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	Thy Drone Test and Innovation center network
Short name of the project	Dronetestcenter Thy
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)	Thy Erhvervsforum
Name of the organisation (English)	Thy Business Agency (Denmark)
Website	www.Thyef.dk
Country	DK

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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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.

This is the first time that Thy Business Agency and mb+Partner participate in a project under the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. Thy Business Agency represents the business and innovation ecosystem in Thy, a sparsely populated rural area in north-western Denmark, and sees this as an opportunity to bring new regional actors into transnational cooperation.

5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

Public authorities, innovation actors, and businesses across the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) are facing growing pressure to understand, regulate, and utilise drone and autonomous technologies. However, the region lacks a shared framework and test infrastructure that enables safe, coordinated, and scalable development of these technologies across land, sea, and air domains.

While several national and local initiatives exist, they are often isolated—resulting in fragmented standards, duplicated investments, and missed opportunities for collaboration. SMEs, municipalities, emergency services, environmental agencies, and defence actors are especially affected due to limited access to structured test environments, shared procedures, and cross-border knowledge exchange.

At the same time, many rural areas in the BSR are uniquely positioned to host drone and autonomous systems test sites. They often possess underutilised infrastructure—such as small airports, maritime zones, and open land—that can be adapted for testing with relatively low social and environmental risk. This means rural regions can turn structural challenges into innovation opportunities by activating

their place-based assets.

The project addresses this dual challenge—technological and institutional—by developing a collaborative initiative that connects actors working on test infrastructure across the BSR. It will align local and national efforts, map existing capacities, identify overlaps and gaps, and co-develop a shared strategic vision for transnational test environments.

The project contributes to the following EUSBSR Policy Areas:

• PA Innovation: by fostering rural innovation through the development of drone and autonomous systems test infrastructures.
• PA Secure: by improving civil protection and emergency response through integrated, cross-border testing and coordination.
• PA Transport: by supporting autonomous logistics and mobility solutions tailored to rural and maritime areas.

5.2 Focus of the call

The project is rooted in a rural and remote area of northern Denmark—Thy—where local stakeholders are proactively transforming structural challenges into opportunities for innovation and development. Like many rural areas in the Baltic Sea Region, Thy faces demographic decline, labour market shifts, and digital divides.

To respond, the project uses a Small Project format to bring together fragmented actors working with drone and autonomous systems test environments across the region. By coordinating local initiatives and facilitating shared learning, it supports the development of rural test infrastructures that would otherwise remain isolated.
In Thy, the project builds on place-based assets: Thisted Airport offers safe conditions for aerial testing, while the Hanstholm marine site enables trials of surface and underwater vehicles. These facilities, combined with low population density and strong local collaboration, provide ideal conditions for experimentation.

The project enables rural areas to take an active role in future-oriented technologies—turning underused infrastructure into innovation hubs. In doing so, it supports balanced territorial development and the integration of small places into transnational innovation ecosystems.

6. Transnational relevance

The project focuses on developing a dedicated test centre for drones and autonomous systems in Thy, Denmark. However, this effort is part of a broader landscape: across the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), several regions—often rural or peripheral—face similar opportunities and challenges in establishing test infrastructure based on underutilised airfields, marine areas or open land.

To be successful, these initiatives cannot remain isolated. The technologies involved cross borders, and so must the frameworks, standards and learning processes that support them. We know that actors in other BSR countries are already exploring or implementing similar drone test initiatives. Through this platform, we aim to connect with them to exchange knowledge, align efforts, and build a coordinated foundation for drone testing and innovation across the region.

Transnational cooperation will allow us to:

- Share methodologies for test site development,
- Learn from different governance, regulatory, and technical models,
- Support mutual recognition of test protocols and results,
- Coordinate investment and avoid duplication,
- Build a network of complementary, rather than competing, facilities.

The Thy test centre can serve as a living case: a rural model for how local infrastructure (such as small closed airports or marine zones) can be transformed into high-value innovation assets. At the same time, we are eager to learn from similar processes in Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Latvia, Poland and beyond.

The platform supports the objectives of the EUSBSR, particularly within PA Innovation, PA Secure and PA Transport, by facilitating a transnational exchange of practices and co-development of test infrastructures that serve both civil and security-related innovation needs.

By working together, we ensure that test centres in rural areas become not only nationally useful, but regionally integrated—contributing to a connected and resilient innovation system in the Baltic Sea Region.

