

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	Center for Playful Problem Solving (CPPS)
Short name of the project	CPPS
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)	Science City Skelleftea AB
Name of the organisation (English)	Science City Skelleftea AB
Website	https://www.skellefteasciencecity.se/
Country	SE



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

N/A

5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

Baltic Sea Region communities face unprecedented transformation pressures that demand innovative responses beyond traditional governance and business models. Small municipalities and rural areas particularly struggle with demographic decline, aging populations, and youth migration while simultaneously facing needs for digitalization and green transition. Local public authorities lack systematic methodologies to engage citizens meaningfully in developing solutions.

SMEs in BSR experience similar constraints when addressing market disruptions, technological changes, and sustainability demands. Traditional business development approaches prove insufficient for navigating complex, interconnected challenges. These enterprises need innovative problem-solving tools that can harness collective creativity.

Educational institutions and training centers struggle to prepare learners for rapidly changing economic and social environments. Current curricula often emphasize analytical thinking over creative problem-solving, leaving graduates unprepared for the collaborative, adaptive approaches necessary

in transformation contexts. Civil society organizations face similar limitations when mobilizing community responses to local challenges, lacking structured methods to facilitate inclusive innovation processes.

The core challenge lies in the predominance of "puzzle-thinking" approaches that focus on identifying problems rather than exploring possibilities. Research demonstrates that playful problem-solving enhances creativity, enables perspective shifts, and generates breakthrough solutions, yet these approaches remain underutilized in regional development contexts.

Business support organizations recognize this gap but lack validated methodologies for implementing playful approaches within their existing programs. Higher education and research institutions possess theoretical knowledge about creativity and innovation but struggle to translate findings into practical tools for community application.

The specific challenge is the absence of systematic, transnational frameworks that can harness playful problem-solving for addressing complex regional transformation issues while building local capacity for sustained innovation. This creates a critical gap between the need for creative solutions and the availability of appropriate methodologies, leaving BSR communities vulnerable to ongoing transformation pressures without adequate tools for adaptive response.

5.2 Focus of the call

Our application supports cohesive development in small Baltic Sea communities by creating a network of "Centers of Playful Problem Solving" that use a game-based innovation/incubation method to address shared regional challenges.

Strengthening Social Fabric: We tackle key issues—demographic change, shifting job markets, and education gaps—by using playful problem-solving to boost collaboration, social cohesion, and local identity.

Driving Economic Development: The initiative builds on regional strengths such as strong education, cross-sector collaboration, and sustainability to create new opportunities in creative industries. It helps retain local talent and attract international expertise.

Fostering Cross-Border Cohesion: By connecting similar-sized communities across borders, we enable knowledge exchange and shared solutions. This network reduces isolation and supports joint responses to common pressures, from rural depopulation to climate adaptation.

Promoting Sustainable Innovation: Merging creativity with environmental goals, we help communities develop solutions that are both economically viable and ecologically responsible—ensuring long-term resilience.

Building Capacity: We turn Nordic-Baltic cooperation into a practical advantage. The centers offer spaces where traditional approaches meet playful innovation, helping small places stay vibrant, economically strong, and culturally unique.



6. Transnational relevance

The complex challenges facing Baltic Sea Region (BSR) communities—demographic change, digitalization, and climate transition—transcend borders and demand coordinated, transnational solutions. Small and rural areas across Sweden, Germany, Finland, Estonia, and others share these pressures, yet lack structured methods to foster local innovation.

Shared Challenge, Local Nuance: While the core issues are similar, their expression varies by cultural, economic, and geographic context. Transnational cooperation allows for a flexible framework that adapts to local realities while maintaining shared principles and goals.

Essential Knowledge Exchange: No single country holds all the expertise needed for playful problem-solving. Sweden contributes game cluster and regional development know-how, Germany brings creative research and playful incubation expertise, Finland offers strength in combining sustainable development and cutting-edge technology, and Estonia adds expertise in cross-industry innovation, including AI, health, and green tech. Only together can these capacities be combined effectively.

Scale and Impact through Cooperation: National initiatives alone would limit reach and resilience. Transnational collaboration builds critical mass for developing methodologies, supports shared learning, and fosters a network capable of weathering local economic fluctuations. A digital platform connecting all hubs further amplifies reach and scalability.

Validation and Sustainability: Testing across varied cultural and institutional settings ensures adaptability and proves the model's relevance across Europe. This broad validation supports credibility and long-term use, even beyond project funding.

Efficient Use of Resources: Shared development, joint training, and collaborative pilots reduce costs and raise quality, delivering stronger results than isolated national efforts.

