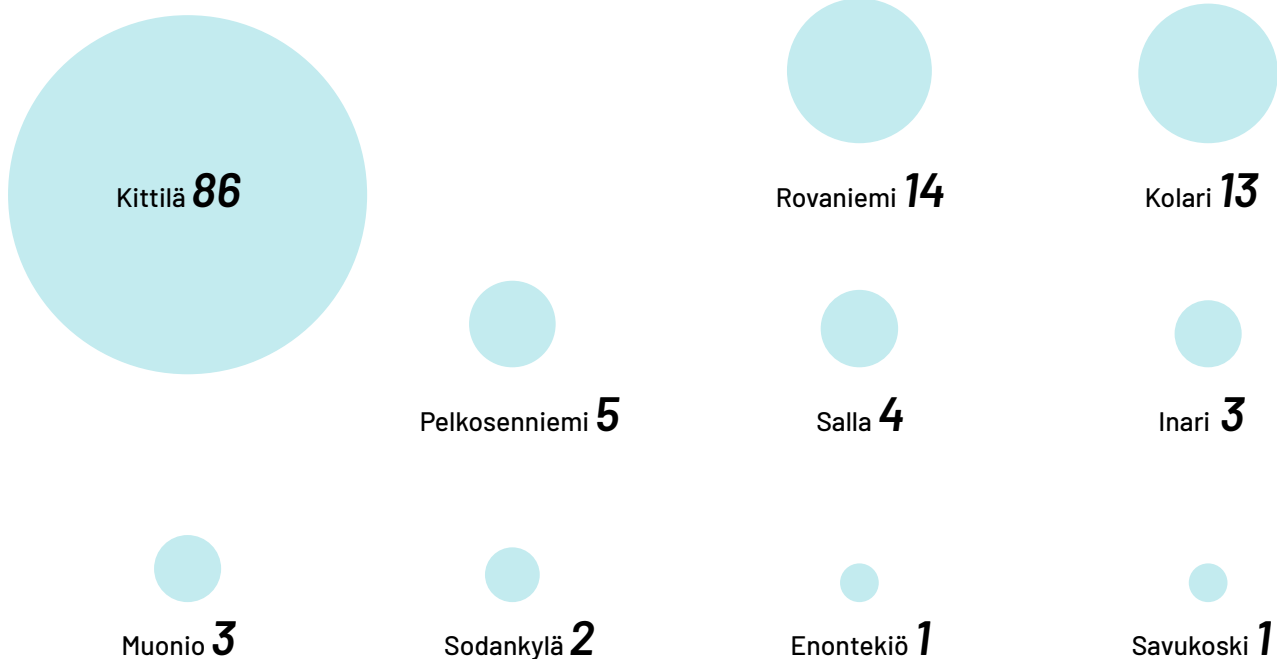
Residents in Finland by region (number of respondents)

Lapland	<b>132</b>	
Uusimaa	46	South Savo 3
North Ostrobothnia	19	Päijät-Häme 3
Central Finland	13	Satakunta 3
Pirkanmaa	12	Kanta-Häme 1
Kainuu	6	Central Ostrobothnia 1
Southwest Finland	6	Ostrobothnia 1
North Savo	4	North Karelia 1
South Ostrobothnia	3	

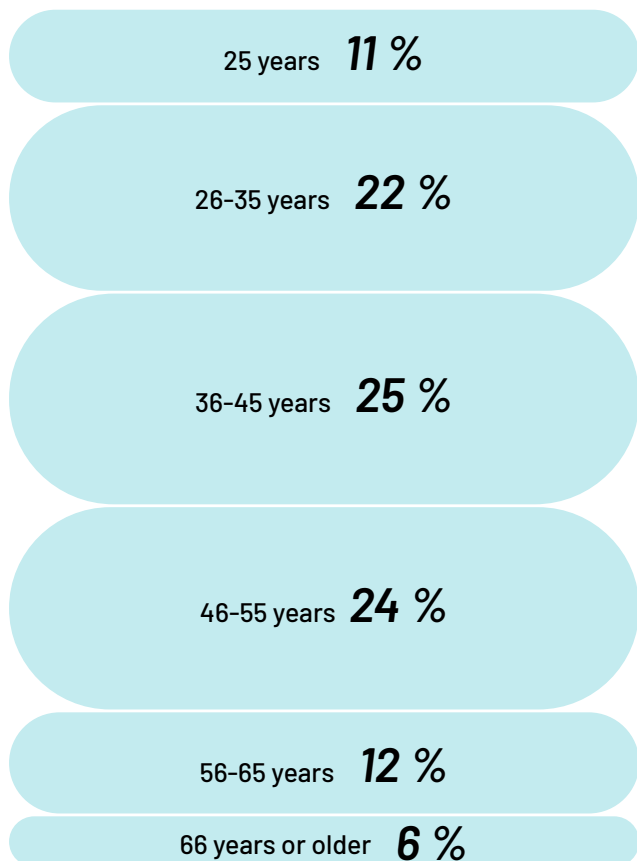
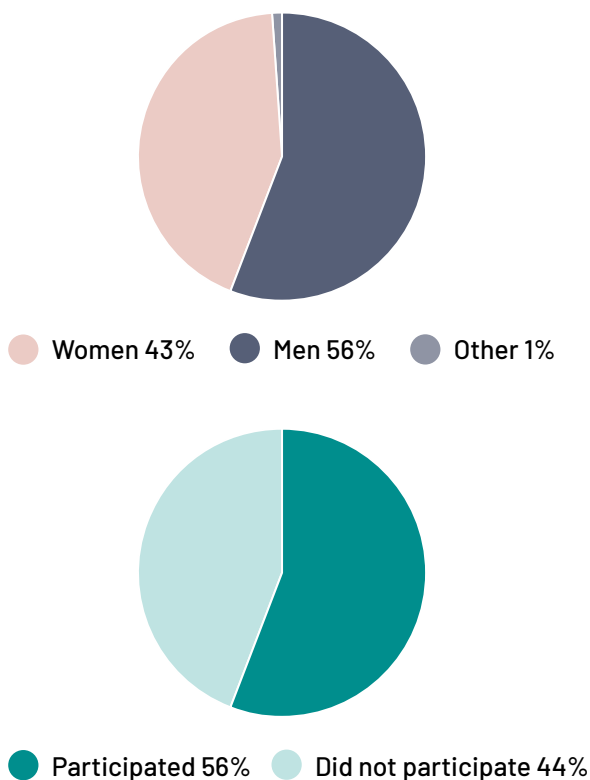


Locations of residents in Lapland region  
(number of respondents)

Most Finnish respondents were from Lapland. The largest portion of them resides in Kittilä.



