

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 | Baltic Coastal Guardians: Youth Action for Marine Litter Solutions |
| Short name of the project | BalticGUARDIANS |
| 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

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|--------------------------|
| 2. Water-smart societies |
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3. Programme objective

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| 2.1. Sustainable waters |
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4. Potential lead applicant

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|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Name of the organisation (original) | Daugavpils Universitāte |
| Name of the organisation (English) | Daugavpils University |
| Website | www.du.lv |
| Country | LT |



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|-----------------|---|
| Type of Partner | Higher education and research institution |
|-----------------|---|

Contact person 1

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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.

The newcomer organization to the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme in our planned partnership is the Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG) (Finland). BSAG is an association with strong experience in working with youth. Their expertise directly aligns with our project's thematic focus on youth empowerment for marine litter solutions, making them a valuable first-time participant.

5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

The Baltic Sea faces severe pressure from human activities, with marine litter being a significant and persistent challenge. Despite efforts, HELCOM's 'State of the Baltic Sea 2023' report (covering 2016-2021) shows little to no overall improvement in the sea's environmental health. Marine litter is a key pressure, with monitoring showing high levels; 11 out of 16 sub-basins have 'not good' status for beach litter, and quantities can range from 47 to 280 items per 100 metres on beaches. These materials can persist for hundreds of years, making this a cumulative and long-term threat to the ecosystem.

Plastics are the predominant material, making up 60-80% or more of the waste found. The most common items include single-use plastics related to drinking and food, cigarette butts, and plastic fragments. Up to 80% of this litter originates from land-based activities, particularly tourism, recreational use, and poor waste management, often entering the sea via rivers and drainage. This pollution harms marine life through ingestion and entanglement and contributes to microplastic

contamination throughout the food web. This poses a direct threat to the region's blue economy, particularly tourism and fisheries, with cleanup costs adding significant financial strain to coastal municipalities. The pervasive nature of microplastics means they are now found in commercial fish species, raising concerns about human health through consumption.

While European youth show high concern for environmental issues (33% view environment/climate change as a top EU priority), there is a critical need for structured, transnational opportunities for them to actively participate in solving these problems. A gap exists between awareness and empowered, coordinated action. Empowering youth with the right tools and platforms, as this project intends, is a strategic investment in the region's long-term environmental sustainability and a direct response to the programme's focus on capacity building.

This project directly addresses this challenge by engaging youth across the BSR to co-develop and pilot practical solutions for marine litter. It directly supports the Interreg BSR Programme's Priority 2 "Sustainable waters" and Specific Objective RSO2.5 "Promoting access to water and sustainable water management" by aiming to prevent/reduce water pollution, engaging local communities, and piloting actions to shift consumer patterns, contributing to the EUSBSR goal 'Save the Sea'.

5.2 Focus of the call

BALTICLITTER project directly supports the call's focus on cohesive development for small places, rural areas, and areas experiencing challenges.

Many BSR coastal communities often rely heavily on tourism and a healthy marine environment, both of which are directly threatened by marine litter. Studies indicate that coastal litter significantly detracts from tourism appeal, potentially impacting local economies reliant on this sector.

Furthermore, several BSR rural and coastal regions face demographic challenges, including youth out-migration. The project addresses this social fabric issue by actively engaging young people within these communities. By providing skills training, opportunities for tangible action (pilots), and a platform for transnational connection, it empowers youth, foster a sense of local ownership and purpose, and enhance their future prospects within their home regions. BALTICLITTER will actively recruit partners and youth groups from these smaller towns and coastal villages.

As a 'small project', this initiative offers an accessible entry point for local authorities, schools, and NGOs in these potentially less-resourced areas to participate in valuable transnational cooperation. BALTICLITTER aim to build trust and networks, share practical solutions, and bring the benefits of the Interreg programme "closer to the citizens", thereby fostering cohesive and sustainable development from the ground up.

6. Transnational relevance



Marine litter in the Baltic Sea is an inherently transnational challenge. The Baltic is a semi-enclosed sea where currents transport pollutants, including plastics and microplastics, across national borders. Litter originating in one country often washes ashore in another, meaning isolated national actions cannot solve the problem. HELCOM's 2023 data confirms this, showing a region-wide issue with 'not good' status for beach litter in the majority of sub-basins.

Key sources, such as major rivers carrying waste from multiple countries, international shipping, fishing activities, and tourism, are all transnational in nature. The products and packaging that often end up as litter are also part of a shared BSR market. Therefore, addressing only national sources or impacts is insufficient.

When creating the Solution 1 “Coastal Guard Methodology” the consortium will have to consider the differences on countries experiences with coastal waste management, awareness campaigns, and youth engagement. Cooperation will allow to learn from each other and design a Solution 1 which will be common for all the coastal BSR areas.

