Project idea form - small projects

Version 2.1

Registration no. (filled in by MA/JS only) _____

Project Idea Form

Date of submission *dd/mm/yyyy*

1. Project idea identification

Project idea name	CircMetrics: Driving Rural Bioeconomy with Digital Solutions
Short name of the project	CircMetrics
Previous calls	yes ◉ no ○
Short name of the previous project	BaltCircMetrics
Seed money support	yes ○ no ◉

2. Programme priority

	3. Climate-neutral societies

3. Programme objective

	3.1. Circular economy

4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original)	Yrkeshögskolan Arcada Ab
Name of the organisation (English)	Arcada University of Applied Sciences
Website	www.arcada.fi

Country	FI
Type of Partner	Higher education and research institution

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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.

Arcada University of Applied Sciences

5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

Our project addresses the challenge of limited capacity in small rural areas and businesses to identify, measure, and implement circular bioeconomy practices. While circular economy strategies are advancing in urban and industrial centers, rural regions often lack the tools, indicators, and networks needed to unlock the value of local bio-based materials (such as agricultural residues, reeds, or forest side-streams).The target groups facing this challenge include:Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with focus on bio based flows (e.g. farming, food processing, forestry),Rural municipalities and development agencies, Local entrepreneurs, educational institutions and cooperatives interested in circular business models. These groups often struggle to: Understand their circular potential due to lack of data or capacity to apply circular economy indicators, Find economically viable uses for underutilized bio-based materials, Access services, networks, or support structures for transforming waste into value. Our project aims to test and apply bioeconomy and circularity indicators in selected rural areas, while co-developing new circular solutions with local actors. This includes identifying value-added applications for bio-resources, enabling industrial symbiosis, and linking rural actors to

digital tools and knowledge platforms that support a more circular regional economy. Rural and small-scale communities around the Baltic Sea face several interlinked barriers that undermine the effective adoption of circular (bio)economy principles. Although regional and national policies increasingly emphasize “green growth,” most existing indicator sets and decision-support tools have been developed for urban or large-scale contexts and often overlook the specific realities of remote municipalities, family-run farms, and micro-enterprises. As a result, local SMEs struggle to measure resource flows, identify inefficiencies, or demonstrate the economic benefits of closed-loop models. At the same time, educational institutions in rural areas lack tailored curricula and training modules that would introduce students and young professionals to context-appropriate circularity metrics and hands-on methods. Community organizations and interest groups frequently organize grassroots recycling or upcycling efforts, but without consistent performance benchmarks or access to comparative data, it is difficult to upscale these initiatives or replicate successful practices.

5.2 Focus of the call

The project will support implementation of circular economy in the BSR addressing small communities and SMS at first, but later transferring elaborated and adapted approaches to key target groups in project partner and other countries. The focus of the project is to support cohesive development of small places, rural areas, and areas experiencing challenges significant to the social and economic sustainability. Circular (bio) economy is of key importance for development of climate smart societies especially in local communities within the Baltic Sea region as the main relevant sectors covers services, food processing, agricultural, forestry and similar small sized industries. Promotion of circular (bio) economy lack practical indicators and tools to measure progress and attract and guide investments. Thus, project results will support creation of new jobs and opportunities for rural areas and motivation to develop local industries. Another major target groups includes youth and especially students: demonstration of success stories and development of skills, their training in basic concepts of circular (bio) economy will encourage younger people from small communities to develop businesses.

6. Transnational relevance

Baltic Sea Region is facing environmental, economic and social problems and a major challenge: transition towards climate smart area and circular (bio) economy plays a key role in this process. Project partnership, including associated partners, covers BSR regions where development of small communities is especially topical and thus will help to elaborate approaches relevant for the whole BSR. Transnational cooperation will allow to share experiences, success stories and failures in countries with largely differing development problems, but at first share elaborated circular (bio) economy metrics application in all interested sites in the BSR. Development of atlas of good practices, how to measure and thus promote circular (bio) economy, elaborated within this project and use it for training will support of sustainability of this project. By working across borders, Baltic Sea area countries will support implementation of circular economy, bioeconomy concepts, contribute at climate change mitigation and support new generation innovative potential, growth of bio-based industries and waste management practices to reach production circularity.

