# 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 | Making Working Life Visible – Career Paths for Citizens in Small Baltic Sea Towns |
| Short name of the project | CAREERLINK |
| Previous calls | yes ◯  no ◉ |
| Seed money support | yes ◯  no ◉ |

## 2. Programme  priority

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|---|
| 1. Innovative societies |

## 3. Programme objective

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| 1.2. Responsive public services |

## 4. Potential lead applicant

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of the organisation (original) | MW-Kehitys Oy |
| Name of the organisation (English) | MW-Kehitys Ltd., municipal development agency of Mänttä-Vilppula |
| Website | mw-kehitys.com |
| Country | FI |

| 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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| Phone | +358504413249 |
| **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.

All planned partners are expected to participate in the BSR programme for the first time. They will be selected from our twin towns: Põltsamaa, Haapsalu (Estonia), Ronneby (Sweden), Aakirkeby/Bornholm (Denmark), and Høyanger (Norway). The partners will represent different types of actors, such as municipalities, development agencies, and the education sector. The consortium will be formed as the project progresses.

## 5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

The project tackles a common structural challenge in small and remote towns across the Baltic Sea Region: young people often leave their home regions due to the lack of visible and understandable pathways to local education and employment. This results in a loss of talent, a mismatch in local labour markets, and declining vitality of these areas. The challenge particularly affects youth, but also impacts local employers, educational institutions, and public authorities.

The core objective is to address the disconnect between existing opportunities and the people they are meant to serve. While small towns often have job openings and training programs, they lack tools to make these visible in a user-friendly and motivating way. This especially hinders young people's ability to see a future in their home region.

The project develops a flexible, digital model that helps local stakeholders—such as municipalities, schools, employers, and employment services—work together to present available work and training options to citizens in a clear and inspiring way. The model is adaptable and intended to be tailored to

each local context.

Young people are the main target group, but the model is also useful for jobseekers of all ages and families looking to support education and career choices. Other key groups affected by the challenge include:
– Local businesses facing labour shortages;
– Schools and training providers seeking better alignment with employment needs;
– Municipal and regional authorities aiming to retain population;
– Development agencies working to boost employment and local vitality.

Through international collaboration, the project allows participating towns to learn from each other and co-create transferable solutions. The aim is not just to share a tool, but to jointly build a model that strengthens local ecosystems and supports long-term regional resilience.

The challenge is directly linked to Programme Objective 1.2: the project enhances the availability of skilled labour by creating locally adapted and citizen-centred tools that improve labour market transparency and participation.

## 5.2 Focus of the call

The project strengthens social and economic cohesion in small towns by supporting citizens—especially young people—in connecting with their home region. It brings together local businesses, schools, and public services to make future work and learning opportunities visible, understandable, and relatable. By addressing the visibility gap between youth and local labour markets, the project helps reduce outmigration and improves long-term access to skilled labour.

The approach is strongly citizen-oriented: its main users are young people, families, jobseekers, and educators. The model uses real workplaces and local role models to make career paths concrete and accessible. The project brings the Programme closer to the citizens by increasing access to career information, building trust in local development, and engaging people in shaping their own future within their community.

## 6. Transnational relevance

The project creates added value through transnational cooperation by developing and comparing models in small towns across different countries that face similar challenges: population decline, youth outmigration, labour shortages, and the disconnect between education and working life. Although local contexts vary, the core issues are shared—making solutions transferable and adaptable across borders.

Transnational collaboration enables joint development of approaches, integration of diverse perspectives, and exchange of good practices. It also supports the creation of a scalable and replicable model suitable for broader application across the Baltic Sea Region. Rather than transferring one fixed model from one country to another, the project aims to co-create a new, refined version based on the experiences and insights of all partners.

Through this project, we not only aim to further develop our own existing model through comparison, learning and sharing, but also to build a version that can be widely applied across the region. This goal is only achievable through transnational cooperation.

## 7. Specific aims to be adressed

**Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives**

The project brings Baltic Sea Region cooperation closer to citizens by offering a concrete, everyday-level tool that connects local labour markets, education, and residents. The digital platform provides a clear view of employment and training opportunities, making the EU programme a visible and useful part of daily life for young people and jobseekers.

The cooperation builds on existing twin town relations, which strengthens long-term ties between small cities and creates a trust-based environment for joint development. Shared learning, exchange of experiences, and the development of adaptable models lay the foundation for further collaboration in the Baltic Sea Region beyond the project itself.

**Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR**

The project connects small cities sharing the goal of improving the match between youth and local labour markets while strengthening regional vitality. The cooperation is rooted in existing twinning relations, offering a natural and solid basis for a long-term network.

