

# 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	Workation as Future-Oriented Rural Hubs – Strengthening Innovation and Resilience in Tourism-Based Regions
Short name of the project	WorkationHubs
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
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### 3. Programme objective

1.1. Resilient economies and communities
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### 4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original)	Tønder Erhvervsråd
Name of the organisation (English)	Business Development Business Development Council of Tønder Municipality
Website	<a href="https://tondererhvervsraad.dk/">https://tondererhvervsraad.dk/</a>
Country	DK



Type of Partner	Business support organisation
	chamber of commerce, chamber of trade and crafts, business incubator or innovation centre, business clusters, etc.
<b>Contact person 1</b>	
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<b>Contact person 2</b>	
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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.

Tønder Business Council (Denmark)  
 Founders Bay UG (Germany)  
 Municipality of Nowogródek Pomorski (Poland)  
 Fundacja Urlop Bez Granic (Poland)  
 Economic Development Agency of North Frisia (Germany)  
 District of Vorpommern-Rügen (Germany)  
 The Kivik's Museum & Archives Foundation (Sweden)  
 Latvian Youth Development Center (Latvia)

### 5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

Many rural regions across the South Baltic area face persistent structural challenges that threaten their long-term economic and social resilience. These include a lack of economic diversification, over-dependence on seasonal tourism, demographic decline, brain drain, and weak local innovation ecosystems. Regions with strong summer tourism often struggle to remain active during the off-season, leading to underused infrastructure and workforce migration. This results in fragile economies, reduced regional attractiveness, and limited opportunities for young people.

The main target groups affected include municipalities, tourism organisations, hotel and coworking operators, and local entrepreneurs – as well as mobile workers, startups and freelancers looking for new places to live and work. While many areas offer promising assets – such as broadband access, vacant hotels, and natural or cultural attractions – they often lack tested strategies for sustainable, year-round development.

At the same time, global work and lifestyle trends have shifted. Remote work has become more common, and younger professionals seek locations combining purpose, flexibility, affordability, and nature. The concept of "Workation" – working remotely from inspiring rural areas while connecting with the local community – is growing and holds significant potential for regional development.

Despite this demand, many regions lack the frameworks and experience to attract and benefit from new working communities. There is a strong need for transnational exchange, capacity building, and innovation transfer to develop adaptable local models. Regional collaboration is essential to reduce dependence on monostructured tourism and to unlock opportunities in digital work, green entrepreneurship, and social innovation.

This project addresses these challenges by piloting and scaling a transnational Workation framework that empowers rural regions to attract new groups, activate year-round engagement, and build new value chains. Through strong local partnerships (e.g. municipalities, hotels, coworking spaces), practical tools, and a cross-border learning community, the project supports structural transformation and regional resilience.

It aims to activate infrastructure, retain young talent in rural areas, and strengthen the role of small municipalities in the green and digital transition.

## 5.2 Focus of the call

The project "Workation as Future-Oriented Rural Hubs" supports the development of rural and structurally weak regions by transforming underutilized or seasonal tourism infrastructures into vibrant innovation spaces. Many rural communities across the Baltic Sea region struggle with depopulation, seasonal economic cycles, and a lack of knowledge-intensive job opportunities. By turning hotels and similar locations into flexible hubs for remote work, entrepreneurship, and co-creation, the project offers new economic stimuli while fostering social inclusion and digital participation.

It particularly addresses the needs of local communities by introducing year-round activities and enabling cross-sectoral cooperation with local actors – from municipalities and SMEs to tourism and innovation stakeholders. Instead of focusing only on tourists, the project activates local and regional value chains, creates collaboration networks, and encourages long-term settlement.

This approach supports the call's objective by fostering economic resilience and social cohesion in regions that are otherwise at risk of losing their young and educated population. It builds new narratives around rural living and working, connecting places across the Baltic Sea region facing similar challenges, and offering transferable solutions and tools.

