



# 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 Inclusive Labour Markets for Resilient Baltic Sea Regions

Short name of the project INCLUDE-BSR

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) Hanse-Parlament

Name of the organisation (English) Hanse-Parlament

Website [www.hanse-parlament.eu](http://www.hanse-parlament.eu)

Country DE



|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 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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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.

Only PPP 1, Hanse-Parlament has previous experience with Interreg BSR.

Partners 2 to 6—including the Labour Office of the Voivodeship Gdańsk (Poland) and the planned regional labour offices and NGOs from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—are all newcomers to the Programme.

### 5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

Across the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), significant groups face persistent barriers to labour market integration, while companies report a lack of workforce. This exclusion is increasingly unsustainable economically, socially, and fiscally, exacerbating labour shortages driven by demographic shifts. Addressing this exclusion is crucial to ensure regional economic resilience and social cohesion. Three key groups face integration challenges:

- **Young People neither in employment nor education and training (NEETs):** Many youths lack vocational qualifications, leaving them vulnerable to long-term unemployment. Approximately 75% of unemployed youth under 25 lack formal training, and up to 30% abandon education prematurely. Digital transformation reduces low-skilled jobs and raises qualification standards, increasing marginalisation risks.
- **People with Disabilities:** Less than 30% of businesses employ individuals with disabilities despite legal obligations. Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia report high poverty and exclusion rates among disabled

persons (approx. 40%), necessitating targeted support, workplace accessibility, skills training, and employer awareness.

- **Older Workers:** Employment among those over 65 remains low despite willingness and capacity to work. Poland reports the lowest older worker participation in the EU; Sweden the highest. These discrepancies highlight significant untapped potential, particularly among older women. Inclusive work environments, lifelong learning, and tailored support services can enhance their integration.

This project aims to strengthen social inclusion capacities by building competencies within:

- **Regional authorities (employment agencies):** Enhanced competencies in service design, personalised career guidance, and targeted interventions.

- **NGOs:** Improved skills in advocacy, outreach, service delivery, and cross-sector collaboration.

- **Business support organisations:** Increased abilities in promoting inclusive employment, facilitating dialogue between businesses and target groups, and supporting inclusive hiring practices.

The project will initiate a network between these three relevant stakeholders to work collaboratively on improving labour market integration of these groups.

## 5.2 Focus of the call

Integration of young people, people with disabilities, and older workers into the labour market directly supports the cohesive development of small towns, rural areas, and regions facing significant socio-economic challenges within the Baltic Sea Region. Enhancing the employability and participation of these groups strengthens local economies by addressing critical labour shortages and reducing dependency on welfare systems. By activating the untapped potential of these vulnerable groups, local communities benefit from increased productivity, economic diversity, and sustainability.

The project's activities will equip local stakeholders-regional employment agencies, NGOs, and business support organisations-with tailored strategies and tools to effectively address barriers preventing these groups from full labour market participation. This approach fosters inclusive economic growth, enhances social cohesion, and builds resilience in local communities, ensuring they are better prepared to adapt and respond swiftly to economic disruptions and demographic shifts. Ultimately, the project promotes resilient economies by creating sustainable labour market conditions, improving social well-being, and ensuring that local communities remain attractive places for diverse generations to live and work.

It will contribute directly to the so far underrepresented PA Education (Transition from school to work, Labour market for all and recognising potential).

## 6. Transnational relevance

The challenges related to integrating vulnerable groups such as youth (NEETs), individuals with disabilities, and older workers into the labour market transcend national borders within the Baltic Sea Region. Rural areas, in particular, face remarkably similar issues related to labour market integration,



demographic shifts, and socio-economic resilience, necessitating a transnational approach and significant mutual learning.

National efforts alone often lack comprehensive perspectives and innovative solutions essential to tackle multifaceted issues effectively. Transnational collaboration facilitates crucial mutual learning, enabling rural communities and regions to exchange best practices and successful integration strategies.

For instance, Finland demonstrates notably high integration rates of individuals with disabilities compared to the significantly lower integration levels in the Baltic states. Similarly, Sweden exhibits high employment rates among older individuals, whereas Germany's employment rates among the elderly remain substantially lower. These disparities present valuable opportunities for learning and exchange across borders.

