Project idea form - small projects

Version 2.1

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

Project Idea Form

Date of submission 03/06/2025

1. Project idea identification

Project idea name	Learning from emerging good environmental practices and steering mechanisms for harnessing agricultural loading
Short name of the project	Agri dialogue
Previous calls	yes ◯ no ◉
Seed money support	yes ◯ no ◉

2. Programme priority

	2. Water-smart societies

3. Programme objective

	2.1. Sustainable waters

4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original)	Suomen ympäristökeskus, Syke
Name of the organisation (English)	Finnish Environment Institute, Syke
Website	www.syke.fi
Country	FI

Type of Partner	Higher education and research institution

Contact person 1	
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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.

- Ostseestiftung, Germany
- Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde (IOW), Germany

5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

The project addresses the main environmental challenge of the Baltic Sea: the overload of nutrients which results in eutrophication and poor environmental state of the Baltic Sea. By improving access of stakeholders to emerging agricultural water protection methods and steering mechanisms, the project contributes to the “Save the Sea” objective of Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme and its sub-objective “Clear water in the sea”. The project idea is related to Action 1 of Priority Area Nutri: Reduce nutrient emissions from agriculture and other diffuse sources.
Reducing diffuse loads from agriculture is challenging and knowledge and understanding about viable and cost-effective measures to reduce nutrient loading is needed by regional agricultural and environmental authorities to fulfil their legal obligations, and by farmers to carry out their business in a sustainable manner. Therefore, the authorities, farmers, and farmer and advisory organisations are the main target groups of the project.

5.2 Focus of the call

The project provides support to rural areas in tackling agricultural nutrient loading. Reductions of nutrient inputs from farming are called for in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), in the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) as well as in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) to mitigate eutrophication and to achieve a good environmental status of the Baltic Sea. However, reducing diffuse loads from agriculture is a more complex task than controlling of discharges from point sources, and it requires cooperation, development and implementation of new sustainable agricultural practices, and support to farmers for their deployment. The project will introduce new measures for consideration in the national palettes of measures and allow small scale testing and discussion on the local adaptation opportunities of emerging measures to support capacity building of farmers and sustainability of rural livelihoods.

6. Transnational relevance

The pollution of the Baltic Sea is a shared transnational problem, caused and affected by the surrounding countries. Current strategies and regulations have not completely succeeded in protecting the vulnerable sea and additional cross-border actions are needed. This can be done by sharing information not only on novel agricultural practices but also on larger sectoral reforms aiming at more sustainable agriculture.
Challenges in reducing diffuse loading are already widely recognised nationally and in international fora but gaining wider acceptance for new practices takes time. The project will cooperate with target groups, share information on and test measures that have potential to remarkably reduce nutrient loading if widely applied in the agricultural sector, and enable discussing them in the three participating countries.
The selected practices and measures have been evaluated by project partners with more knowledge on them and found potentially relevant for use in other countries, sparking interest in other countries to consider adapting these measures locally. This shared approach enables mutual learning.
In addition, the project will facilitate the testing of load-cutting activities by a joint process for planning as well as solving of potential bottlenecks. The project partners and target groups will learn from well-functioning solutions and each others' experiences, and can adjust ideas further according to their local needs.

7. Specific aims to be adressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

In the project, information on selected novel agricultural load-cutting measures and steering mechanisms is shared openly and honestly, including their pros and cons, challenges in implementation, and any potential issues. This allows the project participants to form a realistic picture of the potential of the selected topics and enables their neutral consideration. Moreover, the project encourages an open dialogue with local target groups on each topic, so that their feasibility is discussed and feedback can be collected. Mini-pilots will allow gathering information on the functionality of the measures in local circumstances, and the results of the testing will be shared with

target groups. The most promising measures can then be developed further in later cooperation initiatives.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

The project will initiate new cooperation networks between the southern and northern parts of the Baltic Sea. In the area of water protection in agriculture, they will facilitate information sharing and collaboration, contributing to more effective water protection efforts. Locally, the project will connect various stakeholders, including scientists, authorities, policymakers, and farmers, enabling the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and emerging technologies for better water protection.

