Project idea form - small projects

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

Project Idea Form

Date of submission   *28/05/2025*

1. Project idea identification

Project idea name	Promoting ecotourism capacity building in the Baltic Sea Region
Short name of the project	PECAB-BSR
Previous calls	yes ◯ no ◉
Seed money support	yes ◯ no ◉

2. Programme priority

3. Climate-neutral societies

3. Programme objective

3.1. Circular economy

4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original)	*Suomen ympäristöopisto SYKLI*
Name of the organisation (English)	SYKLI Environmental College
Website	*https://sykli.fi/*
Country	FI

Type of Partner	Education/training centre and school

Contact person 1

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Contact person 2

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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.

Gotland Grönt Centrum (Gotland, Sweeden)

5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

Ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors in global tourism, with an expanding market valued in the tens of billions of euros annually. This growth is driven by travelers' increasing demand for authentic experiences that combine nature, culture, and sustainability. Ecotourism holds immense potential to create inclusive and resilient local economies, protect biodiversity, and promote cultural heritage. When rooted in circular economy principles, ecotourism can minimize environmental impacts by promoting resource efficiency, reducing waste, and encouraging the reuse and sustainable management of materials, water, and energy.

Despite its promise, ecotourism in the Baltic Sea Region remains in its infancy. A key barrier to its development is the widespread lack of knowledge, cooperation, and capacity to plan, implement, and sustain ecotourism in a coherent and circular manner. There is no common vision or agreed standards across the region. Educational and training opportunities are limited, and many local actors, including NGOs, public authorities, and service providers, lack the tools or guidance needed to initiate or transition toward sustainable tourism practices.

In alignment with the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme Priority 3.1: Circular Economy, our project aims to address these gaps by promoting ecotourism capacity building across the region. We will develop practical educational courses, training modules, and capacity-building roadmaps specifically tailored to "train the trainers"—empowering regional partners to educate and support local development organizations, public authorities, and NGOs. These, in turn, will enable local entrepreneurs and tourism service providers to adopt and implement circular ecotourism practices.

This long-term educational approach ensures that the project's impact extends beyond its lifecycle. Rather than producing static tools and platforms that often become obsolete after end of project, we aim to create a living and evolving educational product. Our project partners will continue to use, adapt, collaborate, and improve this resource, helping the region build lasting competence in sustainable and circular ecotourism.

5.2 Focus of the call

The project supports the cohesive development of small and rural places by equipping local actors with tools and training to implement circular ecotourism. Through cross-border collaboration, we create replicable models for resource-efficient tourism that strengthens local economies, preserves biodiversity, and enhances quality of life. The educational approach builds long-term skills and enables communities to participate actively in the green transition, responding directly to the social and economic fabric challenges of smaller Baltic regions.

6. Transnational relevance

Circular ecotourism cannot be effectively developed in isolation due to the shared environmental and socio-economic conditions across the Baltic Sea Region. Transnational cooperation ensures harmonized standards, the exchange of best practices, and the development of joint training tools. Partners from different countries contribute diverse expertise, strengthening the overall capacity of the region to move towards climate neutrality and circular tourism.

The project will include versatile pilot projects in different countries, each reflecting distinct local cultures, traditions, and ways of life. This diversity is a strength: by working across a range of contexts, we will gain valuable insight into how ecotourism can be adapted to different local realities. These pilots will serve as learning environments to test and refine educational and training approaches, ensuring that the resulting tools and methods are inclusive, flexible, and culturally responsive. This approach supports more equitable regional development and enhances the long-term relevance and uptake of project outcomes across the Baltic Sea Region.

7. Specific aims to be adressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

Through shared pilot activities, joint training programmes, and an ecotourism collaboration hub, we foster cross-border trust and partnerships for long-term cooperation.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR:
The project creates and anchors the Baltic Ecotourism Collaboration Hub, ensuring continuity of partnerships and access to shared knowledge and tools.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

The hub will be governed through collaboration and one of its main principles would be openness. New players can easily join and tap into the resources.

