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	Smart development of Ukmerge Region
Short name of the project	Smart Ukmerge Region
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)	Ukmergės miesto vietos veiklos grupė
Name of the organisation (English)	Ukmerge city Local Action group
Website	https://ukmergesmiestovvg.lt/
Country	LT

Type of Partner	Higher education and research institution

Contact person 1

Name	Agne Kanapeckaite
Email	ukmergesmiestovvg@gmail.com
Phone	+370 699 38127

Contact person 2

Name	-
Email	-
Phone	-

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.

1. Ukmerge city Local Action Group (Lead partner)
2. Swedish rural community network "Hela Sverige ska leva" (Partner)

5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

The Ukmerge district (population ~36,500) has been experiencing demographic changes in recent years. As of early 2024, the number of declared residents in the district reached 36,533, of which 21,990 lived in the city, 13,974 in rural areas, and 569 had no declared place of residence. It is encouraging that between 2023 and 2024, the population increased by 1,045 residents. This growth is largely driven by migration – many people move to Ukmerge due to its proximity to the capital and better living environment, but commute daily to work in Vilnius. However, this "commuter suburb" phenomenon poses several challenges:
1. Lack of Workforce for Local Industry and Businesses.
2. Weak NGO Sector and Community Activities.
3. Insufficient Social Infrastructure and Services for Residents.
4. Weak Community Life and Lack of Strategic.
Summary of the Challenge.
Ukmerge region, being adjacent to the dynamically growing capital city Vilnius, faces a dual challenge: on the one hand, it must meet the increasing needs of a growing population (social services, infrastructure); on the other, it must maintain local economic vitality and community cohesion to

avoid becoming merely a "bedroom suburb".

Target Group(s) Directly facing this Challenge:
1. Local businesses and employers (especially in the industrial sector) – face a labor shortage due to residents commuting to Vilnius for work.
2. Working-age population – many commute daily and are less involved in local community life; those staying face limited local employment options.
3. Youth – lack of quality leisure, education, and employment opportunities in Ukmerge leads to outmigration; youth voices are underrepresented in community planning.
4. Families with children – face shortages in early childhood education, limited family-oriented services, which negatively affects their quality of life.
5. Seniors and vulnerable groups – the aging population increases demand for social care services, which are still underdeveloped; specialized support (e.g., for victims of violence, persons with disabilities) is lacking.
6. Local NGOs and community organizations – themselves lack competencies and resources to address local issues effectively; need support in networking and implementing innovative solutions.

5.2 Focus of the call

Ukmerge district is a small municipality located near teh Capital. It is a typical example of a territory facing challenges from the "shadow" of a large city – such as daily outflow of residents, difficulties in attracting investments, and limited social activity. Project activities are designed to strengthen cohesion in this small region, allowing it to develop sustainably alongside surrounding areas rather than fall behind.
1. Strengthening the Social and Economic Fabric of the Local Community
The project aims to address issues of community cohesion, employment, and social inclusion – which are essential for sustainable development in any area. By fostering community spirit, promoting local entrepreneurship, and encouraging environmental awareness, the project will reinforce the socio-economic fabric of the region.
2. Sustainability Component
The project integrates environmental activities and green space development. Community-led initiatives to create or renovate public spaces and greenery, as well as public education on sustainable living, will help reduce the ecological footprint and increase environmental awareness.
3. Perspective of Rural Areas
The project will specifically focus on rural communities – by planning accessible services (e.g., mobile service units, digital solutions to prevent isolation of remote villages), promoting local initiatives, and supporting youth engagement in rural areas. Project supports the revitalisation of rural areas.

6. Transnational relevance

The challenges addressed by the project — labour shortages, youth migration, a weak NGO sector, and social infrastructure gaps — are not unique to Ukmerge. Many small towns and districts across the Baltic Sea Region face similar problems: peripheral regions are losing young people to capital cities, community engagement is declining, and there is a pressing need for innovative public service

solutions. For these reasons, transnational cooperation is essential to the success of this project, because:

1.Exchange of Good Practices: each partner country brings unique experience.