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

To bring the Interreg BSR close to citizens, the project will use diverse communication channels to keep them informed and engaged. This includes educating the public about Baltic Sea eutrophication and emerging opportunities for water protection, and utilising digital tools for engagement.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

The project addresses the challenge of increasing nutrient loading from agriculture due to climate change. Climate change will complicate eutrophication control by intensifying the conditions that lead to excessive nutrient loading. Rising temperatures, floods, altered precipitation patterns, and increased storm events all contribute to increasing nutrient loading from agriculture and call for adaptation of new measures in water protection.

8. Target groups

The main target groups of the project include regional public authorities responsible for environment and agriculture, farmers' organisations and farmers. The project plans to engage them in workshops and excursions showcasing good practices and involve them in the small-scale testing of selected new water protection measures in mini pilots. The target groups will utilise the results in choosing abatement measures and steering mechanisms for reducing eutrophication.

	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.	Regional public authority	Agriculture	FI, DK, DE
2.	Regional public authority	Environment	FI, DK, DE
3.	Interest group	Agriculture	FI, DK, DE

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 Nutri

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

Finnish Environment Institute, Syke (FI), Lead Partner
SYKE is a research institute employing nearly 700 professionals and governed by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Syke has been participating and leading several studies and pilots on gypsum since 2007 and also has experience on structure liming. Syke will be responsible for general management, communication and advice on gypsum/structure lime piloting and monitoring.

John Nurminen Foundation, JNF (FI)
JNF is an NGO implementing cost-effective Baltic Sea protection measures. JNF has extensive experience in eutrophication abatement, from engagement of farmers in soil amendment application to testing of new methods and advocacy work. JNF will organise piloting of integrated buffer zones in Finland and facilitate discussion on the need of an agricultural reform in Finland by engaging relevant target groups.

Aarhus University, AU (DK)
The Department of Agroecology of AU carries out basic, strategic, and applied research on issues regarding the interaction among climate, soil, plants, animals, and people in agro-ecosystems with a focus on promoting health, sustainability and environmentally friendly production of food, feed, energy, and bio-based products. AU has had an important role in developing the Green Tripartite Agreement (agricultural reform) as well as the concept of integrated buffer zones.

Ostseestiftung DE (to be confirmed) is an NGO with the aim of safeguarding valuable natural marine and coastal habitats and reducing nutrient and pollutant inputs into the Baltic Sea. The foundation has extensive expertise in agricultural restoration and will share their experiences, particularly of peat soils which are major sources of dissolved organic matter, greenhouse gases and nutrients.

Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde (IOW) DE (to be confirmed)
is a non-university institute dedicated to interdisciplinary marine research on coastal and marginal seas with a special focus on the ecosystems of the Baltic Sea.

11. Workplan

The project will showcase a selection of emerging good practices and steering mechanisms that have been developed by one country but are less known in the others. The number of ideas presented is limited to two per country to guarantee the high quality of the ideas and a learning process where the developer can properly introduce the ideas to the other participants.
The topics dealt with will include a variety of measures and steering mechanisms, but the common feature is that they are all highly effective and feasible in reducing nutrient loading in areas they have been invented. They include
• Danish agricultural reform referring to the 2024 Agreement on a Green Denmark by the Green Tripartite consisting of the government, the agriculture industry and environmental groups. It sets the course of action for future food production and presents how to meet the country's ambitious goals for water protection and climate change mitigation.
• Saturated buffer zones referring to the filtering of artificial drainage waters in buffer strips or zones before they enter a waterbody.
• Rewetting of agricultural land, particularly peatlands, referring to restoring drained areas by raising the water table, often by blocking drainage ditches. This practice aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance biodiversity, and improve water quality.
• Soil amendments referring to the use of gypsum and structure lime to improve soil properties for a healthier soil, and better nutrient retention and plant growth.
The project will consist of three activities:
1. Knowledge exchange in workshops, including
• presentations of local solutions for promising agri-environmental practices and steering mechanisms
• site visits with demonstrations of practices
• discussion on adaptation opportunities
2. Production of manuals with basic info on the practice/mechanism
3. Mini pilots for testing selected new measures, e.g. two measures per country
• planning of pilot setup with experts from the country of origin, implementation and evaluation
• sharing of pilot results with project consortium and target groups

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	We are specifically interested in whether we have understood the topics of the call correctly, i.e. how well do you see that the suggested project conforms to the requirements of the call? If needed, should the topic be adjusted to incorporate other aspects.
Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	Do you have any wishes concerning budget allocation between networking& knowledge building (activity 1) and piloting (activity 2)?
Any other questions	*(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)*

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