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INTERREG
CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME
POLAND-BELARUS-UKRAINE 2021-2027

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1. PROGRAMME STRATEGY: MAIN DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES AND POLICY RESPONSES

1.1. PROGRAMME AREA

The Programme area is determined on the basis of NUTS 3 units (subregions) in Poland¹ and oblast division in Ukraine and Belarus.

The Programme area consists of:

- in Poland: Białostocki, Łomżyński, Suwalski, Ostrołęcki, Siedlecki, Białski, Lubelski, Puławski, Chełmsko-Zamojski, Przemyski, Rzeszowski, Tarnobrzski, Krośnieński subregions,
- in Belarus: Grodno, Brest, Gomel and Minsk Oblasts (excluding the city of Minsk),
- in Ukraine: Volyn, Lviv, Zakarpattya, Rivne, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk Oblasts.

The Programme area covers around 316 300 km². The largest part belongs to Belarus (44%), and the remaining to Ukraine (32%) and Poland (24%).

Despite the vast size of the Programme area, the participating regions face analogous problems and presents similar development potential. The borderland of the three countries is characterized by low population density, a sparse settlement network and - mainly in Poland - a large number of nature conservation areas. Combined, these factors contribute to a relatively high preservation of natural resources. The majority of the area is a periphery of the countries involved, as evidenced by the lower than average national GDP value of most subregions. Metropolises are an exception here and their economic situation is more favourable. It is also a region that has experienced an economic collapse and political crisis.

On the other hand, basic systems such as education, public administration, legal and political systems or management of public tasks differ greatly between the three countries involved in the Programme.

Despite the existing adversities, joint actions are undertaken and common solutions are developed. Cooperation between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine has been going on for years and the partnership in the form of the Neighbourhood Programme was established in the years 2004-2006. Since 2007 it has been continued as the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-border Cooperation Programme.

¹ In accordance with Commission Regulation (EU) 2016/2066 of 21 November 2016 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) C/2016/7380.



1.2. SUMMARY OF MAIN JOINT CHALLENGES, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL DISPARITIES AS WELL AS INEQUALITIES, JOINT INVESTMENT NEEDS AND COMPLIMENTARY AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER FUNDING PROGRAMMES AND INSTRUMENTS, LESSONS-LEARNT FROM PAST EXPERIENCE AND MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND SEA-BASIN STRATEGIES WHERE THE PROGRAMME AREA AS A WHOLE OR PARTIALLY IS COVERED BY ONE OR MORE STRATEGIES

Socio-economic, spatial and functional problems can be identified in the area of the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme and the following conclusions were drawn on the basis of a socio-economic analysis of the support area and diagnostic workshops with representatives of units from the support area. Information about the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on the lives of the inhabitants of the support area is based on publicly available knowledge about the problems related to the functioning of Central and Eastern European countries during the pandemic.

1.2.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

1.2.1.1 DEMOGRAPHY AND HEALTH

The Programme area is mostly low populated - the average density is 80 people per square kilometre. In 2018, the population of the Programme area was 19 886 000 people, of which 31% were in Poland, 27% in Belarus and 42% in Ukraine. Each country has seen a decline in its population in recent years. Demographic forecasts indicate further declining trends in the number of inhabitants in most units of the Programme.

An important issue influencing the demand for various social services, such as senior care or healthcare, is the age structure of the inhabitants. A decreasing population and low population growth affect the demographic structure - the percentage of people in pre-working age is decreasing and the percentage of people in post-working age is increasing. The highest percentage of people in post-working age in the total population is recorded in the Belarusian part of the Programme area. A favourable demographic situation in the support area is recorded in subregions and oblasts in which the largest cities are located - capital cities of voivodeships, main public service centres. In Poland, these are the Białostocki, Lubelski and Rzeszowski subregions, in Ukraine – Lviv, Volyn, Zakarpattya and Rivne Oblasts. This is related to the migration trend of inhabitants from rural areas to cities.

The unfavourable demographic situation of a significant part of the Programme area is strongly linked with low migration attractiveness and low economic development, which is manifested by unemployment and a shortage of high-paid, specialized positions. Urban areas are an exception in this context (in Poland - Białostocki, Lubelski and Rzeszowski subregions, in Ukraine - Lviv Oblast and in Belarus - Minsk Oblast). Stopping unfavourable processes, such as depopulation of the Programme area as a result of the increasing number of people in retirement age and the decline in the birth rate, in most of the Programme area is becoming a key social challenge.



