

# 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	Enabling Green Action and Growth for Everyone
Short name of the project	ENGAGE Islands
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

1.1. Resilient economies and communities
--

### 4. Potential lead applicant

Name of the organisation (original)	Institut für Klimaschutz, Energie und Mobilität, e.V.
Name of the organisation (English)	Institute for Climate Protection, Energy and Mobility
Website	<a href="https://www.ikem.de/">https://www.ikem.de/</a>
Country	DE



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

#### Contact person 1

Name	Dàmir BELLTHEUS AVDIC
Email	damir.belltheus-avdic@ikem.de
Phone	+49 (0) 30 408 18 70-14

#### Contact person 2

Name	Anika NICOLAAS PONDER
Email	anika.nicolaas-ponder@ikem.de
Phone	+49 (0) 30 408 18 70-15

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.

Åland University of Applied Sciences, Science Park Gotland, Estonian Islands Energy Agency and Bornholm Regional Municipality (all except the proposed lead partner , the nstitute for Climate Protection, Energy and Mobility).

### 5.1 Specific challenge to be adressed

The project responds to a shared macro-regional challenge: island regions such as Bornholm, Gotland, Åland and Saaremaa are especially exposed to the cascading effects of external disturbances, including public health crises, energy price volatility, geopolitical disruptions, supply chain failures, and climate-related stress. These areas experience demographic decline, economic narrowness, limited institutional redundancy, and a rising gap in service access and opportunity compared to more central regions.

Regional public authorities are expected to maintain essential services despite shrinking fiscal and human resources. SMEs struggle with energy costs, logistical delays, and recruitment challenges in remote labour markets. Education and training centres operate in a context where young people often see no viable future on the island, leading to brain drain and skill mismatch. Business support organisations face growing pressure to help local enterprises survive and adapt, but with few region-specific tools or strategic partnerships. And interest groups, particularly energy cooperatives and community-based initiatives, often hold the key to resilience but lack the capacity to scale or integrate into broader transition strategies.

Current policy and innovation ecosystems insufficiently address the distinct needs of these island contexts. Smart specialisation approaches, risk planning, and digital innovation efforts tend to prioritise urban clusters or industrial centres. Island stakeholders are often left without the adaptive instruments, inter-island connections, or locally grounded strategies needed to proactively manage economic and societal stress.

The target groups for ENGAGE Islands are:

Business support organisations, education/training centres and schools, interest groups (local energy cooperatives), regional public authorities, and SMEs. Each of these groups plays a crucial role in the social and economic fabric of island communities across the Baltic Sea region. Yet each is constrained in its ability to adapt to and recover from external shocks, due to the structural vulnerabilities of the territories in which they operate.

## 5.2 Focus of the call

ENGAGE Islands supports the cohesive development of small island communities by piloting locally grounded responses to demographic and economic stress. It works with municipalities, SMEs, schools, cooperatives and business support organisations to improve access to services, retain youth, and diversify local economies through inclusive innovation linked to the energy transition.

The project focuses on rural and remote island regions—Bornholm, Gotland, Åland and Saaremaa—that face persistent challenges related to isolation, limited labour markets, ageing populations, and outmigration. These regions are especially vulnerable to external shocks, but also hold untapped potential for community-led resilience and green transformation.

ENGAGE Islands strengthens liveability by providing practical tools (e.g. a modular community toolkit), testing low-threshold pilot actions (e.g. local energy days, green skills routes), and building ownership through collaboration between citizens, institutions and businesses. By embedding actions in local contexts and linking them across borders, the project increases adaptability, supports intergenerational renewal, and enhances the long-term attractiveness of small places as vibrant, future-oriented communities.

## 6. Transnational relevance

The challenges facing small island regions—demographic decline, limited economic diversity, service loss, and vulnerability to external shocks—are shared across the Baltic Sea. No single island has the full capacity to address them alone, but together they can pool ideas, resources and experiences to build more resilient local systems.

Transnational cooperation enables partners to compare and test approaches to rural service delivery, youth retention, green skills, and community energy in similar but distinct territorial contexts. It strengthens innovation ecosystems by linking actors who would otherwise remain isolated, and it accelerates learning by adapting successful models across borders.