7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

CPPS is itself a further cooperation initiative, from the projekt BSG-Go!. In CPPS we continue this cooperation, building sustainable trust with these key factors:

Creating collaborative experiences and shared ownership of results. The joint development of playful problem-solving innovation/incubation method requires intensive partner cooperation, creating deep professional relationships based on mutual expertise.

Transnational training sessions for "Playful Facilitators" create lasting personal networks across borders.

A co-creation incubation process: Partners jointly design, test, and refine methodologies through 8 pilot actions to ensure shared intellectual ownership.



A knowledge sharing platform will establish permanent communication and exchange of best practice. Shared learning experiences in joint evaluations.

Success multiplication, possible scaling to additional BSR regions, attracting new partners, and developing specialized applications (climate, digital incl.).

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

CPPS creates multi-level networks crucial for BSR resilience:

Professional Network of 40 trained Playful Facilitators across four countries, creating permanent expertise exchange.

Institutional Network connecting universities, business support organizations, and municipalities through shared methodology implementation.

Digital Community via the collaboration platform, enabling continuous knowledge transfer and joint problem-solving beyond project duration.

Local-Transnational Bridge linking grassroots communities with the BSR-wide innovation ecosystem. These interconnected networks address BSR's core need for strengthened territorial cohesion and innovation capacity in smaller regions.

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

Our project brings the Programme closer to citizens by actively involving them in playful co-creation innovations/incubation method that address real local challenges. Through pilot actions in Sweden, Germany, Finland, and Estonia, citizens participate in creative workshops, gamified consultations, and collaborative scenario planning—making innovation accessible and tangible. We aim to tell compelling impact stories through video portraits, digital showcases, and exhibitions that highlight how Interreg BSR contributes to everyday life.

By training 40 local facilitators embedded in their communities, we ensure long-term visibility and citizen access to creative problem-solving tools. Special attention is given to youth, SMEs, and underrepresented groups to broaden the Programme's reach and relevance. These efforts support a positive, human-centred perception of Interreg BSR and foster trust in transnational cooperation as a driver for regional development.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

CPPS creates rapid-response infrastructure by implementing a playful problem-solving innovation/incubation method that helps communities collaboratively address these challenges while strengthening local identity and social cohesion. Playful problem-solving adapts quickly to unexpected challenges, moving beyond rigid traditional approaches that fail under pressure.

The project fosters an agile problem-solving culture. Playful approaches inherently embrace uncertainty and rapid iteration, making communities more adaptable to unexpected challenges. The network transforms isolated vulnerable regions into a resilient, interconnected system capable of



collective rapid response to demographic shifts, economic disruptions, or climate emergencies affecting BSR.

8. Target groups

The primary target groups include local community leaders and municipal representatives from small communities and rural areas who are directly affected by demographic shifts, digitalization challenges, and economic transformation. These mayors, council members, and local government officials have decision-making power to implement solutions and can champion playful problem-solving approaches within their communities.

Civil society organizations and community groups such as NGOs, community associations, and volunteer organizations experience societal challenges firsthand and have established community trust with mobilization capabilities. They can facilitate citizen engagement and ensure inclusive participation in project activities.

Small and medium enterprises and social entrepreneurs represent a crucial primary target group as local businesses facing transformation challenges while seeking innovative solutions. They are directly impacted by demographic shifts, digitalization, and climate transition requirements, providing practical implementation capacity and real-world testing grounds for playful problem-solving methods.

Educators and youth workers, including teachers, adult education providers, and youth center staff, are essential for building long-term capacity and cultural change toward innovative thinking. They can integrate playful methodologies into educational programs and represent future-oriented perspectives on community development.

Secondary target groups encompass regional development agencies, innovation support organizations, and academic research communities who provide institutional capacity, methodological expertise, and evaluation frameworks to ensure project sustainability and transferability across the Baltic Sea Region.

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. Business support organisation	Business support organizations include agencies, incubators, and chambers that offer consulting, funding, networking, and training to SMEs and entrepreneurs across sectors.	SE, GE, ES, FI

2. Local public authority	Local public authorities include municipal governments, councils, and agencies managing services, planning, development, and welfare in small towns and rural areas.	SE, GE, ES, FI
3. Small and medium enterprise	Diverse economic sectors including local services, creative industries, technology startups, sustainable tourism, agriculture, crafts, and retail businesses facing digitalization, demographic changes	SE, GE, ES, FI
4. Higher education and research institution	Include universities, colleges, and centers working on creativity, innovation, regional development, digital tech, and sustainability, providing education and knowledge transfer.	SE, GE, ES, FI
5. Education/training centre and school	Include schools, vocational institutes, adult education, community colleges, and lifelong learning providers offering education, skills development, and capacity building for all ages.	SE, GE, ES, FI

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

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

A complementary partnership of rural transformation expertise, urban innovation research capabilities, and digital technology integration knowledge, creating synergies between practical implementation experience and academic rigor. Each partner brings unique regional challenges and strengths. The partnership represents different demographic, economic and cultural contexts, which enables co-creation of robust, adaptable playful problem-solving frameworks suitable for diverse BSR contexts while maintaining scientific credibility and practical applicability.

