



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 Hearing the Unheards: Smart Participation and Citizen Insights for Rural Futures

Short name of the project HTU - CivicPulse

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) BALTIC REGION APPLIED AI NETWORK e.V.

Name of the organisation (English) BALTIC REGION APPLIED AI NETWORK e.V.

Website <https://braain.ai/> (not up to date yet due to the public sector initiatives are missing right now)

Country DE



Type of Partner	NGO
	Non-governmental organisations, such as Greenpeace, WWF, 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.

PL Gmina Nowogródek Pomorski – Local authority, Magdalena Piątek
 PL Rekord Mobile Sp. z o.o. – Private tech company
 DE Kreis Nordfriesland – Regional authority, Silke Andreas
 DE DBU Digital Business University – Higher education, Prof. Hebing
 DE kaleidemoskop GmbH – Private AI company, Prof. Manhembué
 DE NETUNITY GmbH – Private company, Tim Voigt
 DE Project Bay GmbH – Innovation hub, Toni Gurski

5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

Rural areas across the Baltic Sea Region face multiple structural challenges: demographic decline, limited access to services, and reduced civic engagement. Traditional participation processes often fail to reach underrepresented groups due to barriers like language, time constraints, or digital exclusion. This leads to distorted decision-making and missed opportunities for inclusive development.

Our project addresses this by testing innovative, low-threshold digital participation formats tailored specifically to rural regions. Using AI-supported tools such as digital citizen panels, participatory platforms, and text analytics, we aim to better capture the voices of “quiet” citizens – those who rarely participate but whose input is crucial for sustainable local governance.

The challenge lies not only in reaching these groups, but also in making their input actionable for administrations. Therefore, the project goes one step further: it empowers local and regional authorities to understand the basics of data collection, data engineering, and digital citizen insight



generation. Through hands-on engagement, partners build foundational skills in using data for evidence-based decision-making.

To structure this capacity building, the project is divided into three stages:

- 1) Interregional exchange on participation,
- 2) Innovative digital data collection, and
- 3) Citizen Insights for local action.

This staged approach ensures that municipalities and regions not only try new tools, but also build the understanding needed to sustainably integrate citizen-focused data strategies into their work. It supports both digital transformation and a cultural shift towards responsive, inclusive governance – fully aligned with Interreg goals.

5.2 Focus of the call

The project fits the focus of the call by addressing the gap between citizens and local administrations in rural areas. It proposes a low-threshold, transnational learning process that builds trust, initiates durable networks, and brings Interreg closer to the everyday concerns of citizens.

Instead of developing one central solution, the project creates a structured exchange between three rural regions in Germany, Latvia, and Poland. Each brings their own experiences, challenges, and tools related to digital participation and data use. Through mutual comparison, piloting, and joint reflection, partners will explore what works where – and why.

This open approach empowers new Interreg actors to strengthen their digital capacity and explore how data can improve public services. At the same time, it supports inclusive governance by helping administrations better understand the needs of underrepresented citizens.

The activities go beyond knowledge exchange: they lead to concrete, data-based outcomes like citizen insights, digital personas, and local recommendations. These results are scalable and relevant across the BSR, making the project a valuable contribution to the Programme's aim of practical, citizen-centred innovation.

6. Transnational relevance

The project is built around a strong transnational learning structure involving three rural municipalities and their ecosystem partners from Germany, Latvia, and Poland. Each of these regions faces similar structural challenges – demographic change, disengagement of citizens, and a lack of digital participation infrastructure – yet they differ in their local approaches, available tools, and institutional frameworks.

This diversity is not a barrier but a central strength of the project. By enabling mutual exchange and



reflection on existing practices, the project allows partners to benchmark, test, and adapt citizen participation strategies across national contexts. Instead of exporting a single solution, the project promotes joint understanding and tailored implementation.

Transnational cooperation adds value by providing a safe space for experimentation with digital or data-driven methods and participatory technologies. It allows smaller, less experienced municipalities to access new expertise, build up their capacities, and co-develop approaches that would not be feasible in isolation.

Furthermore, by collecting experiences with digital methods and analysing citizen needs, the project generates shared insights that go beyond local relevance. The comparative experiences in tech stack and processes generated will feed into a common knowledge base for rural participation in the BSR, making it useful for other regions facing similar challenges.