When defining the Solution 2 “Coastal Litter Toolkit” it will be necessary to develop a common standard which can apply to any BSR youth group. Creating a unified "Youth Action Toolkit" and coordinating pilot actions ensures a comparable approach and a stronger collective impact.

The project aims to engaging young people in international cooperation and BSR identity, by empowering them across the BSR, fostering a shared environmental identity and building a network for long-term collaboration. This objective requires a transnational cooperation approach.

Finally, getting a better influence at policy level, can be done more efficiently if done by a united voice from a transnational group. BALTICLITTER will provide stronger, evidence-based input to EUSBSR PAs (like Hazards and Education) and EU-level policies, promoting a harmonised approach.

7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

BALTICLITTER project directly addresses this aim by creating a collaborative framework for diverse partners (NGOs, Higher education and research institutions, and Local public authorities) from multiple countries to work together on concrete tasks.

Overcoming the inherent challenges of cross-sectoral and transnational work on concrete deliverables, such as the joint research in WP1 and the coordinated pilot actions in WP2, will forge strong professional relationships and mutual respect that go beyond simple networking.

This project acts as a structured incubator for these partnerships. This foundation of proven, successful collaboration is essential for enabling future, larger-scale cooperation initiatives, directly fulfilling a key purpose of the small projects instrument, which is designed to be a gateway for new and lasting

partnerships in the region.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

A main project goal is establishing the "Baltic Coastal Guardians" network, a durable, multi-level transnational community. This network will not only connect youth but also their mentors at NGOs, their supporters within Local public authorities, and academic advisors at Higher education and research institutions. Initiated through our Baltic Youth Innovation Camps and solidified via coordinated pilot actions, this network will function as a long-term community of practice for sharing knowledge on marine litter solutions.

By providing a shared mission and digital tools like the 'Youth Action Toolkit', the project fosters a self-sustaining platform that can incubate future joint initiatives and serve as a unified advocacy voice, contributing directly to the EUSBSR's need for engaged and coordinated stakeholders.

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

BALTICLITTER project is fundamentally designed to bring the Interreg BSR Programme "closer to the citizens". We achieve this by empowering local youth to lead highly visible environmental actions (e.g., clean-ups, public awareness campaigns) within their own communities.

By engaging local media and showcasing the results publicly, we transform an abstract, EU-funded programme into a concrete local event that people can see, understand, and even participate in. When citizens witness direct, positive improvements in their local environment driven by local young people, the impact of EU funding becomes tangible, relatable, and highly relevant to their daily lives.

This approach directly supports the programme's communication objective to make the added value of transnational cooperation acknowledged by citizens across the region.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

N/A

8. Target groups

The project's target groups are strategically selected for their direct connection to the marine litter challenge, their capacity to act, and their interest in using the project's results.

LOCAL PUBLIC AUTHORITY

Local authorities in coastal areas are key partners as they are directly affected by the economic costs



of marine litter on tourism and cleanup services. Their competence in municipal waste management and local planning is essential for project success.

They will actively support pilot actions by providing permits, coordinating with local services, and promoting local activities. They will be central to the policy dialogues in WP3 and are prime users of the final "Policy Brief" and pilot models to improve local environmental strategies.

NGOS (NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION)

Environmental and youth-focused NGOs are central as their missions are directly challenged by marine pollution and youth disengagement. Their core competence is youth mobilization and non-formal education, engaging youth effectively outside formal structures.

They will be crucial in co-designing practical tools in WP1, and will then lead youth engagement, mentor "Guardian" groups, and implement pilot actions in WP2. They have a strong, long-term interest in using the 'Youth Action Toolkit' and training curriculum to enhance their future programmes.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTERS

These institutions are directly affected by the need to provide modern, engaging environmental education. Their pedagogical expertise and daily access to youth are vital.

They will be actively involved by integrating project materials into curricula, providing a framework for project-based learning, and dedicating teacher support for student participation in research (WP1) and pilots (WP2). They are key final users of the "Youth Action Toolkit" and assessment as ready-made resources that fulfill their educational mandates, increasing student capacity.

| 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 | Local Authorities are direct users of the project solutions, and will use it to support the creation of roadmaps to create actions to fight against marine litter in their local areas. | Partners will come from across the BSR programme area, with representatives from coastal regions in Finland to ensure a broad transnational scope |

| | | |
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| 2. NGO | NGOs, equal than LPAs support the creation of youth action groups in the collaboration area, working to adress the issue of marine litter accumulation and the environmental roblemas associate with it. | Partners will come from across the BSR programme area, with representatives from coastal regions in Finland, and Germany to ensure a broad transnational scope. |
| 3. Higher education and research institution | Environmental science, marine biology, oceanography, sociology, and educational sciences research and teaching. | Partners will come from across the BSR programme area, with representatives from coastal regions in Estonia and Latvia to ensure a broad transnational scope |

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 Education

PA Health

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

Each partner was selected in accordance to the project necessities in the territory and their expertise.



