

Project idea form - small projects

Version 2.1

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

Project Idea Form

Date of submission 05/06/2025

1. Project idea identification

Project idea name	Local development through the history of seal hunting in the Baltic Sea Region
Short name of the project	Historical seals
Previous calls	yes <input type="radio"/> no <input checked="" type="radio"/>
Seed money support	yes <input type="radio"/> no <input checked="" type="radio"/>

2. Programme priority

1. Innovative societies

3. Programme objective

1.1. Resilient economies and communities
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4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original)	Svenska Österbottens förbund för utbildning och kultur skn
Name of the organisation (English)	SÖFUK Federation of Swedish Municipalities in Ostrobothnia for Education and Culture
Website	https://www.kulturosterbotten.fi/
Country	FI



Type of Partner	Regional public authority
	regional council, etc.

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.

SÖFUK/KulturÖsterbotten / Federation of Swedish Municipalities in Ostrobothnia for Education and Culture
 Sihtasutus Rannarootsi Muuseum / Museum of the Coastal Swedes
 Västerbottens museum
 Ålands jakt- och fiskemuseum / Åland's hunting and fishing museum
 Holmöns båtmuseum / Holmön's boat museum

5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

Seal hunting has been practiced in the Baltic Sea region since the end of the Ice Age. Coastal villages have been dependent on seal hunting for subsistence and economical reliance. Seal hunting was banned in the Baltic Sea region in the mid-20th century because of diminishing populations of seals. This had a profound impact on the economical, cultural and social fabric of the villages. Nowadays seal hunting is practiced by only a few individuals on a recreational basis, and for most people it is seen as something exotic and unrelatable.

Cooperation and codependency were essential parts in the lives of coastal communities. This was especially noticeable in seal hunting, which engaged many households for equipping seal hunting teams for long and dangerous hunting trips. Today, coastal communities in the area are faced with different challenges – diminishing infrastructure and social support as well as depopulation. The communal spirit has diminished.

Coastal museums in the project area are often very small and maintained entirely on a voluntary basis

by a small group of enthusiasts or have only a few employees at hand. These museums struggle with being relevant for the local public. Many coastal museums exhibit stories of seal hunting in their exhibitions, but they have very little contact to other museums. Through networking and communication, the museums can create a joint narrative on the historical and social relevance of seal hunting.

With this project we want to explore how the old ways of cooperating, trusting in each other and using natural resources in a sustainable way can transmit to today's society. This can be done through dissemination of traditional knowledge and values. The museums play an essential part in this as providers of stories and material about past culture and ways of living. The stories and artifacts connected to seal hunting make a relevant and thought provoking case for testing new methods of cooperation and public outreach.

5.2 Focus of the call

Our project supports the cohesive development of small places, rural areas, and communities facing socio-economic challenges in the Baltic Sea region by strengthening the role of small museums as a driving force of local resilience and identity. Through the project activities, we focus on enhancing the sustainability of museums in remote and rural areas by developing new revenue models, including digital services and partnerships with local businesses. These efforts aim to build economic stability and deepen community engagement by making museums more reflective of local histories and needs. The project uses shared cultural heritage—specifically the tradition of seal hunting—as a foundation for educational resources tailored to both schools and informal learning environments. By connecting people with their local history, the project fosters a sense of belonging and intergenerational dialogue. The project also links historical practices to modern sustainability challenges, promoting circular thinking and resource awareness. Together, these actions empower small communities to preserve identity, engage residents, and foster economic and ecological sustainability.

6. Transnational relevance

Seal hunting was a way of life of coastal communities in all regions of the northern Baltic Sea. Seal hunters cooperated across country borders and helped each other when out at sea or on the sea ice. Seal hunting (and maritime industry in general) created contacts and bonds across the Baltic Sea Region. The impacts of the ban on seal hunting had repercussions in all communities that were part of the seal hunting industry.

In this project we want to explore how the history of seal hunting can be used to increase the resilience of coastal communities, but also how it can be used to create a sense of shared history between coastal communities in Finland, Sweden and Estonia. We want to build on our common experiences both regarding seal hunting as a phenomenon and how it has affected local communities.



We also want to create a network of small, rural museums and cultural heritage actors for sharing stories, methods and peer support.

7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

Building trust and creating possibilities for cooperation are twofold in this project. Firstly, we want to build trust between local communities and "their" museums. We want to involve communities in the development of platforms and materials connected to the history of seal hunting. We want to build a sense of mutual cooperation and benefits between local communities and museums. Once this trust is created, it will increase the possibility for future collaborations between communities and museums. Secondly, we want to create connections between museums in different regions of the Baltic Sea coast. Coastal museums around the Baltic Sea have a lot in common and many similar challenges. By creating collaboration around a common theme - the history of seal hunting - connections and models of cooperation are created, which can be used in future projects and cooperation initiatives.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

One of the goals of the project is to create a network of small, rural museums across the region. The main focus of the network would initially be on the history of seal hunting, building on the shared history of coastal regions. The network will meet regularly online and occasionally IRL. The museums in the network will have the opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss common challenges and hopefully come up with ideas for future collaboration. The exit strategy of the project will focus on how to maintain the network after the conclusion of the project activities.

