Project idea form - small projects

Version 2.1

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

Project Idea Form

Date of submission 04/06/2025

1. Project idea identification

Project idea name	Strengthening Drinking Water Safety Against Microplastics in the Baltic Sea Region
Short name of the project	SafeDRINK
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)	Latvijas Hidroekoloģijas institūts
Name of the organisation (English)	Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology
Website	www.lhei.lv
Country	LV

Type of Partner	Higher education and research institution

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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.

Republic of Estonia Health Board - this organisation is planned to take lead in monitoring Estonian drinking water microplastics pollution in the future.

German Water Center (TZW) - this organisation lies outside the programme area, however, encompasses unique knowledge and experience on drinking water microplastics topic. They are the only ones currently having skills to conduct drinking water microplastic monitoring following the methodology laid down by EU 2024/1441 Directive.

5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

Microplastic (MP) pollution in drinking water is an emerging threat with unclear health implications, yet no harmonised monitoring standards exist. Drinking water suppliers, environmental and health authorities, and laboratories currently lack validated methods for sampling, treating, and analysing MP from drinking water. This hampers the comparability of results, delays risk assessments, and limits regulatory responses.
The new EU guidelines (2024/1441) for measuring MP in water intended for human consumption have not yet been tested in Europe and, therefore, it is unclear whether the method is applicable for diverse local conditions. The implementation of these measures is especially acute for smaller utilities in less-resourced regions, which often lack access to advanced technical capacity. This project aims to equip target groups – public health authorities, water utilities, environmental agencies – with clear, regionally harmonised and validated protocols to ensure safe drinking water and respond to evolving policy requirements.
The developed protocols can then be utilised for acquiring data to assess health risks posed by

microplastic in drinking water, to set baseline conditions and threshold values.

5.2 Focus of the call

The project directly supports the cohesive development of small places and rural areas by addressing a technical and scientific capacity gap that disproportionately affects smaller drinking water suppliers and local environmental authorities having no equipment for independently detecting microplastics in drinking water. By providing harmonised, practical, and scalable methods for microplastic detection, we empower these actors to participate in region-wide water quality monitoring and provide bases for validated service in the future. The project strengthens the drinking water safety and resilience management and ensures that all communities can benefit from high standards of drinking water safety. This supports equitable health and environmental outcomes across the Baltic Sea Region.

6. Transnational relevance

Microplastic pollution is not limited by national borders. Transnational cooperation is essential for establishing harmonised microplastic monitoring methods that are applicable, accepted, and comparable across the Baltic Sea Region, considering local conditions, i.e. drinking water supply sites and pipe systems, foster knowledge exchange, and reduce duplication of effort. It ensures that all countries – especially smaller ones – can benefit from shared expertise and apply the same high standards to protect public health.

7. Specific aims to be adressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

The project fosters trust between research institutions, public authorities, and water suppliers working together the first time in such consortium. Building mutual collaboration in this project sets the foundation for harmonised microplastic monitoring methods across the Baltic Sea Region. It represents an important first step in addressing microplastic pollution in drinking water and paves the way for a long-term joint support network for water monitoring and pollution mitigation that is expected to continue after the project's lifetime.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

We will establish an international network of researchers, laboratories, public health agencies, and water utilities focused on monitoring microplastic pollution. This network will serve as a platform for knowledge exchange, inter-laboratory comparisons, and coordinated action, and continue functioning after the project lifetime, supporting long-term collaboration on joint response strategies across the region.

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

While the project is primarily technical, it contributes to citizens' well-being by safeguarding public health through better monitoring of drinking water quality. We will organize outreach and education activities (e.g., school visits, public events, samples preparation and analysis demonstration) to

increase public understanding of microplastics and their impact on water quality and its safety. Communication activities will explain the significance of microplastic pollution and the value of harmonised monitoring in an understandable language. This will help build public trust in regional cooperation and show tangible benefits of EU-funded efforts at the local level.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

The project does not directly respond to urgent or unpredictable challenges. However, by equipping institutions with harmonised and validated methods for monitoring microplastics in drinking water, it improves long-term readiness to address emerging contaminants in the drinking water systems. The resulting data sets will also provide a foundation for future efforts to identify and implement effective microplastic removal techniques from the drinking water. By establishing standard protocols and baseline data, the project enables authorities to detect and respond quickly to sudden spikes in microplastic pollution in drinking water systems.

