

Project idea form - small projects

Version 2.1

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

Project Idea Form

Date of submission 05/06/2025

1. Project idea identification

Project idea name	Finding a second youth: Reinvent, Reuse, Recycle the post-industrial past towards the resilient society of the Future
Short name of the project	RE:YOUTH
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
--

4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original)	Gmina Leśna
Name of the organisation (English)	Municipality of Leśna
Website	https://lesna.pl http://bip.umlesna.nv.pl/
Country	PL



Type of Partner	Local public authority
	municipality, etc.

Contact person 1

Name	Szymon Surmacz
Email	s.surmacz@lesna.pl
Phone	+48730897891

Contact person 2

Name	Žemartas Budrys
Email	zemartas@thecritical.lt
Phone	+370 6 728 9425

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. Gmina Leśna (PL)
2. Nordic Circular Hotspot (NO)
3. Natural State (NO)
4. The Critical (LT)
5. QKilpos (LT)
6. Folkuniversitetet Uppsala (SE)

5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

The project addresses a shared challenge across the Baltic Sea region: the socio-economic decline of post-industrial towns and rural areas outside major urban centers. With the collapse of industries and kolkhozes, communities such as Leśna (PL), Kintai (LT), and their surrounding villages lost not only employment but also the social fabric that once connected residents, workers, and families. The ruins of former factories—once vibrant hubs of local life—now stand abandoned, symbolizing disconnection, loss, and stagnation.

In areas where the return of large-scale industry is unlikely due to globalization and logistical shifts, it is essential to REINVENT the meaning of post-industrial heritage, REUSE local identity rooted in a rich past, and RECYCLE decaying infrastructure—both physical and social. This “3R process” aims to shape a new, community-driven vision for regeneration and resilience in places left behind.

The project focuses on two key groups:



Older residents, many of them former factory workers, still live with the impact of industrial closures. Their identity and cohesion were shaped by shared labor and space. Often “suspended in the past,” they remain rich sources of knowledge about what it means to belong to a value-based community. In this project, they serve as Guardians of the Community, keeping memory alive and sharing intergenerational wisdom. Their inclusion offers recognition and renewed hope that the communities they helped build can evolve with dignity.

Young people entering the labor market, a group facing difficult decisions about their future. This includes:

(2a) Youth from rural and small-town areas, increasingly migrating to cities in search of opportunity.

(2b) Young urban residents, disillusioned by limited career prospects, social inequality, and a lack of agency.

The project engages both subgroups in the 3R process by providing tools, creative spaces, and participatory models to reimagine and repurpose post-industrial skills and spaces. Through hands-on learning and collaborative business development, it fosters intergenerational dialogue, social cohesion, and empowerment.

Sites will be rethought with a focus not just on revitalization but also on justice—avoiding gentrification or extractive use. Instead, they will become inclusive places that meet local needs by repurposing traditional skills and valuing productive labor. Mixed-use development will be promoted—both in the services these sites

5.2 Focus of the call

The project supports the coherent development of small towns, rural areas, and communities facing deep socio-economic challenges by transforming post-industrial decline into opportunity. In places like Leśna (PL), Kintai (LT), and Drammen (NO), the loss of industry has weakened local economies, social cohesion, and identity. The project uses Natural State’s proven Placemaking methodology to repurpose abandoned sites into inclusive, nature-integrated community hubs that respond directly to local needs.

In Kintai, where industrial collapse led to unemployment and youth outmigration, the project will turn derelict buildings into cultural and social spaces, combining circular construction, renewable energy, and eco-tourism. This creates new opportunities while preserving cultural identity.

Leśna will promote small-scale crafts rooted in local heritage, such as ceramics and woodworking, to build sustainable income and attract new residents. The commune’s development strategy envisions a creative settlement to reverse demographic decline through coordinated action with NGOs and social enterprises.

In Drammen, small-scale production and education-led pilots will reconnect the city with its timber and railway heritage. Local partnerships will activate underused spaces, support entrepreneurship, and foster community pride.

Through inclusive, participatory action, the project builds resilient, future-oriented local economies across the Baltic region.



6. Transnational relevance

Transnational cooperation is key to tackling the shared challenges. Though local contexts vary, similar social, spatial, and environmental issues persist: loss of public space function, community marginalization, and lack of accessible, appealing infrastructure.