The health of inhabitants of the Programme area is also of key importance. Deaths, irrespective of location, are mainly caused by cardiovascular disease (in Poland their share in the total number of deaths is 41,5%, in Belarus – 55,5%, and in Ukraine – 56,5%) and cancer (in Poland their share in the total number of deaths is 26,5%, in Belarus – 15,7%, and in Ukraine – 13,4%) in all regions.

This is due to the growing demographic trends and the growing number of people in post-working age, as well as the apparent inequalities between the subregions of the Programme area in terms of the availability of healthcare. One of the elements of the senior policy will be the development of care and health services. Secondly, as shown by statistical data on mortality and morbidity, measures in the field of preventive health and safety should be taken. These problems overlap with staff shortages - in the medical sector, as in other sectors, there is an outflow of staff to other urban centres and regions with a higher level of development potential. Inequalities in access to healthcare are manifested by the varying number of clinics, doctors and hospital beds in relation to the number of inhabitants. On the Polish side, these inequalities are most visible due to the fact that capital cities of voivodships are located in some subregions, which often act as regional healthcare centres, serving patients from neighbouring subregions. On the Belarusian and Ukrainian side, the disproportions between the oblasts are much smaller. The best accessibility of clinics (number of clinics per 10,000 population) is noticeable on the Polish side. In the oblasts of Belarus and Ukraine this indicator is lower by about half. When it comes to the availability of doctors (number of doctors per 10,000 population), the inequalities between the three countries are not significant, but with regard to the availability of beds in hospitals, their availability on the Polish side is much lower than in Belarus and Ukraine.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is a huge threat to the efficiency of healthcare and to elderly people. Its estimated duration is unknown, therefore long-term measures should be taken to safeguard the local population and healthcare providers. In order to combat the effects of the ongoing pandemic, it is advisable to tighten and develop cross-border cooperation between medical and emergency services.

Taking into account the demographic structure of the Programme area, the Programme should invest in public services aimed at improving the welfare of the aging population and mitigating results of the unfavourable demographic structure of the population. This can be achieved i.e. through improving health services across borders, especially those targeting senior citizens, preventive health and safety, access to specialists and e-medicine, as well as strengthening the cooperation and exchange of experiences between medical professionals, and increasing the migration attractiveness of the Programme area i.e. by supporting better use of the potential of the Programme area such as high touristic attractiveness of natural resources.



1.2.1.2 ECONOMIC SITUATION, EDUCATION AND LABOUR MARKET

The economic situation in the Programme area is characterized by large and deepening disparities between the subregions covered by the Programme and the other parts of participating countries.

The economic structure of individual regions in the Programme area is characterized by a significant share of the agricultural sector in creating gross value added. In the Belarusian part of the Programme area, Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Poland), as well as in the Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast (Ukraine) there is also a relatively large industry sector. However, despite some regional economic differences in all units of the Programme area, the share of the services sector is growing, while the share of sector I (agriculture) and sector II (industry) is decreasing. Such changes in the economic structure are typical of developed and developing economies.

The highest entrepreneurship indicator is on the Polish part of the Programme area, it remains moderately high in Ukraine. However, units of Programme area located in Belarus have a low entrepreneurship indicator. The share of medium and large enterprises remains relatively high in units in Belarus and Ukraine, while in Poland small and micro enterprises dominate. The Lubelskie and Podkarpackie Voivodeships and the Brest and Grodno Oblasts are characterized by a relatively high level of innovation.

The education systems in Poland, Ukraine and Belarus are quite different from each other. Nevertheless, in all surveyed units there is a clear tendency to reduce the number of educational institutions, which is a consequence of a decrease in the number of students. The number of university students is high in the Lviv Oblast and Lubelski, Rzeszowski, Białostocki subregions. This is due to the variety of educational opportunities offered by cities located within these units. Academic cities are characterized by high migration attractiveness - mainly among young people. The development of educational institutions from the elementary level to the tertiary level requires support. High-quality educational services combined with access to attractive job offers may limit the outflow of young staff from the Programme area to large agglomerations. An important aspect of cooperation in the field of education is the integration of the inhabitants of border areas from an early age. Due to the lack of trust and the noticeable reluctance of citizens of countries of the support area to cooperate, it is advisable to undertake integration activities already at the stage of education.