For small island communities, cooperating transnationally ensures that local efforts are not fragmented or reinvented from scratch. Instead, ENGAGE Islands builds a shared foundation of knowledge and tools that help regions act faster, more effectively, and with greater confidence in the face of future disruptions.

## 7. Specific aims to be addressed

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

ENGAGE Islands aims to build trust by empowering local actors—especially youth, SMEs and energy cooperatives—to take an active role in shaping their communities' future. Each island pilot is co-designed with local stakeholders to reflect their realities and needs. The project fosters collaboration between citizens, public authorities, and business support actors, creating visible results that demonstrate institutional responsiveness and reinforce mutual confidence. Peer exchange between islands builds solidarity and trust across borders, showing that small communities are not alone in facing shared challenges.

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

ENGAGE Islands creates a dedicated network of island-based actors across the Baltic Sea Region working on resilience, liveability and community-led innovation. Partners co-develop outputs such as toolkits, skills maps and operational models that are designed for mutual use and long-term adaptation. Through joint pilots, peer learning and documentation of results, the project lays the foundation for ongoing cooperation between municipalities, educational institutions, SMEs and interest groups in small island territories, ensuring that connections outlast the project itself.

### Bringing the Programme closer to the citizens

ENGAGE Islands brings the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme closer to citizens by directly involving them in shaping, testing and benefiting from local resilience actions. Through community-driven pilots, youth engagement activities, and local partnerships with schools, SMEs and energy cooperatives, the project translates transnational cooperation into visible, place-based results. Citizens see how EU collaboration supports their everyday lives—through access to opportunities, skills, and services that respond to local needs in small island communities.

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

ENGAGE Islands responds swiftly to urgent challenges facing small island communities, including energy insecurity, youth outmigration, and service loss. The project implements low-threshold, quickly deployable pilot actions that address these issues in context-specific ways—such as energy awareness campaigns, green skills initiatives, and inclusive engagement formats. By focusing on flexible, replicable solutions and linking island actors across borders, the project strengthens collective readiness to manage current and future disruptions.

## 8. Target groups

The project involves five primary target groups, each of which is directly affected by the structural and economic challenges facing small island regions and holds key capacities to respond through local engagement, service provision, knowledge transfer and innovation.



### 1. Business support organisations

These actors help local enterprises adapt to changing conditions and pursue new opportunities. In island settings, they are often under-resourced and operate in fragmented ecosystems. The project equips them with practical models and tools to support green diversification and local resilience.

### 2. Education/training centres and schools

Local schools and training providers are central to youth retention, upskilling and future-oriented community development. They will be involved in developing and testing place-based green skills activities tailored to the needs and aspirations of island youth.

### 3. Interest groups

Here, this refers specifically to local energy cooperatives and citizen-led sustainability initiatives, which play a growing role in shaping community resilience. These groups often lack support but are ideally placed to promote inclusive participation and co-develop practical solutions that respond to local needs.

### 4. Regional public authorities

These actors are responsible for planning, service delivery and long-term development in island regions. They face capacity gaps due to demographic and fiscal pressures. ENGAGE Islands supports them with low-threshold solutions and models for territorial coordination and inclusive governance.

### 5. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

Local businesses form the backbone of island economies but face high exposure to cost pressures, labour shortages and limited market access. The project works with SMEs to explore how climate- and energy-related innovation can strengthen long-term viability and resilience.

All target groups will be involved in design, testing, refinement and uptake of outputs.

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. Business support organisation	support for local entrepreneurship, green business innovation, and SME development in peripheral island regions	all four target countries

2. Education/training centre and school	vocational and general education, youth training, and skills development for the green and local economy	all four target countries
3. Interest group	community-led renewable energy, citizen engagement, and local energy ownership and governance	all four target countries
4. Regional public authority	territorial development, climate and energy planning, service provision and regional resilience policy	all four target countries
5. Small and medium enterprise	local service provision, crafts, tourism, construction, and innovation in climate-relevant sectors	all four target countries

## 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 Energy

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 partnership of ENGAGE Islands brings together five core organisations from island regions in Sweden, Finland (Åland), Denmark, and Estonia, alongside a coordinating research institute in Germany. All island partners represent territories facing demographic pressure, economic fragility, and limited capacity to respond to external shocks. Each partner is deeply rooted in its local context and contributes specific expertise relevant to small-scale resilience and innovation.

