



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 WISE Synergies. Women Innovating through Symbiotic Entrepreneurship

Short name of the project WISE Synergies

Previous calls yes no

Seed money support yes no

2. Programme priority

1. Innovative societies

3. Programme objective

1.1. Resilient economies and communities

4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original) RZESZOWSKA AGENCJA ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO SPOLKA AKCYJNA

Name of the organisation (English) Rzeszow Regional Development Agency

Website <https://rarr.rzeszow.pl/>

Country PL





Type of Partner	Regional public authority
	regional council, etc.

Contact person 1

Name	Marek Duda
Email	mduda@rarr.rzeszow.pl
Phone	+48 17 86 76 215

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.

Centre for Education and Enterprise Support (Poland)
Lithuanian Women's Lobby (Lithuania)

5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

In many rural areas of the Baltic Sea Region, the potential for sustainable, locally rooted economic development remains underexploited due to persistent structural limitations. One particularly overlooked avenue of opportunity lies in the use of underutilised material flows, industrial by-products, and side-stream resources from sectors such as agriculture, food processing, and rural manufacturing. These residual streams, which often lack systemic channels for reuse, represent a significant yet untapped basis for new forms of entrepreneurship anchored in circular and symbiotic principles. Women in rural regions face a layered set of constraints in accessing and benefiting from these opportunities. Across the EU, women represent only around 30% of self-employed individuals in rural areas and are significantly less likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities compared to their urban counterparts (European Commission, EU Rural Review No. 29, 2020). The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) highlights persistent gender gaps in entrepreneurship, particularly in access to financing, business networks, and innovation support services. These gaps are even more pronounced in peripheral regions, where infrastructure and institutional support are thinner. The underrepresentation of women in green and circular innovation is not just a social concern, but a structural barrier to achieving the EU's green transition. The European



Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan both stress the need to foster inclusive and socially just pathways towards sustainability.

However, unless tailored approaches are developed to activate the potential of women in rural contexts, the benefits of these transitions risk remaining unevenly distributed. The EU's Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (2021) likewise calls for the empowerment of rural populations particularly women and youth, as central actors in building stronger, more connected, resilient, and prosperous territories. WISE Synergies addresses this challenge by focusing on the intersection of gender, rurality, and circular entrepreneurship. It proposes a multi level approach that combines territorial diagnosis with capacity-building and co-creation, enabling women to develop business models that valorise local resources and industrial side-streams. These models not only promote environmental efficiency, but also contribute to the diversification and resilience of rural economies.

5.2 Focus of the call

The WISE Synergies project directly responds to the call's emphasis on enhancing the liveability and resilience of small and rural communities by enabling women to become agents of sustainable entrepreneurship. Rural areas across the Baltic Sea Region often face depopulation, economic stagnation, and underutilisation of local resources. At the same time, women in these areas remain underrepresented in economic leadership and innovation. WISE Synergies supports the cohesive development of such places by linking two underexplored potentials: the abundance of industrial and agricultural by-products, and the entrepreneurial ambitions of rural women. Through participatory mapping, tailored training, and collaborative business modelling, the project will help women build ventures that create local value from existing resources. By activating circular resource flows and fostering inclusive business ecosystems, the project will improve economic diversification, strengthen social cohesion, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of communities that are often bypassed by mainstream innovation efforts. The project ensures that development is grounded in the specific needs and aspirations of local actors, particularly those whose voices are less often heard in policy and planning processes

6. Transnational relevance

The challenge of activating rural women's entrepreneurial potential while improving the use of local material flows is common across the Baltic Sea Region but varies in form due to national and regional differences. In Poland, women constitute just 34% of entrepreneurs, with lower representation in rural and resource based sectors. In Lithuania, while SMEs make up over 99% of enterprises, women are underrepresented in business ownership, especially outside urban centres. Estonia and Denmark show stronger engagement in innovation-driven entrepreneurship, yet still face gender imbalances and difficulties in mobilising circular business models in smaller communities. Transnational cooperation is essential to address these shared yet differentiated challenges. WISE Synergies brings together organisations from four countries: Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Denmark with complementary strengths and experiences. The Polish partners (RARR, CWEP, and the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship) bring deep knowledge of regional development and grassroots entrepreneurship in contexts where innovation infrastructures remain limited. Lithuania's Social Innovation Fund contributes experience in gender equality and social entrepreneurship. Estonia's Tallinn Science Park Tehnopol offers expertise in innovation support ecosystems, and Denmark's Business Hub Central



Denmark shares practical approaches to circular business development. Working across these regions allows for a comparative exploration of how women in rural areas can activate underused local resources to create viable enterprises. Differences in innovation capacity and policy settings strengthen the project's ability to build adaptable methods. This approach is aligned with the European Green Deal and the EU's Longterm Vision for Rural Areas, both of which call for place-based, inclusive, and cooperative responses to territorial inequalities.