7. Specific aims to be adressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives
We will build trust by involving partners and stakeholders in joint testing of circular bioeconomy indicators and co-creating solutions based on local materials and needs. Participatory methods, workshops, and shared pilots will help establish strong working relationships. These interactions will create lasting collaboration structures and motivate future joint projects in sustainability, innovation, and rural development.
Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR
The project will strengthen and expand existing BSR networks focused on circular and bioeconomy, linking rural municipalities, universities, SMEs, and NGOs. Through shared learning activities, partner site visits, and digital collaboration platforms, we aim to maintain a vibrant cross-border network that continues beyond the project. This network will also help connect students and young entrepreneurs with innovation ecosystems across the BSR.
Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens
We will actively engage local communities, youth, and students through pilot demonstrations, open events, and training sessions. By showcasing tangible local benefits—such as new uses for local bioresources or community-driven circular solutions—we make the Programme's impact visible and relatable. Citizen involvement in data collection, awareness campaigns, and solution co-design will help anchor the programme's relevance at the grassroots level.
Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges
N/A

8. Target groups

1. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)
2. Rural Municipalities and Local Development Agencies
3. Entrepreneurs and Cooperatives in Rural Areas
4. Students and Young Professionals

	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, forestry, bio-based industries	Finland, Latvia, Poland

2. Regional public authority	Local public administration, regional development, circular economy policy planning	Finland, Latvia, Poland
3. Business support organisation	Bioeconomy, local circular initiatives, community entrepreneurship	Finland, Latvia, Poland
4. Higher education and research institution	Higher education, vocational training, circular innovations and education	Finland, Latvia, Poland

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 Bio-economy

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

Lead Partner: Arcada University of Applied Sciences (Arcada UAS) – Helsinki, Finland

Arcada leads the project with expertise in Baltic Sea-related circular economy innovations, circular economy indicators, and the development and application of digital tools and AI in sustainability contexts.

Activities are primarily focused on Swedish-speaking regions of Finland, the southern coastline, and the Åland Islands, which has strong community ties and experience with bio-based material valorisation and regional innovation support.

Arcada coordinates the project, leads methodological development of circularity indicators, and supports digitalization, training, and demonstration activities in Finnish pilot areas. Associated partners are Orkla, ÅCA and regional biobased waste treatment facility.

Partner 2: University of Latvia – Latvia

The University of Latvia contributes deep expertise in circular bioeconomy innovation, circular forestry, sustainability indicator frameworks, and waste management systems. The university also has strong capabilities in training youth, working directly with local communities, and engaging a broad range of stakeholders.

All regions of Latvia, with specific activities linked to partners in the Vidzeme region.

The university co-leads work on indicator testing, community engagement, youth training, and pilots of circular economy models in collaboration with associated partners.

Associated partners from Latvia include:

ZAAO (Ziemeļvidzeme Waste Management Authority) – Provides access to circular waste and environmental education infrastructures through their education centre URDA, which supports youth engagement and awareness raising.

Salacgrīva Municipality – Engaged in local implementation, stakeholder mobilisation, and alignment of project results with municipal strategies and rural development plans.

Partner 3: SME – Poland GreenBack Ltd.

This SME brings hands-on experience in circular business model consulting, particularly for small enterprises in rural and bio-based sectors. They provide tools for business transformation, contribute real-world data for tool testing, and serve as a bridge between research and practice.

Regions in northern and central Poland, with rural and industrial actors as key beneficiaries. The SME will apply and validate circularity tools with selected clients, co-develop business case examples, and participate in cross-border activities.

11. Workplan

The project aims to support the transition toward a circular (bio)economy in the Baltic Sea Region by developing and applying practical indicators and digital tools that enable stakeholders to measure progress, guide sustainable investments, and scale circular solutions. These tools will be co-created and delivered to key target groups and broadly disseminated across partner countries to ensure regional relevance and impact.Building on existing work within the BSR, the project will evaluate, analyse, and comparatively test circular (bio)economy indicator sets across the partner countries (Finland, Latvia, Poland). Based on this testing, the project will further develop and adapt a refined set of indicators suited to rural and small-scale bio-based contexts. These indicators will be validated (approbated) in real-life settings in collaboration with rural SMEs, local authorities, and development actors.To ensure practical use of these indicators, the project will invest in translating technical metrics into accessible insights for various stakeholder groups, including businesses, policymakers, advisors, and the general public. Targeted communication and training activities will be organized across the Baltic Sea Region to build awareness and ensure uptake.A key focus of the project is the integration of circularity metrics into education and youth engagement. Tailored study materials and training modules will be developed, piloted with students and young professionals, and made available for broader use among SMEs, cooperatives, and community organizations.The project will also produce a Digital Atlas of Good Practices, showcasing inspiring success stories in rural circular (bio)economy from across the region. These examples will serve as both a training resource for youth and a strategic tool to highlight the economic, environmental, and social value of circular solutions. The atlas will help stimulate local innovation, support youth entrepreneurship, and promote the emergence of new bio-based industries.Finally, the project will strengthen long-term transnational cooperation by building lasting partnerships between regions, municipalities, universities, and SMEs. It will contribute to the wider goals of climate-smart, inclusive development in the Baltic Sea Region and support replication of tested models in other rural and coastal areas.

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	Do we need additional partners?
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