Project idea form - small projects

Version 2.1

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

Project Idea Form

Date of submission *dd/mm/yyyy*

1. Project idea identification

Project idea name	Digital revalorisation of museum collections for resilient economies and communities.
Short name of the project	DIREMU
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)	Eesti sõjamuuseum - kindral Laidoneri muuseum
Name of the organisation (English)	Estonian War Museum - General Laidoner Museum
Website	www.esm.ee
Country	EE

Type of Partner	National public authority ministry, 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.

2. NGO Estonian Military Heritage (Estonia).

5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

The specific challenge addressed by the project is the growing digital and economic divide between urban and rural cultural and heritage institutions, particularly in their capacity to adopt and leverage advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI). Museums and memory institutions in rural areas are often underfunded and understaffed, lacking the digital infrastructure necessary to implement innovative tools. This disparity weakens the resilience of local communities and reduces their potential to attract visitors, generate income, and actively contribute to the social and economic development of their regions.
By focusing on AI-powered image recognition the project provides a scalable technological solution that enhances the visibility, usability, and economic value of cultural collections. This innovation facilitates the digital transformation of rural cultural institutions and opens up new pathways for economic development within the creative and cultural industries (CCI) and ICT sectors.
Local authorities benefit by integrating these digital heritage services into broader regional development and tourism strategies, while businesses—particularly SMEs in the CCI and ICT sectors—gain new opportunities to co-develop and deliver such services. In doing so, the project strengthens the local innovation ecosystem, contributes to job creation, and supports the broader objective of

territorial resilience and liveability in rural areas
Target groups affected:
- Rural museums and memory institutions struggling with digital transition and revenue diversification.
- Local governments and development agencies seeking innovative ways to revitalise rural areas and support cultural sectors as contributors to regional resilience.
- SMEs and start-ups in the creative industries and ICT sector that often overlook cultural heritage as a potential sector for innovation and business development.
- citizens and wider community.
The project is directly aligned with the programme objective by equipping cultural institutions with tools to combine sustainable use of heritage with income generation, it promotes place-based innovation that supports long-term settlement and community wellbeing in rural areas. Specifically, in the context of image recognition, the project increases the role of local communities by inviting residents to contribute to local knowledge, co-create narratives linked to identified persons and events and ownership and inclusion.

5.2 Focus of the call

The project supports cohesive development in rural areas by transforming cultural heritage into a driver of local economic resilience and quality of life. AI-based facial recognition enables museums to digitise and interpret historical content more effectively, increasing public access and interaction. This leads to new visitor experiences and revenue models based on digital storytelling, educational services, and heritage tourism.
It strengthens the integration of culture and innovation into regional development, ensuring that even small or remote communities can create competitive digital offerings linked to local identity and small-scale cultural institutions to become active players in their local economies. Through digital revalorisation of their collections and community-driven innovation, it creates possibilities to:
• Generate new income streams through AI-supported services.
• Engage local residents and visitors in co-creating and consuming cultural content.
• Promote local identity and pride, essential for resilience and improving quality of life and creating better prospects for people living in rural and often remote areas.
The project acts as a catalyst for inclusive growth by combining cultural heritage, digital innovation, and participatory governance. Its socioeconomic impact is reflected in its emphasis on income generation for small institutions, business opportunities for SMEs and reducing reduce structural disadvantages through digitally abled growth.

6. Transnational relevance

AI-powered image recognition technologies benefit from data variety and diverse use cases across national borders. By pooling historical image data from different countries, the algorithm becomes more accurate and inclusive. Transnational cooperation allows partners to compare legal, technical, and participatory approaches to AI integration in cultural heritage and adapt the solutions to different institutional and socio-economic contexts.
By making this wealth of historical data accessible, the project strengthens transnational memory

culture, stimulates new forms of creative production (in CCI and ICT sectors), improves the socioeconomic sustainability and resilience of local authorities, enterprises and communities, and builds thus bridges between the countries and regions involved.
Authorities and enterprises from different regions will co-develop and test a shared AI tool, creating an exportable model. Cultural and ICT stakeholders can thus collaborate in forming a BSR-wide innovation ecosystem. This is particularly valuable for smaller organisations, which would otherwise lack the scale to access or influence such advanced technological applications

7. Specific aims to be adressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

DIREMU creates structured, transnational cooperation among public authorities, cultural institutions, and technology providers. By demonstrating how AI can serve shared societal goals, the project lays a foundation for durable partnerships and future collaborative projects, such as:
- creating networks for exchange and establishing mutual understanding between the partners / partnering countries at different levels: heritage institutions, authorities, enterprises, NGOs etc
- exchange of information and best practices
The project is much needed because museums and cultural institutions lack opportunities to exchange experience with their peers and other stakeholders from the cultural sector, especially in the use of AI. Also the local authorities do not often see the beneficial socioeconomic connection museums and memory institutions provide for the area and community. The enterprises consider museums and the services they provide as not too attractive field, which is a mistake.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

The project will strengthen the role of cultural heritage institutions in regional innovation networks, like NEMO (Network of European Museum Organisations) or BSR Cultural Planning.
In addition to cultural and museum-specific networks, the project also engages structures representing local governments and enterprises. These include the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC), networks like ICT Cluster Latvia, Baltic Creative, and Creative Estonia—platforms that support SME innovation, digital entrepreneurship, and cross-border cooperation in the ICT and CCI sectors.
DIREMU aims to form a network of cultural institutions experimenting with AI, ensuring long-term collaboration and shared learning within the region that will be sustained post-project. The initial partnership of DIREMU shows the role such projects play in creating and sustaining partnerships (the majority of partners have had previous cooperation experiences).