Lead Partner, coordinator: Science City Skellefteå AB (Sweden) A business support organization with ten years of proven experience in regional development, entrepreneurial ecosystems, and innovation support, such as managing the regional game cluster. Located in a rural and rapidly growing region undergoing green transition, SCS provides an ideal testbed for playful problem-solving methods. This project will be the foundation for establishing a playful incubator, integrating creative methods into long-term innovation infrastructure.

DE:HIVE, HTW Berlin University of Applied Sciences (Germany) A Berlin-based center for Play, Art and Technology who brings unique expertise in game principles, interactive systems, and the transfer of game mechanics to non-entertainment sectors. Their interdisciplinary approach provides foundation for developing scientifically validated playful problem-solving methodologies. Located in transforming industrial area in socio-economic transition, provides direct experience with regional transformation challenges.

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Finland) Metropolia brings expertise in operating incubation centers and entrepreneurship education programs and cutting-edge knowledge in digital technologies and sustainability development (via Helsinki XR Center, Immersive Sustainability Lab). Both are to be integrated into the project outcomes align them with digitalization and green transition priorities. CPPS methods will be piloted in context of challenges of areas outside metropolitan area, facing socio-

economic disruption and especially with SMEs.

Sparkup Tartu Science Park (Estonia) A public non-profit business support organisation, running different incubation and acceleration programs for startups and university spin-offs. This experienced partner strive to discover and apply different tools and programs to support local SME in their internationalisation activities.

11. Workplan

WP1: Creating, testing and implementing an international methodology for playful problem-solving

GoA 1.1 Methodology Development (M 1-8): transnational needs assessment across partner regions, analysis of existing related research based methodologies, developing harmonised playful problem-solving frameworks, and creating training materials. The lead output is a validated CPPS innovation methodology toolkit adaptable to diverse regional contexts, incorporating creativity research findings and regional development best practices, such as running game incubation programs.

GoA 1.2 Infrastructure and Capacity building (M 6-16): Establish Centres for Playful Problem Solving, or implement the methods in existing centre, in all partner regions. Launch a digital collaboration platform. Train 40 local facilitators to build lasting capacity via shared online courses between all locations.

GoA 1.3 Pilot Implementation & Evaluation (M 12–22): Conduct two pilot actions per region addressing local challenges based on the needs assessment. Test CPPS methods and evaluate cross-regional with shared protocols.

GoA 1.4 Dissemination & Transfer (M 14–24): Share pilot results and tools via applications and public events. Involve citizens directly and enable knowledge transfer across the BSR for long-term impact.

Target Group Involvement

Local public authorities are pilot hosts and solution implementers, providing real challenges and decision-making authority. SMEs engage as both problem owners and solution developers, testing business applications of playful methods. Educational institutions test methodologies and provide venues for community workshops. Civil society organisations facilitate citizen participation and ensure inclusive representation in the pilot processes.

Business support organisations coordinate between different stakeholder groups and provide ongoing mentorship for solution implementation. Higher education partners conduct evaluation research and methodology refinement based on pilot outcomes.

Target Groups Using Final Outcomes

Municipal governments will integrate playful problem-solving into participatory planning processes. SMEs will apply creative innovation methods for business development. Educational institutions will incorporate playful methodologies into entrepreneurship and community development programs.

Regional development agencies will adopt CPPS approaches for innovation support programs. Civil society organisations will use methods for community mobilisation and engagement. Other Baltic Sea Region communities will implement proven solutions through knowledge transfer via a digital platform.

Long-term Impact: The established network of 40 trained facilitators becomes a permanent resource for ongoing application and further development of playful problem-solving across BSR, ensuring project sustainability beyond the funding period while creating a foundation for scaling to additional regions and specialised applications.

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	Could you clarify Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens (1000)- should we just focus on one or more specific engagement? It says in the description: Please select one or more specific aims.
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Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	<i>(max.1.000 characters incl. spaces)</i>
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Any other questions	<i>(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)</i>
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15. Additional information

This is our first time acting as Lead Partner in an Interreg BSR project. Our regional network includes several individuals and organisations who have not previously engaged with Interreg BSR, making this an opportunity to broaden awareness and participation.

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>