Respondents' age, gender, and participation in Interski 2023 (n=381)

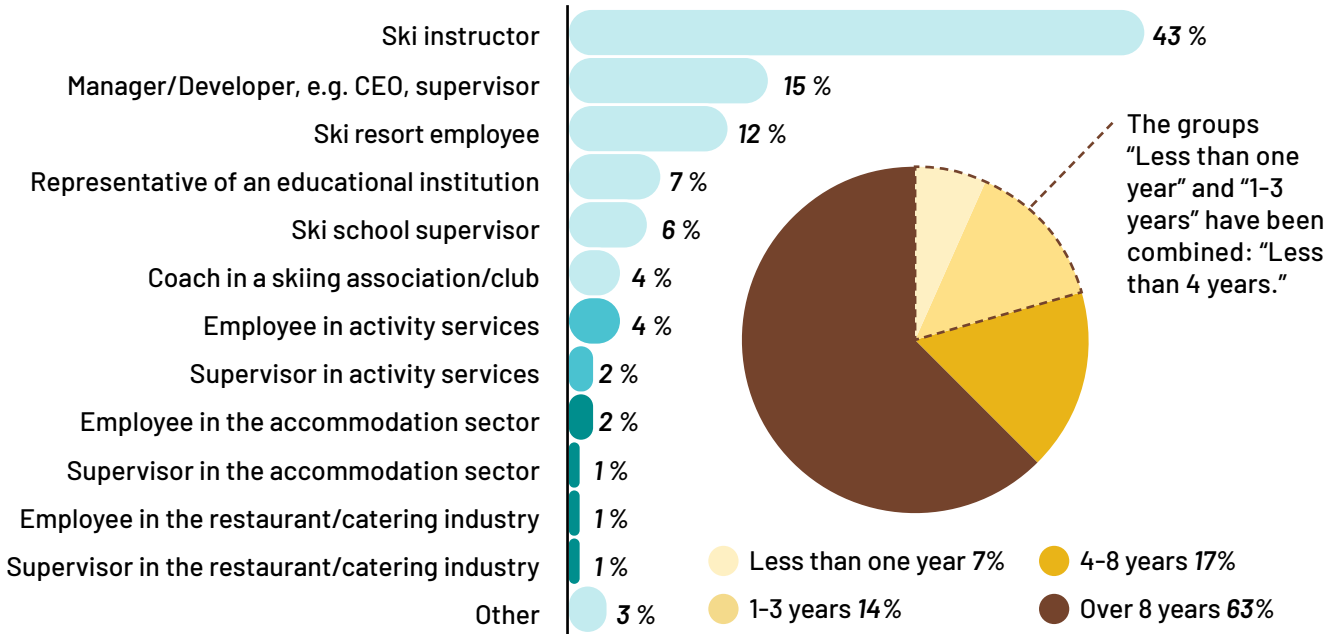




Respondents' role in the ski resort industry and length of employment in the industry (n=381)

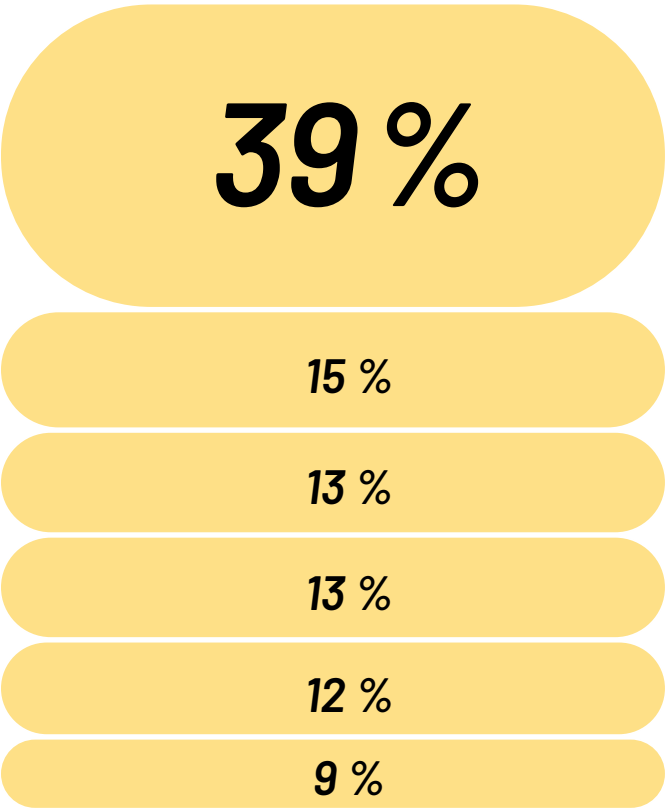
To analyze the results, employees and supervisors in program services were combined into one group: program services. Similarly, different roles in the accommodation and restaurant/catering industry were combined into one group: accommodation, restaurant, and catering

industry. In the question about working in the ski resort industry, those with less than one year of experience and those with 1-3 years of experience in the industry were combined into one group: less than 4 years.



Respondent group training (multiple choice question, n=381)

Short-term training and courses in the ski resort industry (ski instruction, activity services, lift operation training, coaching, so-called certificate courses, etc.)



Only about one in ten respondents did not have ski resort industry-related training. The majority have completed short-term training and courses in the industry.