Extractive industries and tourism may offer short-term economic gains but are highly vulnerable to systemic shocks. A more resilient path lies in building diverse local economies based on productive, value-driven jobs—a topic still underexplored and in need of international collaboration. Such cooperation enhances competitiveness, expands market access, and enables shared tools and resource pooling.

Though our project sites differ, they share the need for an integrated approach that blends diverse knowledge, expertise, and cultural insights. Partnerships enable:

- Comparative testing of methods in different environments
- Mutual learning through exchange of practices and experiences
- Joint creation of adaptable, replicable models for wider impact

Our consortium unites researchers and practitioners from civil society, public, and private sectors. This multidisciplinary and international mix is essential for nurturing social innovation—often sparked through unexpected conversations, cross-sector collaboration, and exposure to different viewpoints

Innovation stems from both internal assets and external influences. To evolve, ideas must be tested, refined, and evaluated through diverse lenses. Curiosity and openness drive this process. A transnational perspective helps challenge norms, find shared values, and reconfigure existing assets into new social and economic networks

This collaborative spirit also bridges divides—between generations, and between contrasting communities (e.g., residents of urban Norway and post-communist rural towns). Only through transnational work can we ensure project outcomes are relevant, transferable, and truly beneficial across the Baltic Sea Region—not just in isolated cases

7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

Our goal is to build trust among residents, organizations and authorities through transparency, joint activities and co-design of public spaces. Collaboration strengthens relationships and a sense of shared responsibility.

We understand that different places may need different techniques in regeneration processes, therefore our “RE:YOUTH” model is a radically endogenous approach, based on local identity and resources, which is the foundation for building lasting trust between the local community and the project team.



Such an endogenous approach is contrary to “classical” investments based on external financial capital, which usually irreversibly transform places and communities, destroying local social capital to the core. Our goal is to create places that avoid extractive approaches and focus on local needs and trust as the foundation for stable development.

Exchanging experiences with international partners also strengthens trust and lays the foundations for future cooperation.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

The project initiates and strengthens cooperation networks between small towns and organisations across the Baltic Sea Region that face similar social and spatial challenges. By jointly developing a revitalisation model and regularly exchanging knowledge, the project builds a lasting network of contacts między partnerami projektu, that can be sustained and expanded through future initiatives and activities beyond the project’s lifetime.

The key planned activity is an international school and at the same time a network of local activists (RE:YOUTH) and "skill hubs" created by them. The newly created network of local city transformers will remain under the supervision and support of specialists from partner organizations that initiated the project. In this way, the number of connections and relationships between specialists, organizations and BSR countries will be created and constantly developed and strengthened.

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

The project brings the Interreg Programme closer to citizens by demonstrating in practice how international cooperation can help address local challenges and improve quality of life. Residents are directly involved in project activities – participating in workshops, consultations, and public events – which helps them better understand the concept of European cooperation and its tangible benefits for their communities.

Our intervention in local communities, through prepared and trained young trainers and "skill hubs" run by them, is to act as a catalyst and create new organizational, economic and social connections in local communities.

The approach of endogenous development understood in this way is the key idea and value of our project. At its center are citizens, involved in the process of RE:YOUH of their towns.

Information activities described later in the "workplan" section will be helpful in spreading knowledge about the project, bringing the ideas closer to the citizens

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

The project enhances the ability of local communities to respond swiftly to unpredictable and urgent challenges – whether social, climatic, or economic – by strengthening economic resilience, social bonds, developing civic competences, and creating flexible public spaces that can serve various functions depending on emerging needs. Through cooperation with partners, the project also enables the quick adoption of proven solutions from other countries.

At the same time, the workplan is designed so that young trainers can respond to sudden events in



their communities. Planned, multi-faceted supervision by our specialists allows us to conduct subsequent activities carried out within the "skill hubs" in short iterations, enabling quick response and adaptation of activities to changing needs.

