

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	BSO4CE – Empowering Business Support Organisations for a Rural Circular Economy Transition
Short name of the project	BSO4CE
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

1.2. Responsive public services

4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original)	Tønder Erhvervsråd
Name of the organisation (English)	Business Development Business Development Council of Tønder Municipality
Website	https://tondererhvervsraad.dk/
Country	DK



Type of Partner	Business support organisation
	chamber of commerce, chamber of trade and crafts, business incubator or innovation centre, business clusters, etc.
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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.

Tønder Erhvervsråd(BSO)/Regional Development Agency S.A. in
 Bielsko-Biała(Cluster)/The Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (interestgroups inkl. NGO's),
 Kaunas Science and Technology Park(NGO)

5.1 Specific challenge to be addressed

To accelerate decarbonisation and sustainable resource use, a circular transition of SMEs in the rural Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is crucial. However, rural SMEs often lack the capacity, awareness, and support needed to navigate this transition. BSO4CE addresses this gap by equipping Business Support Organisations (BSOs) – particularly NGOs and public bodies in rural areas – with tools and training to activate local innovation, guide SMEs, and align with circular economy (CE) goals. The project develops: A CE Coach Training Programme tailored to rural BSOs; A hands-on CE Toolbox for rural SMEs, co-created with users; Guidelines for engaging municipalities in local CE strategy and SME support planning. A small but strategic transnational partnership ensures high commitment and focused delivery. Cross-border knowledge exchange ensures that best practices are multiplied across the BSR, addressing disparities and strengthening public capacity to drive the circular transition.

5.2 Focus of the call

Our application directly supports the cohesive development of small places and rural areas in the Baltic



Sea Region by strengthening the role of Business Support Organisations (BSOs) – particularly NGOs and public bodies – in facilitating the circular economy (CE) transition among SMEs. Rural SMEs often face challenges such as limited innovation capacity, lack of awareness about CE opportunities, and minimal access to tailored support structures. By developing a CE Coach Training Programme and a practical SME-focused CE Toolbox, the project equips local BSOs with the skills and tools to unlock hidden innovation potential and guide SMEs through circular business transformation. Furthermore, by providing guidelines for engaging local municipalities, the project fosters stronger cooperation between local authorities and business support actors, ensuring that circular economy strategies are integrated into local planning, procurement, and investment. Through this place-based, capacity-building approach and targeted cross-border knowledge exchange, the project reduces territorial disparities, supports green economic transition, and enhances the long-term resilience and competitiveness of rural communities across the BSR.

6. Transnational relevance

The challenges rural SMEs face in transitioning to a circular economy—such as limited support structures, low innovation capacity, and policy fragmentation—are common across many regions in the Baltic Sea area. These systemic barriers cannot be effectively addressed by one country or region alone. BSO4CE brings together NGOs and public Business Support Organisations (BSOs) from different BSR countries to co-develop scalable tools, training programmes, and policy engagement strategies that are adaptable to diverse rural contexts. The exchange of experience, joint development of solutions, and piloting across borders ensure that outputs are relevant beyond local conditions and can be transferred and implemented regionally. By fostering peer learning, shared methodologies, and joint capacity building, the project helps to reduce disparities between more and less advanced regions in circular economy practices. It also supports the broader goals of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), contributing to green innovation, sustainable SME growth, and stronger rural economies.

7. Specific aims to be addressed

Building trust that could lead to further cooperation initiatives

BSO4CE builds trust among local actors, citizens, and transnational partners by fostering open collaboration, shared learning, and visible results in rural communities. By working closely with NGOs, public bodies, and municipalities, the project creates strong local networks around the circular economy agenda. Joint development of tools, peer training, and mutual exchange across borders strengthen relationships and demonstrate the value of cooperation. The involvement of trusted, community-based organisations ensures legitimacy and continuity beyond the project. As partners see concrete outcomes and shared challenges addressed together, a strong foundation is built for future cross-border initiatives, encouraging long-term collaboration and policy alignment across the Baltic Sea Region.