Pooling expertise and resources, regional authorities, NGOs, and business support organisations across the Baltic Sea Region can develop robust, adaptive, and context-sensitive approaches. Collaboration promotes joint testing and implementation of effective strategies that have broader regional applicability.

Moreover, transnational cooperation fosters enduring networks and partnerships that enhance regional capacities significantly. Such collaborative frameworks facilitate coordinated policy development and innovative labour market practices more effectively than isolated national approaches. By connecting regions facing similar challenges, stakeholders can sustainably improve labour market integration, building resilient economies and socially cohesive communities throughout the Baltic Sea Region.

## 7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

The project initiates an innovative partnership among regional labour offices, NGOs, and business support organisations (BSOs) by establishing structured dialogue and collaborative workshops for the first time. These stakeholders will jointly identify barriers and co-develop tailored strategies to improve labour market integration of vulnerable groups.

Regular collaborative meetings and joint actions will enhance mutual understanding, build trust, and create a strong foundation for sustainable partnerships. This collaboration ensures ongoing coordination, knowledge exchange, and strengthened regional networks beyond project completion, laying groundwork for future joint initiatives.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

The project establishes a durable transnational network connecting regional labour offices, NGOs, and business support organisations (BSOs) working on labour market inclusion. It enables structured cooperation through shared tools, regular virtual exchanges, and peer-to-peer learning formats.

By fostering direct links between practitioners from different countries, the network helps bridge



regional disparities and strengthens shared commitment to inclusive employment. The partnership is designed for continuity, with joint action plans, mutual follow-up commitments, and mechanisms for ongoing exchange beyond the project's end. This creates lasting value for the BSR.

#### Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

The project directly engages citizens who are often excluded from labour market policies—youth (NEETs), people with disabilities, and older workers—particularly in rural areas. By involving local NGOs and employment agencies, the project ensures that these groups are not only addressed but their needs are actively included in designing solutions. Through local outreach, public events, and feedback mechanisms, the project brings EU cooperation closer to citizens' everyday realities.

It makes the Programme visible where it is most needed—among people facing exclusion and limited support. This strengthens local ownership and trust in European cooperation.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

n/a

## 8. Target groups

### Target Groups

The project involves three primary target groups that are directly affected by the challenge of low labour market participation among NEETs, people with disabilities, and older workers.

#### 1. Regional Public Authorities (e.g. Labour Offices, PP2-3):

These institutions are responsible for implementing employment policies at the regional level. They interact directly with job seekers and employers and have tools to influence labour market integration through guidance, job placement, and training services. Their involvement in the project includes network building, identification of successful practices, and piloting inclusive measures. They will use project outputs such as integration models and the BSR Inclusion Toolbox to enhance their regional strategies and service offers.

#### 2. Business Support Organisations (BSOs, PP1):

BSOs represent the interests and needs of SMEs, which are key actors in hiring vulnerable groups. They have access to companies, understand skill demands, and can guide businesses in inclusive employment practices. Their participation ensures that solutions are feasible from a business perspective. BSOs will contribute by collecting company feedback, supporting pilot activities, and promoting tested approaches to member firms. They are also central in transferring knowledge across regions and sustaining engagement beyond the project.

#### 3. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs, PP4-5):

NGOs have close contact with marginalised groups and are often the first point of support. They provide tailored services such as counselling, skills training, and legal support. Their local knowledge

and trust-based access to the target population make them critical actors for inclusive labour market strategies. Within the project, they will co-develop and implement solutions, help ensure outreach to excluded groups, and contribute to dissemination efforts. NGOs will directly use project tools and networks to strengthen their own integration work.

| 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. Regional public authority  | represent the labour market needs and social integration                                   | PL, LT, LV   |
| 2. Business support organisation  | bring needs of employers and receive solutions for implementing in the company             | DE & BSR   |
| 3. NGO  | will connect with people with disabilities, elderly and NEETs                              | EE, LT   |

## 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 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 partnership structure ensures practical engagement across three types of stakeholders: BSOs, labour authorities, and NGOs. The geographic spread across Germany, Poland, and the Baltic States addresses both common and contrasting integration challenges, enhancing the project's relevance and transferability across the BSR. The partnership is composed of one experienced lead partner and a group of four to five newcomers to the INTERREG programme. This mix ensures both strategic guidance and fresh engagement.