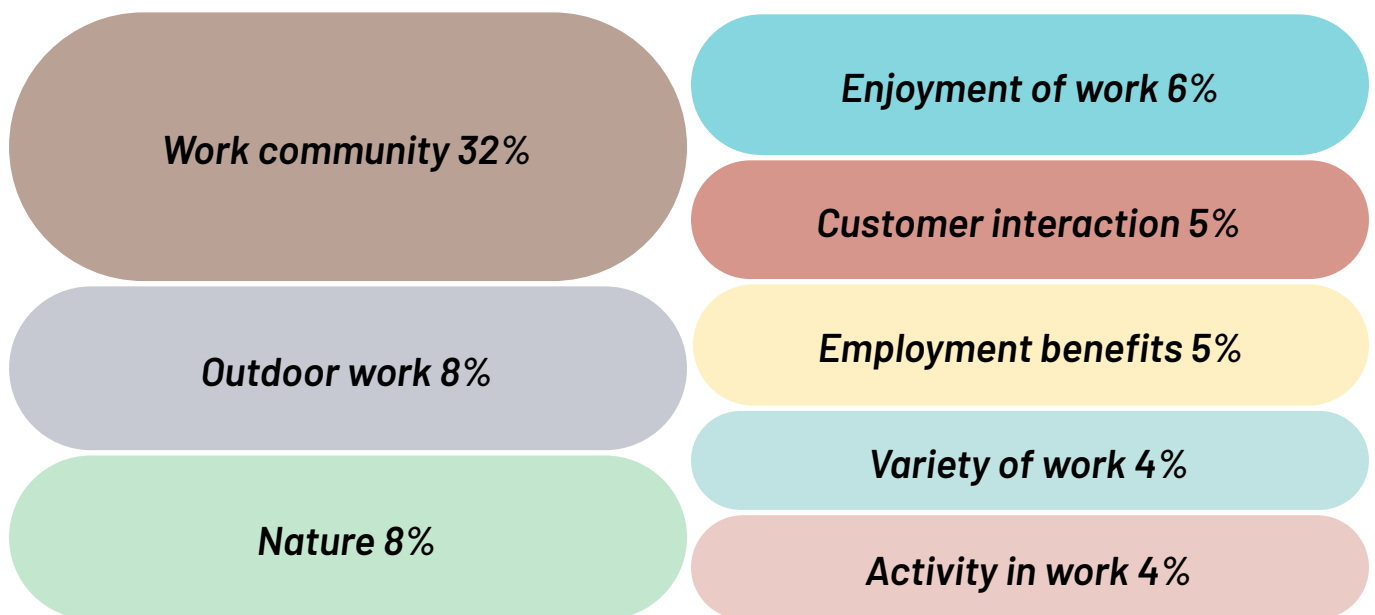


# ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE TOURISM AND SKI RESORT INDUSTRY

A pleasant work environment and safety as attractions

Based on the survey, the strengths of the ski resort industry are a pleasant work environment and a safe working environment. A whopping 95% of respondents considered the industry's work environment pleasant, while 80% found it to be a safe working environment.

The importance of the work environment as an attractive factor in the ski resort industry was also emphasized in the open comments provided by the respondents. When respondents who found the industry attractive were asked to justify their stance in one word, one-third mentioned the work environment. Outdoor work and nature were mentioned as meaningful factors.



**Open text question:** "Justify in one word why the ski resort industry is attractive? You can mention 3 justifications." (n=518)

---

Retention challenges are related to year-round employment, career development, wage levels, and housing arrangements

The main retention challenges in the industry, as indicated by the survey responses, include difficulties in year-round employment, perceived low competitiveness in terms of industry wages, challenges in arranging housing in ski resort areas, and the high cost of housing. Therefore, it is logical that a significant portion, 71% of respondents, disagreed with the statement that the

industry provides a reliable livelihood. A fifth factor that was perceived more strongly as a retention challenge than an attractiveness factor is "The ski resort industry is an attractive career opportunity for young people." Despite its attractiveness, the ski resort industry is not seen as offering long-term career opportunities.



## How could the industry's attractiveness be improved?

Development suggestions were requested from those respondents who felt that the ski resort industry does not offer opportunities to build a career. In this feedback, challenges related to wages and year-round employment were highlighted. When asked about the key areas for improvement in the industry, better pay was mentioned by nearly every third respondent, followed by year-round employment and housing.

In addition to salary, better employment benefits (including those related to housing) would have a positive impact on encouraging career development and retaining professionals in the field. From the perspective of ski resorts, this would also have a positive effect on workforce availability.

Other factors that were mentioned as positively affecting career advancement include training opportunities, the overall development of the industry towards year-round operations, and collaboration and networking with various stakeholders to promote year-round employment and labour mobility for job opportunities. However, opportunities for education and international, cross-industry collaboration should continue to be developed.

**Better salary 30%**

**Year-round employment 11%**

**Housing 10%**

**Career development 4%**

**Opportunities for education 4%**

**Industry recognition 3%**

**Open text question:** "The key areas for improvement to make the ski resort industry more attractive as an employer." n=257

The challenges of year-round employment are related to the seasonality of the work. Respondents were asked for feedback on how year-round employment in the ski resort industry could be improved. Increasing and developing summer activities in ski resort areas was generally seen as a way to reduce seasonality and promote year-round employment. Combining work with other industries and entrepreneurship was also seen as an opportunity. While there is plenty of work during the winter season, securing affordable and suitable accommodation emerged as one challenge, even year-round.

*"Support the education of ski instructors, plan year-round activities so that one could work at the ski resort continuously. The constant seasonality is a barrier to development and continuity. Due to housing issues, many don't want to return to shared accommodations, making it nearly impossible for adults to live in a ski resort. Consequently, job roles don't have a chance to develop, as someone willing to live in a bunk bed with others often ends up taking on the job. In other words, jobs go to those who happen to get housing or are willing to tolerate poor living conditions, not necessarily to those who would be the best fit for the role."*

**Ski Instructor, female,  
Finland, more than 8 years in the field**

*"Improve the salary; the work is extremely demanding and doesn't in any way correspond to the current pay. [...] Support for education could be provided. At the moment, we pay for all our own training and courses. [...] Also, incentives for well-done work would be appropriate. If, for instance, you receive positive feedback or a customer returns for another lesson and, in the best case, requests the same instructor, you could receive a small salary bonus."*

**Ski Instructor, male, Finland,  
1-3 years in the field**

Some of the suggested summer activity offerings for ski resorts included typical activities that are already being developed, such as:

- Diversifying and developing mountain bike trails and bike park activities. Downhill biking was also mentioned in relation to cycling.

*"Either by boosting the reputation of Lapland and Finland for summer tourism or through collaboration with companies that require a lot of personnel during the summer. This way, after the season, employees would have secure jobs for the summer, and then they would return to ski resorts and program services for the winter."*

**Employee in program services, female, Finland, in the industry for 4-8 years**

*"Improved relationships and marketing between schools in the northern and southern hemispheres. Ski resorts investing in summer activities. Training for ski instructors in summer job fields (e.g., mountain biking instruction, hiking guides, guest services, hotel and restaurant jobs). Retaining staff is a major challenge in our industry and could be an excellent topic for the upcoming Interski congress."*

**Management/development role, male, Australia, in the industry for over 8 years**

- Various forms of outdoor activities, including hiking, trekking, trail running, and canoeing.
- Golf.
- Synthetic ski slopes and tracks for summer use.
- Developing various summer-related program services and adventure tourism.
- Developing the services of nature guides.

Developing training opportunities to diversify workforce skills was seen as a driver for promoting year-round employment. Diversifying skills would enable broader job roles, for example.

There was also a desire for skills development among supervisors, management, and administration, potentially through a more robust HR function. Successful leadership and human resource management were seen as crucial for retention and, at the same time, impacting the attractiveness of the industry.

International job opportunities and promoting workforce mobility for "chasing winter" were seen as factors that could reduce seasonality dependence. Facilitating international mobility would involve international networking among ski resorts and lowering mobility barriers. This could be achieved by providing information about visa and other requirements in different countries, among other measures.