Through its horizontal structure and inclusive process, the project exemplifies the added value of transnational cooperation: mutual empowerment, practical learning, and co-creation of locally adapted yet regionally transferable solutions.

7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

The project builds trust between citizens and administrations by showing that participation matters. Trust also grows among partners through transparent, low-pressure exchange – laying the groundwork for future cooperation.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

A new transnational network in south baltic sea region connects rural municipalities, data/ai experts, and civic tech providers with easy to use solutions and experience sharing. Joint activities and shared tools ensure exchange continues beyond the project.

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

The main target group is public administration. Citizens benefit through improved communication, better participation formats, and more responsive services.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

By strengthening data and communication skills, the project equips authorities to respond more effectively to crises – with better insight for faster decisions and links to their citizen



8. Target groups

The main target group of the project is local and regional public administrations. Within this group, we focus on:

Data and digitalisation units (e.g. statistics offices, municipal IT managers) – they are supported in collecting, analysing, and using citizen-related data.

Planning departments (e.g. social planning, mobility, regional development) – they benefit from better insights into local needs.

Participation and communication officers – they are trained to design inclusive, data-driven formats for citizen engagement.

Decision-makers and elected officials – they receive structured inputs for informed decision-making in everyday governance.

These target groups gain skills, tools, and practical experience in applying digital participation methods in a rural context. This empowerment enables them to modernise their workflows and create more responsive services.

The secondary target group is the broader population of rural citizens. While not the primary audience, they benefit from improved communication, new ways to express needs, and more inclusive participation formats. These include diverse subgroups such as parents, seniors, migrants, young adults, entrepreneurs, or people with limited time and digital access.

By aligning administrative capacity-building with citizen needs, the project creates long-term value for both sides of the governance relationship.

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	Digital citizen engagement, local planning, service innovation, tooling	DE: Nordfriesland, PL: Nowogródek Pomorski, LV: Gulbene
2. Regional public authority	Data-informed regional development, digital governance, tooling	DE - Kreis Nordfriesland and some municipalities in this region



3. Infrastructure and public service provider	IT services, data infrastructure, digital administration	DE: Nordfriesland, PL: Nowogródek Pomorski, LV: Gulbene
4. Interest group	Citizens: Civic engagement, public communication, participation support	DE: Nordfriesland, PL: Nowogródek Pomorski, LV: Gulbene
5. Small and medium enterprise	Experiences: GovTech / CivicTech / Smart City	DE: Berlin, Handewitt, Lietzow (Rügen); PL: Poznań

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 Secure

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 partnership is built around three rural regions – Gulbene (LV), Nowogródek Pomorski (PL), and Nordfriesland (DE) – which form the core of the project. These regions will share and compare their approaches to citizen participation, data collection, and digital governance in a structured transnational exchange. All three local authorities bring concrete use cases.

LV Gulbene Municipality – Local authority, Inga Lapse
 PL Gmina Nowogródek Pomorski – Local authority, Magdalena Piątek
 DE Kreis Nordfriesland – Regional authority, Silke Andreas

Gulbene Municipality and Gmina Nowogródek Pomorski are particularly motivated to implement



digital participation tools. As well as Nordfriesland as Member of the Smart City Initiative "Smarte Grenzregion (Deutschland-Dänemark)". To ensure successful local adaptation, they are eager to engage in dialogue about participation frameworks and methodologies with their German and Polish-Baltic peers. This exchange will enable them to co-develop realistic and context-sensitive strategies together with regional actors.

The lead applicant, BRAAIN e.V. (DE) from Rostock, a publicly co-funded association for applied AI in the Baltic Sea Region, coordinates the project and supports transnational knowledge transfer, especially toward civic tech actors and researchers.

Several thematic partners contribute essential expertise:

Rekord Mobile Sp. z o.o. (PL) develops mobile citizen apps and shares experience in civic tech development.

kaleidemoskop GmbH (DE) brings advanced knowledge in data engineering and AI-based analysis.

DBU Digital Business University (DE) provides academic guidance on data-driven governance.

NETUNITY GmbH (DE) offers consulting in participation technology and practical implementation strategies, if necessary.

Project Bay GmbH (DE) connects coworking and regional innovation, operating in Rügen, Usedom (Vorpommern Rügen), Sylt (Nordfriesland), Rostock an All over Europe.

So far, the partners have collaborated through online meetings and jointly developed the project proposal. The partnership remains open to one or two additional actors, ideally from the Baltic States or Nordic countries, to expand the thematic and regional diversity.