2. Addressing Common Challenges with Broader Ambitions: issues like labour migration and community stagnation are macro-regional phenomena. Through collaboration, it is possible to develop joint initiatives – such as a transregional youth mentoring programme, or a shared digital platform connecting communities.

3. Adoption of Innovations and "Smart Region" Concepts from Leading Examples:there are successful smart community models across the Baltic Sea Region.

4. International Legitimacy and Shared Identity: with international partners, the project team can more easily engage local residents – people will see that their issues are being addressed in collaboration with international experts and as part of a broader European goal.

Ukmerge municipality could theoretically develop a local strategy on its own, but it would lack international perspective, innovation, and comparability with similar regions. Moreover, national funding (or local budgets) rarely support experimental or pilot initiatives. Interreg, by contrast, offers the space to take risks, test new solutions, and learn from others' successes and failures. Transnational cooperation is essential to produce strategies and pilots that are high-quality, innovative, and scalable, not only for Ukmergė, but also for other regions. The project's results could serve as a model for other small areas in the Baltic Sea Region.

7. Specific aims to be adressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

The project will bring together diverse local actors – local government, NGOs, businesses, and academia – to jointly develop a strategy and pilot activities. Through joint trainings, workshops, and public events, mutual understanding and trust will be fostered across sectors. The transnational partner network will also build connections between institutions (e.g., Ukmerge LAG, Swedish rural community network "Hela Sverige ska leva", Vilnius Tech and the University of Riga), which can evolve into future project partnerships. The goal is to establish long-term relationships – both locally and internationally – that will provide a foundation for continued cooperation in tackling regional challenges.

The project will initiate a Baltic Smart Small Regions Network – a platform for exchanging ideas between small towns and districts. Participating partners will co-create a network to share smart rural/ urban solutions (e.g., regular online meetings, joint newsletters).

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

A large part of the project activities – public events, community campaigns, citizen trainings – will be targeted directly at local residents, not only institutions. This means that the benefits of the Interreg programme will be tangible in daily life: a young person will attend entrepreneurship training, a family

will take part in a community event held in a renovated green space, and a senior will access a newly introduced service in their village. At every step, we will communicate clearly that these opportunities are made possible by an EU cooperation project, raising awareness of EU support. This will help bridge the gap between international programmes and local citizens – people will see firsthand how Interreg contributes to improving their community. It is expected that this will also boost civic engagement and trust in European initiatives.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)

8. Target groups

The project identifies the following main target groups that are planned to be involved in its activities. These groups are directly affected by the identified challenges and can positively influence the situation:

	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.	Interest group	Residents will participate in surveys during the strategic planning process, take part in trainings and contribute to community events and pilot activities (through volunteering and participation).	Primarily residents of the Ukmerge region (Lithuania); also, communities from similar small towns in partner countries.

2.	NGO	NGOs will act as direct project partners or working group members in the preparation of the strategy. They will benefit from targeted capacity-building activities. NGOs will also implement pilot proje	Ukmerge. region (primary target group); also knowledge exchange with NGOs from partner countries
3.	Local public authority	The municipality will actively participate in drafting the strategic and action plans – engaging civil servants, politicians, and the community. Municipal representatives will be a key audience	Lithuania (Ukmerge municipality); also corresponding institutions from partner countries
4.	Small and medium enterprise	The project will include activities to promote entrepreneurship – such as training for new entrepreneurs, a mentoring programme and a campaign promoting job opportunities.	thuania (Ukmerge businesses); in partner countries, business representatives will join some activities
5.	Higher education and research institution	Students may carry out research, contribute to smart region ideas during hackathons, and participate in internships	Lithuania, Latvia (partner universities) – with results benefiting small regions and strengthening academia-region cooperation

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 Culture
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

