



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	Youth Driven Circular Transformation in Family Businesses
Short name of the project	NextCircle
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)	Kauno mokslo ir technologijų parkas
Name of the organisation (English)	Kaunas Science and Tecnology Park
Website	https://techpark.lt/
Country	LT



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	
Name	Irma Bagdonienė
Email	irma.bagdoniene@techpark.lt
Phone	+37061873770
Contact person 2	
Name	Vaiva Kelmelytė
Email	vaiva.kelmelyte@techpark.lt
Phone	+37067335561

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.

To be confirmed. We are aware that this call strongly encourages input from newcomers to the Programme, introducing fresh perspectives and expanding participation.

5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

Family-owned SMEs in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) face a dual challenge: the need to adapt to circular economy practices and the struggle to ensure successful generational renewal. Younger members of these businesses often lack structured support, relevant skills, and engagement opportunities to drive circular transitions. This challenge is particularly pressing in rural areas and small town contexts, where traditional business models persist, and youth migration further threatens economic resilience. NextCircle addresses the disconnect between the younger generation's motivation to contribute to green transformation and their limited involvement in strategic decision-making. The project will empower youth in family businesses by equipping them with the tools, peer networks, and mentoring needed to lead the circular transformation, thus fostering economic resilience, innovation, and environmental sustainability within communities.

5.2 Focus of the call



In many rural areas and small towns across the BSR, family businesses play a key role in supporting the local economy. However, these businesses often face challenges when it comes to involving the younger generation in their long-term development, especially need when adopting business operations to areas such as sustainability and the circular economy. In this project, we aim to help these businesses adapt to new demands by working directly with young people who are part of or connected to family-owned SMEs. Together with local BSOs and municipalities, we plan to test various cooperation formats, such as mentoring, peer exchanges, or thematic workshops, that bring together youth, businesses, and support institutions. These activities will be carried out in different regions and will help us understand what works best in rural areas. The goal is to develop practical models that can later be shared and used more widely across the BSR.

6. Transnational relevance

The challenges of circular economy transition and generational renewal in family-owned SMEs are not unique to one country. They are shared across the BSR. In many rural areas and small towns, these businesses form the backbone of the local economy but often face similar structural barriers: limited access to innovation support, low youth engagement in succession planning, and a lack of tailored models for implementing sustainable practices.

Transnational cooperation allows us to address these challenges more effectively by bringing together diverse regional experiences, institutional approaches, and local realities. By working together, we can co-create and test models that are not only effective in one local context but also adaptable across regions.

The exchange of knowledge and practices will help us build more reliable and flexible cooperation formats between young people, SMEs, and support institutions. It will also enable us to develop joint outputs that reflect the shared needs of the region.

In addition, transnational collaboration increases the value, relevance, and scalability of the project outcomes. It ensures that the solutions we create are formed by real experiences from across the BSR and that they contribute to building a more resilient and connected regional economy.

7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

By engaging youth, businesses, and regional institutions in collaborative processes, the project fosters trust across generations and between stakeholders.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

By initiating collaborative activities, the project will form a transnational community of practice linking youth in family businesses, circular economy experts, and BSOs.



Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

Through workshops and mentoring activities in small communities, the project engages youth and business owners directly.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

N/A

8. Target groups

The project will involve four main target groups: SMEs, regional public authorities, NGOs, and BSOs. These groups are directly affected by the challenges addressed in the project: intergenerational renewal in family-owned businesses and the transition to circular economy practices. These target groups are positioned to contribute to and benefit from the project's outputs.

SMEs, particularly family-owned businesses, will participate in the piloting activities.

Regional public authorities will be involved in facilitating access to local ecosystems and supporting long-term sustainability.

BSOs will provide technical and advisory support and facilitate implementation at the local level.

NGOs active in youth engagement and community development will assist in outreach to young participants, support participatory elements of the project.

All groups will be involved in co-designing, testing, and applying the project outputs during implementation and long-term period.

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	Family-owned small and medium-sized enterprises, especially those located in rural or small-town contexts.	Lithuania, Poland, Latvia. The partnership will be extended, which will help reach more regions. It is also planned to reach out to other countries in the BSR, using the existing partnership network.
2. Regional public authority	Local and regional government institutions which responsibilities involve economic development, SME policy, youth support programmes, and environmental and circular economy planning.	Lithuania, Poland, Latvia. The partnership will be extended, which will help reach more regions. It is also planned to reach out to other countries in the BSR, using the existing partnership network.
3. NGO	Organizations engaged in youth development, entrepreneurship education, and community capacity-building, particularly those working with young people in local economic contexts.	Lithuania, Poland, Latvia. The partnership will be extended, which will help reach more regions. It is also planned to reach out to other countries in the BSR, using the existing partnership network.
4. Business support organisation	Institutions that provide innovation support services, SME advisory, business incubation, and entrepreneurship training.	Lithuania, Poland, Latvia. The partnership will be extended, which will help reach more regions. It is also planned to reach out to other countries in the BSR, using the existing partnership network.