8. Target groups

1. Residents of Leśna and partner municipalities – especially blue-collar workers and seniors often left behind in development processes. These residents are direct users of public spaces and active participants in co-creation efforts, including the revitalization of abandoned areas such as a port (NO), factory (PL), and power plant (LT).
2. Youth – typically excluded from decision-making but full of potential to contribute fresh ideas and energy. They actively participate in co-creation and the development of skill hubs. 2a. Young trainers – selected and trained from the youth group to become catalysts of change. With new knowledge and networks, they will animate the RE:YOUTH process and act as "agents of influence", inspiring local authorities and leaders to adopt active transformation policies through skill hubs.
3. Local NGOs – experienced in community engagement and essential in facilitating revitalized spaces. They help build and sustain skill hubs as carriers of social capital and interpersonal networks. 3a. Small local businesses – including owners and managers. Their focus on stable value streams and solid value propositions supports the development of sustainable economic models. Through the RE:YOUTH process, NGOs and small enterprises will also be supported in establishing social enterprises that can deliver essential services and contribute to long-term economic renewal.
4. Authorities of Leśna – as project initiators, they are already motivated and engaged. Leśna serves as a model testing ground and an inspiring example of effective endogenous development for other municipalities.
5. Local authorities and public institutions – responsible for spatial planning, social policy, and development. They are key to implementing project outcomes and integrating solutions into long-term strategies.
6. International partners from BSR – as co-creators and testers of adaptable models that can be transferred to other regions facing similar challenges.

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 – especially young people and seniors, former employees of closed factories, ports, and collective farms – as direct users and active participants in the processes of co-creating re:youth of	Leśna community (PL, Lower Silesia): town and 19 villages Kintai (LT, Šilutė District), additionally, focusing on the neighbouring towns and villages Drammen (NO): redeveloping port city,
2. Local public authority	Representatives of local authorities and institutions, responsible for spatial planning, social policy, and local development – as key actors in implementing the future outcomes. Also political leader	Leśna community (PL, Lower Silesia) and neighbouring municipalities, Kintai (LT, Šilutė District) and other neighbouring villages as well as Šilutė municipality. Drammen (NO)
3. NGO	Local social and cultural NGO's – experienced in community work and the capacity to facilitate activities and provide social services in the re:youth process. Important stakeholders of skill hubs	Leśna community (PL, Lower Silesia): small town and 19 villages Kintai (LT, Šilutė District), including relevant institutions working in the region Drammen (NO)
4. Education/training centre and school	Folkuniversitetet Uppsala provides adult and VET education in Sweden, applying Korta vägen (Short way) and Rusta och Matcha models to boost skills, digital literacy, and employment in non-urban, trans	SE research on: PL, NO, LT

5. Small and medium enterprise	Businesses and social enterprises (mainly created by young people involved in the project) participating in the consultation as potential future service providers in the re: youth spaces and community	Leśna community (PL, Lower Silesia): small town and 19 villages Kintai (LT, Šilutė District), including relevant businesses working in the region Drammen (NO)
--------------------------------	--	--

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

PA Culture

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

1. The Municipality of Leśna (PL) – the lead partner – will coordinate the project and develop a technical design for revitalizing a central post-industrial site. It will lead public consultations and co-create the spatial concept with local communities, while recruiting young creatives to help build a “creators’ settlement.” The result will be a ready-to-implement technical design and a replicable model for inclusive revitalization in small towns across the Baltic Sea Region.

2. Natural State (Norway) will lead the strategic planning process, bringing its proven value-based placemaking methodology. It will guide partners on how to reuse and recycle abandoned industrial structures to foster local identity and economic resilience. Natural State will also build partner capacity and ensure broad knowledge exchange of project insights and best practices.

3. Nordic Circular Hotspot (Norway) is a collaborative platform advancing circular economy models across the Nordics. As a leader in the Nordic-Baltic circular transition, with working groups in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, NCH will facilitate knowledge transfer, link partners to circular businesses and value chains, co-organize capacity-building workshops, and support dissemination of results at regional and international levels.

4. Folkuniversitetet Uppsala (Sweden) is a respected adult education foundation with strong expertise in non-formal and vocational education, labor market integration, skills development, and regional innovation. It will contribute methods for inclusive, community-based learning and training of disadvantaged groups, supporting skill hub creation.

5. The Critical (Lithuania) is a research and design agency specializing in participatory design, placemaking, circular strategies, and behavior change. With extensive EU project experience, it will support co-creation, research, and capacity-building to ensure context-sensitive, sustainable solutions.

6. QKilpos (Lithuania) is a Kintai-based NGO focused on culture-led regeneration and sustainability education. It owns a former boiler room, the site of a pilot action where the project will explore reusing abandoned infrastructure for cultural, environmental, and civic uses.

Natural State and The Critical recently completed a joint research project, “Trustmaking: Young creators and responsibilities for the new green transition”. Its findings will support the creation of trustworthy, community-rooted processes across project sites.