Initiating and keeping networks that are important for the BSR

(max. 1.000 characters incl. spaces)

Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

BSO4CE brings the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme closer to citizens by delivering concrete support to rural SMEs through local NGOs and public business support organisations. These actors are trusted, accessible, and embedded in their communities. By training them as Circular Economy Coaches and equipping them with practical tools, the project enables them to guide local businesses in adopting greener, more competitive practices. Citizens benefit through stronger local economies, new opportunities, and more sustainable development. The project also supports dialogue between BSOs and municipalities, ensuring that circular principles shape local planning and investment. Through visible, place-based results, BSO4CE shows how transnational cooperation creates real value for people and businesses in small communities across the Baltic Sea Region.

Allowing a swift response to unpredictable and urgent challenges

BSO4CE enables a faster and more flexible response to unpredictable and urgent challenges by strengthening local business support structures in rural areas. Through targeted training and co-developed tools, the project equips NGOs and public BSOs to better support SMEs in adapting to new regulations, market shifts, or sustainability demands. These local actors act as first responders in times of change, quickly translating macro-level knowledge into local action. By building cross-border networks and sharing adaptable methods, the project ensures that solutions can be scaled or adjusted quickly across regions, increasing overall resilience and readiness in the face of sudden socio-economic or environmental challenges.

8. Target groups

The primary target groups of BSO4CE are Business Support Organisations (BSOs), especially NGOs and public bodies operating in rural areas across the Baltic Sea Region. These actors play a key role in enabling SMEs to engage in the circular economy but often lack the tools, knowledge, and capacity to offer effective guidance. By focusing on strengthening their competencies and creating a shared toolbox, the project empowers them to become local drivers of circular transition. Rural SMEs are the second key target group. They are directly affected by increasing sustainability demands but often struggle to access tailored support and understand how circular principles can translate into business value. Through the BSOs, SMEs will benefit from hands-on tools, practical guidance, and stronger links to policy support and funding opportunities. Local and regional public authorities are also a target group, as they influence strategic frameworks, investment decisions, and procurement practices that can either support or hinder SME engagement in the circular economy. BSO4CE provides them with guidance on how to cooperate with BSOs and design more SME-oriented CE strategies. Finally, the project will engage transnational networks, innovation actors, and knowledge providers to ensure the transferability of project outcomes and build long-term capacity beyond the partnership. The interaction between these groups creates a multi-level approach that strengthens local ecosystems while fostering macro-regional cooperation.



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. Small and medium enterprise	Rural small and medium-sized enterprises across sectors, with a focus on manufacturing, agriculture, food production, and service industries engaging in circular economy practices.	NGOs providing business development, sustainability support, and innovation services to rural SMEs, with a focus on circular economy, green transition, and local capacity building.
2. NGO	<i>(max. 200 characters incl. spaces)</i>	<i>(max. 200 characters incl. spaces)</i>

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 ☒

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 BSO4CE partnership brings together a balanced, transnational mix of NGOs, business support organisations (BSOs), interest groups, and cluster actors, each with strong regional roots and complementary expertise in supporting SMEs and promoting sustainable innovation. Tønder Erhvervsråd (Denmark) acts as the lead partner. As a local BSO operating in a rural region, it has deep experience in advising SMEs, facilitating local business networks, and coordinating development projects focused on green transition and entrepreneurship. Tønder Erhvervsråd also works closely with local municipalities, making it ideally placed to bridge SME support and public strategy. Regional Development Agency S.A. in Bielsko-Biała (Poland) is a regional cluster organisation with strong ties to businesses, research institutions, and public stakeholders in southern Poland. It supports innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development, particularly in industrial and technology sectors. As a