*"[...] In our case, the solution is that the majority of employees are also entrepreneurs in other fields (farmers, machine operators, etc.) and/or work seasonal jobs in other companies during the summer (summer restaurants, gardening, marketing). [...] I think it's very common these days for people to have multiple jobs and perhaps even run their own business. It requires flexibility from employers as well [...]."*

**Management/development role, female, Finland, in the industry for over 8 years**

*"Sister ski resorts that allow instructors to transition between northern and southern hemispheres between winters. Summer jobs at ski resorts that are related to the winter season and off-season work. [...]."*

**Ski school supervisor, female, United States, in the industry for over 8 years**

*"More modern HR practices. It's surprising when employees come from the south and realize that human resource management is not up to date. Nowadays, it's crucial to invest in training for supervisors to ensure employee well-being competes effectively. Unfortunately, many people leave the job market in Lapland due to poor HR practices. The idea that a good employee is a good leader still applies here. Good HR is the most important asset for employees."*

**Employee in the accommodation sector, female, Finland, in the industry for over 8 years**

*"It's important to find alternatives for year-round work so that employees don't have to move for work, for example, to the other side of Finland. Some employees are happy to work elsewhere in the summer, but there are also many who would like to stay in the region (especially in Lapland) during the summer if there were jobs available. Permanent positions or long-term contracts are relatively scarce, so there is high turnover in the industry. [...]."*

**Management/development role, female, Finland, in the industry for less than one year**



## The attractiveness of the industry from different roles and groups' perspectives



The results were analyzed not only at the overall level but also among different respondent groups. The differences among different respondent groups are mainly indicative due to variations in group sizes. For example, there was little difference in responses between genders.

Regarding age, young individuals under 25 years old, in particular, find the ski resort industry attractive. They were significantly more in agreement with the following statements: The ski resort industry is an attractive field for employees, it offers competitive employment benefits, and it is an attractive career opportunity for young people.

The length of time working in the industry did not significantly affect the responses. Age may correlate with the duration of employment in the field. Those with less than four years of experience in the industry were more likely to view the ski resort industry as an attractive career opportunity for young people and believe that it offers competitive employment benefits.

When examining the results by job roles, it's important to note that the data is weighted towards ski instructors. Ski instructors were generally more critical of the industry's attractiveness compared to other roles, while respondents in leadership or development positions had a more positive

outlook. Ski instructors and those working in activity services were particularly more critical when it came to one of the central challenges, which is the ability to provide year-round employment. Ski instructors, those working in activity services, and ski resort employees expressed more criticism regarding competitive wages. Those working in accommodations, restaurants, and catering were more critical of the ease of arranging housing.

In addition to role-based analysis, supervisors' views were compared to those of employees. Generally, supervisors had a more positive attitude toward the industry's attractiveness factors. When comparing supervisors and employees, supervisors had a significantly more positive view of the ski resort industry offering reliable income and career opportunities.

In terms of geography, it's important to remember that the data is weighted towards Finnish industry participants. Although regional results are indicative, they are interesting to examine. The most significant differences in assessments were the more negative views of North American respondents regarding employment benefits, career opportunities for young people, reliable income, year-round employment in the industry, and competitive wages.

# CHANGING WORK LIFE

In the “Changing Work Life” section, respondents were asked about issues related to general trends in the changing work environment. Respondents strongly agreed that the ski resort industry enables international work. In connection with international work, the industry was also seen as well-networked and engaged in international cooperation. Working in the ski resort and tourism industry is inherently international, especially in northern tourism areas. The emphasis on ski instructors among the respondents, who are often seen as international operators, may have influenced the responses.

On the other hand, respondents were most strongly in disagreement regarding whether the industry allows for remote work or mobile work (67% disagreed with this). These responses can be partly explained by the basic requirements

of the industry, which often involve customer service work.

As for areas of improvement, nearly half of the respondents expressed the view that the ski resort industry does not take good care of its employees. While the majority of respondents agreed that leadership in the industry is fair and equitable, approximately four out of ten disagreed with this. Those working in leadership roles in the industry were more likely to believe that leadership in the industry is fair and equitable.

The “Changing Work Life” section did not include questions that would have been answered with open-text responses. The responses in this section complement the findings related to the industry’s attractiveness and the development of education in the field.

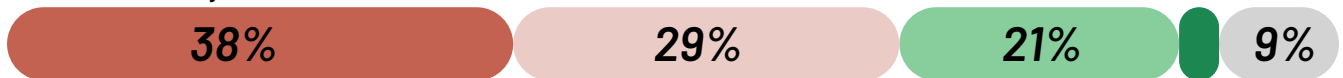
Ski resort industry promotes entrepreneurship



Ski resort industry utilizes digitalization as a tool for work



Ski resort industry enables remote or mobile work



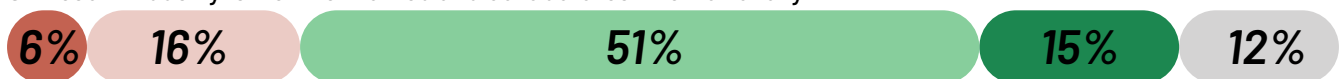
Ski resort industry enables flexible working



Ski resort industry enables working internationally



Ski resort industry is well-networked and collaborates internationally



Ski resort industry takes good care of its employees



In the ski resort industry, leadership is fair and equitable



In the ski resort industry, operations align with sustainable development goals



Results of the Changing Work Life statement matrix





# DEVELOPING SKI RESORT INDUSTRY EDUCATION

The importance of personnel management and supervisory work

Based on the statement responses, two-thirds of the respondents considered on-the-job training effective in the ski resort industry. However, open-ended responses revealed a more critical perspective on onboarding and emphasized the importance of supervisory skills and successful personnel management.

*"At the moment, there are many older generations in ski resorts who have incredible technical skills and expertise. This is not taught anywhere, such as driving a snow groomer, maintaining ski lifts, electrical work, and more. It is mainly learned through apprenticeship-like activities. We need some sort of training program for this."*

**Ski school supervisor, female, Finland, in the industry for 4-8 years**

Ski resort industry collaborates well with educational institutions



Onboarding in the ski resort industry is effective



There is sufficient workforce available for the ski resort industry



There are several high-quality training programs available for the ski resort industry



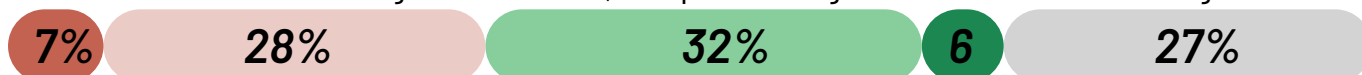
Training in the ski resort industry meets the needs of the industry's workplace



Employers in the ski resort industry provide training for their employees



International collaboration at a high level works well, examples including workforce and student exchanges



The skill level of the workforce is very high



Foreign labour finds it easy to find employment in the ski resort industry



Results of Developing ski resort industry education statement matrix.

