



**Interreg  
North Sea**



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FREIIA



Høgskolen i Østfold

**INTER - ISLAND**

**PRODUCT AND BRAND DEVELOPMENT**

**ACADEMIC ISLAND RESIDENCY PROGRAM**

**WP4.3; ØSTFOLD UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

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# INTER-ISLANDS PRODUCT AND BRAND DEVELOPMENT

The Inter-Island Product and Brand Proposals presented in this report have been developed within the framework of the FREIIA project (Facilitating Resilience Embracing Islands Innovation Approaches), part of the EU Interreg North Sea Region Programme.

The initiative aims to strengthen the innovation capacity and long-term resilience of small European island communities by connecting research-based understanding with the everyday realities, knowledge, and aspirations of local people.

Each proposal is rooted in fieldwork and dialogue, offering a grounded response to real challenges identified by island residents themselves. The work addresses shared concerns such as seasonal economic dependence, youth outmigration, limited housing opportunities, and the need for sustainable value creation that respects local identity and community life. Guided by design thinking and co-creation principles, the proposals combine analysis, creativity, and collaboration to generate practical, transferable solutions that emerge from, and belong to the communities they serve.

A defining strength of these proposals is their inter-island character. Instead of treating each island as an isolated case, they build on shared experiences, common challenges, and complementary strengths within the FREIIA network. This collaboration enables the exchange of ideas, models, and practices between islands such as Hvaler (Norway), Schiermonnikoog (Netherlands), Bornholm (Denmark), Koster (Sweden), Groix, and Ouessant (France). Together, these islands form a living laboratory for sustainable innovation, a space where local insight and experimentation contribute to regional learning and collective growth.

Taken together, the proposals illustrate how locally grounded innovation can advance broader European goals of resilience, inclusion, and circular transition. Each follows a shared framework outlining the target group, identified challenges and opportunities, proposed solutions, implementation needs, and expected impacts. Collectively, they embody FREIIA's core ambition: to empower islands to learn from one another, to innovate with and for their communities, and to show that genuine sustainability begins with cooperation, creativity, and care for place and people.

Among these inter-island proposals, the Academic Island Residency Program focuses on connecting education, research, and community development across the FREIIA islands. The concept invites university students to live and work on the islands for extended periods, conducting field-based research that benefits both academic institutions and local communities. By transforming the islands into living laboratories for learning and innovation, the program strengthens local capacity, attracts young people, and fosters collaboration between academia and island societies.

# INTER ISLAND PRODUCT/BRAND: ACADEMIC ISLAND RESIDENCY PROGRAM

## INTER ISLAND - PRODUCT AND BRAND DEVELOPMENT 2.0



### ISLAND & IDEA TITLE

HVALER, KOSTER, BORNHOLM, GROIX,  
OUESSANT AND SCHIERMONNIKOGG  
ACADEMIC ISLAND RESIDENCY PROGRAM



### TARGET GROUP

BACHELOR, MASTER, AND PHD STUDENTS IN FIELDS SUCH AS BIOLOGY, SOCIOLOGY, MARINE ARCHAEOLOGY, AND URBAN PLANNING. SECONDARY TARGET GROUPS INCLUDE ISLAND RESIDENTS, LOCAL BUSINESSES, AND VISITORS WHO BENEFIT FROM STUDENT RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT.



### PROBLEM AND OPPORTUNITY

ISLAND COMMUNITIES FACE DEPOPULATION AND LOSS OF YOUNG TALENT, LEADING TO REDUCED INNOVATION AND LOCAL VITALITY. THE PROGRAM TURNS ISLANDS INTO "LIVING LABORATORIES" WHERE STUDENTS CAN ADDRESS REAL CHALLENGES, STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY TIES, AND GENERATE NEW KNOWLEDGE.



### SOLUTION

THE ACADEMIC ISLAND RESIDENCY PROGRAM INVITES STUDENTS TO LIVE ON THE ISLANDS FOR 3–6 MONTHS TO CONDUCT APPLIED RESEARCH AND FIELDWORK. IN EXCHANGE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND ACCESS TO LOCAL RESOURCES, STUDENTS CONTRIBUTE TO PROJECTS ON SUSTAINABILITY, CULTURAL HERITAGE, AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT. THE MODEL COMBINES COMMUNITY CONTINUITY WITH ACADEMIC FLEXIBILITY.



### WHAT ALREADY EXISTS?

UNIVERSITY FIELDWORK PROGRAMS AND TRAINEE INITIATIVES PROVIDE USEFUL MODELS. MANY ISLANDS ALREADY HAVE HOUSING, MUSEUMS, ARCHIVES, AND NATURAL SITES SUITABLE FOR ACADEMIC USE. LOCAL RESIDENTS ALSO HOLD VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ECOLOGY, HISTORY, AND COMMUNITY LIFE.