cluster, it provides access to SME ecosystems and facilitates collaboration between companies and knowledge providers, which is central to the project's goals of enabling cross-sectoral circular economy transition in rural areas. The Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Latvia) is the largest business network in Latvia, representing a broad spectrum of SMEs and business associations, including NGOs. Its role in the project is to provide access to rural SME networks, ensure that tools and training align with real business needs, and support dissemination and policy dialogue at national and regional levels. Kaunas Science and Technology Park (Lithuania) is a non-profit innovation hub with strong experience in mentoring start-ups and scaling SME innovation capacity, particularly in green and circular economy sectors. It brings practical expertise in co-developing digital tools and guiding SMEs through technology-driven transitions, and will contribute to the design and testing of the CE Toolbox. Together, the partners represent a geographically diverse and thematically complementary group of organisations with strong stakeholder networks, hands-on SME experience, and a shared commitment to strengthening circular economy capacity in rural regions. The partnership is well-balanced in terms of skills, territorial coverage, and institutional types, enabling deep collaboration and effective transfer of results across the Baltic Sea Region.

11. Workplan

Workplan for BSO4CE – Empowering Business Support Organisations for a Rural Circular Economy Transition

The BSO4CE project is structured into four work packages designed to equip rural Business Support Organisations (BSOs) with the knowledge, tools, and partnerships needed to support SMEs in their transition to a circular economy. Each work package builds on the previous one, ensuring a logical progression from capacity building to implementation and transfer.

WP1 – Project Management and Coordination
Lead partner oversees financial and administrative coordination, monitors progress, and ensures smooth communication among partners. This work package includes risk management, reporting, and evaluation activities.

WP2 – Capacity Building: CE Coach Training Programme
This work package focuses on designing and piloting a Circular Economy Coach Training Programme for NGOs and public BSOs in rural areas.
Mapping training needs and existing skills gaps
Co-developing training modules (e.g., circular business models, SME mentoring, CE funding)
Organising transnational training sessions and peer learning activities
The training programme ensures that BSOs across the BSR gain practical CE expertise adapted to rural SME contexts.

WP3 – SME Support Tools and Policy Engagement
This work package delivers two core outputs:
Rural SME Circular Economy Toolbox – a set of simple, hands-on tools co-developed with SMEs to help them explore, implement, and benefit from CE practices. The toolbox includes templates, assessment methods, business case examples, and digital resources.
Guidelines for Local Policy Engagement – guidance for BSOs on how to cooperate with municipalities and local authorities to integrate CE support into local strategies, investment planning, and procurement processes. Activities include field testing tools with SMEs, workshops with public authorities, and refining tools based on feedback.

WP4 – Transnational Exchange and Transfer
This work package focuses on sharing results, promoting mutual learning, and ensuring transferability across the Baltic Sea Region.
Hosting webinars, peer-review sessions, and study visits
Creating transfer packages with translated tools and training materials
Promoting project results through communication channels and regional/national networks
This ensures the long-term usability of project outputs beyond the partnership and stimulates follow-up initiatives. Together, these work packages ensure that BSO4CE creates real, measurable value for rural SMEs, strengthens the capacity of local

support structures, and builds a solid foundation for ongoing cooperation and circular innovation across the BSR.

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 XXX
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

Staff Costs – Involvement of Experts: Can we include external circular economy experts under staff costs if they are contracted as individual consultants, or must they be budgeted under external services?/Focus on Rural SMEs and Circular Economy: Our project addresses circular economy implementation in rural SMEs through local support organisations. Does this fit clearly within the scope of “Responsive public services supporting green and resilient economy transition” under the Innovative Societies priority?

15. Additional information

BSO4CE addresses a critical gap in the circular transition by focusing on rural areas often overlooked in innovation policy. The project builds long-term capacity in NGOs and public BSOs that are close to local SMEs and can act quickly and effectively. Its outputs—training, tools, and policy guidance—are co-created with users to ensure relevance and usability. The small, committed partnership enables deep

collaboration and flexibility, while transnational exchange ensures that solutions are scalable across the Baltic Sea Region. BSO4CE also aligns with EUSBSR priorities on innovation, bioeconomy, and reducing regional disparities. The project lays the groundwork for future cooperation and integration of circular economy practices in rural development strategies.

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>