- **IKEM – Institute for Climate Protection, Energy and Mobility (Germany)**

Based in Berlin, IKEM serves as lead partner and provides legal, policy, and coordination expertise. As the only non-island partner, IKEM supports strategic alignment, synthesis, and transferability. It ensures outcomes are grounded in policy frameworks and adaptable to other regions across the Baltic Sea.

- **Science Park Gotland (Sweden)**

An innovation and business development hub supporting young sustainable entrepreneurship and leading local innovation initiatives and processes. It brings strong experience in fostering rural innovation ecosystems and anchoring development in community needs.

- **Åland University of Applied Sciences (Finland/Åland)**

A regional research and education institution with strong links to vocational training, youth, and stakeholder networks. Åland UAS designs locally adapted training initiatives and helps embed them in broader strategies for remote island communities.

- **Bornholm Energy Island (Denmark)**

A regional platform for green transition on Bornholm, contributing practical expertise in community energy, infrastructure, and engagement. It links technical innovation with citizen participation and local implementation.

- **EISEA – Estonian Islands Energy Agency (Estonia)**

EISEA brings together six West Estonian islands, development centres and universities to advance regional energy solutions. As Estonia's second energy agency, it specialises in community energy, inclusive governance and inter-island cooperation.

The partnership combines geographic diversity and complementary institutional strengths—from innovation and education to planning, policy, and community activation.

## 11. Workplan

ENGAGE Islands delivers five interlinked outputs that build the capacity of small island communities to anticipate and respond to shared challenges through inclusive innovation, community-based action, and long-term resilience-building. The project follows a structured progression from orientation to action and learning:



1. **ACTivateE – Awareness and Commitment Toolkit for Empowerment:** A modular, multilingual toolkit that supports municipalities, business support organisations, cooperatives, and education providers in launching local resilience processes. It includes adaptable templates, outreach formats, stakeholder mapping tools, and good practice guides tailored to small, rural, and island settings.
2. **SEED Demonstration Projects:** Co-created pilot actions on each island, tailored to local needs and conditions. These might include energy awareness events, youth-led climate projects, intergenerational dialogues, or mobility challenges. They offer low-threshold, visible activities that activate local participation, test new approaches, and build trust among stakeholders.
3. **BLOOM – Local Ownership & Operational Models:** A curated collection of viable models for inclusive governance, local partnerships, and sustainable service delivery in peripheral areas. BLOOM translates successful practice into clear options that other regions can evaluate, adapt, and implement to strengthen resilience in their own institutional ecosystems.
4. **GROW – Green Routes to Opportunity & Work:** A set of region-specific “skills maps” that connect local educational offers, matching future-oriented labour market needs with startups and SMEs in particular. Developed with training providers, schools, and SMEs, 3GROW helps territories rethink how they retain and empower young people, align vocational pathways with regional strengths, and revitalise their human capital base.
5. **HARVEST – Synthesis & Repository:** An open-access digital repository containing the project’s main outputs, practical tools, pilot stories, and transferable lessons. It supports the wider uptake of ENGAGE Islands’ results and helps actors across the Baltic Sea region learn from and adapt the tested approaches.

All five target groups—business support organisations, education/training centres and schools, interest groups (represented by local energy cooperatives), regional public authorities, and SMEs—are actively involved throughout the process. They participate in local design and testing workshops, pilot roll-out and review sessions, and cross-island peer exchanges. Their practical knowledge and lived experience inform every step of the project.

The outcomes are designed for direct uptake by local and regional authorities, civil society actors, schools and training providers, SMEs, and regional innovation systems seeking proven ways to enhance liveability, adaptability, and opportunity in small, rural and island communities throughout the Baltic Sea region.

## 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
<b>Total budget (including preparatory costs)</b>	<b>EUR 500,000.00</b>



### 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	Are non-investment citizen-oriented pilots eligible even when carried out by non-municipal actors?
---	--

Questions related to budgeting and expenditure	Are micro-grants to local youth organisations an eligible cost if managed by a lead partner?
--	--

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>