7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

WISE Synergies aims to create a foundation of trust among rural women, local SMEs, support organisations, and policy actors through cocreation processes rooted in shared regional realities. By involving women directly in resource mapping, business design, and collaborative learning, the project creates spaces for exchange that are inclusive, practice-oriented, and regionally relevant. The partnership model linking regions at different stages of institutional and economic development will reinforce trust not only locally but also across borders. Structured interaction during learning labs and mentoring sessions will promote mutual recognition of challenges and opportunities. This trust will not only support the immediate development of symbiotic entrepreneurship but also foster conditions for further cooperation among partners, stakeholders, and newly formed networks in the Baltic Sea Region beyond the lifetime of the project.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

N/A

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

WISE Synergies brings the Programme directly into rural communities by engaging women with little prior access to entrepreneurship support in practical, context-sensitive activities. Rather than operating at a distance from local realities, the project embeds itself in everyday environments through practical workshops, participatory mapping, and small-scale business design sessions tailored to the lived experience of women in rural areas. Local SMEs, producers, and craftspeople will be invited to co-develop business models based on the reuse of local resources, fostering grassroots ownership and visibility of the Programme's benefits. By making EU cooperation tangible and inclusive, the project not only supports individual entrepreneurial journeys but also strengthens civic understanding of how cross-border collaboration can improve social and economic resilience in places often overlooked in mainstream innovation discourse.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

WISE Synergies addresses the need for rural regions to respond more effectively to unforeseen disruptions, such as economic shocks, supply chain interruptions, or environmental crises, by building local entrepreneurial ecosystems that are adaptive, resource-aware, and socially inclusive. By training women to identify and activate underused local resources such as agricultural surplus or industrial by-products the project strengthens the community's ability to respond with agility when traditional value chains are affected. The focus on symbiotic business models promotes flexible production and



cooperation across sectors, which can cushion the impact of sudden market changes. Additionally, the involvement of local authorities and support institutions ensures that knowledge and strategies developed during the project can be quickly mobilised in response to future challenges, making the outcomes both immediately practical and resilient in the longer term.

8. Target groups

The primary target group of WISE Synergies consists of women residing in rural and semi-rural areas who are either aspiring entrepreneurs or already engaged in small-scale business activities. This group is directly affected by structural barriers such as limited access to tailored support services, lack of confidence in navigating entrepreneurial processes, and minimal exposure to innovation ecosystems. The project recognises that these women hold untapped potential to contribute to the development of their local economies, particularly through ventures rooted in the reuse of local material flows. By involving them actively in all phases from territorial resource mapping and needs assessment to training and business model development the project aims to strengthen their capacity to launch and sustain regionally embedded enterprises. In addition to women entrepreneurs, local SMEs, including agricultural producers, food processors, rural manufacturers, and craftspeople, form a key secondary target group. These actors often generate underutilised by-products and materials that could become the basis of new value chains. Their participation is essential for establishing practical collaborations and testing symbiotic business configurations. Engaging SMEs not only supports diversification but also helps anchor the project outputs within existing rural economic structures. Business support organisations, local incubators, and training providers will also be targeted as intermediaries who can extend the project's impact beyond its duration. Their involvement in co-developing and delivering training modules ensures transferability and institutional learning. Finally, municipalities and regional authorities will be included to facilitate the integration of project outcomes into local development strategies. Their role is critical for policy alignment, longer-term sustainability, and replication of methods in other areas.