### WHAT IS NEEDED?

FORMAL UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS, SEED FUNDING (PUBLIC OR FOUNDATION), DEDICATED STUDENT HOUSING, AND A PROGRAM COORDINATOR LINKING STUDENTS WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.



### WHO IMPLEMENTS IT?

**KOSTER:** UNIVERSITY WEST  
**BORNHOLM:** UNIVERSITY OF COLLEGE COPENHAGEN  
**HVALER:** ØSTFOLD UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
**GROIX:** UNIVERSITÉ DE BRETAGNE SUD  
**OUESSANT:** UNIVERSITÉ DE BREST  
**SCHIERMONNIKOGG:** UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN



### WHEN IS IT FEASIBLE?

PHASE 1 (PLANNING & PARTNERSHIP, SEPT 2025–FEB 2026): SECURE CORE FUNDING AND FORMAL UNIVERSITY AGREEMENTS.  
PHASE 2 (PILOT, SPRING 2026): TEST LOGISTICS AND CONCEPT WITH 2–3 STUDENTS AND MENTORS.  
PHASE 3 (FULL LAUNCH, AUTUMN 2026): EXPAND TO MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES AND A BROADER STUDENT COHORT.



### EXPECTED IMPACTS

**ECONOMIC:** YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITY, EXTENDED TOURISM SEASON, AND NEW KNOWLEDGE-DRIVEN SERVICES.  
**SOCIAL:** YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, CULTURAL EXCHANGE, AND STRONGER COMMUNITY VITALITY.  
**ENVIRONMENTAL:** SUPPORT FOR LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY, CONSERVATION, AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.  
**EDUCATIONAL:** HANDS-ON FIELD EXPERIENCE, INTERCULTURAL LEARNING, AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR STUDENTS.



### RISK FACTORS AND MITIGATION

#### STRATEGIES

**LOW PARTICIPATION:** UNIVERSITY OUTREACH AND INCENTIVES (STIPENDS, MENTORSHIP).  
**LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES:** DEDICATED COORDINATOR AND WELL-MAINTAINED STUDENT HOUSING.  
**LOCAL ACCEPTANCE:** EARLY COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION OF LOCAL BENEFITS.



### POSSIBLE FUNDING OR BUSINESS

#### MODEL

EU INTERREG/ERASMUS+ MICROGRANTS; CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS (SUSTAINABILITY-ORIENTED); UNIVERSITY PLACEMENT FEES; AND LOCAL CROWDFUNDING OR STEWARDSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS FROM BENEFITING BUSINESSES.



### SUGGESTED NEXT

#### STEPS

INITIATE CONTACT WITH POTENTIAL UNIVERSITY PARTNERS TO FORMALIZE AGREEMENTS.  
PRESENT THE CONCEPT TO MUNICIPALITIES AND TOURISM BOARDS FOR ENDORSEMENT.  
DEVELOP A DETAILED, FIELD-SPECIFIC PROGRAM PROPOSAL.  
SECURE AND ADAPT SUITABLE STUDENT HOUSING IN COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Islands: Koster, bornholm, hvaler, Ouessant, Groix and Schiermonnikoog  
Title: **Academic Island Residency Program**



### 1. **Target group**

Bachelor, Master, and PhD students from various universities and fields, particularly those studying Biology, Sociology, Marine Archaeology, and Urban Planning. Other target groups include island residents, local businesses, and tourists who benefit from the students' knowledge.

### 2. **Problem and opportunity**

Small island communities struggle to attract and retain young, highly educated residents, leading to an aging population and decline in local activity. The opportunity lies in utilizing the islands' unique challenges and resources as "living laboratories" for academic research and project-based learning. By connecting students directly with the local community, the program can help solve local issues, counteract emigration, and generate intellectual vitality.

### 3. **Your solution**

Establish an "Academic Island Residency Program" where students spend 3–6 months on the island conducting fieldwork and applied research. The program offers students affordable housing and access to local resources in exchange for working on challenges specific to the island community. This includes research on sustainable fisheries, social trend analysis, cultural heritage preservation, or developing new urban planning models. This provides a balance of continuity for the community and flexibility for the students.

#### **4. What already exists?**

Existing university fieldwork programs and student trainee programs.  
Unique local museums, archives, and natural resources available as research material.

Infrastructure and housing on some islands that can be adapted for accommodation.

Local residents possess unique, valuable knowledge about the island's history, biology, and social conditions.