## 6. Transnational relevance

The challenges of demographic change, seasonality, and rural depopulation are not confined to one



country – they are shared by many communities across the Baltic Sea region. While some areas face strong outmigration from rural zones, others struggle with monocultures in tourism or aging populations. The Workation project addresses these shared issues by fostering transnational cooperation, learning, and joint solution-building across diverse contexts.

Through cross-border collaboration, we aim to develop and pilot a model that transforms tourism infrastructure into year-round, community-based work and innovation spaces. These “Workation hubs” are not a one-size-fits-all solution but require adaptation to different legal, cultural, and economic settings. Only by working together can we co-develop flexible concepts and test scalable approaches tailored to regional needs.

Involving partners from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, and Finland enables us to gather diverse knowledge on rural revitalization. While Sweden and Finland may focus on sparsely populated innovation zones, Poland and Germany can contribute experience in reactivating hotel infrastructure or driving community initiatives. The project gains from this diversity by pooling resources, building joint tools (e.g. quality frameworks, platform models), and sharing best practices.

Moreover, the project aims to establish a transnational network of rural innovation stakeholders who act as ambassadors beyond the funding period. This ecosystem of municipalities, tourism actors, coworking providers, and digital innovators will be crucial for long-term cooperation and knowledge transfer.

Without transnational collaboration, the validation of the concept, comparison of results, and scaling to other rural areas would be far less effective. Only through joint efforts can we respond to complex, cross-cutting rural challenges in the Baltic Sea region.

## 7. Specific aims to be addressed

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

The project fosters trust among rural innovation stakeholders by jointly developing and testing Workation-based transformation models. By working across regions and sectors, partners build confidence in each other's expertise, reliability, and motivation. Trust is reinforced through regular exchanges, shared piloting activities, and collaborative evaluation formats. Each partner actively contributes knowledge and receives recognition for local strengths and experiences.

The involvement of public, private, and civic actors in each country ensures a balanced perspective and transparency. Shared learning formats (e.g. study visits, peer-to-peer feedback) help build long-term relationships. As a result, the project lays the foundation for follow-up initiatives, such as joint infrastructure investments, co-branded formats or strategic alliances for rural development in the Baltic Sea region.

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

The project initiates a transnational Workation network that connects rural regions with tourism, innovation, and digitalisation stakeholders across the Baltic Sea region. By involving actors from Germany, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, Lithuania, and Finland, the project builds a structured network of municipalities, hotel partners, coworking providers, and public bodies.



Regular online meetups, in-person exchange formats, and shared events ensure continuous engagement. Partners co-develop scalable Workation formats, share insights into regional transformation needs, and align strategies. The network promotes long-term cooperation on rural revitalisation, tourism season extension, and hybrid work.

Through open access resources and multilingual communication channels, the network remains accessible and grows beyond the project duration – supporting continuous knowledge exchange and collaboration across borders.

#### Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

The project brings the Interreg Programme closer to citizens by directly engaging local communities in the design, implementation, and evaluation of Workation hubs. Citizens, local businesses, and public authorities in rural areas are involved through co-creation workshops, open calls for participation, and regional test events.

By repurposing underused infrastructure (e.g. vacant hotels or municipal spaces) for hybrid working, the project makes EU-funded innovation tangible in everyday life. Local hosts, freelancers, and tourism providers benefit directly and become ambassadors for the Workation concept.

Furthermore, multilingual communication campaigns and regional storytelling formats make the programme's goals visible and relatable to the general public. Through accessible digital platforms, citizens can share feedback, follow progress, and join events – making Interreg both approachable and relevant to their local challenges.

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

The project strengthens rural regions' ability to respond flexibly to unpredictable socio-economic shifts, such as sudden drops in tourism, demographic change, or post-crisis labour trends. By establishing agile Workation hubs, the project creates alternative economic opportunities that can be activated quickly when traditional industries (e.g. seasonal tourism) face downturns. Participating regions develop modular formats for digital work, entrepreneurship, and co-living that can be rapidly adapted to local needs. This flexible use of existing spaces (e.g. hotels, public buildings) allows municipalities to react to crises without long planning cycles or new infrastructure investments. The involvement of local actors, supported by a transnational knowledge network, ensures swift information exchange and scalable responses. Through digital community management and on-site facilitators, local initiatives can be launched quickly and sustained with minimal resources, increasing resilience.

