



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	Empowering Baltic Sea communities through transnational cultural solutions for local resilience
Short name of the project	EmpowerBalticCulture
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)	Sihtasutus Tartu 2024
Name of the organisation (English)	Foundation Tartu 2024
Website	www.tartu2024.ee
Country	EE



Type of Partner	Interest group
	Trade union, foundation, charity, voluntary association, club, etc. other than NGOs
Contact person 1	
Name	Sille Talvet-Unt
Email	sille.talvet-unt@tartu2024.ee
Phone	+3725109278
Contact person 2	
Name	Annela Laaneots
Email	annela.laaneots@tartu2024.ee
Phone	+3725579808

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.

Foundation Tartu 2024
 Foundation Liepaja 2027
 Oulu Culture Foundation

5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

The specific challenge addressed by this project is the persistent decline in liveability, confidence, and social cohesion in small places, rural areas, and peripheral urban districts within the Baltic Sea region, particularly in Estonia, Latvia, and Finland. These regions, situated at the external border of the European Union with Russia, face a unique set of pressures that compound already difficult demographic and socioeconomic trends. As young people continue to leave for larger cities and older residents remain in increasingly neglected environments, the built environment in many post-socialist and peripheral transformation areas—including former collective farm villages, ex-military districts like Karosta, and remote northern municipalities in Finland—stands as a reminder of past ambitions but is often underused and lacking investment. The closure of traditional economic pathways, limited access to services, and a lack of opportunities for meaningful community engagement have contributed to a loss of confidence and local identity among residents. These issues are further intensified by the regions' borderland status, which brings additional economic and social uncertainty due to geopolitical tensions and the disruption of traditional cross-border ties.

Culture is both a reflection of these challenges and a powerful tool for addressing them. In many of these areas, cultural participation and creative expression have diminished, weakening social ties and reducing the sense of belonging that is essential for community resilience. The absence of accessible, participatory cultural activities means that residents—especially youth, the elderly, and minorities—have fewer opportunities to connect, express themselves, and shape their communities’ futures. This is particularly acute in linguistically or culturally diverse areas, such as Russian-speaking communities in Latvia, where social fragmentation can lead to further isolation.

By focusing on culture as a driver for positive change, the project seeks to empower communities to reclaim agency over their future, foster trust and cooperation, and enhance the attractiveness of their regions for both current and potential residents. Through participatory cultural and artistic interventions, the project will support the development of stronger, more resilient, and more inclusive communities, transforming these peripheral areas into places where people not only want to stay but can also thrive.

5.2 Focus of the call

Our application directly responds to the call’s focus on supporting the cohesive development of small places, rural areas, and peripheral urban districts experiencing significant social and economic challenges within the Baltic Sea region. Recognizing that these areas—especially in Estonia, Latvia, and Finland, which form the EU’s external border—face heightened demographic, economic, and social pressures, the project leverages the unique potential of culture and the arts as catalysts for renewal. Through participatory cultural and artistic interventions, we aim to empower local communities to co-create solutions that not only improve liveability and foster a stronger sense of community, but also help restore confidence and local identity in regions where these have been eroded. The project will pilot innovative models of community engagement, creative placemaking, and cultural tourism, with a particular emphasis on youth involvement, intercultural dialogue, and cross-regional learning. By rooting activities in the specific histories and aspirations of each locality and ensuring that local voices guide the process, our approach will contribute to making these peripheral areas more attractive and resilient for both current and future generations, fully in line with the objectives of the call.

6. Transnational relevance

The transnational relevance of this project is deeply rooted in both the nature of the challenges and the established practices of the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) partners. Peripheral, rural, and post-industrial areas in Estonia, Latvia, and Finland—especially those located on the EU’s external border—face similar demographic, social, and economic pressures that are further intensified by their borderland contexts and the legacy of large-scale transformation. However, these challenges cannot be effectively addressed by any single region acting alone. Solutions require transnational cooperation to enable the sharing of knowledge, inspiration, and innovative models that are tailored to local realities but informed by broader European experience.

ECOCs are uniquely positioned to lead such cooperation, as ongoing cross-border collaboration, knowledge exchange, and joint development of best practices are integral to their programming and long-term impact. Tartu 2024, Liepaja 2027, and Oulu 2026 have established routines of working



together and with other ECOCs, ensuring that new approaches to community building, cultural activation, and placemaking are continuously tested, improved, and disseminated. This project builds on that tradition by creating a living laboratory for cultural interventions in peripheral transformation areas, where methodologies and results are co-developed and jointly evaluated.

Transnational activities—such as joint workshops, field visits, collaborative art projects, and hybrid seminars—will not only allow participating communities to see their own challenges in a broader context, but also ensure that successful solutions are adapted and scaled across borders. Furthermore, thanks to the extensive ECOC network and its established knowledge transfer mechanisms, the results, toolkits, and best practices developed in this project can be shared with and applied by other peripheral regions across Europe.

7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

Through participatory workshops, field trips, and joint creative interventions, the project will foster trust between communities and stakeholders across the region.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

N/A

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

The project's community academies, art events, and public discussions will directly involve local residents, making EU cooperation tangible and relevant at grassroots level.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

By developing flexible, community-driven models and sharing guidelines, the project will enhance the capacity of target areas to respond to future social or demographic shocks.