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

Citizens benefit directly through community-based pilot projects, local training sessions, and the promotion of ecotourism as a path to regional well-being and sustainability. Furthermore, one important element of the educational program related to the citizens will be co-creation.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

The capacity-building approach equips communities with adaptable tools and knowledge, enabling flexible responses to future challenges in tourism, environment, or resource use. As the Interreg panel discussion in Tampere (21.5.2025) pointed out: more focus is needed on sustainable tourism capacity building in the region!

8. Target groups

Local and regional public authorities responsible for planning, tourism, and environment
(e.g. municipalities in Sweden, Latvia, Finland)

Local SMEs and entrepreneurs in tourism, hospitality, transport, and food production
(e.g. rural operators in Estonia, Poland)

Environmental and cultural NGOs active in nature conservation, heritage, and youth work
(across all partner countries)

Educational and training institutions working in adult learning, tourism education, and vocational training
(e.g. regional universities in Lithuania, Denmark)

Tourism boards and DMOs coordinating regional promotion and development strategies
(e.g. local development organisations in coastal regions)

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. Local public authority	*They will support data collection, pilot implementation, policy development, and long-term integration of project.*	Finland Åland, Helsinki, Porvoo Länsstyrelsen Gotland, Sweden; Klaipeda Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, Lithuania; Latvia Jelgava/Riga,
2. Business support organisation	Piloting ecotourism principles and providing feedback	Visit Åland, Visit Porvoo?; Gotlands besöksnäring (Gotland, Sweeden); Lithuania Klaipeda; Latvia Jelgava/Riga
3. NGO	as key partners in ecological protection. They will co-develop guidelines, advise on nature-based solutions, and help ensure that tourism development respects conservation goals.	*Sykli Finland;* *Leadergute Sweden;* *Lithuania Klaipeda;* *Latvia Jelgava/Riga,,*
4. Education/training centre and school	*Institutions contribute expertise in sustainability, circular economy, and social innovation. They will support assessments, monitoring, training, and dissemination of results.*	*Sykli, (Finland)* *Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (Latvia)* *Gotland Grönt Centrum (Gotland, Sweeden),*

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 ◯

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

Sykli (Finland); project coordinator, educational partner, piloting in Finland.

Klaipeda Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (Lithuania); coordination of stakeholder network and piloting in Lithuania.

Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (Latvia); educational partner, coordinating piloting in Latvia.

 Gotland Grönt Centrum (Gotland, Sweeden); Educational partner, program development and testing, piloting in Gotland.

11. Workplan

Main activities:

- Assessment of current ecotourism and circular economy practices taken into consideration regional guidelines and best practices, and certification aligned with circular principles
- Co-creation and delivery of educational modules for trainers, NGOs, and local institutions
- Pilot implementation of training involving potential ecotourism providers (focus on circularity, energy and water reuse)
- Regional awareness campaigns promoting sustainable travel
- Establishment of the Baltic Ecotourism Collaboration Hub
- Final evaluation and publication of results

Pilots will test solutions such as:
- Circularity in accommodation and infrastructure
- Renewable energy systems for rural tourism
- Water-saving and greywater reuse systems

- Zero-waste food products and service offerings

Target group involvement:
Stakeholders will co-develop pilot cases, participate in educational activities, and contribute to framework validation.

Use of outcomes:
Local governments, SMEs, NGOs, and training institutions will use the educational resources and policy tools to continue developing ecotourism after the project ends.

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 XXX*
Total budget (including preparatory costs)	**EUR 500,000.00**

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	*(max.1.000 characters incl. spaces)*
Any other questions	What cafeterias are to consider for a good application Structure of the project plan, what components are to consider. Budgeting and flat rates Involvement of partners and hour reporting.

15. Additional information

Assisting partners (aiding in providing information and coordinating collaboration with local hospitality partners):

Gotland besöksnäring
Leader Gute

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