## 8. Target groups

The project targets actors in rural areas who are both affected by socio-economic transformation and capable of shaping responses through active involvement:

### 1. Local municipalities and public sector actors

Municipalities are key enablers of regional transformation. They provide access to public infrastructure, coordinate planning processes, and are crucial for embedding Workation hubs in



regional development strategies. The project involves them in identifying sites, adapting concepts locally, and co-creating long-term use cases.

2. Owners and operators of local infrastructure (hotels, coworking spaces, community centres)  
These actors offer the physical backbone for Workation hubs. Through the project, they are empowered to repurpose underused spaces and develop hybrid offerings for remote workers, regional guests, and innovation-oriented communities. Their participation is essential for the pilot phase.

3. Rural entrepreneurs and small businesses  
As potential users of Workation infrastructure and contributors to community events, they represent a vital link between the local economy and visiting professionals. The project supports them in building networks, gaining visibility, and accessing broader markets.

4. Regional development agencies and tourism boards  
These institutions act as intermediaries, offering valuable data, stakeholder contacts, and outreach support. They help integrate the Workation approach into broader place-branding and tourism strategies.

5. Remote workers and digital professionals  
As end users, they validate the attractiveness and functionality of the Workation hubs and contribute knowledge to local communities. Their feedback guides improvements, and their presence brings new perspectives to rural areas.

All target groups will be actively involved through interviews, workshops, co-design formats, and pilot implementations, ensuring relevance, ownership, and long-term impact.

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	Regional development, land use planning, tourism coordination, infrastructure use	Germany (Schleswig-Holstein, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Finland
2. Small and medium enterprise	Hospitality, tourism, coworking, IT services, retreat operators	Germany, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania

3. Business support organisation	Startup promotion, rural entrepreneurship, tourism innovation support	Germany, Denmark, Lithuania, Sweden, Finland, Poland
4. NGO	Community development, local participation, social innovation	Germany, Denmark, Lithuania, Sweden, Finland, Poland
5. Higher education and research institution	Evaluation, rural transformation, regional studies, digital work trends	Germany, Sweden, Lithuania, Denmark, 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 Tourism
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 consortium unites 11 diverse organizations from across the South Baltic Sea Region, each contributing essential perspectives in rural tourism, regional development, and community-based innovation.

Project Bay Workation Hotel UG (Germany) acts as the lead partner and brings long-standing experience in developing rural innovation hubs and Europe's largest network of Workation locations. They offer strong expertise in integrating tourism, digital infrastructure, and local development strategies.



Nowogródek Pomorski Municipality (Poland) is a rural municipality adjacent to major tourist zones and seeks to promote year-round economic activity and sustainable visitor models.

Fundacja Urlop Bez Granic (Poland), based in Grzybowo, supports regional cooperation, social inclusion, and rural innovation. The foundation serves as a local connector and brings civil society experience to the consortium.

EUCC Baltic Office (Lithuania) in Klaipėda contributes expertise in sustainable coastal development, nature-based tourism, and capacity-building through years of EU cooperation.

Wirtschaftsförderung Nordfriesland GmbH (Germany) is the regional development agency for the district of Nordfriesland and supports structural change, innovation, and tourism diversification in remote areas like the island of Sylt.

District of Vorpommern-Rügen (Germany) is one of the largest rural regions in Germany with strong ambitions to transform its coastal tourism sector into a more resilient, digitally supported ecosystem.

Kivik's Museum & Archives Foundation (Sweden) offers regional anchoring in the cultural and historical tourism sector and strengthens the integration of place-based identity into modern Workation offers.

Tønder Business Council (Denmark) provides access to local SMEs, policy networks, and rural innovation efforts in Southern Denmark, facilitating strong public-private collaboration.

Crazy Town Oy (Finland) is a leading co-working and innovation space operator supporting entrepreneurship and remote work across smaller towns in Finland. Their experience with community building and hybrid work infrastructure is key.