#### **5. What is needed?**

Partnerships: Formal agreements with universities and research institutions.

Funding: Seed capital for program establishment (e.g., from public grants or foundations).

Accommodation: Dedicated, adapted housing for the student residents.

Program Management: A dedicated Program Coordinator to act as the liaison between the students and the local community.

#### **6. Who implements it?**

Core Group: A joint body consisting of representatives from the municipality, local businesses, and academia.

Local Community: Residents act as mentors, supervisors, and project collaborators.

FREIIA and Østfold University College: Can contribute students, project development, and academic guidance.

#### **7. When is it feasible?**

Phase 1 (Planning & Partnership): September 2025 – February 2026. Secure core funding and establish formal university partnerships.

Phase 2 (Pilot Project): Spring 2026. Launch a small pilot with 2–3 students/teachers to test logistics and concept.

Phase 3 (Full Launch): Autumn 2026. Expand the program to include more fields and a larger pool of students.

#### **8. Expected impacts**

Economic: Increased year-round activity (extending the season) and new knowledge leading to improved local services or businesses.

Social: Influx of young people, creating a more dynamic community, and opportunities for cultural exchange and knowledge sharing.

Environmental: Contributions to research on local sustainability, conservation, and resource management.

Educational: Students gain unique, real-world field experience, cultural immersion, and career enrichment.

### **9. Risk factors and mitigation**

Low Participation: Actively market the program at universities and offer strong incentives (e.g., stipends or specialized mentorship).

Logistical Issues: Appoint a dedicated Program Coordinator and secure adequate housing with maintenance plans.

Lack of Local Acceptance: Involve the community in planning and clearly demonstrate how the students' work will directly benefit the island (e.g., through public presentations).

### **10. Possible funding or business model**

EU Interreg/Erasmus+ Microgrants or similar cross-regional funding schemes.

Corporate Sponsorships from companies interested in sustainability or community development.

University Fees/Tuition: Structured agreements where universities pay a fee for placing their students in the program (as a fieldwork expense).

Local Crowdfunding/Stewardship Fees: Small fees or grants from local businesses benefiting from the research.

### **11. Suggested next steps**

Contact potential university partners to gauge interest and secure formal agreements.

Present the concept to relevant municipalities and tourism boards.

Develop a detailed program proposal outlining project scopes for each field of study.

Secure and adapt housing in partnership with local municipalities.

# STAKEHOLDER MAP

## KOSTER

Local Government	Strömstad Kommun
Local Development	Koster Framtid AB
Academic Partners	University of Gothenburg
Academic Partners	Högskolen Väst
Local Sponsorship	Kläpphagen Koster
Local Sponsorship	ICA Sydkoster
Local Sponsorship	Torghatten AB
Community Collaborators	Kosterhavet Nature Center

## GROIX

Local Government	Commune de Groix
Academic Partners	Université de Bretagne Sud
Local Sponsorship	Coopérative maritime de Groix
Local Sponsorship	Hotel La Marine Groix
Local Sponsorship	Les Garçon du Port
Community Collaborators	Écomusée de l'Île de Groix

## BORNHOLM

Local Government	Bornholms Regionskommune
Academic Partners	University of College Copenhagen
Local Sponsorship	Torvehal Bornholm
Local Sponsorship	Diva Secondhand De Luxe
Community Collaborators	Destination Bornholm ApS
Community Collaborators	University of College Copenhagen (Campus Bornholm)

## OUessant

Local Government	Commune d'Ouessant
Academic Partners	Université de Brest
Local Sponsorship	Compagnie maritime Penn Ar Bed
Local Sponsorship	Sport Ouessant Spa
Community Collaborators	Musée des Phares et Balises

## HVALER

Local Government	Hvaler Kommune
Academic Partners	Høgskolen i Østfold
Local Sponsorship	Hvaler Skjærgårdstjenesten
Community Collaborators	Hvaler frivilligsentral

## SCHIERMONNIKOOG

Local Government	Gemeente Schiermonnikoog
Academic Partners	University of Groningen
Local Sponsorship	VVV Schiermonnikoog
Community Collaborators	Nationaal Park Schiermonnikoog

## ROLE DEFINITIONS

- **Local Government** - Provides the overall administrative framework.
- **Local Development** - Handle practical implementation and logistics.
- **Academic Partner** - Enters a formal agreements to send students; provides academic supervision and credit.
- **Local Sponsorship** - Offer sponsorship/fees for research, especially related to the marine national park or small-scale retail/services.
- **Community Collaborators** - Acts as a mentors and knowledge providers, collaborating heavily on environmental or sociological research.