● Completely disagree  
● Somewhat disagree

● Somewhat agree  
● Completely agree  
● I don't know

## The diverse skills needed in ski resort areas

Half of the respondents felt that there are quality training programs available for the ski resort industry and that the education meets the needs of the industry. Respondents were given the opportunity to express in their own words how ski resort industry education should be developed and what kind of education they would like to see.

*"Education that covers various aspects of the winter sports industry and thus provides a wide range of job opportunities."*

**Management/Development role, male, Austria, in the industry for over 8 years**

*"Language studies, developing comprehensive customer service, and considering environmental issues in daily operations."*

**Restaurant/Catering industry supervisor, female, Finland, in the industry for 4-8 years**

The development requests covered a wide range of topics, from sport-specific advanced training to first aid, customer service, management, and business studies. The largest group of respondents in the survey, ski instructors and ski resort employees, emphasized continuing education in their own sport but also education that would expand their skills more broadly in the industry. Employers were expected to provide support for further education. Customer service training was mentioned in several requests.

*"More education in various functions within the industry. If the development continues, the direction of leadership should also cover resort operations, including restaurant and beverage services, mountain activities, and snow sports."*

**Ski School Supervisor, male, Australia, in the industry for over 8 years**

*"Targeted training, operational training for foreign labour (work methods and culture, required work permits, etc.), career coaching, supervisor training."*

**Supervisor in the accommodation sector, female, Finland, in the industry for over 8 years**





*"Comprehensive basic training for various jobs in ski resorts. Especially now, there is a need for education since almost every centre has turned its operations into year-round or is heading in that direction. Moreover, customers are no longer a homogeneous group; diversity has also increased significantly."*

**Manager/Development role, male, Finland, over 8 years in the industry**

*"Particularly, technical training for ski resorts should be improved. Offering courses and training programs in English would help in engaging international workforce. Ski resort jobs are generally seen as temporary work rather than a career, official broader training would bring seriousness and development opportunities to the industry."*

**Manager/Development role, female, Finland, 4-8 years in the industry**

## The need for skilled labour

Over half (54%) of the respondents feel that there is not enough workforce available in the industry. This opinion was particularly prevalent among respondents from the accommodation, restaurant, or catering sector. Additionally, the level of workforce competence was assessed as relatively low, indicating an area for improvement that is closely related to the previously mentioned development needs.

The skills related to employment and success in the industry, which will become more emphasized in the future, are more related to social skills, language proficiency, and customer service than specific skills related to the sport.

The common factor in the responses is the new skill requirements that arise from the expansion and development of activities in ski resort areas. On one hand, there is a need for versatile professionals who possess skills in customer service, interpersonal skills, cultural competence, and technical service expertise such as ski instruction or guiding activities. However, there are also specific needs mentioned, such as those related to the maintenance of slope infrastructure, which include tasks like operating snow groomers, snowmaking and snow expertise, electrical and property maintenance work, expertise in accommodation and restaurant services, as well as activity services.

**Social skills 13%**

**Language proficiency 12%**

**Customer service skills 11%**

**Sport-specific skills 6%**

**Interpersonal skills 5%**

**Flexibility 4%**

**Open text question:** "The most important skills or areas of expertise needed in the future in the ski resort industry." n=686





# SUMMARY OF WORKFORCE ISSUES IN THE SKI RESORT INDUSTRY

Employment in the ski resort industry is closely linked to employment in the tourism sector. According to various statistics and studies, the tourism industry requires an increase in both the number and expertise of its workforce. The availability of skilled labour has, in some cases, become a hindrance to the growth of businesses. Additionally, the tourism industry faces significant labour market imbalances, where job seekers are located in different regions from the job opportunities, or the required skills and qualifications for jobs do not align with those possessed by job seekers. In the coming years, a significant portion of the workforce will retire, and the growth of the working-age population will be concentrated in major urban centres. Forecasts suggest that this demographic shift may not be offset by immigration in Lapland.

*"The tourism industry also faces a significant labour market imbalance; jobs are located in different areas from job seekers, or the skills of job seekers do not match the requirements of the job. At the same time, there are many job vacancies in the industry, but also unemployment because job seekers often do not want to accept the jobs offered."*

**(Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Industry Report 2023:3)**

*"The development of the working-age population is relatively modest on a national level, whereas in the scenario of Finland becoming more international, the growth of the working-age population is reasonable. However, the challenge lies in regional development. All the growth in the working-age population is concentrated in major urban centers. Even a significant increase in immigration would not significantly alter the regional structure of the working-age population."*

**(Labour Force Demand and Employment Outlook, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment)**

## International collaboration holds potential for solving workforce challenges

Based on the survey responses, it is noteworthy that there are no significant differences between the responses from different countries, and none come about through open-ended responses either. The challenges in the ski resort industry are similar worldwide. This perception was reinforced by participating in the workshops at the Interski 2023 event, where representatives from different countries identified the same challenges as those currently faced in Finland, and vice versa. Potential solutions may include combining industries and working in different parts of the world based on staggered peak seasons.

## Community and environment as strengths – these should be maintained in the future!

The ski resort industry's strongest attraction factors included the perceived pleasant work community within the industry, the opportunity to work internationally in the field, and the perception of the industry as a safe place to work. Through open-ended responses, attractiveness factors related to the environment, such as nature and good employee benefits often tied to recreational opportunities, emerged as significant. It is essential to remember that without retention, there can be no long-term attractiveness.

## Younger individuals hold a more positive view of the ski resort industry

The results were analyzed based on the following background variables: the respondents' age, gender, role in the ski resort industry, the perceptions of supervisors and employees, length of time in the industry, and region. It should be noted that the differences in results between different groups are largely indicative due to differences in the number of respondents in each group. The roles in the data are heavily weighted toward ski instructors, and the region is mainly Finland. In many cases, there were no significant differences in the views of different groups.



PHOTO: VISIT LEVI

Explore the results of the survey conducted by the project in more detail in the survey report: [\*\*Read report here\*\*](#)

*"It's also good to remember that without retention, there won't be attraction in the long run."*

**Said in the project workshop**

The youngest group of respondents, those under 25, had a more positive outlook on all aspects of the survey compared to other age groups. This presents a challenge in terms of how to maintain the interest of young individuals already in the industry and keep them engaged.

## Salary, housing, and career opportunities as the most significant challenges

The factors that diminish the industry's attractiveness and pose retention challenges include the perception that the industry does not offer remote or mobile work opportunities, difficulties in arranging housing near ski resorts, and the perception that the industry does not provide competitive salaries. Following closely behind these three critical factors is the industry's ability to enable year-round work. This factor is linked to the fact that a fairly significant group, 42% of all respondents, felt that the industry does not currently offer opportunities for career advancement. Additionally, 52% of respondents felt that the industry is not an attractive career option for young individuals.

