



# Project idea form - small projects

Version 2.1

Registration no. (filled in by MA/JS only) \_\_\_\_\_

## Project Idea Form

Date of submission 29/05/2025

### 1. Project idea identification

Project idea name Young Baltic Smiles: A Regional Initiative for Children's Oral Health

Short name of the project Young Baltic Smiles

Previous calls yes ☐ no ☒

Seed money support yes ☐ no ☒

### 2. Programme priority

1. Innovative societies

### 3. Programme objective

1.2. Responsive public services

### 4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original) Rīgas Stradiņa Universitāte

Name of the organisation (English) Riga Stradins University

Website rsu.lv

Country LV



Type of Partner	Higher education and research institution
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#### Contact person 1

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#### Contact person 2

Name	<i>(max. 100 characters incl. spaces)</i>
Email	<i>(max. 100 characters incl. spaces)</i>
Phone	<i>(max. 100 characters incl. spaces)</i>

Which organisation(s) in the planned partnership take part in a project within the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme for the first time? Please list the respective partners.

Riga Stradins University (RSU) Latvia  
 Vilnius University (VU) Lithuania  
 University of Tartu (UT) Estonia

### 5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

Children and adolescents across the Baltic Sea Region—particularly in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia—face a significant oral health burden, most notably due to the high prevalence of dental caries. The orofacial pain and temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders are emerging concerns in children, though they remain under-recognized and insufficiently documented in national surveillance systems. These challenges place a growing strain on public health infrastructure, drive up long-term healthcare costs, and disproportionately affect socioeconomically disadvantaged families.

Currently, each country in the Baltic Sea Region largely operates in isolation, missing valuable opportunities to learn from one another's successes, share resources, and build collective capacity. A coordinated, cross-border approach to public oral health policy—grounded in shared strategies and evidence—can significantly strengthen the prevention and management of childhood dental caries and orofacial pain-related conditions.

The target groups facing this challenge are:

- Children under 18 suffering from or at risk of dental caries, oral-related pain;
- Public health authorities and policymakers who need tailored evidence-based strategies ;
- Healthcare providers, dental professionals, educators, students, who require access to training,

updated guidelines, and collaborative networks to deliver effective prevention and treatment. Addressing both dental caries and pain-related conditions in an integrated, child-focused, and regionally coordinated way is crucial for improving quality of life and reducing the long-term public health burden.

## 5.2 Focus of the call

The Young Baltic Smiles project directly contributes to the cohesive development of small towns, rural communities, and socially or economically disadvantaged areas across the Baltic Sea Region. Dental caries and orofacial pain disproportionately affect children in these underserved regions, where access to preventive care, oral health education, and affordable treatment is often limited or inconsistent. These challenges not only compromise children's health and quality of life but also place added pressure on families and local healthcare systems—widening existing health and social inequalities. The project will:

Engage local public health services, schools, and community organizations

Develop scalable and adaptable public health strategies

Promote capacity-building in universities and healthcare institutions.

Pilot solutions in both urban and rural areas

Create a cross-border knowledge-sharing network.

By prioritizing areas where health inequalities are most pronounced, Young Baltic Smiles contributes to reducing health disparities, strengthening local healthcare capacities, and improving the overall social and economic resilience of communities across the Baltic Sea region.

## 6. Transnational relevance

Transnational cooperation is essential because it allows countries to pool knowledge, resources, and successful practices, creating solutions that are more efficient, scalable, and adaptable to local needs. Cooperating across borders enables to:

Compare and analyze diverse public health systems and emulate best practices;

Develop joint training programs, guidelines, and tools that raise the standard of care in all partner countries;

Address shared structural challenges, such as shortages of dental health professionals in rural areas, through shared capacity-building efforts;

Ensure that even small and resource-limited communities benefit from innovations developed at the regional level

Create a sustainable cross-border network that facilitates long-term collaboration, data exchange, and mutual support beyond the project lifetime.

Without transnational cooperation, countries risk duplicating efforts, missing opportunities for learning, and failing to achieve the level of systemic change needed to reduce the burden of childhood dental caries and pain across the region

## 7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives



#### Building Trust for Future Cooperation

The groundwork for long-term, trust-based cooperation among public health institutions, universities, policymakers, and local communities across the Baltic Sea Region is essential. This can be achieved by

- Establishing a cross-border Young Baltic Smiles Network that creates engagement and cooperation from national and local bodies.
- Facilitating mutual learning and exchange visits between participating countries,
- Co-creating solutions (such as training modules, guidelines, and pilot programs) where partners contribute their knowledge and perspectives
- Creating a long-term cooperation sustainable road map at the project's end, outlining future joint initiatives, funding opportunities, and partnership models.

By working openly and inclusively across sectors and countries, Young Baltic Smiles will serve as a springboard for future cross-border health, education, and social policy initiatives in the Baltic Sea Region.

#### Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

The Young Baltic Smiles Network envisions a future where every child grows up free from dental disease and discomfort with equal access to high-quality oral health services. The network will bring together public health institutions, dental professionals, educators, students, researchers, policymakers, and communities across the Baltic Sea Region in a shared effort to reduce the burden of childhood dental disease. The network will be initiated by actively engaging stakeholders and jointly co-creating its vision, governance structure, and priority actions to ensure broad ownership and commitment. A clear sustainability roadmap will be developed, outlining governance mechanisms, partnerships with EU programs, national health initiatives, and professional associations, as well as future opportunities for collaboration to secure the network's long-term impact.

#### Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

The project will involve local communities, parents, teachers, and youth in shaping solutions tailored to their needs. Through public consultations, educational workshops, and feedback channels, citizens will shape local programs that are culturally sensitive and relevant. A meaningful engagement with the local stakeholders by communication and feedback will be achieved.

#### Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

N/A

## 8. Target groups

*(max. 2.000 characters incl. spaces)*



Please use the drop-down list to define up to five target groups that you will involve through your project's activities.	Please define a field of responsibility or an economic sector of the selected target group	Specify the countries and regions that the representatives of this target group come from.
1. Higher education and research institution	Education, Public health, Policy	Latvia
2. Higher education and research institution	Education, Public health, Policy	Lithuania
3. Higher education and research institution	Education, Public health, Policy	Estonia
4. Interest group	European Dental Students Association	Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia

## 9. Contribution to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Please indicate if your project idea has the potential to contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (<https://eusbsr.eu/implementation/>).

yes ☒ no ☐

Please select which policy area(s) of the EUSBSR your project idea contributes to most.

PA Health

The MA/JS may share your project idea form with the respective policy area coordinator(s) of the EUSBSR. You can find contacts of PACs at the EUSBSR website (<https://eusbsr.eu/contact-us/>).

☐ If you disagree, please tick here.

## 10. Partnership

The core partnership of the Young Baltic Smiles initiative currently includes oral health researchers from public universities in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. These partners bring deep expertise in dental public health, epidemiology, and clinical research, and are actively involved in national oral health surveillance and child-focused prevention programs. Their institutions play a central role in training dental professionals, treating childhood oral diseases as a referral centre and influencing oral health policy in their respective countries. The respective partners will work on the country challenges and identify common patterns and contexts that can be handled through trans-national cooperation in research, designing guidelines and mathematical modeling of economic prudence in fund allocation.



## 11. Workplan

### 1. Mapping and Baseline Assessment:

Comprehensive mapping of existing public oral health infrastructure, disease burden (caries, orofacial pain, TMJ disorders), and current spending on prevention and treatment across partner countries. Data collection through national health records, school dental programs, and insurance databases, purposeful surveys of dentists, parents, schools

### 2. Development of a Visual Policy Dashboard:

Creation of an interactive, transnational dashboard that integrates disease data, cost of care, and oral health infrastructure by region. The dashboard will simulate economic outcomes using Markov modeling to estimate the long-term savings and public health benefits from optimized investments in preventive and treatment services.

### 3. Evidence-Based Budget Allocation Recommendations:

Use dashboard insights to generate customized, country-specific and region-specific recommendations for cost-effective reallocation of dental health budgets. Focus areas include prevention, early intervention, community-based care, and school health programs.

### 4. Pilot Testing of Solutions:

Pilot interventions will be tested in selected municipalities (one in each core country: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia) to assess:

The usability and impact of the policy dashboard in real-world decision-making.

The feasibility of integrating caries and TMJ pain screening into school health services.

Community awareness strategies for increasing parental engagement and early care-seeking behavior.

Target Group Involvement:

- The project will actively involve:

Local and regional health authorities as end-users of the dashboard and budget tool.

School administrators and public dentists, through feedback workshops and pilot implementations.

Parents and youth groups, via awareness campaigns and co-design sessions in selected pilot regions.

Dental students and researchers, by integrating the tools and findings into degree programs and internships.

Use of Final Outcomes:

Public health institutions and ministries will use the dashboard and policy briefs to guide funding allocations for children's oral health programs.

Municipalities and school-based health services will apply the pilot-tested screening and prevention models.

Universities and research centers will benefit from open-access data layers for further research, modeling, and teaching.

## 12. Planned budget

ERDF budget (planned expenditure of partners from the EU)	EUR 400,000.00
Norwegian budget (planned expenditure of partners from Norway)	EUR XXX
<b>Total budget (including preparatory costs)</b>	<b>EUR 400,000.00</b>



### 13. Project consultation

Please indicate if you wish to have a consultation (online meeting) with the MA/JS to discuss your project idea

yes ☒ no ☐

### 14. Questions to the MA/JS

Questions related to the content of the planned project *(max.1.000 characters incl. spaces)*

Questions related to budgeting and expenditure Is PhD tuition fees covered by grant? Can research assistants, PhD students and post doc salary be paid by grant.

Any other questions Can dental student association be a partner in this grant?

### 15. Additional information

*(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)*

#### Your account in BAMOS+

Please remember that to officially submit your application you need to access our electronic data exchange system BAMOS+. More information about the process of applying for your account in BAMOS+ you will find here:

<https://interreg-baltic.eu/gateway/bamos-account>