This selection follows a logical process:

- LOCATION: Partners have been chosen to cover a wide BSR area, representing different coastal and marine litter challenges from south to north.
- PILOTS: In regions where pilots will take place, we have included a local implementer as NGOs and a local administrations to ensure practical implementation and support.
- EXPERTISE: 2 partner profiles have been defined to cover all project tasks with complementary skills.
- AGREEMENT: A process of negotiation was undertaken with each partner to clarify their share of work and budget.

EXPERTISE PROFILES were sought in accordance with the project's activities:

1. Local Implementers (NGOs & Schools): Expertise in youth engagement, non-formal education, and hands-on community action. They will use the Toolkit and run the pilots.
2. Public Administration (Local Public Authorities): Expertise in local governance, environmental planning, and waste management. They will pilot the "Municipal Blueprint."
3. Sectorial Experts (Higher education institutes): Specific expertise in training platform development and creating practical, engaging materials for the Toolkit.

Currently, there are 4 partners under confirmation, and it is expected to double this number considering the associated partners. Some of the profiles are:

- Latvia: Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology
- Finland: Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG)
- Germany: EUCC – The Coastal Union Germany
- Estonia: Digitaletus OÜ

Some associated partners are still under negotiations, confirmed in final application. The associated partners provide the project with expertise and target group engagement activities regarding the overall project, specific pilots or value-based profiles.

11. Workplan

The BALTICLITTER project follows a 3 Groups of Activities structure: Solutions, Pilots, and Results Transfer , ensuring a logical flow from development to long-term impact.

GoA1: DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS (PP2_FWF and PP5 DIGI). GoA1 establishes project management and co-creates core project tools.

ACTIVITIES:

- A1.1: Solution 1: Coastal Guard Methodology: protocol for local authorities to assess the local marine litter problematic and to create a roadmap to launch their coastal youth guardians network adjusted to their problematic.
- A1.2: Solution 2: Coastal Guardian Toolkit: a practical, multilingual online platform featuring campaign guides and training modules. This toolkit will be used to train more than 100 youth people in the BSR area.
- A1.3 Pretesting and validation of solutions 1 and 2



OUTPUTS:

- Solution 1: Coastal Guard Methodology
- Solution 2: Coastal Litter Toolkit

TARGET GROUPS: Higher education and research institutions will lead the Methodology definition; NGOs and Local Authorities will co-develop tools and facilitate youth groups feedback process.

GoA2: PILOTING SOLUTIONS (PP3_BSAG and PP4_EUCC). In this second GoA partners will test solutions in real contexts.

ACTIVITIES:

- A2.1: Piloting Solution 1: PPs will use the Methodology to create the Coastal Guard Roadmap and launch their Coastal Guardians Networks.
- A2.2: Piloting Solution 2: PPs will use the Coastal Guard Toolkit to train local Coastal Guardians Groups. After the training, each group will implement 4 group events focused on collecting marine litter in their local coastal areas (Coastal Guardian Collect Actions)
- A2.3: Pilot Monitoring & Evaluation: Collect data and feedback to assess impact of pilots.

OUTPUTS:

- 4-5 Coastal Guard Roadmaps
- 4-5 Coastal Guard Networks
- 10 Coastal Guardians Groups
- 40 Coastal Guardian Collect Actions

TARGET GROUPS: NGOs and Local Authorities will lead pilot actions in each collaboration area.

GoA3: RESULTS TRANSFER – SPREADING IMPACT (PP6_UML). GoA3 focuses on visibility, policy impact, and sustainability.

ACTIVITIES:

- A3.1: Transferring and enlarging the usage of Coastal Guard Methodology: The number of roadmaps will rise from 5 to 10, with continuous follow up of investment.
- A3.2: Transferring and enlarging the usage of Coastal Guardian Toolkit: The number of Youth groups trained will rise from 10 to 20.
- A3.3: Exploitation Strategy definition and implementation: It will outline how the project's results will be sustained, scaled up, and exploited.

OUTPUTS:

- Report on conclusion of the transfer of Solutions
- Exploitation and Business Plan

TARGET GROUPS: Results will be shared with public authorities and policymakers.; NGOs and Local Authorities will ensure sustainability.

FINAL OUTCOMES:

- Policy Makers: Apply policy brief and pilots to improve marine litter management.
- NGOs: Use Toolkit and network to expand environmental programmes.

12. Planned budget

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| 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>