**1. Lead Partner: Hanse-Parlament (Germany)** The Hanse-Parlament is a transnational association of business support organisations (BSOs) across all BSR countries. While the network is experienced in transnational cooperation, it has not previously focused on labour market integration of NEETs, people with disabilities, or older workers. Through this project, BSOs will bring in practical insights from SMEs and their needs, serving as a bridge between employers and inclusion strategies. The network's broad geographic reach is also essential for identifying and transferring successful models from countries with strong integration records, such as Sweden or Norway.

**2. Labour Office of the Voivodeship Gdańsk (Poland)** This regional labour office covers the Pomeranian region and aims to strengthen links between businesses and NGOs. Its focus is on reaching underrepresented labour market groups and increasing their participation through integrated approaches. Their involvement brings concrete regional labour market data, policy tools, and experience in public employment services.

**3.- 6. Planned Partners (in formation)** The partnership will include regional labour offices and NGOs from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. These partners are currently being finalised. They will bring valuable local perspectives from rural areas that face persistent socio-economic challenges and have high exclusion rates, particularly for disabled individuals and NEETs. Their inclusion ensures that the project captures a wide range of national contexts and socio-political frameworks within the BSR.

## 11. Workplan

The project is structured as one Work Package focused on strengthening the integration of NEETs, people with disabilities, and older workers into the labour market in the Baltic Sea Region. The Work Package is divided into four Groups of Activities (GOAs), each with a specific function contributing to the overall project objective of improving stakeholder capacities and building resilient regional labour markets.

### GOA1.1: Establishing Regional Stakeholder Networks

This activity group lays the foundation for effective cooperation at the regional level. Each project region will create a stakeholder network consisting of regional labour offices, NGOs, and business support organisations (BSOs). Activities include stakeholder mapping, kick-off workshops in each region, and bilateral coordination meetings to clarify roles and expectations. The networks will facilitate structured collaboration between actors who often work in isolation and ensure regional ownership of the project activities. By the end of this phase, regional action plans and cooperation protocols will be in place.



#### GOA1.2: Identification and Exchange of Existing Solutions

The second group of activities focuses on identifying successful strategies and practices already used across the BSR. Project partners will jointly collect and analyse integration models, including those from outside the partnership (e.g. Sweden and Finland). The results will be synthesised in a "BSR Inclusion Toolbox"-a structured, practice-oriented guide with adaptable methods for integrating the target groups. An online exchange platform will be launched to facilitate peer learning and continuous interaction.

#### GOA1.3: Implementation and Adaptation of Solutions

In this phase, selected solutions from the toolbox will be adapted to the specific contexts of each partner region and implemented in cooperation with local stakeholders and companies. Each region will pilot 2-3 approaches. SMEs will be directly involved to test how the approaches can be operationalised. Joint partner workshops will be held to monitor progress, share feedback, and refine implementation. This group of activities ensures that project results are not only theoretical but tested and applied in real settings.

#### GOA1.4: Dissemination, Awareness, and Future Planning

The final group of activities focuses on communication, transfer, and sustainability. Given awards at the biggest SME conference in Poland, Katowice, each with approx. 1500 participants, will serve as key milestones for raising public awareness. In addition, regional dissemination events will be organised in all partner countries. A final policy paper will outline lessons learned and recommend future actions. Partners will also jointly develop follow-up project concepts and funding proposals to ensure continuity beyond the project's end.

## 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 | Based on our very positive experience in connecting NGOs with BSOs for migrants (Prosper), we agreed to take on the role of Lead Partner for this socially and economically focused project and connect to further NGOs. BSOs will be represented solely through the Lead Partner; all other partners will be either regional public authorities or NGOs. Both groups |
|---|---|



are central to advancing social integration.

While we have not yet decided whether to expand NGO involvement further, we are currently in contact with several interested regional authorities and NGOs. If the Joint Secretariat is aware of specific organisations that could be a valuable addition to the partnership, we would welcome the opportunity to connect.

Questions related to  
budgeting and expenditure

*(max.1.000 characters incl. spaces)*

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>