The model developed is not a one-off pilot but part of a longer-term transnational effort. Participating regions commit to mutual learning and continued support beyond the project's lifetime. Sharing and adapting the digital platform in different contexts helps build a lasting network of small cities across the Baltic Sea region.

**Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens**

The project brings the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region closer to citizens by concretely addressing its key goals: access to skilled labour, regional attractiveness, and youth retention. A digital platform presents local job and education opportunities in a clear and accessible way – helping especially young people envision realistic future paths in their home environment.

The BSR Programme becomes visible in citizens' everyday lives as a practical tool for improving their position in the labour market, not merely as a strategic policy. Citizens contribute to the development of content in collaboration with schools, companies, and educational institutions.

Through international co-creation with partners from other countries, the model gains broader perspectives, comparability, and transferability – demonstrating how the BSR Programme delivers locally impactful solutions across the region.

**Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges**

n/a

## 8. Target groups

Target groups can be divided into two main categories: 1) local actors who implement the model, and 2) citizens for whom the model is built.

1. Local actors (key target groups):

Local companies actively contribute to content creation by presenting workplaces, employees, and career paths. They benefit from improved employer branding and better access to talent – especially important in regions facing labour shortages.

Educational institutions (secondary and higher education) use the model for career guidance, collaboration with employers, and promoting local training opportunities. They also play a key role in increasing young people's engagement.

Municipalities and development companies coordinate the implementation and dissemination of the model. Their role in regional development, vitality strategies, and youth policies makes them central target groups for the model's long-term impact and sustainability.

2. Citizens (users and beneficiaries):

Young people are the primary user group. For them, the model offers a clear, accessible way to discover local education and employment opportunities – supporting their attachment to the region and future career planning.

Unemployed and adults outside the labour market can use the model as a tool for employment support and reskilling.

The wider local population benefits from the system, which is open to all and supports social sustainability by providing information, inclusion, and practical tools for shaping one's future.

All target groups are involved in developing, piloting, and producing content for the model during the project.

| 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. |
|---|---|---|

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|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Local public authority | Employment services, youth outreach, local education | Finland – Pirkanmaa (Mänttä-Vilppula) Estonia – Jõgevamaa (Põltsamaa), Läänemaa (Haapsalu) Sweden – Blekinge (Ronneby) Denmark – Bornholm (Aakirkeby) Norway – Vestland (Høyanger) |
| 2. | Education/training centre and school | Vocational education, guidance counselling | Finland – Pirkanmaa (Mänttä-Vilppula) Estonia – Jõgevamaa (Põltsamaa), Läänemaa (Haapsalu) Sweden – Blekinge (Ronneby) Denmark – Bornholm (Aakirkeby) Norway – Vestland (Høyanger) |
| 3. | Business support organisation | Local and regional development agencies, chambers of commerce, and networks that support SME growth, labour market connections and business visibility. | Finland – Pirkanmaa (Mänttä-Vilppula) Estonia – Jõgevamaa (Põltsamaa), Läänemaa (Haapsalu) Sweden – Blekinge (Ronneby) Denmark – Bornholm (Aakirkeby) Norway – Vestland (Høyanger) |
| 4. | Small and medium enterprise | Employers in services, manufacturing, creative sectors | Finland – Pirkanmaa (Mänttä-Vilppula) Estonia – Jõgevamaa (Põltsamaa), Läänemaa (Haapsalu) Sweden – Blekinge (Ronneby) Denmark – Bornholm (Aakirkeby) Norway – Vestland (Høyanger) |

| 5. Regional public authority | Regional development and innovation policy, labour market strategy | Finland (Pirkanmaa), Estonia (Jõgevamaa, Läänemaa), Sweden (Region Blekinge), Denmark (Bornholm), Norway (Vestland county) |
| --- | --- | --- |

## 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 Education

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 partnership is built around five small and more remote cities that share similar structural challenges: youth outmigration, skills shortages, a mismatch between education and labour market needs, and limited regional attractiveness. The coordinator is Mänttä-Vilppula (Finland), and partner cities are planned from Põltsamaa and Haapsalu (Estonia), Ronneby (Sweden), Aakirkeby/Bornholm (Denmark), and Høyanger (Norway). These cities are initial partner candidates from an existing twinning network – but their selection is guided primarily by shared development needs and similar demographic and labour market structures, not merely administrative ties.

Partners represent various types of organisations: municipalities, development companies, educational institutions, and business support organisations. This enables cross-sectoral cooperation that brings together the perspectives of education, labour market and the public sector. The aim is to create a multidisciplinary partnership that develops local solutions while also building a transferable, co-created model for other cities in the Baltic Sea Region.

