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	Local Solutions for Water Quality and Retention in Rural Catchments
Short name of the project	MicroWaters
Previous calls	yes ◯ no ◉
Seed money support	yes ◯ no ◉

2. Programme priority

	2. Water-smart societies

3. Programme objective

	2.1. Sustainable waters

4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original)	Gmina Puck
Name of the organisation (English)	Puck Municipality
Website	https://www.gmina.puck.pl
Country	PL

Type of Partner	Local public authority
	municipality, 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.

The following organisations are taking part in a project within the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme for the first time:
- Puck Municipality (Poland)
- K2 Solutions Foundation (Poland),
- Hässleholm Municipality (Sweden),
- Administration of Lithuania Minor Protected Areas (Lithuania)

None of these organisations have previously participated in projects funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme and are therefore new to the Programme.

5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

In many rural and peri-urban areas of the Baltic Sea Region, especially in lowland or agricultural zones, small water catchments such as drainage ditches, field canals, and seasonal streams suffer from degradation, erosion, and water quality decline. According to Eurostat and EEA data, agriculture-related nutrient discharges are among the leading pressures on surface waters in countries like Poland, Lithuania, and Sweden, with over 80% of river basins exposed to nutrient pollution. Moreover, nearly 14% of groundwater monitoring stations across the EU exceed nitrate thresholds (50 mg/l), particularly in intensively farmed areas.Climate projections further indicate a 10–20% increase in heavy rainfall events in the Baltic Sea Region, leading to more frequent flash floods and nutrient washouts from unprotected soils. These pressures disproportionately affect micro catchments, which often lack basic retention, filtration, or monitoring infrastructure. Local authorities, farmers, landowners, and environmental managers are directly affected but typically lack the tools and capacity to implement

effective small-scale hydrological solutions. MicroWaters addresses this systemic gap through community-based actions and replicable interventions.

5.2 Focus of the call

The project supports the cohesive development of small towns, villages, and rural areas by addressing one of the often overlooked but critical environmental and planning challenges in the Baltic Sea Region: the degradation and mismanagement of small water catchments. These micro catchments – such as drainage ditches, temporary streams, and wetland fringes – play a vital role in local water retention, flood prevention, and pollutant filtration, but are rarely included in municipal planning or infrastructure funding.MicroWaters provides a practical, low-cost, and scalable approach to revitalizing these natural systems through nature-based solutions and citizen-driven interventions. The project demonstrates how even small-scale hydrological measures – when implemented collaboratively with local communities, schools, and landowners – can generate significant environmental, social, and educational benefits.By piloting such interventions in underserved rural areas facing climate-related pressures and fragmented water management, the project offers a replicable model for other municipalities. It builds capacity where it is most needed: in local governments and stakeholder groups with limited access to expert knowledge, funding, or technical tools. In doing so, MicroWaters strengthens the social and ecological fabric of communities that are most exposed to environmental risks but least equipped to respond effectively.

6. Transnational relevance

Microcatchment degradation, declining water retention capacity, and nutrient runoff are common challenges across the Baltic Sea Region, particularly in rural and lowland areas. While the physical, legal, and institutional contexts vary between countries, the ecological processes and water management gaps are strikingly similar. Transnational cooperation allows partners to test nature-based solutions under different environmental and administrative conditions, enhancing the adaptability and transferability of project results.By working together, municipalities and environmental actors from different countries can co-develop practical tools, shared design standards, and common indicators to manage small catchments more effectively. The exchange of know-how also supports mutual learning on how to engage local communities and integrate micro-retention into local planning systems. This cooperation strengthens the capacity of rural areas to respond to climate-related water challenges and supports the Programme's goals of cohesive, resilient, and environmentally sound development across the region.

7. Specific aims to be adressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

The project builds trust between local communities, landowners, schools, and public institutions by addressing a shared but under-recognized issue: the degradation of small water catchments and the local impacts of declining water retention. Through collaborative pilot actions, participatory mapping, and open demonstrations, stakeholders gain direct experience with nature-based solutions and see

the practical value of small-scale interventions. This inclusive approach fosters confidence in local environmental governance and lays the groundwork for future cooperation on climate adaptation, sustainable land management, and community-led water initiatives across borders.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

MicroWaters initiates a practical transnational network of rural and coastal municipalities, environmental practitioners, and educational institutions committed to improving micro catchment management. By sharing pilot results, technical guidelines, and community engagement methods, the project creates a platform for sustained cooperation across the Baltic Sea Region. This network will enable the exchange of low-cost, replicable hydrological solutions and foster dialogue between local governments, land users, NGOs, and policymakers. It lays the foundation for future collaboration on climate-resilient water governance in both rural and semi-urban settings.

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

The project engages residents, landowners, schools, and local associations in hands-on activities that make water management tangible and locally relevant. Through participatory mapping, educational campaigns, and small-scale interventions such as rain gardens, retention ditches, retention basins, and evaporation ditches, citizens directly shape solutions in their surroundings. These visible and accessible actions bring the Programme into daily life, raising environmental awareness and encouraging civic responsibility. By empowering communities to take part in restoring their water landscapes, MicroWaters fosters a stronger connection between EU goals and local realities.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

Extreme rainfall, flash floods, and nutrient washouts are becoming increasingly frequent in the Baltic Sea Region due to climate change. Rural municipalities often lack the tools and resources to respond quickly and effectively to these sudden environmental threats. MicroWaters offers a fast and practical response by piloting low-tech, easily replicable micro-retention and filtration solutions that can be implemented without heavy infrastructure. By providing local actors with ready-to-use designs, guidance, and monitoring tools, the project helps communities act early—before damage occurs—reducing long-term costs and protecting water resources.