11. Workplan

Phase 1: Interregional Exchange and Capacity Building

The project starts with structured exchange among the three core regions: Gulbene (LV), Nowogródek Pomorski (PL), and Nordfriesland (DE). Each presents its current approach to citizen participation, digitalisation, and data use.

A key element is a transnational live conference, bringing together local authorities, civic tech experts, and researchers. This kickoff event fosters mutual understanding and sets the tone for co-creation. The exchange continues via regular video calls and thematic working groups.

Together, the partners define shared goals, analyse their institutional conditions, and explore suitable frameworks for participation and data integration. This builds a solid foundation for implementation.

Phase 2: Local Adaptation, Piloting and Regional Digital Value Creation

This phase focuses on action at the local level. Each region identifies participation formats to adapt or



pilot, supported by practical consulting and light-touch technical input.

The Polish municipality will implement a citizen participation app, already planned with local tech support. Gulbene benefits from in-house AI and data expertise within its municipal IT infrastructure. These setups enable not just adoption of tools, but also regional digital value creation – boosting local innovation ecosystems and involving regional service providers.

In parallel, the regions work on their data foundations: setting up data flows, ensuring privacy-compliant collection, and preparing data structures that allow meaningful analysis. Technical support is provided by partners such as kaleidemoskop and NETUNITY.

Phase 3: Citizen Insights and Administrative Application

Once data structures are operational, the project turns to generating actionable insights. Citizen input – from surveys, digital tools, or participatory formats – is analysed and translated into structured findings using AI-supported methods.

These insights are visualised (e.g. personas, maps, dashboards) and embedded into the daily workflows of public administrations. The goal is to make citizen needs visible and useful for planners, communicators, and decision-makers alike.

The final project phase focuses on knowledge consolidation, peer feedback, and the preparation of a “Participation & Data Readiness Brief” – a practical resource for rural authorities in the BSR.

Throughout all phases, the project closely involves the selected target groups – particularly public administration units responsible for IT infrastructure, planning, and citizen communication. In each region, these stakeholders participate in workshops, tool selection, and pilot activities. Their input guides the design and testing of data flows and participation methods.

The main outputs – such as citizen insights, visualised personas, and the Participation & Data Readiness Brief – are developed for and with these actors. They are designed to be directly used by public sector employees in th

12. Planned budget

ERDF budget (planned expenditure of partners from the EU)	EUR 209,435.00
Norwegian budget (planned expenditure of partners from Norway)	EUR 0.00
Total budget (including preparatory costs)	EUR 209,435.00

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

<p>Questions related to the content of the planned project</p>	<p>Is our thematic focus on public sector digital capacity and regional knowledge exchange suitable for the Small Project Scheme?</p>
<p>Questions related to budgeting and expenditure</p>	<p>We found the budget section of the PiF form slightly unclear, as the “ERDF budget” field appears to be pulled into the “total budget” automatically. To clarify our intention, this is how we calculated our figures:</p> <p>Total own contribution (gross): approx. 41,887 EUR This results in a total project budget (gross) of: 41,887 EUR (20%) → 209,435 EUR (100%) → ERDF share (80%): approx. 167,548 EUR</p> <p>Please confirm if this approach is in line with the expectations of the PiF form.</p>
<p>Any other questions</p>	<p>We are aware that the Small Project Scheme primarily focuses on rural areas. However, we would like to ask if it is still possible to include the City of Rostock as a project partner in the full application phase. Rostock could contribute as a knowledge partner, sharing its experience in citizen insights with the participating rural regions and supporting the transfer of innovative practices across the partnership.</p>

15. Additional information

This project is a timely and realistic step toward strengthening digital participation and data competences in rural areas across the Baltic Sea Region. It connects local authorities, tech actors, and civic engagement experts in a focused exchange and empowers administrations to better understand and serve their citizens.

We are convinced that even small municipalities and rural communities can benefit from practical and hands-on approaches. This project provides accessible and effective measures to help them build capacities, develop insights, and engage their citizens more meaningfully.

It aligns well with the goals of the Small Project Scheme: modest in scope, transnational, practice-oriented, and inclusive of new actors. We hope this initiative can serve as a valuable starting point for broader transformation in the region.

In times of growing geopolitical uncertainty, reliable communication with citizens and the ability to make informed, data-based decisions are essential.



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>