Addressing year-round work, salary levels, and housing opportunities requires comprehensive development. Based on these insights, a central question regarding future employment especially in the ski resort areas of Northern Finland is: how to attract not only essential but also skilled labor to the region and provide them with a work and leisure environment that encourages them to seize the opportunity, commit, and motivate them to stay in the area more permanently?

## A functioning network is of great importance

Tourism is connected to many industries, each with its own skill needs. However, the common factor is working together in the context of ski resort areas, understanding that different actors together form a wide tourism industry entity. The whole is more than the sum of its parts because different actors complement each other. While companies compete with each other within tourism areas, and there is competition between tourism areas, cooperation is crucial in growing the common "cake". Leadership in development work is often assumed to be the responsibility of the regional organisation or business development services when, in reality, responsibility lies with all stakeholders together.

## The competence of companies, entrepreneurs, supervisors, and employees should serve the whole

Ensuring competence is a collective effort within the tourism industry and is not limited to a single tourism area, making it crucial to share best practices. Basic skills in the industry repeat similarly regardless of location. Utilizing both accumulated and tacit knowledge is important. Developing local expertise, defining common practices, and establishing a local work culture are the responsibilities of the tourism area and its companies. The volume of tourism activities determines how specific or broad the skill requirements are; in small resorts, employees do a bit of everything, while in larger ones, competence is specialized by job roles.





# THE EMERGING OF COOPERATION INITIATIVES

**We began to address the workforce issues that emerged in the survey and in discussions with various stakeholders during the project. The goal of the cooperation initiatives we implemented during the project was to bring the right stakeholders to the same table to discuss common workforce challenges so that the problems could be understood, and the solution processes could be initiated.**

The Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment assisting in understanding workforce challenges

According to the surveys conducted by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, labour market imbalance problems will continue to be a challenge in the future. Here, imbalance refers to the compatibility between the demand and supply of labour (or lack thereof), i.e. how well the needs of employers and the skills, characteristics, and goals of job seekers match each other. The factors influencing the imbalance involve various stakeholders and simultaneous processes that influence each other.

There are several stakeholders influencing the imbalance. The actor field featured in the Future Labour Markets project includes a wide range of regional and national entities. In our project, stakeholders include the public sector, regions, municipalities, employment offices, Centres for Economic Development, Transport

and the Environment, educational organisations and institutions, business services, companies, and actors in the non-profit sector.

The network of actors is susceptible to change; for example, during our project, the significance of the TE24 reform became prominent. Regional reforms significantly alter the already complex network of actors and the overall structure of services. Different actors may not necessarily be familiar with each other, existing structures, or networks well enough to facilitate smooth cooperation.

At the core of the change should be designing services to be user-friendly, with the goal of minimizing even the smallest barriers to accessing them. The operating and service environment should be made favourable for businesses and easily accessible to workers from diverse backgrounds.

## Challenges in data collection and utilization

Efforts are made at the national and regional levels to collect labour market information. Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment actively collect data and bring stakeholders together, facilitating the planning of measures to develop job and business services, among other things. Using data for decision-making is part of labour market thematics. Information is available for those who seek it, but can it be effectively utilised? Is the data suitable for forecasting, up-to-date, accurate, understandable, and easily accessible?

The information collected from the ski resort industry needs to be placed in a broader context, and stakeholders from various sectors should be included in the discussion. No single piece of data or statistics necessarily provides a complete picture of the labour market situation, but information and experiences from various sources fuse together. The reliability and comprehensiveness of data raise many questions, which were also discussed during our project.

The Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment has highlighted challenges related to data, such as the fact that not all labour demand becomes visible. Additionally, classification, the breadth of skills and professions, and industry definitions can make data collection and interpretation challenging. Moreover, different regions emphasize different aspects

of workforce and industry structure. Therefore, data collection and support measures must be largely local, bearing in mind that it is important to share information and best practices across regions.

Sizeable requirements are set for available data, such as openness, comparability, and shared use. Simultaneously, to enhance efficiency and avoid duplication of work especially in development projects, discussion between actors should be encouraged.

## Labour market challenges bring stakeholders together

It is an opportune time to discuss the power and challenges of the network. There are several ongoing projects that promote tackling issues related to labour market imbalance and working life. For example, the Future Labour Markets and Work2030 coordination projects managed by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment work in these thematic areas. Development actors should be aware of these projects as they provide a framework for labour market issues, where measures and mutually beneficial support actions are developed.

In terms of the collaboration initiatives of the Future of Snowsport Industry project, the following parties emerged as key stakeholders:

- Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, background information and previous projects
- Public employment and business services (TE Services) and TE24 change actors
- Secondary schools, Kittilä gymnasium and REDU Levi Institute, and Levi Snow Sport Academy
- Educational and training institutions of Rovaniemi Municipal Federation of Education REDU
- Lapland University Consortium, Lapland University of Applied Sciences and University of Lapland
- Regional developers Kideve Kittilä Development and Fell Lapland Development
- Levi tourism area organisation Visit Levi
- Tourism area companies, entrepreneur associations and unions
- Industry organisations such as the Finnish Ski Area Association, Lapin Matkailuyhdistys ry, Suomen Hiihdonopettajat ry, and the Finnish Lapland Tourist Board
- Sporting club Levi Ski Club

In our collaboration initiatives, we considered activities at the national, regional, and local levels, which brought a wide network of stakeholders into the project. In these collaboration initiatives, we examined labour-related questions from the perspectives of various actors and roles.



# EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS SERVICES FOR SKI RESORTS

In Finland, there are approximately 70 ski resorts, most of which belong to the Finnish Ski Area Association. The largest resorts are international holiday destinations. These centres and the tourism areas around them employ a large number of people, especially during the peak season. All resorts offer comprehensive winter sports activities and, increasingly, services during the off-season as well. The customer base of these centres includes local residents, people from nearby areas, and international travellers.

As the project progressed, it became apparent in various contexts that existing support measures were poorly reaching businesses. Some companies may not be aware of support for international recruitment, work permits, or short training programs for job seekers, such as hygiene certificates or other certificate courses. Thus, companies may use their resources for something for which financial, temporal, and instructional support is available elsewhere.

In the daily life of companies, it can be challenging to find time for tasks such as developing recruitment processes, orientation, or identifying and offering additional and supplementary training for staff. These challenges are likely to arise especially in seasonal industries and in job positions where obtaining labour is challenging due to labour market imbalance problems, rapid changes in personnel needs, or tasks requiring authorization.

The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment as well as public employment and business services are working to promote, among other

things, the meeting of employees and employers in the best possible way. They also collaborate closely and genuinely want to help businesses and employees. Various measures, such as improving recruitment and clarifying the process of obtaining international labour permits, are underway.