8. Target groups

Drinking water suppliers and operators – responsible for water safety and monitoring, in need of accessible and reliable methods to monitor microplastic contamination in their systems.
Environmental and public health authorities – providing monitoring service, policy enforcement, in need of baseline and long-term data on microplastics in drinking water for policy development.
Laboratories and research institutions – responsible for developing and validating monitoring methodologies, in need of harmonised protocols to produce comparable, valid results to support policy development.
Policy and decision-makers at the local and national level – benefiting from sound data when drafting water quality standards and regulations, in need for evidence-based and harmonised insights.
General public – users of drinking water, in need of safe drinking water for consumption and educational information for raising awareness and avoiding misinformation.

	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.	Large enterprise	Drinking water suppliers and operators – responsible for water safety and monitoring	All consortium countries
2.	Infrastructure and public service provider	Environmental and public health authorities – providing monitoring service, policy enforcement	All consortium countries

3.	Higher education and research institution	Responsible for developing and validating monitoring methodologies	Latvia and Estonia
4.	National public authority	Policy and decision-makers , ministries	All consortium countries
5.	Interest group	eneral public – users of drinking water, in need of safe drinking water	All consortium countries

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 Hazards

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

Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology (LHEI), Latvia – Lead partner, scientific coordination, responsible for developing and harmonising microplastic monitoring method.
Tallinn University, Estonia – community involvement, developed methods validation.
Public Health Laboratory of Republic of Estonia Health Board, Estonia – providing monitoring service and policy enforcement.
TZW: DVGW-Technologiezentrum Wasser (German Water Center), Germany – ensuring technical expertise and vast experience on the topic for knowledge transfer. This organisation lies outside the programme area, however, encompasses unique and sound knowledge and experience in Germany (and Europe) under the topic of drinking water microplastics samples collection, preparation and detection. They are currently the only organisation conducting microplastic monitoring following the methodology laid down by EU 2024/1441 Directive. They will transfer experience acquired over the years to other partners and Baltic Sea Region counties.
Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre (LVGMC), Latvia - risk assessment and

development of a national monitoring plan, aligning project outcomes with national regulations and strategic priorities, ensuring that developed methods are feasible for future integration into national and regional monitoring frameworks.
We are currently seeking to include additional partner representing drinking water supply system and/ or operator.
All partners bring unique competencies and national perspectives that ensure the project's outputs are scientifically robust, practically relevant, and applicable across the Baltic Sea Region. The consortium creates a strong foundation for effective cooperation, mutual learning, and high-impact outcomes.
Thus far, the partners have not worked together, allowing for new networks to form, enabling building of cross-sector trust and knowledge exchange.

11. Workplan

Key activities:
1. Comparative review of EU and national microplastic monitoring guidelines, present status in infographics - mapping existing drinking water microplastic monitoring methods across BSR countries; listing knowledge, capacity, and infrastructure gaps among water utilities, laboratories, and public authorities (questionnaire); Analysis of local conditions that may affect method applicability (e.g., pipe materials, water treatment technologies).
Main outputs: review of EU and national microplastic monitoring guidelines, infographics presenting current development status in BSR.
Target group involvement: Water suppliers and laboratories provide information and practical insights, authorities review findings to assess policy implications
2. Development and harmonisation of protocols - adaptation of EU guideline 2024/1441 to regional/ local conditions; Harmonisation of protocols for sample collection, preparation, and analysis; Implementation of inter-laboratory testing for validation; Field piloting in partner countries to test protocol robustness and applicability.
Main outputs: Validated, harmonised protocols for drinking water microplastic monitoring; Technical guidance and training materials for labs and water suppliers.
Target group involvement: Laboratories, health authorities, and water utilities actively participating in method harmonisation, Feedback used to refine protocols.
3. Network Building and Stakeholder Engagement – training sessions and workshops for target groups (labs, water suppliers, authorities); Knowledge exchange events; Outreach activities for the general public (demonstrations, exhibitions, school visits).
Main outputs: Trained professionals in all partner countries; Citizen-oriented awareness materials and events; International network established for continued collaboration.
Target group involvement: Direct participation of technical and policy-level actors in trainings; Citizens engaged through public events and communication activities.
4. Policy Uptake and Future Use - preparation of BSR-wide drinking water microplastics monitoring guidelines; Seminars with policy-makers at national and regional levels.
Main outputs: Recommendations/guidelines aligned with EU Drinking Water Directive; Joint statement of support from participating authorities.
Target group involvement: Policy-makers and regulators consulted and involved in co-developing final recommendations; All outputs shaped to enable direct policy relevance and uptake; Closing event

organization.

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	Is the chosen program priority and objective appropriate? Is consoritum appropriate?
Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	-
Any other questions	-

15. Additional information

-

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