



# 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	InnoAccess: Strengthening Local Innovation for Accessible and Equitable Public Services
Short name of the project	InnoAccess
Previous calls	yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> no <input type="radio"/>
Short name of the previous project	InnoCit
Seed money support	yes <input type="radio"/> no <input checked="" type="radio"/>

### 2. Programme priority

1. Innovative societies
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### 3. Programme objective

1.2. Responsive public services
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### 4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original)	Ab Yrkeshögskolan vid Åbo Akademi
Name of the organisation (English)	Novia University of Applied Sciences
Website	<a href="https://www.novia.fi/en/">https://www.novia.fi/en/</a>



Country	FI
Type of Partner	Higher education and research institution

#### Contact person 1

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#### Contact person 2

Name	<i>(max. 100 characters incl. spaces)</i>
Email	<i>(max. 100 characters incl. spaces)</i>
Phone	<i>(max. 100 characters incl. spaces)</i>

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.

City of Porvoo, Finland  
 City of Liepāja, Latvia  
 City of Partille, Sweden

### 5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

The specific challenge we aim to address is the limited capacity of local public authorities to deliver inclusive, responsive, and digitally accessible services to all residents, particularly those with limited language proficiency, such as migrants and newcomers. This challenge directly aligns with the Programme objective of strengthening institutional capacity and promoting the development of user-driven public services through innovation, cross-sectoral collaboration, and digital inclusion.

Access to public services plays a key role in local integration. However, residents with limited language skills often struggle to navigate increasingly digital systems for tasks such as booking appointments, accessing social benefits, or completing official procedures. In Partille (Sweden), 21% of residents are foreign-born; in Porvoo (Finland), 9%; and in Liepāja (Latvia), 16%. Many of these individuals face language-related barriers that reduce their ability to engage with services, leading to exclusion and underutilization of support systems. Simultaneously, local authorities are increasingly expected to provide digital services, yet often lack the institutional resources and capacity to initiate the necessary

innovation processes.

The lack of accessible digital solutions not only limits migrants' societal participation but also places additional strain on municipal staff who must provide alternative support. Furthermore, being unable to access basic public services can contribute to a broader form of exclusion - not only digital but also democratic. When individuals are unable to engage with the institutions that shape their daily lives, their ability to participate meaningfully in civic life and democratic processes is also diminished.

The project will take a cross-sectoral and transnational approach to co-develop, pilot, and launch an innovative digital tool and inclusive communication strategies that improve service accessibility. This includes exploring the potential of AI in tackling language-related communication challenges. Crucially, the project has two central goals: a) to co-design and test a practical tool that improves service access for residents with limited language proficiency, and b) to enhance the long-term innovation capacity of local public authorities so they are better equipped to respond to future needs as well.

## 5.2 Focus of the call

The project supports the cohesive development of small and mid-sized municipalities in the BSR by enhancing the innovation capacity of local public authorities to provide inclusive digital services.

The participating towns – Partille (SE), Porvoo (FI), and Liepāja (LV) – are not economically disadvantaged but face distinct territorial and demographic challenges. Located outside major urban centers, they serve both aging populations and growing migrant-origin communities. However, research shows that migrants in smaller towns often relocate to metropolitan areas with better services and jobs. A shared challenge is therefore retaining migrants and their families – a key goal given population aging and a shrinking workforce. To increase regional impact, the project will also involve surrounding rural municipalities as associated partners. These areas face even greater constraints due to size, resources, and service accessibility. They will benefit from the project's capacity-building process.

All participating areas involved have limited capacity to design and deliver user-centered digital services and lack consistent access to innovation tools. They share a pressing need to strengthen local institutional capacity and reduce both digital and linguistic exclusion. The project responds by co-developing and testing an inclusive, AI-supported digital tool and communication strategies to improve service access for migrant residents and support their integration.

## 6. Transnational relevance

Transnational cooperation is essential to ensure that the outcome is relevant, adaptable, and scalable across different local contexts in the BSR. The project brings together partners from Finland, Sweden, and Latvia, each representing different stages of digital transformation and public sector innovation. While the core challenge - how to make digital public services more inclusive - is shared, the institutional cultures, user needs, and service delivery models vary. This diversity provides a valuable testing ground for developing a solution that is technically functional and culturally and administratively adaptable.



By working transnationally, the partners can 1) co-design a solution that reflects a broader range of user needs and administrative realities; 2) share knowledge and experiences on what has worked (or not) in their respective contexts; and 3) benchmark and validate the tool in different environments, increasing its relevance and transferability across the BSR.

The collaborative process itself adds value by building capacity, facilitating peer learning, and strengthening institutional networks. This aligns with the Interreg BSR Programme's goal of enhancing innovation in public services through cross-border cooperation.

## 7. Specific aims to be addressed

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

The project brings together municipalities in three countries (FI, SE, LV) and engages civil society, users, and digital experts in co-developing inclusive digital public services. This collaborative, user-driven approach builds mutual understanding and trust across sectors and borders. It creates a solid foundation for future cooperation in service innovation, digital inclusion, and user-centred public sector development.

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

The project strengthens a transnational network of municipalities, higher education and research institutions, and digital innovators working on accessible service delivery. This network responds to shared societal challenges in the BSR, and supports mutual learning and future joint efforts.

### Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

By involving end users, particularly migrants who face challenges in their exchanges with public service providers, in co-creating digital services, the project directly engages citizens in shaping public service delivery. It also supports digital inclusion and empowerment and works as an example of how EU cooperation can improve residents' daily interactions with local authorities.

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

In times of crisis, such as sudden migration flows, geopolitical instability, or public health emergencies, municipalities must respond quickly and equitably. By co-developing scalable and language-accessible digital services, the project strengthens institutional resilience and ensures that all residents, including newcomers, can access vital information and support without delay.

## 8. Target groups

The project is grounded in the local realities of the participating municipalities and will involve public officers, managers, and innovation support actors in the design and testing of the solution. This is to ensure that the tool is technically functional, socially embedded, and administratively feasible.



The main target group is local public authorities in the BSR, particularly those in small and medium-sized cities. These authorities are directly affected by the challenge of digital exclusion and have the institutional capacity to drive change through innovation in public service delivery.

The project will actively involve the following sub-groups within local public authorities:

- Leaders and managers in public organizations: These individuals play a critical role in enabling digital public innovation through strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and the institutionalization of innovation processes. Their involvement is essential for embedding new practices and ensuring long-term impact.
- Public officers in digital and citizen-facing services: This includes staff working in IT, social services, education, healthcare, and other departments that interact with citizens through digital channels. Their insights are vital to ensure the tool meets real-world needs and integrates into existing workflows.
- Frontline staff working directly with migrants and newcomers: This group includes, e.g., caseworkers, integration officers, and social workers, who have firsthand knowledge of the communication barriers faced by residents with limited language proficiency. Their participation will help ensure the tool is inclusive, culturally sensitive, and practically useful in everyday service encounters.

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	Local public authorities, including e.g. innovation teams, IT staff, middle managers, social workers, teachers, youth and culture officers, admin staff, and others working directly with citizens.	The project includes teams from Partille Municipality in Västra Götaland County in western SE; Porvoo in the eastern part of the Uusimaa region of FI; Liepāja in western LA, in the Courland region.

## 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 Innovation

PA Education

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

The project partnership brings together a well-balanced consortium of actors from across the BSR, each contributing complementary expertise and perspectives to address the identified challenge:

- Novia University of Applied Sciences (FI) is a higher education and research institution with extensive experience in coordinating EU-funded development projects. Novia brings strong competence in applied research, cross-sectoral collaboration, and stakeholder engagement. It will lead the facilitation of co-creation processes, support capacity-building activities, and ensure methodological rigor throughout the project.
- Drivhuset Göteborg (SE) is a business support organization with a proven track record in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship across sectors. Drivhuset contributes deep expertise in institutional innovation, capacity-building, and the development of user-driven innovation processes. It will support municipalities in strengthening their innovation ecosystems and embedding inclusive practices.
- City of Porvoo (FI), City of Partille (SE), and City of Liepāja (LV) represent the municipal partners who will serve as pilot sites for the project. These local public authorities bring diverse regional perspectives and institutional contexts, thereby offering an excellent testbed for co-developing the digital tool and inclusive communication strategies.

The partnership is designed to reflect the diversity of the BSR and to ensure that the project outcomes are relevant and transferable across different local contexts. The inclusion of both innovation support actors and public authorities ensures a holistic approach, from ideation and design to implementation and institutionalization.

The consortium is currently looking to expand by involving associated partners, particularly from rural towns within the same regions as the partner cities. These partners will help ensure that the project also reflects the specific development needs and service delivery challenges of more rural and less densely populated areas.

## 11. Workplan

The project will be structured around a single work package focused on co-developing and piloting an inclusive digital tool that improves access to public services for residents with limited language proficiency. The workplan combines capacity-building for local public authorities with participatory



innovation processes that directly involve end-users.

At the core of the project is an accelerated innovation process based on a “SPRINT” methodology. This approach divides the development into 2–3 intensive cycles, each ending in a tangible outcome, such as a tested prototype or validated concept. After each sprint, the municipalities will assess whether to continue or adapt the solution. This iterative, test-evaluate-refine model is designed to be sustainable and replicable beyond the project’s duration.

Pilots will be conducted in each of the three participating cities, Porvoo (FI), Partille (SE), and Liepāja (LV). These pilots will serve as testbeds for the co-designed digital tool.

The project will involve a wide range of target groups within local public authorities, including innovation teams, IT staff, middle managers, and frontline workers such as social workers, teachers, and citizen-facing staff. Their participation is necessary to make sure that the tool is possible to integrate into existing workflows and it meets institutional needs.

Crucially, migrants, as the end beneficiaries, will be actively involved in each city through participatory workshops, interviews, and user testing. Their input will guide the design to ensure the tool is accessible, culturally appropriate, and responsive to diverse language needs. The project will also explore the use of AI-based solutions to support multilingual user experience.

The final outputs will include:

- A co-developed digital tool for inclusive service access
- A tested and replicable innovation process model
- Increased innovation capacity within participating municipalities
- Practical recommendations for scaling and transferability across the BSR

## 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 *(max.1.000 characters incl. spaces)*





project

Questions related to  
budgeting and expenditure

Just to confirm: when you state that 'the total budget may not exceed EUR 500 000', does this mean that the funder's maximum contribution is EUR 400 000 (with the co-financing rate of 80%)?

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>