Based on the situation described above, as a collaborative initiative, we organised two information sessions (October 13, 2023, and January 11, 2024) in cooperation with the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and public employment and business services, and the Finnish Ski Area Association. The aim was to provide ski resorts with information about the support services mentioned above. In addition, our idea was to encourage ski resorts to explore the availability of support services and to be in contact with service providers with a low threshold. The collaborative initiative offered a new way for services to become part of companies' everyday life through an industry association.

Guiding and encouraging entrepreneurs to use support services is important for several reasons. In addition to saving resources for businesses, it ultimately improves the encounter between labour and employers in a way that benefits both parties the most, and through experience, operations can be further developed. The TE24 reform is also expected to bring progress in this area, and it is what the reformed employment areas are currently working on.

## **Are you an employer?** You should familiarize yourself with at least these available services:

TE-services – For employers

TE- services – Job Market Finland

TE- services – Job Market Finland

TE- services – Job Market Finland

TE- services – Hiring int'l workforce

TE- services – Recruit like a pro service

ELY-centre – Services

[Employer services \(in Finnish\)](#)

[Pay subsidy for the wage costs of an employee](#)

[Hiring an employee from abroad](#)

[Work in Finland – free employer advice to support recruitment](#)

[Hiring international workforce \(in Finnish\)](#)

[Information service for the self-employed and micro-enterprises](#)

[Services for companies and communities \(in Finnish\)](#)



# SHAPERS OF THE FUTURE IN SKI RESORT AREAS -

*Tools for businesses to ensure skilled labour*



Many businesses in Lapland are directly or indirectly related to the tourism industry. For example, the logistics, transportation, construction, industrial, and retail sectors enable tourism activities, and vice versa. Different fields and job positions require a wide and diverse range of specific expertise. Employers are looking for skilled employees in terms of both core competencies and workplace skills. The process leading to the point where an employer finds an employee matching their needs can be quite lengthy.

If the employee's needs outside of work are added to the recruitment process, contract writing, and

enabling work, employers have a considerable amount of responsibility. While the employer's responsibility does not extend to the employee's leisure-time needs or activities, this matters when considering the attractiveness and retention factors of a job or workplace, job matching, or the meaningfulness of work. In the tourism industry, stakeholders should together provide such a comprehensive environment where employees also enjoy themselves outside working hours. The emergence of this perspective during the project also reveals something about the special characteristics of the seasonal tourism and ski resort industry.

## Entrepreneur and job seeker, get to know these:

REDU Edu Ltd - Recruitment training  
[Recruitment training \(in Finnish\)](#)

REDU Edu Ltd - For employers  
[Individual recruitment \(in Finnish\)](#)

REDU Edu Ltd - For job seekers  
[Workforce training for adults \(in Finnish\)](#)



Keynote speech:  
futurist Ilkka Halava

### **In relation to these themes, we organised an event for tourism area businesses (January 10, 2024), aiming to delve into the following questions:**

- What does working life look like for employees in Lapland's tourism and ski resorts?
- What are the future skills needs in businesses?
- What kind of work culture are we building in fell centres?

The event had a diverse group of participants from the Fell Lapland and Rovaniemi regions. The event was opened by futurist Ilkka Halava, who set the stage for the day and shared his insights on the future of jobs and the nature of work, the development of tourism in Lapland as part of broader global trends, and the needs and operations of future communities.

During the seminar portion of the event, addressing the previously mentioned need for support services for businesses, public employment and business services and the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment presented their respective service offerings for businesses. For example, joint procurement and recruitment training garnered interest among participants. Educational institutions such as Rovaniemi Municipal Federation of Education REDU, Santasport Lapland Sports Institute, and REDU Edu Ltd shared information about their educational content, with the aim of increasing awareness of training opportunities among businesses. REDU Edu Ltd also discussed its services for businesses and job seekers, which can be beneficial for additional training for employees already in the workforce or providing training for individuals in the recruitment process directly into the job.

The event also included a workshop with the aim of bringing all stakeholders together to discuss the importance of community and social networks as part of retention. In this context, two keynote speeches were heard, in which Lapland University of Applied Sciences presented experiments on strengthening the retention of work in the tourism and service sectors, and the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment project team presented experiences in creating competent workforce through community and partnership networks.

The speeches highlighted the significance of supervisory work and shared the experiences of employees that affect the decision to stay in the region for work or move elsewhere. The leisure opportunities for employees in the ski resort area, as well as communication and coordination related to them, sparked a lot of discussion. Participants were unanimous in their belief that the responsibility for matters related to work and leisure in tourism areas is collective among all stakeholders in the area.

During the event, good and concrete practices and ideas were shared across regions. Sharing similar everyday experiences also facilitates joint development work and increases dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders. After the event, discussions were initiated, such as updating the common working life website in the case of Levi, to better accommodate international labour. Another example is that educational institutions began considering ways to support tourism and service sector companies in the development of supervisory work.







# EDUCATION RESPONDING TO THE WORKFORCE CHALLENGES IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Participants seeking solutions to workforce challenges through projects and initiatives.



The tourism industry plays a significant role in employment and the attractiveness of Lapland. As the industry develops, there is a need to improve education and training to better match the needs of the workforce, find solutions to create year-round jobs or facilitate collaboration, and combine the expertise and roles of educational institutions, businesses, municipalities, development organisations, and employment services into a collective force.

International labour has been recognized as essential for both basic services and tourism services in the future. With the tourism volume continually increasing and a significant portion of the workforce retiring in the coming years, the need for international and skilled labour becomes even more pronounced. To address this, quick actions are needed to ensure sufficient recruitment of international and skilled labour and the development of international networks to facilitate labour mobility.

Education institutions must be able to respond to the needs of the labour market by developing forecasting data and creating flexible skills development solutions in collaboration with the business sector. Future professions and job roles are expected to become more fragmented and diversified, requiring more tailored and short-term training programs instead of traditional degree programs.

The Future of Snowsport Industry project organised a series of three events in Kittilä (November 20, 2023, December 21, 2023, and January 9, 2024) that brought together key stakeholders in the region to discuss solving the previously mentioned challenges through a joint project initiative. During these events, educational institutions had the opportunity to share their existing activities, networks, and interests from their perspective. Other key stakeholders presented their needs for skills development, to which educational institutions could offer solutions.

These events conveyed a shared desire and common challenges. To address these challenges, stakeholders must enhance collaboration and develop agile and flexible operations and models to tackle workforce challenges effectively.

As a result of these events, educational institutions began working on a new project aimed at aligning the region's education offerings and content more closely with the needs of the labour market. The project also aims to strengthen collaboration among education providers, development organisations, local businesses, and public employment and business services to ensure a skilled workforce in the ski resort and tourism industry in the future.