8. Target groups

The project targets groups that are directly affected by declining water retention and water quality in small catchments, and who are in a position to address these challenges through local planning, implementation, and stewardship. These include:Local public authorities in rural and peri-urban areas are responsible for spatial planning, environmental protection, water infrastructure, and climate adaptation strategies. They will play a leading role in selecting sites, planning interventions, coordinating with stakeholders, and scaling up successful practices.Environmental and water management agencies that oversee water bodies, drainage infrastructure, or protected areas. Their expertise is crucial for aligning the interventions with regulatory requirements and ensuring ecological effectiveness.Landowners and farmers who manage land adjacent to small water bodies or drainage systems. Their participation is key to the success of retention and filtration measures, as they provide access to implementation areas and long-term maintenance.Schools and educational institutions located in or near the pilot areas, which will be engaged in awareness campaigns, citizen science, and youth-led monitoring initiatives to foster environmental literacy.Local NGOs and community groups that can support outreach, facilitation, and long-term dissemination of project results within the wider

community.All groups will be actively involved through co-design workshops, field visits, educational activities, and dissemination events. Their participation will ensure that the solutions developed are not only technically sound but also socially accepted and ready for long-term use and replication.

	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	Water retention, flood mitigation, and land-use planning	*Poland, Sweden, Lithuania*
2.	Sectoral agency	Monitoring of small catchments and ecological protection	*Poland, Sweden, Lithuania*
3.	Interest group	Land management and microcatchment use (e. g. farmers' groups)	*Poland, Sweden, Lithuania*
4.	Education/training centre and school	Environmental education and youth engagement	*Poland, Sweden, Lithuania*
5.	NGO	Community engagement and public awareness on water issues	Poland

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 Hazards
PA Bio-economy

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 MicroWaters partnership consists of complementary organizations from Poland, Sweden, and Lithuania that represent key actors in local water management and civic engagement. The current consortium includes:Puck Municipality (Poland) – Lead Partner. A coastal local authority with both rural and tourism-related areas, facing seasonal water management challenges. The municipality will host the Polish pilot, coordinate stakeholder engagement, and ensure policy integration of results.K2 Solutions Foundation (Poland) – NGO. An experienced organization working at the intersection of environmental innovation, education, and community-led sustainability. K2 will coordinate knowledge development, facilitate educational components, and support pilot monitoring and dissemination. Hässleholm Municipality (Sweden) – Local public authority. A municipality with a strong record in nature-based water solutions and community participation. Hässleholm will implement the Swedish pilot and contribute to evaluation and replication.Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania (ALAL) – Sectoral agency / Interest group. ALAL brings together Lithuanian municipalities and will coordinate national outreach, ensure policy-level input, and facilitate dissemination of outcomes across rural municipalities.This combination brings together implementation capacity (local authorities), civic engagement expertise (NGO), and transnational policy reach (municipal association), ensuring a balanced and action-oriented partnership. Each partner represents different hydrological, institutional, and socio-political contexts, enriching the testing and transferability of solutions.

11. Workplan

The project follows a structured and participatory work plan that begins with micro catchment identification and ends with tested, replicable nature-based solutions for improved local water management.Main activities:Selection and mapping of pilot micro catchments Two sites (in Poland and Sweden) will be selected based on environmental sensitivity, water retention potential, and local engagement capacity. Participatory mapping will include landowners, schools, and local authorities. Design and implementation of nature-based interventions Each site will test low-cost solutions such as vegetated swales, retention ditches, sediment traps, or buffer strips. Measures will be tailored to local conditions and co-designed with stakeholders.Water quality and retention monitoring Baseline and post-intervention data will be collected (e.g., turbidity, flow variability, nutrient loads), with citizen science tools and technical input from project partners.Capacity-building and education Workshops, on-site demonstrations, and school activities will engage local public authorities, environmental officers, students, and landowners. Educational materials and awareness campaigns will support wider understanding and adoption.Development of replication toolkit and policy brief A toolkit will be produced including intervention designs, implementation steps, cost estimates, monitoring templates, and community engagement guidelines. A policy brief will summarise key insights for regional and national policymakers.Dissemination and outreach Local and transnational events, targeted communication, and digital dissemination will ensure wide visibility. The project will actively use

networks such as ALAL and Interreg BSR channels.Pilot solutions to be tested:Small-scale retention and filtration structures adapted to rural micro catchments,Community-led monitoring methods using simple water quality indicators,Integration of educational and participatory tools in environmental governance.Involvement of target groups:Local authorities will co-lead the planning, implementation, and integration of results.Farmers and landowners will host and maintain pilot interventions.Schools will support citizen science and youth awareness.NGOs and community groups will facilitate engagement and local dissemination.Use of project outcomes:Final outputs will be used by: Municipalities and local planners to replicate tested interventions,Environmental agencies to update guidelines for small catchment management,Educators and schools as part of climate and water education,Landowners and farmers to apply cost-effective water retention practices.

12. Planned budget

ERDF budget (planned expenditure of partners from the EU)	*EUR 470,000.00*
Norwegian budget (planned expenditure of partners from Norway)	*EUR 0.00*
Total budget (including preparatory costs)	**EUR 470,000.00**

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

MicroWaters directly supports local-level implementation of EU climate adaptation strategies and water-related environmental directives, including the Water Framework Directive and the EU Biodiversity Strategy. The project responds to a growing demand from rural municipalities for affordable, nature-based solutions that can be implemented without waiting for large-scale infrastructure.The project also complements national initiatives on water retention, circular economy, and environmental education. Its outputs – including the replication toolkit, monitoring templates, and educational modules – will be freely available and adaptable for use beyond the partner regions. The solutions tested can be scaled both technically (from plot to catchment) and geographically (across various BSR landscapes).The partnership intends to build on the project results in a future core project or as part of a joint policy initiative under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

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