Although the consortium is not yet finalised, the intention is to assemble a core group of actors for

whom the Interreg BSR programme would be a new experience. This expands the programme's accessibility and increases its impact at the local level. All partners work directly with citizens, young people and businesses – in line with Specific Objective 1.2 – and are able to apply the project results in their own development work.

The coordinating partner is a Finnish development company that currently manages the operational website www.toissataidekaupungissa.fi. It serves as a pilot model in the project, based on which other partners will develop their local versions. Each partner brings local expertise and adapts the model to fit their specific needs.

Partners co-develop the model, test it locally with schools, companies and employment services, and document their experience for broader use. This collaboration lays the groundwork for a wider network and long-term cooperation in the future.

## 11. Workplan

The main objective of the project is to develop and replicate a digital, place-based operational model that connects educational institutions, companies, and local authorities in small towns. The model will present local job and training opportunities in an accessible and citizen-oriented format. Its purpose is to strengthen local attachment, especially among young people, increase transparency in the labour market, and establish a new local innovation ecosystem.

The project consists of three main phases, scheduled throughout the two-year implementation period.

1. Joint Model and Conceptualisation (Months 1–7):
Based on the original Finnish model (toissataidekaupungissa.fi), a shared conceptual framework will be developed for adaptation in each partner's local context. The focus is on content production, actor roles, and local implementation methods – not on technical platform development, but on exchanging and applying existing practices. The goal is to formulate a scalable and flexible model that can be easily transferred to other areas.

2. Local Pilots and Co-Creation (Months 8–18):
Each partner develops their own version of the model in collaboration with local target groups (educational institutions, companies, municipal actors, jobseekers). Pilots will test content types (e.g., employer stories, training paths), application in schools and employment services, and citizen-based participation methods. Feedback will be systematically collected and analysed through peer learning, workshops, and online sessions.

3. Finalisation and Transferability (Months 19–24):
In the final phase, a joint documentation package will be produced, including the concept, engagement methods, and role distribution recommendations. The aim is not only to generate local solutions but to model a transferrable approach suitable for different national contexts. Results will be presented at an international final seminar and published on an open-access web platform.

Target group involvement is embedded in every phase:

1. Young people and jobseekers participate in development, content creation, and feedback.
2. Educational institutions pilot the model and support content development.
3. Companies are featured as workplaces and strengthen their local appeal.
4. Municipalities and development companies coordinate implementation and scaling.

The final output will benefit a wide range of local actors. The project directly supports Programme Specific Objective 1.2 by strengthening local skills, youth engagement, and community-based innovation culture.

## 12. Planned budget

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|---|---|
| ERDF budget (planned expenditure of partners from the EU) | EUR 460,000.00 |
| Norwegian budget (planned expenditure of partners from Norway) | EUR 40,000.00 |
| **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

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|---|---|
| Questions related to the content of the planned project | Can a development company act as the lead partner even if it is not a public authority, but operates on behalf of municipalities and public actors? |
| | Can we include educational institutions (e.g. schools and vocational secondary institutions) in the project in a way that their role is based on local involvement and piloting, without them being official partner organisations? |
| Questions related to budgeting and expenditure | Can personnel costs be allocated to both project coordination and content production, if the work is carried out by the same person in a small organisation (e.g. a development company)? |
| | Are there any restrictions on outsourcing technical development work (e.g. website updates, user interface improvements) if internal capacity is limited? |
| | Can the production costs of multimedia and communication materials (e.g. videos, interviews, visual content) be considered eligible as |

communication or implementation costs?

Are travel and meeting costs between partner cities eligible if they are related to joint planning of pilots, peer review, or dissemination of results?

Can the costs of local-level events (e.g. school presentations, public events) be included under communication or stakeholder involvement costs?

| | |
|---|---|
| Any other questions | *(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)* |

## 15. Additional information

The coordinating organisation, a development company owned by the City of Mänttä-Vilppula, has extensive experience in supporting entrepreneurship, education, youth work, and civic engagement. It has implemented several projects funded by ERDF, ESF, and rural development programmes, and has participated in international initiatives particularly with partners in Germany, the Nordic countries, and higher education networks. Mänttä-Vilppula is also known for its strong arts and culture profile.

The project builds on an already functioning digital model – www.toissataidekaupungissa.fi – used locally to connect youth, education, and employment opportunities. The aim is to further develop the model through international collaboration and create a transferable solution for other towns. Sharing the model and co-developing it with other regions is a core motivation and value of the project.

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**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

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