Partnership Composition and Geographical Coverage:The project consortium consists of five partners from three Baltic Sea Region countries – Lithuania, Latvia, and Sweden:
1. Roles of Each Partner:Ukmergė City LAG (LT) – Project Lead Partner.
Responsible for overall coordination, budget management, and organizing the local strategic planning process. With close ties to the local community, the LAG will mobilize residents, NGOs, and local authorities to participate in the project. It will also implement pilot community initiatives in the Ukmergė region (e.g., community events, pilots in local municipalities).
Why this partner: The LAG is best positioned to bring together local stakeholders and ensure sustainability after the project ends.
2.Vilnius Tech University (LT) – Academic and technical partner. Its experts (urban planners, IT engineers, management professionals) will support the strategic plan development (research, methodologies, facilitation of creative workshops on smart region themes). They will also provide training for municipal staff and NGOs on smart city technologies (e.g., data use in planning, IoT for urban infrastructure), boosting local innovation capacity.
3. University of Riga (LV) – Academic partner, with expertise in social innovation and regional policy. The team will conduct a comparative study: assessing Ukmergė's situation in the context of other similar Baltic towns, and share Latvian experience (e.g., how small municipalities address migration or support NGOs). Riga experts will also lead empowerment sessions (drawing on Interreg BSR SEMPRE project experience, in which Latvian organisations developed empowerment methods). They will also help prepare policy guidelines with national-level recommendations.
4. Swedish Village Action Movement "Hela Sverige ska leva" (SE) – NGO partner and practitioner.
Brings practical experience in community mobilization from Sweden. This partner will coordinate parts of the pilot initiatives, especially related to green spaces and environmental education (e.g., guidance

on organising community gardens or park clean-ups with volunteers; sharing good practices on climate-friendly communities). They will also contribute to the project's sustainability plan (e.g., how to establish a permanent community coalition post-project, based on Swedish experience).

11. Workplan

The project comprises a single work package encompassing several interrelated tasks designed to achieve the overarching goal. The activity plan is as follows:

1. Development of the Strategic Plan "Smart Ukmergė Region 2030"Activities: Establish a working group (comprising representatives from the municipality, NGOs, businesses, youth, and partner experts); collect data (through resident surveys, focus groups, statistical analyses); organize three creative workshops to determine strategic directions. With the assistance of experts from Riga University and Vilnius Tech, a strategic vision, objectives, and tasks will be formulated in areas such as social infrastructure, employment, entrepreneurship, environmental protection, and smart governance. Partners will review the draft plan and provide recommendations, ensuring integration of international best practices. Strategic components on innovation and green solutions will be informed by partner experiences (e.g., smart solutions from Swedish rural areas integrated into the action plan). The strategic plan is developed as a pilot and adapted for application in other Baltic Sea Region countries.

2. Educational and Training Program for the Community and Institutions

Target Group Involvement: Training participants will be selected from the local community based on motivation, ensuring diversity (youth, women, unemployed individuals, NGO members, municipal employees, etc.).Transnational Element: Some training sessions will be led by partners (e.g., Swedish experts on community initiatives, Riga University on social innovation), providing international content. Additionally, one training module is planned to be conducted jointly with residents from a similar region in Latvia (in the form of online joint workshops), facilitating cross-border learning.

3. Community Events and Public Actions (Public Engagement)

Activities: Organize at least four major community events:

 - "Smart Region – Smart Community" Forum: An open conference-fair presenting project ideas, with partners from other countries sharing success stories.

- Youth Hackathon:innovation workshops where youth teams develop mini-projects for Ukmergė – such as IT solutions (apps, websites) or prototypes of social initiatives. Mentors from partners

-"Youth Entrepreneurship Laboratory" – about 3-month program where approximately 15 young individuals (aged 18–29) will work on their business or social enterprise ideas. They will be provided with a co-working space (e.g., in VVG premises or a library), intensive training (business planning, marketing), and mentors from local entrepreneurs or partner experts.

4. Dissemination of Project Results and Ensuring Sustainability

12. Planned budget

ERDF budget (planned expenditure of partners from the EU)	EUR 490,000.00
Norwegian budget (planned expenditure of partners from Norway)	*EUR XXX*
Total budget (including preparatory costs)	**EUR 490,000.00**

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	*(max.1.000 characters incl. spaces)*
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