



BSR Cultural Pearls 2026 Guide for Applicants

BSR Cultural Pearls is a title **for small and medium size towns and cities** that provides awarded candidates a peer-learning opportunities and support to use culture to build social resilience.

By engaging and involving their citizens, increasing quality of life, sense of belonging and trust, they will be able to make their communities stronger and more resilient.

Annually, we invite local authorities from the region – especially those from less central areas – to join this transformative journey. Through a meticulous selection process, the candidates with outstanding and impactful action plans on culture driven social resilience are awarded the BSR Cultural Pearls title.

Applications must be submitted in English via project website www.culturalpearls.eu.

The deadline for application submission is 4 April 2025, 23:59 CET.

For questions please contact:

Ms Egija Salnikova, Project manager at ARS BALTICA
egija.salnikova@arsbaltica.net

The project “Baltic Sea Region Cultural Pearls for more resilient cities and regions” is co-funded by the European Union's Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme and led by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) along eleven partners from across the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). It aims to strengthen social resilience in BSR municipalities by harnessing the potential of local assets of culture and creativity. Specifically, the project objectives are to enable smaller cities and regions increase their social resilience and maintain the quality of life with local assets in an innovative way.



Conditions of Entry

- Small and medium-size towns and cities, from the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme area, including Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany (the States (Länder) of Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schleswig-Holstein and Niedersachsen (only NUTS II area Lüneburg region)), Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.
- Less central towns and cities are especially welcomed.
- cities are especially welcomed.
- A single municipality or a team of municipalities can participate, but in this case a lead partner needs to be indicated.
- The capital cities Stockholm, Helsinki, Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, Warsaw, Berlin and Copenhagen are non-eligible.

Application procedure

- Application must be submitted using online form.
- Incomplete entries will not be considered.
- Applications must be submitted in English.
- Receipt of an application will be acknowledged by an automatic system reply.

The Selection Process

BSR Cultural Pearl selection has two stages.

1. Pre-selection

Eligibility criteria, motivation and general approach of each candidate is evaluated by the Selection Committee consisting of BSR Cultural Pearls project partnership. All applications are assessed individually and based on the summary of scores number of eligible candidates are accepted to enter the final selection phase.

2. Final selection

The object of the final selection is Culture and Resilience action plan developed by the candidate and assessed by an international Jury. Each plan is assessed individually and the final selection is based on the summary of the scores given by the Jury. Three candidates with the highest scores but not more than one per country are awarded the title. In case of tight scores or very convincing action plan, Jury can award one more candidate. In this case the rule of the country does not apply.



Our international jury is comprised of experts in social resilience, urban planning, arts, and culture, along with representatives from pan-Baltic and European organizations and networks of cities.

Overarching criteria

MOTIVATION

Willingness to engage and involve citizens, increasing quality of life, sense of belonging and trust to make your community stronger and more resilient, and how BSR Cultural Pearls program will help you to achieve that.

AWARENESS

Understanding challenges, strengths and local community needs.

ABILITY TO LEARN

Cros-departmental and cross-sectoral team with the strong will and ability to learn and transfer the knowledge into the actions.

ENGAGEMENT

Readiness to cooperate with local NGO's, Culture and Creative Sector actors.

CAPACITY TO DELIVER

Capacity of human and financial resources to participate in the programme, develop and implement the culture driven social resilience action plan.

BSR PERSPECTIVE

Openness for cross-border cooperations and knowledge exchange within Baltic Sea Region.

Pre-Selection criteria

Clear and compelling motivation to become a BSR Cultural Pearl.

An innovative and holistic general approach to the programme and activities it plans to carry out as a BSR Cultural Pearl.

Potential to generate real and sustainable impact in strengthening culture-driven resilience.

An open, inclusive, and cross-sectorial engagement of different stakeholders in the application and implementation process.



Final Selection criteria

A well-articulated, clear, and high-quality Culture and Resilience Action Plan.

Cultural tools used to co-create the applicant's Culture and Resilience Action Plan with citizens and other stakeholders, and to achieve the goals identified are innovative, creative.

The applicant applies a truly participatory approach and envisages a broad engagement of different stakeholders both inside the administration (i.e. across departments) and outside throughout the process.

Good balance between being ambitious yet realistic and achievable.

The applicant's Culture and Resilience Action Plan will have a long-lasting and meaningful impact on addressing its current challenges.

The applicant has demonstrated its capacity to deliver the planned projects and initiatives both in terms of human, physical and financial resources.

Selection Timeline

Monday 3 February

Call for applications is open

Friday 4 April, 23:50cet

Application submission deadline

Thursday 24 April

Announcement of Pre-selection results: candidates chosen for the Second stage of the selection. Launch of the Development phase

Thursday 16 October

Deadline for CuReAP submission

Monday, 10 November

Announcement of BSR Cultural Pearls 2026