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

The partnership for the NextCircle project has been designed to reflect a balanced and complementary composition across sectors and countries within the Interreg BSR Programme area. It brings together organizations with relevant experience in supporting SMEs, circular economy development, youth engagement, and regional economic resilience. The selected partners represent/will represent different types of institutions (business incubator, regional development organizations, NGOs, and public authorities). and come from both EU and non-EU Programme countries.

Confirmed project partners:

- Kaunas Science and Technology Park, Lithuania (lead partner). The organization will coordinate the project, lead the development of the toolkit, and host one of the regional pilot activities.
- Harju County Entrepreneurship and Development Centre (HEDC), Estonia. In the project, HEDC will focus on piloting local cooperation models, engaging youth and SMEs, and contributing to the toolkit development with a rural perspective.
- Piaseczno municipality, Poland. The organization will also support the implementation of pilot activities involving youth and SMEs in Poland.

Partners to be confirmed:

The partnership is currently in the process of selecting additional partners from southern part of the BSR (preferably a regional SME support agency or public authority with experience in rural economic development), and northern part of the region (institutions with expertise in circular economy implementation, business education, or support for family-owned enterprises).

These partners will enhance geographical coverage and allow for broader testing and validation of the project's outputs across different regional contexts.

11. Workplan

The project consists of a WP titled “Youth-Driven Models for Circular Transition in Family Businesses”. The work package aims to co-develop, test, and validate practical approaches for involving young successors in the circular transformation of family-owned SMEs in rural areas and small towns of the BSR.

Activities:

A1.1, Circular Readiness and Youth Engagement Scan, aims to map the current state of awareness and engagement among family-owned SMEs in participating regions. Interviews/surveys will be conducted with business owners and successors. This will help identify the circular economy potential within each SME and the level of intergenerational dialogue. The activity will produce regional “Local Readiness Maps”. SMEs, BSOs, and NGOs will contribute to this process by providing data and validation through consultations.

A1.2, Intergenerational Sandbox Workshops, will provide a practical setting for families to co-develop small-scale circular ideas. These workshops will be held in each region and will use design-thinking and circular economy canvases. The result of each workshop will be a “minimum viable circular idea”. The activity focuses on generating realistic ideas which come from the SME’s actual context. The involvement of SMEs, NGOs, and BSOs ensures practical relevance and methodological support.

A1.3, Piloting Circular Action Sprints in Family Businesses, will implement selected prototypes developed in the sandbox workshops. These short-term pilots will test concrete circular practices. The pilots will be led by young successors with mentoring support provided by BSOs. Each pilot will result in a brief implementation report summarizing outcomes, challenges, and follow-up options. This will serve as a decision-making tool for SMEs and a basis for assessing transferability to other businesses.

A1.4, Peer Exchange and Cross-Region Case Clinics, will create structured opportunities for learning between SMEs and support institutions in different regions. Online events will be organized, during which pilot participants will present their experiences and receive feedback. Outputs from this activity will be compiled into a “Case Clinic Compendium” summarizing insights for circular innovation in family-owned SMEs.

A1.5, NextCircle Toolkit and Policy Briefs, will summarize the project’s practical and analytical outcomes into a toolkit and regionally tailored policy briefs. The toolkit will include such tools as circular transformation guide, dialogue templates, and case profiles from pilots. The policy briefs will be aimed at regional public authorities, offering recommendations on how to support intergenerational innovation and incorporate youth perspectives into circular economy strategies. The final outcomes of the project will be used by family-owned SMEs looking to start their circular transition; and BSOs, NGOs, and regional public authorities interested in incorporating circular and youth-focused approaches into their framework.

12. Planned budget

ERDF budget (planned expenditure of partners from the EU)	EUR 400,000.00
Norwegian budget (planned expenditure of partners from Norway)	EUR XXX
Total budget (including preparatory costs)	EUR 400,000.00



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	<p>Can the toolkit be considered a core output of the project, even if it consists of elements such as circular transformation guide, dialogue templates for family firms, case profiles from pilots, and a self-assessment tool for youth engagement? We would like to confirm whether it meets the Programme's expectations for small project outputs.</p> <p>Workplan: should we include more theoretical aspects about circularity/ family business transfer.</p> <p>Family businesses: your opinion on whether we would expand our initial target audience to include owner-led businesses who are transferring a business (not necessarily within the family).</p> <p>Selected target groups. What suits better for this project: regional authority or local authority?</p> <p>Partnership: comments on composition.</p>
Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	<p>If necessary, can a part of the 40% of the project costs be allocated to pilot activities, when a specific product/service for the pilot participant is purchased by the project partner (on demand).</p>
Any other questions	-

15. Additional information

The project aligns with the European Green Deal and the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the BSR by linking circular economy innovation to demographic renewal and community resilience.



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>