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

The project integrates citizen science by inviting local residents to help identify persons besides the possibilities provided by AI in historical photographs, co-create metadata, and contribute narratives. This supports community cohesion and opens B2B opportunities—for example, through local firms offering digital services or tourism packages based on the digitised collections.
Examples of implemented projects that inspire this approach include “Europeana Transcribathon,” which engaged citizens across Europe to transcribe and annotate historical documents, and the “Rephotography” initiatives in Central Europe, where communities compared old and new images of

their towns to create visual narratives of change.
Another relevant example is the Finnish “Yle Elävä Arkisto”, or Estonian "Ajapaik" where users were invited to tag and describe historical media content, which not only improved metadata quality but also strengthened emotional ties between citizens and national history.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

While not the project’s main focus, AI’s flexible application could also support emergency documentation and memory preservation, relevant in climate-related events or conflicts affecting cultural sites. The examples include the “Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online (SUCHO)” initiative, where volunteers used AI-assisted tools to archive websites and collections threatened by war, and the “RePAIR” project under Horizon Europe, which applies AI and robotics to reconstruct cultural artefacts damaged by disasters.

8. Target groups

1. Museums and Memory Institutions (rural and regional): Users of the AI image recognition tools and pilot developers.
2. Local Governments and Development Agencies: Enablers of integration with local development plans and income-generating strategies.
3. SMEs and Startups in the Creative and Cultural Industries: Developers and users of AI applications and related services.
4. ICT Companies: Technical partners adapting AI tools to cultural content and business use.
5. Community Organisations and Education Institutions: Contributors to co-creation and multipliers of project results.

	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.	Local public authority	Enablers of integration with local development plans and income-generating strategies.	Depending on the final partnership of the project consortium
2.	Regional public authority	Enablers of integration with local development plans and income-generating strategies.	Depending on the final partnership of the project consortium
3.	Small and medium enterprise	Partners adapting AI tools to cultural content and business use (mainly CCI and ICT sector).	Depending on the final partnership of the project consortium

4.	Business support organisation	Enablers of integration with local development plans and income-generating strategies.	Depending on the final partnership of the project consortium
5.	NGO	Museums and memory institutions that are users of the AI image recognition tools and pilot developers.	Depending on the final partnership of the project consortium

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 Tourism
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

1. Estonian War Museum - General Laidoner Museum (Estonia). Lead partner responsible for project administration and delivery. Pilot for AI-powered image recognition in the museum.
2. NGO Estonian Military Heritage (Estonia). Pilot for AI-powered image recognition in small museums in rural and remote areas, taking into consideration their capacities and possibilities.
3. Balteus Foundation (Poland). Community engagement campaigns involving citizen science and storytelling.
4. Centria University of Applied Sciences (Finland). Providing the scientific background for AI development and studying its applications and implications in the society and for developing new business models.
5. Museum of Västervik (Sweden). Pilot for AI-powered image recognition in a museum.
6. Region Šiaulių apskritis (Lithuania). Enabler of integration with local development plans and income-

generating strategies, involving SMEs from ICT and CCI sectors.
The partners cover all the relevant content areas and provide specific competences in the project delivery (museum competences, scientific background, community engagement, SME involvement).
The technical development of the AI solution for image recognition will be outsourced.

11. Workplan

Main activities and outputs:
- Mapping and analysis of AI-powered image recognition use cases in the BSR cultural sector.
- Co-development of an AI tool tailored to image recognition focusing on military history
- Participatory pilot projects to validate tool use, especially in small museums in rural and remote areas.
- Business model design workshops with ICT and CCI stakeholders to explore revenue-generation opportunities.
- Community engagement campaigns involving citizen science and storytelling.

Project results will be used by museums, cultural NGOs, local authorities, and SMEs to develop and scale similar initiatives, with transferability ensured through toolkits and policy briefs
Pilot examples:
- A regional identity archive co-created by citizens in partner countries using digitised and AI-identified images.
- A digital exhibition platform integrating local stories and AI-enhanced visuals, monetised via online access or licensing.

Target group involvement:
- Museums lead pilots and data preparation.
- ICT firms code and test the AI functionalities.
- Local governments promote outcomes as part of tourism and development strategies.
- Citizens contribute to identification and contextual storytelling

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 0.00
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	*(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