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. Small and medium enterprise	Agriculture, food processing, rural manufacturing, and crafts – sectors generating side-stream materials suitable for symbiotic business development	Lead Partner and Project Partners Region



2. Business support organisation	Entrepreneurship training, SME advisory services, innovation support, and facilitation of local business development in rural and semi-rural regions	Lead Partner and Project Partners Region
3. Local public authority	Consultation of the developed solutions; analysis of the co-financing possibilities of proposed activities	Lead Partner and Project Partners 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 Tourism

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

The Rzeszów Regional Development Agency (RARR), based in south-eastern Poland, is acting as the Lead Partner. Established in 1993, RARR is a non-profit joint-stock company supporting economic development and entrepreneurship in the Podkarpackie region. With experience in managing EU-funded projects, technology transfer, and SME support, RARR is well positioned to coordinate project activities across all work phases. The agency also manages the AEROPOLIS Science and Technology Park, whose resources and networks will be actively utilised in the project's implementation. CWEP – Centre for Education and Enterprise Support (Poland) contributes longstanding experience in entrepreneurship education, adult learning, and the integration of gender sensitive approaches into



economic development. CWEP will play a central role in co-developing the training framework and facilitating learning labs focused on symbiotic entrepreneurship. Business Hub Central Denmark, a public business support body, will contribute practical knowledge on circular business modelling and support schemes tailored to rural entrepreneurs. Based in a region with advanced sustainability practices, the hub brings valuable insights into how innovation ecosystems can be extended to marginalised areas. Tallinn Science Park Tehnopol Foundation (Estonia) is an established innovation hub supporting start-ups and SMEs through incubation, mentoring, and access to technological expertise. It will lead activities related to mentoring schemes and cross-sectoral collaboration, with a focus on linking women-led businesses with existing SME infrastructure. Lithuanian Women's Lobby in Lithuania will contribute specific expertise in gender equality, social inclusion, and community-based entrepreneurship. With a strong track record in capacity-building programmes for women in disadvantaged regions, LWL will help ensure that the project's activities are inclusive, locally adapted, and socially impactful. Województwo Kujawsko-Pomorskie (Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland) is the regional authority for a largely rural area. It will contribute by ensuring the alignment of project outcomes with regional development plans and supporting the integration of project outputs into relevant local policies. The current partnership covers both stronger and less-developed innovation regions in the Baltic Sea area. At this stage, the consortium remains open to the possible inclusion of an additional partner

11. Workplan

The WISE Synergies project is structured into five main phases, leading to concrete outputs that support the development of symbiotic, women-led entrepreneurship in rural areas of the Baltic Sea Region.

Phase 1: Territorial Mapping and Setup The project begins with regional mobilisation and mapping of underused material flows and industrial side-streams from sectors such as agriculture, food processing, and crafts. Simultaneously, data will be collected on barriers and opportunities for women's entrepreneurship in rural areas. This will result in a Territorial Symbiosis Map for each region. Introductory workshops will engage women, SMEs, and regional actors to co-define priorities and prepare for training and collaboration.

Phase 2: Training and Co-Creation Labs Each region will deliver training sessions to rural women and local SMEs on resource valorisation, circular entrepreneurship, and inclusive innovation. Co-creation labs will follow, bringing together rural women, producers, and intermediaries to design locally adapted symbiotic business models based on regional materials and know-how. Outputs include training materials, improved skills, and a portfolio of business concepts for pilot testing.

Phase 3: Pilot Testing Selected models will be tested in each region in cooperation with participating women and SMEs. These pilots will examine the viability of models in terms of logistics, market fit, and cooperation potential. Participants will receive mentoring and technical advice. The pilots will allow testing of the transition from traditional models to circular, locally embedded ventures. Outputs include implementation cases and assessment reports.

Phase 4: Support Tools and Services Building on pilot results, tailored service packages will be co-developed for use by business support centres and innovation hubs. These include matchmaking



formats, mentoring guidelines, templates for local resource planning, and digital learning content. Outputs will be made available through a shared digital resource hub.

Phase 5: Consolidation and Future Scaling The final phase focuses on mainstreaming results. Regional dissemination events and transnational meetings will be held to share outcomes with public authorities, SME networks, and educational institutions. A WISE Synergies Playbook will consolidate methods and outcomes. Policy briefs and recommendations will support further integration into local strategies. Target groups especially rural women and local SMEs will be involved from the outset and throughout the co-creation, piloting, and evaluation processes. Final outputs will be used by women entrepreneurs, SME owners, business support organisations, local governments, and regional innovation actors. The project ensures that practical, inclusive business approaches are rooted in real regional challenges and capable of future adaptation and expansion 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 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 would like to discuss if the activities and the outputs indicated in the proposal are enough for a small project
---	---

Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	<i>(max.1.000 characters incl. spaces)</i>
--	--

Any other questions	<i>(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)</i>
---------------------	---



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>

