



# Project idea form - small projects

Version 2.1

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

## Project Idea Form

Date of submission 30/05/2025

### 1. Project idea identification

Project idea name Empowering Abilities for Labour Engagement

Short name of the project ENABLE

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) Kurzemes plānošanas reģions

Name of the organisation (English) Kurzeme Planning Region

Website www.kurzemesregions.lv

Country LV



Type of Partner	Regional public authority
	regional council, etc.

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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.

Day Activity Centre, Kretinga (Lithuania),  
Companion Kalmar län (Sweden)

### 5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

The project tackles the lack of inclusive employment support services for people with intellectual disabilities and autism (PwIDA), groups often overlooked by conventional labour market services. According to the statistics, employment rates for people with disabilities in the Baltic Sea region range from 22,7% in LT to 52% in Sweden. These figures highlight the varying degrees of labour market inclusion and the impact of national policies and support systems. Disability is still a stigma in our society. Businesses are afraid to contact with and entrust job tasks to people with disabilities, admitting that they do not have the knowledge and experience working with this group and might face unexpected challenges. Although precise employment statistics for people with intellectual disabilities are not available, the rates are generally even significantly lower, often below 10%. Research indicates that even in Sweden individuals with intellectual disabilities range just from 1,2% to 16% in the competitive labour market.

In addition, persons with autism often have not even been appropriately noticed by public services as a less advantaged group in terms of the labour market, often not qualifying as persons with disabilities. No specific employment data is available for most of the countries, though a population-based study in Denmark examining young adults diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) before age 12

found that by age 25, only 27,2% were employed compared to 77,7% of their peers without ASD. Due to the growing number of this group, as can be particularly traced in the Nordic countries, it is very important to develop a labour market integration mode to help persons with autism integrate into the labour market.

Target groups facing the challenge:

- PwIDA seeking employment or requiring ongoing support in jobs;
- Families of PwIDA, who often bear the burden of advocacy and care;
- Employers unfamiliar with or hesitant about inclusive employment;
- Public services that lack tailored tools and trained personnel to support PwIDA.

This challenge reflects the need to facilitate more responsive and individualised public services that are capable of meeting the specific employment needs of PwIDA through dedicated support - testing 4 employment models, adjusting them to local conditions in 3 countries - Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden, and providing joint assessment results in a framework Labour market integration guide for PwIDA.

## 5.2 Focus of the call

Many rural and small communities in the Baltic Sea Region suffer from outmigration, ageing populations, a shrinking workforce and lack of comprehensive public services. By facilitating the employment of PwIDA locally, the project tests and adjusts potential support models encouraging social inclusion and economic participation, increasing resilience and cohesion in these communities. Creating local support models and accessible job opportunities can retain PwIDA and their families in rural areas, reducing the pressure on urban centres and supporting local economies.

A number of small towns shall be selected in 3 project regions - Kurzeme, Klaipeda, Kalmar, having either an institution, organisation or a company providing specialised social services for PwIDA. The businesses, state and municipal enterprises in the towns shall be attracted to cooperate in the project, where PwIDA can become helping hands and in the future fully operate a model of the integration of PwIDA into the labour market.

## 6. Transnational relevance

ENABLE creates a knowledge exchange network between countries with different levels of experience in inclusive employment. It enables the adaptation of best practices, mutual learning, development of a shared approach for accessible labour market services in the Baltic Sea Region. The tested solutions will be applicable across contexts and scalable within each country, reducing disparities between regions.

Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia each have different levels of experience and approaches to inclusive employment. In Latvia, no labour service model for PwIDA has yet been employed in practice, while there is a recent initiative through the Interreg CB "Stronger Together" project, which the project shall build upon. In Lithuania, there are few individual initiatives at the local level, but no comprehensive joint system. Sweden can offer longer experience and a different approach. The law "LSS" of 1994 gives a right to people with intellectual disabilities or autism to have a meaningful occupation, but not necessarily a work.

This cooperation will therefore provide knowledge transfer, testing in different contexts and joint assessment of the 4 models, which is not possible within one country alone.

Sharing practices will allow for a cross-national transfer of tested methods, avoiding duplication of



efforts and helping to find innovative, culturally adaptable models. Transnational cooperation also brings diverse policy insights, helping to develop employment support practices across the region. The system of labour market integration for PwIDA is still a challenge in the whole region. What is needed is a real testing that would allow to identify what works and what does not and what is the right path to follow in order to avoid the unsuccessful experiences of other countries. Knowledge of how to communicate and cooperate with businesses, how to make them aware and not afraid of disabilities, how to communicate with parents and guardians of PwIDA.

## 7. Specific aims to be addressed

### Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

By involving municipal authorities, employment agencies and NGOs across three countries, the project fosters trust-based cooperation which can lead to future social innovation projects focused on inclusion and accessibility. The project also facilitates trust between public authorities, NGOs and employers, setting the basis for further initiatives and cooperation in the future.

It provides opportunities to learn from experience, discuss and adjust existing actions to achieve practical results and the development of social services focused on targeted employment of PwIDA through labour market participation.

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

The labour market service support network for PwIDA, involving local municipalities and companies participating in the project, can serve as a sustainable backbone for future collaboration, including policy advocacy, joint training curricula, and long-term employment support solutions across the BSR.

### Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

Through a public awareness campaign featuring real stories and positive employment experiences of PwIDA, as well as the "friendship coffee" initiative, the project helps demystify ASD and intellectual disabilities and challenges societal prejudices, directly engaging citizens in the mission, thus facilitating the people-to-people approach and through the members of existing associations for families and people with intellectual disabilities or autism that will share information in their social networks.

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

N/a

## 8. Target groups

Adults with intellectual and complex disabilities

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. Sectoral agency	National employment agencies providing assistance to job seekers, employees and employers.	LV, LT, SE
2. NGO	Representing the rights of and providing assistance to PwIDA.	LV, LT, SELV, LT, SE
3. Education/training centre and school	Providing practical training of the work skills needed.	LV, LT, SE
4. Local public authority	Social services often serving as the first contact point.	LV, LT, SE
5. Small and medium enterprise	Providing job opportunities for PwIDA	LV, LT, SE

## 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 Education

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

LV - Kurzeme Planning Region (Lead Partner, Latvia) - a regional public authority representing all 8 local municipalities of Kurzeme region with the aim to facilitate socioeconomic development of the region based on the priorities set in the regional planning documents: the KPR Sustainable development strategy for 2030 and KPR Development programme 2021-2027. The project is contributing to the Priority - Social Inclusion. Through KPR, it will be possible to reach the small municipalities and social public service providers in rural areas.

LT - Day Activity Centre, Kretinga (Lithuania) - budgetary institution providing licensed day and short-term social care services for disabled people in Kretinga city and district since 2001 and since 2023 preventive social services for children. Since 2024 it has been providing employment services for people with disabilities and has established social workshops. The institution has a large inter-institutional cooperation network, operates in accordance with the EU EQUASS quality model of social services, constantly striving to improve the social services provided, cooperating with the health and education sectors. The institution has implemented national and EU-funded projects and has improved social services through funding. The Day Activity Centre is constantly looking for opportunities to provide innovative services, empowering people with disabilities to contribute to society to the best of their abilities, and to change the way society views disability through their skills.

SE - Coompanion Kalmar län (Sweden) - an experienced actor in the fields of social innovation, cooperation and democratically led organizations. Coompanion Kalmar region also has special legal and pedagogical expertise in the field of autism and intellectual disabilities, and a good knowledge of the situation in Sweden. Through Coompanion, it will be possible to access structures within the municipality and the Kalmar Region, as well as associations of people with Autism or intellectual disabilities, as there is an established relation already. Coompanion is also experienced in process- and project management. Coompanion Kalmar län also has an established relation to education centers.

In addition, the local public service institutions, municipal, private and social enterprises in partner regions shall be involved in the project, by testing the 4 labour market inclusion models developed in the project.

## 11. Workplan

ENABLE aims to develop inclusive public service models that support the employment of PwIDA cross the Baltic Sea Region by bridging the gap between individuals, employers and local public services.

PwIDA face persistent barriers in entering and staying in the labour market across the Baltic Sea Region. Public employment services are often not equipped to offer personalised and ongoing support to this group. The project addresses this gap by co-testing and adjusting 4 different models, drawing on different levels of experience and institutional frameworks in Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden and co-



creating joint assessment results in a framework Labour market integration guide for PwIDA.

In Latvia, 2 models shall be tested: 1) integration through the Day Activity Centre - initiative "Social Workshop" (not practically applied yet) and 2) Integration through the Social enterprise - initiative "Employee as a service" (building upon the Interreg CB Project "Stronger Together").

In Lithuania, 1 model shall be tested: 1) integration through the Day Activity Centre - initiative "Social Workshop" (already being implemented, but need to be adjusted for better and more significant results)

In Sweden, 2 models shall be tested: 1) integration through the municipal company (already being implemented, but need to be adjusted for better and more significant results) and 2) integration through the private company (working on a small scale, occasionally, but not as a comprehensive system)

In addition, partners shall search for similarities and differences in the 3 countries on obstacles of the 3 systems, structures that hinder people to work, incl. legal ones (e.g. possibility of losing social support from the government).

Main activities and outputs:

Design of a transnational testing programme

Testing in selected municipalities in each partner country

Survey of mid-term results and adjustment of actions

Final assessment of results in a framework Labor market integration guide for PwIDA, distributed to regional and local authorities in all 3 countries, incl. policy recommendations for the government for mainstreaming the models in national systems and necessary legal changes

Awareness-raising campaign showcasing positive employment stories of PwIDA

Local and transnational capacity-building workshops for public services and employers

Strengthening the labour market integration skills of PwIDA through publicity and ongoing meetings with businesses by carrying out the Friendship coffee initiative (building upon the Kretinga Day Activity Centre experience from the Lat-Lit "I Can Work" Project)

Result indicators:

- to test at least 4 possible labour market integration models for PwIDA in partner countries.
- to reach at least 30 PwIDA directly.
- to reach at least 10 000 views and 30 employer contacts as a result of the campaign.

## 12. Planned budget

ERDF budget (planned expenditure of partners from the EU)	EUR 500,000.00
Norwegian budget (planned expenditure of partners from Norway)	EUR 0.00
<b>Total budget (including preparatory costs)</b>	<b>EUR 500,000.00</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	1) How detailed should be the described and identified the local public services and enterprises which will be involved in the testing of the 4 models 2) Can any of the models be changed/replaced if the need arise during the course of the project 3) Are partners allowed to exchange experience on the labour market integration initiatives - good practices with countries outside the BSR area, e.g. France?
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Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	N/a
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Any other questions	N/a
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### 15. Additional information

N/a



### **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>