8. Target groups

- Local residents of challenged rural villages, peripheral urban districts, and small towns (including youth, older people, and minorities)



- Community leaders and “community engagers” (active citizens, NGO representatives, local cultural actors)
- Local authorities (municipal officials, planners)
- Artists and cultural professionals interested in community-based work
- Former residents (youth and adults who have left, but may wish to reconnect or contribute)

These groups will be actively involved in mapping needs, brainstorming solutions, participating in workshops, co-creating art and cultural interventions, and evaluating outcomes. Their direct involvement ensures relevance and sustainability of project outputs.

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	Community involvement	Estonia, Finland, Latvia
2. Local public authority	Local development	Estonia, Finland, Latvia

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 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

Confirmed partners:
Foundation Tartu 2024 (Estonia) – Lead partner



Tartu 2024 has extensive experience in rural cultural activation and community engagement, demonstrated through its “Arts of Survival” programme, which encompasses over 150 projects and nearly 1,000 events across Tartu city and 19 South Estonian municipalities. The Foundation has pioneered participatory models, such as the South Estonia Community Programme, which has empowered local communities to initiate and deliver over 100 events in 2023–2024, highlighting local heritage, nature, and values. The Foundation is also recognized for its strategic approach to sustainability and accessibility, with an expanded sustainability guide and a robust impact evaluation process. Tartu 2024 is currently leading 1 Interreg Europe and 1 Interreg Estonia-Latvia programme projects.

Foundation Liepaja 2027 (Latvia) – Partner

Liepaja 2027 brings expertise in urban regeneration and inclusive cultural programming - through art, nature, and community-based interventions. The Foundation’s “Community Programme” has already supported projects, focusing on strengthening neighbourhood ties, fostering intergenerational dialogue, and activating youth in cultural life. Liepaja 2027 is also active in capacity-building for cultural professionals, running workshops and competitions that reach diverse audiences, from schoolchildren to professional artists, and supporting the development of new cultural hubs and events across the city and region.

Oulu Culture Foundation (Finland) – Partner

Oulu Culture Foundation leads the Oulu2026 European Capital of Culture programme, which is one of the largest regional cultural initiatives in the Nordic countries, covering Oulu city and 39 municipalities. Oulu 2026 programme includes projects, that prioritize co-creation, empathy, and respect for diversity, as well as initiatives promoting food culture, local entrepreneurship, and community engagement.

Roles:

Each partner will coordinate activities in their region, lead local engagement, and contribute to transnational exchange and joint outputs. All three organizations have demonstrated the ability to deliver large-scale, inclusive, and innovative cultural programmes, backed by thorough monitoring, research, and capacity-building. Their combined experience ensures that the project will be grounded in best practice, with a strong focus on participatory methods, community empowerment, and sustainable impact.

11. Workplan

The project will follow a structured work plan to build cultural resilience and enhance liveability in peripheral transformation areas across Estonia, Latvia, and Finland, in line with the Interreg BSR small projects call.

Community mapping and co-design:

The project begins with the creation of a cross-regional network of “community engagers”—local catalysts identified in each target area. These individuals will be engaged through outreach and initial meetings, and participate in dedicated workshops to equip them with participatory tools and foster trust. Each country will then host “community academies”—participatory brainstorming events designed to surface local needs, ideas, and aspirations. In Latvia, this will take place in Karosta district; in Estonia, in post-socialist villages Mikitamäe and Lasva; and in Finland, Meri-Toppila, that is socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhood inside of municipality of Oulu. These one-day events (approx 3-4 per selected location) will bring together residents of all ages, with a focus on youth,

minorities, and typically less active groups. Based on the input from these academies, each region will co-develop location-specific intervention plans, selecting art and culture-based activities that reflect community priorities and have the potential to increase liveability and attractiveness.

Cross-regional knowledge exchange:

Transnational learning will be fostered through a hybrid joint workshop for selected community engagers and active residents (20–30 participants). This event will be structured in three parts: (1) an in-person brainstorming session for all selected community members; (2) country-specific online meetings with broader local communities to discuss and refine ideas; and (3) a final in-person joint discussion to share country-specific findings and identify common themes. Field trips will be organized so that community representatives can visit partner regions (ca 10 participants from each country visiting the others), allowing them to see successful interventions first-hand and deepen cross-border relationships.

Creative interventions:

Each partner will implement 2–3 creative interventions in their region, co-designed with local residents. These may include skill-sharing workshops pairing traditional crafts with contemporary design, public art or participatory cultural activities (such as artistic playgrounds, storytelling trails, or community festivals), and initiatives to reconnect former residents—especially youth who have moved away—with their home communities. These interventions will also explore opportunities to develop new cultural tourism offers, involving local businesses and highlighting the unique heritage and creativity of each area.

Knowledge sharing and scaling:

Throughout the project, experiences and lessons learned will be systematically documented. The partnership will develop practical guidelines and recommendation paper.

12. Planned budget

ERDF budget (planned expenditure of partners from the EU)	EUR 385,000.00
Norwegian budget (planned expenditure of partners from Norway)	EUR XXX
Total budget (including preparatory costs)	EUR 385,000.00

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	Need overall opinion on suitability of the idea to present call.
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project

Questions related to budgeting and expenditure Please bring out usual mistakes or problems in budgeting, so we can avoid them

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>