11. Workplan

WP1 Administrative tasks and measures will be implemented from M1 to M24.

WP2: Co-research stage with local communities (M1-M6):

This phase focuses on understanding both the physical (buildings, materials) and social (skills, needs) aspects of each site. We engage local people, former workers, and city officials to: identify causes of low activity, involve local governments, assess risks, and design a system for long-term impact tracking. Special attention is given to preserving the site's identity and traditions. We aim to train local trainers (WP6) who can support ongoing development.

This endogenous approach contradicts usual big capital investments on brownfields. Our goal is to create sites that avoid extractive approaches and focuses on local needs, as well as building resilience to shocks through diversified economies and skill development.

Main output: A clear framework of needed skills and strategies to revive neglected buildings and strengthen community ties. Define RE:YOUTH process for each community.

WP3/4/5 – Youth Skill Hubs (M6–M24)

We'll create “Skill Hubs” in Lesna (PL), Kintai (LT), and Drammen (NO). These are places where young people, NGO's, and local businesses can come together. Each site will carry out its regeneration strategy, based on earlier research. This includes building, teaching, and community involvement tailored to the specific place.



Through hands-on workshops and planning sessions, youth will help shape future infrastructure and services in their area.

Main results:

- Architectural concepts for the sites (following when possible circularity, natural local material and aiming to address all Living Building Challenge petals)
- A long-term youth training programme

WP6 – Training & Cross-Learning (M5–M24)

Led by Folkuniversitetet Uppsala (SE), with Natural State (NO)

We will run a training programme to build up local skills for eco-friendly, community-led development. The programme draws on Folkuniversitetet Uppsala's long-standing experience in vocational education and labor market integration (e.g. Korta vägen (Short way) and Rusta och Matcha models), Natural State's place-based methods for eco-social transformation, and Nordic Circular Hotspot's transnational business community Together, they ensure that training modules are hands-on, inclusive, and tailored to site-specific realities.

This includes:

- In-person workshops and skill sessions in pilot sites (Lesna, Kintai, Drammen);
- Cross-border peer learning events;
- Digital micro-learning units to support long-term access and replication.

Main results:

- Training Programme: Modular curriculum on community-based regeneration and future skills (linked to WP2 Framework).
- 90+ trained local people
- 3 peer-learning meetings (PL – M5, LT – M16, NO – M23)
- A digital handbook with tools and methods
- A plan for keeping the training going after the project (supervision)

WP7 – Communication. Ongoing sharing of results to keep people informed and engaged.

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 100,000.00
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is “budget proportionality” interpreted? Is it acceptable for the lead partner to implement a larger share of the budget if it results from the scope of their tasks? 2. Is it possible for one of the main project results to be project documentation (e.g. technical) developed for one partner – e.g. the lead municipality – provided that the other partners contribute substantively and the result has a transnational character (e.g. as a model to be replicated in other municipalities in the Baltic Sea region)?
Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is it possible for one of the partners (e.g. the lead partner) to have a larger share of the budget, if this is justified by the scope of their tasks (e.g. development of project documentation)? 2. Are costs related to the preparation of technical documentation (e.g. construction design) eligible under small-scale projects? 3. What are the limits and rules regarding the outsourcing of services (e.g. for experts, designers, facilitators)? 4. Is it possible to include promotional costs such as exhibitions, printed materials, a website, or local events as eligible expenses? 5. What are the rules for reporting travel and accommodation costs when partners participate in activities hosted by other partners? 6. Can partners incur expenses in different currencies? How is the conversion to EUR handled in financial reporting?
Any other questions	<i>(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)</i>

15. Additional information

The planned result of WP3 "skill hub" in the Leśna commune - the development of technical documentation and a replicable model for inclusive revitalization is planned to be included in the local development strategy (an official legal document approved by the City Council) and will be used to obtain financial resources (ERDF, CF or PL GOV funds) for the implementation of factory revitalisation.

Similarly, the technique of creating "skill hubs" developed in the project will be correlated in the Leśna commune with the Social Services Center (CUS) financed by ESF+ funds, which will be the first such institution in the region of southern Lower Silesia. The CUS, being a municipal institution, will start operating from 09.2025. The creation of a "skill hub" would be an excellent bottom-up, complement to the CUS.

It will also be a practical adaptation and integration of local resource management schemes into a community (citizen)-led management model (governance).

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>