Latvijas Jauniesu Attīstības Centrs (Latvia) adds a youth-focused, civic engagement lens to the project and helps include early-stage entrepreneurs and young digital workers.

This transnational team combines regional authorities, foundations, NGOs, and private actors to enable a shared vision of Workation as a future-oriented development tool.

## 11. Workplan

The project will be structured into six consecutive work phases, aligned with the overall goal of strengthening rural resilience through innovative Workation hubs:

### Phase 1: Project Start & Coordination (Months 1–3)

Kick-off meeting, consortium agreement, establishment of project governance, and communication structures. Involvement of municipalities and local stakeholders from the beginning ensures regional relevance and political ownership. Communication responsibilities and data collection templates will be agreed upon jointly.





#### Phase 2: Regional Needs Assessment & Site Selection (Months 4–7)

Each partner conducts a local needs analysis to assess tourism infrastructure, community readiness, and existing coworking or digital facilities. Workshops and interviews with public authorities, SMEs, NGOs, and tourism actors help define relevant pilot locations. A regional mapping report will be produced.

#### Phase 3: Concept Development (Months 8–10)

The project co-designs a modular Workation hub model adaptable to various regional settings. Outputs include an implementation guide, concept toolkit, and partnership templates for hybrid-use spaces. Target groups are engaged through co-creation sessions to ensure needs-based design. Content will be provided in multilingual formats for accessibility.

#### Phase 4: Pilot Phase (Months 11–18)

Each region implements 1-2 Workation test formats, such as week-long remote work programs, innovation retreats, or regional exchange events. These pilots allow for low-barrier testing and feedback from all target groups – including coworking operators, municipalities, and rural entrepreneurs. Selected formats will involve communication campaigns to raise awareness locally.

#### Phase 5: Evaluation, Transfer & Knowledge Exchange (Months 19–22)

Using input from local partners and participants, a cross-regional evaluation is conducted. Results are translated into a “Workation Quality Framework” and a Best Practice Handbook. Study visits, webinars, and online peer exchanges support interregional learning and help to improve the transferability of the concept across the BSR.

#### Phase 6: Sustainability & Dissemination (Months 23–24)

The project closes with a public conference, publication of all key materials, and the launch of an open-access digital platform that enables future collaboration and onboarding of new partners. Municipalities, business support organisations, and SMEs will use these outcomes to continue and scale Workation hubs locally and beyond.

#### Involvement of target groups:

All five selected groups (local authorities, SMEs, business support organisations, NGOs, and research institutions) are actively involved throughout – from analysis to implementation and dissemination. Their contributions ensure relevance and impact, and many will be long-term beneficiaries and users of the resulting structures and content.

## 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
<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 project	Could you please confirm whether our focus on hybrid tourism-innovation infrastructures (Workation hubs) aligns well with Priority 1.2 "Resilient economies"? We also aim to include small-scale pilot implementations across several rural regions – is it acceptable to define the pilots in more detail during the full application phase, based on feedback from the concept note?
Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	Are costs for external facilitation, communication campaigns, and web platform adaptation eligible in a small project? Can partners contribute co-financing through staff time and infrastructure use? Is it permitted to allocate lump sums or flexible internal budgets to partners for regional implementation under a common coordination?
Any other questions	Would the MA/JS recommend a consultation meeting before the full application phase, especially to validate the proposed partnership and target groups? Additionally, is it possible to include associated partners at a later stage if local authorities or NGOs decide to join after concept approval?

### 15. Additional information

The project's total budget is EUR 500,000, of which EUR 400,000 is requested from ERDF. The remaining 20% (EUR 100,000) will be provided by the project partners through eligible co-financing, including staff time, infrastructure use, or local public support. No Norwegian partners are involved. As the budget field in the form calculates only based on ERDF/Norway entries, the displayed "total budget" does not yet reflect the full financial scope. The partnership is in advanced formation; some roles and budget shares will be further refined in the full proposal. The project is fully aligned with the Interreg Baltic Sea Region's small project objectives and builds on previous experience in sustainable regional development and transnational knowledge transfer.



### **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>