When it comes to the labour market, in the Polish and Belarusian part of the Programme area, the unemployment level is close to the natural rate of unemployment. It is different in the Ukrainian part, where unemployment (especially in Volyn, Rivne, Ternopil and Zakarpattya Oblasts) remains high. Trends at the national level in Ukraine indicate a significant increase in long-term unemployment, there is a growing need to implement intensive measures to reduce the negative social effects of this problem. In 2014-2018, the highest dynamic of changes on the labour market was recorded in the Brest Oblast in Belarus, which indicates rapid changes that are taking place in this region. Subregions of the Programme area located in Poland are characterized by a relatively stable situation. What is alarming, the growing number of the unemployed with higher and post-secondary education is observed in almost



all analysed units in the support area (in Poland: Białostocki, Łomżyński, Suwalski, Ostrołęcki, Siedlecki, Bialski, Puławski, Rzeszowski, Tarnobrzeski, Krośnieński; in Belarus: Grodno, Brest, Minsk and Gomel Oblasts; no data available for Ukraine).

The Programme area's economic problems are clearly linked to social and demographic problems, common to all three countries. Negative economic phenomena result from the outflow of educated inhabitants, which is why the allocation of financial resources and remedial actions focusing on economic issues may be inefficient. Due to the existing differences in the economic profiles of the areas forming the Programme area and the system differences existing between Ukraine, Belarus and Poland, developing one common economic development strategy is practically impossible. Actions undertaken in each country shall be well adapted to the national, regional and local specificity and that is the role of the local projects promoters.

The Programme should support the development of cooperation and entrepreneurial links across borders and promote actions supporting business start-ups and employment. Support for this type of activities can have a positive impact on eliminating joint problems and achieving synergy.

1.2.2 NATURAL RESOURCES AND THEIR USE - SPATIAL, FUNCTIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

1.2.2.1 ENVIRONMENT

The Programme area is characterized by unsatisfactory air quality. The most common source of pollution is burning of fossil fuels for electricity production, followed by the processing industry and heating households with poor quality fuels. The Ukrainian part of the Programme area is the main emitter of pollution, while the Minsk Oblast in Belarus has the highest percentage of retained and neutralized pollution (over 90%).

Water consumption in most of the Programme area has been decreasing in recent years. In some parts of the Programme area, there are deficiencies in the coverage of the sewage network. The percentage of population using the sewage network is the largest on the Belarusian side. In Belarus, over a third of raw wastewater goes to waters. The situation is worst in the Brest and Minsk Oblasts.

Renewable energy consumption in the Programme area (except for the Zakarpattya Oblast, where the Terebelsko-Rick hydroelectric power plant is located) is low. One of the objectives of the European Union's cohesion policy is to reduce emission that can be achieved by increasing the production of energy from renewable sources. Over the past five years, most Programme area units have not seen a significant increase in green energy consumption - this needs to be emphasized given that environmental protection and sustainable development are key values of the European Union. Adapting to high standards in the Programme area is very difficult, because it results from infrastructural deficiencies, which is manifested in the insufficiently developed sewage and water supply network, and from low ecological awareness of residents and stakeholders operating in the Programme area. The lack of prioritization of environmental protection is noticeable, among others in insufficient



financial resources allocated to equip infrastructure networks, lack of diversification of energy sources or insufficiently controlled extraction of raw materials. The manifestation of environmental problems in the Programme area is the presence of illegal garbage dumps in this area, persistent low level of waste recycling and low water quality.

Significant challenges for the Programme area are air pollution and wastewater management, switching to low-carbon economy as well as increasing the environmental awareness of the stakeholders and the general population of the Programme area.

1.2.2.2 NATURAL RESOURCES AND TOURISM POTENTIAL

The Polish part of the Programme area definitely differs from other countries by the large share of protected areas in the entire territory. While in the Ukrainian and Belarusian oblasts the percentage of the protected area covers around 15%, in Polish subregions it is about 75%. However, the Programme area of all three countries covers many valuable natural areas. There are 31 national parks - 8 on the Polish, 3 on the Belarusian and 20 on the Ukrainian side. Important are also the naturally valuable areas included in the Natura 2000 (in Poland) and Emerald (in Belarus and Ukraine) networks. In Ukraine, the protected areas have increased in size over the past few years, as subsequent areas are covered by various forms of nature protection. The border location of the largest protected nature complexes is an advantage for creating cross-border nature protection networks. The Białowieża Forest, covering extensive primeval forests, stretches across the Polish-Belarusian border. Its greater part, i.e. approx. 58%, is located in Belarus. The Bug River Valley is another key element of the cross-border ecosystem. The total area of the river basin is almost 40,000 km², of which almost 50% is located on the Polish territory. In Belarus, the basin area is 9,200 km², while in Ukraine it is 10,800 km². The Bug is the border river of the three countries. Western Polesie, a natural and culturally coherent area is also on the Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian borderland and at the same time constitutes an important tourist potential of these countries. For cooperation in the field of environmental protection at the Polish-Ukrainian borderland also important are Roztocze and the Eastern Beskids. They constitute environmentally and culturally coherent areas, and, at the same time, they have significant tourist potential, especially in terms of development of ecotourism.