7. Specific aims to be adressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives
The project creates a neutral, inclusive setting for stakeholders from across the BSR to jointly explore the development of drone and autonomous systems test centres. By focusing on early-stage challenges—shared by many actors—it fosters mutual understanding and trust. Joint activities such as mapping needs, exchanging practices, and co-developing strategic visions form the foundation for future cooperation on infrastructure, research, and policy alignment.
Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR
The project initiates a transnational network of test site developers, public authorities, SMEs, defence actors, and universities involved in rural drone and autonomous system testing. Through peer learning, shared strategy, and joint outputs, the network connects currently fragmented efforts across the BSR. The structure will support long-term collaboration and strengthen regional coordination on innovation, safety, and technological deployment.
Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens
By engaging local communities in Thy, the project makes EU cooperation visible and relevant to citizens. It includes school activities, public events, and live demonstrations of drone use in rescue

operations, environmental monitoring, and infrastructure tasks. This increases awareness of how new technologies benefit society and show that innovation and Interreg are not only for urban centres, but can also support resilience and opportunity in rural areas.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

The project strengthens the region's preparedness by improving coordination between test sites for drones and autonomous systems. These technologies are critical for rapid responses to crises such as wildfires, floods, and infrastructure failure. By linking rural test facilities and building a network of ready actors, the project enhances cross-border interoperability and ensures that innovation ecosystems can quickly adapt in times of need.

8. Target groups

The project targets key actors essential to developing coordinated test infrastructure for drones and autonomous systems in the Baltic Sea Region.
This includes test facilities in rural areas—such as small airports, maritime zones, and inland sites—that have strong physical potential but lack shared frameworks, cross-border collaboration, and access to strategic support.

The project also engages public authorities, SMEs, universities, and defence-related stakeholders, who all rely on structured test environments and transnational knowledge exchange to unlock the full value of autonomous technologies.

These groups will actively contribute to mapping capacities, shaping joint strategies, and participating in thematic workshops, test site visits, and policy dialogues—building a networked foundation for cross-regional collaboration.

	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	SMEs in the advanced technology sector, specifically working with the development, integration, or application of drone and autonomous systems for civil or dual-use purposes.	Country: Denmark Region: North Denmark (Nordjylland)

2. Higher education and research institution	Universities and research institutions specialised in drone and autonomous systems, focusing on applied research, innovation, and test development.	Country: Denmark Region: North Denmark (Nordjylland)
3. Education/training centre and school	Vocational education providers offering drone pilot certification and technical training to support workforce development in the drone and autonomous systems sector.	Country: Denmark Region: North Denmark (Nordjylland)

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 Secure
PA Transport
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 project currently involves two interested partners: MB + Partner (Germany), an engineering firm with expertise in aviation infrastructure and drone systems, and Riga Technical University (RTU) (Latvia), a leading technical university with a strong profile in applied research, drone technologies, and test infrastructure development.

Both organisations have expressed clear interest in the project and align with its objectives. Dialogue is ongoing to define their potential roles more precisely, based on their experience with rural test environments and transnational cooperation.

Further partners across the BSR are being identified to ensure a balanced and representative consortium.

11. Workplan

The project will deliver a structured and action-oriented network to support the development of drone and autonomous systems test centres in rural areas across the Baltic Sea Region. It takes the development of Dronetestcenter Thy as the central case and reference point and brings together partners from other BSR countries that are working on similar initiatives.

Main activities and outputs:

1. Mapping and strategic alignmentThe project will start by mapping existing and emerging test sites across the region—such as small airfields, maritime zones, and inland locations—with a focus on rural areas. This includes analysing governance models, infrastructure, regulatory barriers, and future potential. The result will be a shared strategic foundation for coordination and joint development.

2. Knowledge exchange and co-creationThrough workshops, site visits and expert dialogues, partners will share experiences from the development of Dronetestcenter Thy and their own national cases. This joint learning process will result in a best-practice guide and a strategy paper for how to establish and operate rural test centres for drones and autonomous systems in a transnational context.

3. Policy and funding dialogueInvolving policy makers, regulators and funding agencies, the network will co-develop a policy brief and a funding roadmap, based on the practical lessons from Thy and the partner regions. The aim is to build stronger alignment between local development efforts and EU-level strategies and frameworks.

Pilot activity:
Dronetestcenter Thy will serve as the primary pilot environment. The site will be used to test collaborative formats, stakeholder involvement methods, and cross-sectoral governance models. No product pilots are planned; instead, the focus is on validating planning and coordination tools that can be replicated in other regions.

Involvement of target groups:
Target groups—such as test site developers, municipalities, SMEs, defence stakeholders, universities and innovation agencies—will be actively involved in co-creating project results through thematic working groups, test site visits and stakeholder workshops. They will also be primary users of the outputs.

Use of outcomes:

The final outputs will be used by institutions developing test centres in rural areas, national and regional authorities responsible for innovation and resilience, and EU-level actors seeking to support dual-use and autonomous technologies. The project will also serve as a stepping stone for future cooperation and investment across the BSR.

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 you know of any previous Interreg or EU-funded projects that have successfully repurposed old infrastructure (e.g. closed airports, harbours) for innovation purposes—particularly in rural areas? We are interested in learning from potential challenges or pitfalls in such transitions, especially in terms of governance, regulatory issues or stakeholder engagement.
Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	*(max.1.000 characters incl. spaces)*

Any other questions	Are there specific expectations for how target groups should be involved beyond workshops?Can outputs (e.g. best-practice guide) be adjusted during the project if new needs emerge?Is it appropriate to frame a pilot as a governance and planning model rather than technical testing?Would stronger alignment with EU drone policy (e.g. U-space) strengthen the proposal?What are best practices for ensuring small project results lead to future large-scale cooperation?

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