# THE SNOW SPORTS TRAIL AS A REGIONAL ATTRACTION

From the perspective of regional development and municipal employment, it often makes sense and is efficient if local young people are educated in local educational institutions and employed in workplaces within their hometown or nearby areas. Many municipalities and economic regions in Finland probably consider this. The retention of local youth or their return to the region after education elsewhere can be valuable in various ways. The significance of local or regional practices, culture, networks, and local knowledge in different job roles can be crucial. This doesn't mean that employees from other locations or countries can't learn these aspects, but local employees may have a significant advantage in this regard.

In ski resorts and their surrounding areas, there are various job roles that require skills related to snow and working with snow. These roles can be related to slope and lift maintenance, activity services, events, safety, construction, marketing, sales, planning, and development. The activities in snow sports provide diverse experiences beyond work. Many professionals work within the snow sports sector, particularly in coaching and education, both in competitive sports and recreational activities. Engagement in snow sports provides a diverse range of experiences not only in work but also in leisure activities.

## The higher education initiative to complement the snow sports trail in Kittilä

**Levi Ski Club** in Kittilä aims to be the most versatile snow sports club in Finland. They collaborate with various local organisations, including the ski resort and Revontuliopisto (community college), to provide activities for children and youth aged 7–16 in various snow sports. The club employs coaches for different disciplines and youth training and organises sports events.

**Levi Snow Sport Academy**, operating under Kittilä municipality, offers young people in secondary school the opportunity to combine snow sports, athletic careers, and education. The academy closely collaborates with Kittilä gymnasium, Rovaniemi Municipal Federation of Education (REDU), and Lapland Sports Institute. Their activities encompass both sports and education, and the academy is staffed by seven professional coaches and trainers.

Based on this background, we organised two events in Kittilä (October 25, 2023, and October 26, 2023). The aim was to bring local stakeholders together to discuss possibilities, roles, responsibilities, and to introduce Lapland University of Applied Sciences' educational contents that are suitable for snow sports athletes or secondary level students in the region. Higher education institutes offer nationwide study paths and study programs designed to provide secondary level students with flexible pathways to higher education.

Levi Snow Sport Academy includes the women's national alpine skiing C team, for which Lapland University Consortium, through our collaboration initiative, designed an educational package that supports the dual career of athletes. This initiative represents an aim to combine higher education with snow sports. The goal is to strengthen the possibilities for dual career athletes and the employment of experts in the field, both as athletes and after their sports career. Additionally, Kittilä municipality, in collaboration with local stakeholders, embarked on promoting the snow sports trail concept in Kittilä.



# FUTURE AND NEXT STEPS - WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PROJECT?

PHOTO: VISIT LEVI



The results of our survey revealed that wage levels, housing shortages, and the year-round viability of tourism are the central challenges in addressing the labour situation in northern ski resort areas. However, it is impossible to directly influence these challenges. For example, turning tourism into a year-round activity requires development work during the quieter periods between seasons and innovation, which in turn requires new skills. The challenge of year-round viability is thus linked to labour issues.

Increasing wage levels requires raising the value of work in the tourism and service sectors, which can be achieved through higher quality standards. High quality demands high expertise, education, and commitment, making it part of the labour challenges as well. Similarly, housing shortages can be resolved through solutions to tourism attraction and especially retention issues. When there is enough pressure for housing construction, opportunities are seized.

Effecting change in these areas happens through solving immediate challenges at hand. Attitude plays a significant role; it is important to focus on opportunities rather than problems, as what is reinforced tends to strengthen.

Collaborative initiatives received positive feedback from participating entities, indicating that we have been addressing the right issues during the project, and this work should continue. Commitment from decision-makers is also required to advance these matters.

Efforts related to education development and alignment with the labour market will continue, and there is a shared commitment among stakeholders to develop these activities. The insights gained from the event aimed at businesses emphasized the importance of considering non-work-related aspects for entrepreneurs at both local and regional levels. The content of the Snow Sport Trail is already in place in Kittilä, and it will be further clarified, conceptualized, and developed in collaboration with stakeholders. The availability of services provided by employment and business development agencies aimed at ski resorts can be communicated more regularly to ensure wider utilization.

Tourism is a significant export sector for Finland, and it is sensible to promote its growth. Finland is also known as a safe tourism destination, and the development of tourism activities can be carried out sustainably. One crucial sustainability aspect is related to labour force matters.

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS FOR WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

# RELIABILITY OF THE PUBLICATION

The information in this publication has been compiled from various sources. In the first section, we presented results purely based on the survey, and the detailed survey results can also be found on the [Santasport website](#) (in Finnish). When interpreting the survey results, it's essential to consider the respondent group and interpret the results from this perspective. The responses primarily reflect the perspectives of ski resort employees and ski instructors, although similar challenges may be encountered in other tourism sectors.

Key supporting information for this publication has been provided by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and Environment through its data collection and summaries. These include, for example, the **Action plan for ensuring the availability of competent workforce, Lapland's economic outlook**, and the **Workforce needs in Lapland in the 2020s report**. Additionally, the publication makes use of the **Regional development outlooks for 2023** prepared by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.

The collected and compiled information creates a context against which the survey results should be interpreted. At the end of the publication, there is a list of links to useful websites and organisations that tourism stakeholders, regardless of their role, should explore. We extend our gratitude to all stakeholders for their support throughout the project, with special thanks to the staff of the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and Environment coordinated projects Work2030 and Future Labour Markets.

## Topics for future examination

Although our Worklife Experience is Everything survey received praise for its versatility, a more detailed analysis specific to target groups would be required when examining the workforce situation further. For example, we did not differentiate the perspectives of foreign workers employed in Finnish tourist resorts in our survey. Similarly, sector-specific studies should be conducted in more detail, such as those focused on the accommodation and restaurant industry and activity services. Questions related to entrepreneurship are also part of workforce issues.

For future examination, we believe that the most crucial focus should be on the functionality of the matchmaking network of actors. It is essential to clarify the roles of various actors and streamline cooperation. Exploring best practices in tourism areas related to the workforce would also be an interesting topic for further investigation. Practicality should always be kept in mind, especially from the perspectives of businesses and employees.



# USEFUL LINKS

*The measures and publication text of the project have utilized, among others, the statistics, publications, and sources below.*

- **Labour Force Barometer**  
<https://tyovoimabarometri.fi/>
- **Job Market Finland – Hiring an employee from abroad**  
<https://tyomarkkinatori.fi/en/employers-and-entrepreneurs/recruitment/hiring-an-employee-from-abroad>
- **Centre for Economic Development, Transport and Environment**  
<https://www.ely-keskus.fi/en/web/ely-en/employment>
- **House of Lapland - Lapland's official marketing and communications house, a publicly owned destination marketing company**  
[lapland.fi](http://lapland.fi)



LAPIN LIITTO



KITTILÄ  
PUHDASTA KULTAA