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

N/A

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

N/A

8. Target groups

The project focuses on reviving traditional knowledge, communal values, and sustainable resource use through the lens of historical seal hunting practices in the Baltic Sea region. The selected target groups are directly affected by the challenges of cultural disconnect, depopulation, and loss of local identity, and are well-positioned to influence positive change through active participation in the project:

- Museums and cultural heritage actors: Small coastal museums (whether run by an NGO or by a local authority) often lack visibility and resources. They preserve seal hunting histories but work in isolation.



Through networking and capacity building, these museums will co-create a joint narrative, strengthening their relevance and public engagement.

- **Local communities:** Once dependent on seal hunting, these communities now face diminished infrastructure and loss of identity. Their involvement is vital to ground the project in lived experience and to reclaim and adapt communal values.
- **Local businesses:** Especially in tourism and craft sectors, these businesses can help translate heritage into sustainable economic opportunities, creating products and services inspired by cultural traditions.
- **Schools and nonformal education:** By involving youth and learners of all ages in learning about local history, sustainability, and cooperation, schools and nonformal education ensure intergenerational knowledge transfer and foster community pride.
- **Tourism enterprises:** These actors can help communicate the seal hunting heritage to wider audiences through authentic and respectful storytelling.
- **Local and regional authorities:** Their support is crucial for project administration and integrating project outcomes into broader cultural and development strategies.

These groups will be actively involved throughout the project, ensuring impact, relevance, and sustainability.

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. NGO	Museums, project and associated partners. Will carry out project activities.	Finland, Sweden, Estonia
2. Local public authority	Museums, project and associated partners. Will carry out project activities.	Finland, Sweden, Estonia
3. Interest group	Local communities, input and creation of materials	Finland, Sweden, Estonia

4. Small and medium enterprise	Local businesses and tourism entrepreneurs, collaboration on development of packages	Finland, Sweden, Estonia
5. Regional public authority	KulturÖsterbotten, lead partner in project	Finland

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 Culture

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

SÖFUK Federation of Swedish Municipalities in Ostrobothnia for Education and Culture/
 KulturÖsterbotten, Finland: lead partner
 Sihtasutus Rannarootsi Muuseum / Museum of The Coastal Swedes, Estonia: project partner
 Västerbottens museum, Sweden: project partner
 Ålands jakt- och fiskemuseum / Åland's hunting and fishing museum, Finland: project partner
 Holmöns båtmuseum / Holmön's boat museum, Sweden: associated partner

The partners represent the areas of the Baltic sea region where seal hunting was most prevalent, and where traces of the old seal hunting culture can still be found.

The partners will be responsible for maintaining contact and working closely together with small museums and cultural heritage actors in their region, because many of the local museums are too small to maintain the needed administration for a project of this scale.

11. Workplan

The project will be divided into three work packages.

WP 1 – Resilience and networks

- Strengthening the relevance of museums within their local communities
- Creating a model for collaboration between museums, local businesses and tourism initiatives
- Creating a network for coastal museums
- Creating new streams of revenue

WP 1 focuses on enhancing the long-term sustainability and resilience of small museums located in rural and remote areas, where museums often play a vital role in preserving local identity and cultural heritage. A key element is the development of new revenue streams that will help these institutions establish a more stable financial foundation. This could involve creating innovative visitor experiences, developing digital services, forming partnerships or collaborating with regional tourism initiatives.

WP 2 – Strengthening communities

- Research and develop themes concerning seal hunting relevant to local communities
- Creating a common platform for information on seal hunting and its' meaning for communities in historical times

WP 2 focuses on how shared cultural heritage can serve as a resource for strengthening local communities, with a particular emphasis on education and knowledge dissemination.

By connecting people with their local history, the project fosters a sense of belonging and intergenerational dialogue.

A platform for knowledge, stories, research, and visual materials will be developed in collaboration with local stakeholders.

WP 3 – Sustainable environments

- Using historical seal hunting as a base for raising social, economic and ecological sustainability
- Bringing in the nose-to-tail concept into modern society and raising awareness of sustainability issues
- Creating educational materials for schools and nonformal education

WP 3 explores how historical practices can serve as a foundation for raising awareness about sustainability in today's world. The project highlights how earlier generations lived in close harmony with nature and made use of its resources in ways that were often respectful and circular.

A central theme in this work package is the integration of the "nose-to-tail" concept - using the entire animal - standing in stark contrast to today's wasteful consumption patterns.

By compiling and analyzing how seal hunting has been practiced, interpreted, and documented in different regions, the project seeks to create locally relevant educational packages.

Each project partner will be responsible for one WP but will commit to working in all WPs.

The project will have the following outputs:

- A strengthened network of local coastal museums based around the history of seal hunting
- A model for collaboration between museums and local stakeholders
- A common platform (for example a web application or podcast) for disseminating the information that has been collected during the project.
- Educational materials that can be used in schools and in non-formal education.

12. Planned budget

ERDF budget (planned expenditure of partners from the EU)	EUR 250,000.00
Norwegian budget (planned expenditure of partners from Norway)	EUR XXX
Total budget (including preparatory costs)	EUR 250,000.00

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 wish to have a general discussion about the project idea to ensure that we are heading in a direction that is compliant with the BSR programme!
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Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)
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Any other questions	(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)
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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>