The quality of the natural environment of the cross-border area is the key aspect of its inhabitants' high quality of life, it also determines the tourist attractiveness and potential which should be further sustainably explored.

The lack of coordinated plans for the development of protective zones as well as differences in nature protection systems in the three countries involved make it difficult to undertake joint, uniform actions related to environmental protection. Deeper cooperation on this matter would benefit the Programme area.

Due to the relatively favourable natural location and landscape, as well as historical and heritage potential, tourism should be an important element of the Programme area economy. However, its development has to be sustainable and should respect the valuable



natural and cultural heritage on which it is based. Current share of tourism in the GDP in the Programme area remains low. Therefore, it is important to intensify activities related to the promotion of tourism. In terms of the general trends of tourism development, positive phenomena can be observed in Poland and Belarus, where the number of tourist facilities and the number of tourists have increased or remained stable. The situation in Ukraine is different - significant decrease in tourism development occurred in 2018, partly due to the unstable political situation.

There is significant tourist potential in the support area. It is unique in the scale of the respective countries. This is particularly visible in the Belarusian part of the Programme area, where 63% of the whole country's collective accommodation facilities are concentrated. In Ukraine, it constitutes one third of all tourist facilities. In Poland, tourist facilities are the most dispersed and only 13% of them are located in the Programme area. In general, the economic importance of tourism in the Programme area is much lower than globally in each of the countries.

In order to better use the potential of the Programme area, promotional activities concerning tourism in the Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian borderland should be intensified. Furthermore, due to the significant impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (which may turn out to be long-lasting) on the tourism industry and the limitations in the possibility of conducting touristic activities, as well as the decline in the demand for tourist services, particular attention should be paid to the directions of development of such projects in the support area.

The Programme should support the protection of biodiversity and the unique flora and fauna of the area, as well as the development of products and services for tourists which will support the creation of new jobs and aid with the post-pandemic economic recovery of the Programme area.

1.2.2.3 COOPERATION POTENTIAL

The cooperation potential between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine should be evaluated on the regional and local as well as national and EU level. The Programme should concentrate on developing cross-border links on the local and regional scale, both between local government units, communities and NGOs.

The existing development asymmetries between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine influence the possibilities for cooperation, especially due to:

- incomparable competences of local and regional authorities,
- differences in the principles of functioning of local authorities in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine - this mainly concerns the possibility of independent disposal of own resources and communal property, differences in the necessity and possibilities of planning activities for several years ahead, financed from public funds,
- the level of commercialization of the state economy.



In order to strengthen the cross-border ties and create new links between local and regional authorities across borders, capacity building and increasing of competences of local and regional government staff should be supported.

Cross-border cooperation is an important issue for local governments. 41% of the examined Polish local governments declare active cooperation with Ukraine, especially regarding EU projects and gaining local government experience. Cooperation with the Belarusian local governments is of a smaller scale and it concerns economic contacts, cultural and tourist events as well as school youth exchanges, however, the visa requirement remains a problem.

There are 5 Euroregions (Bug Euroregion, Carpathian Euroregion, Niemen Euroregion, Białowieża Forest Euroregion and newly created Roztocze Euroregion) operating in the Programme area, which represent a great potential for further cross-border cooperation development.

Cooperation between different stakeholders across borders, strengthening of the administrative potentials as well as people-to-people actions should be an important part of the Programme intervention.

1.2.3 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN COMMON CHALLENGES AND INVESTMENT NEEDS

In spite of the borders, there are common challenges on the Programme area, especially:

- low level of socio-economic development;
- advanced negative demographic processes such as depopulation and aging;
- negative effects resulting from the peripheral location of the parts of border area of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine.

These can be counteracted by taking advantage of the touristic potential of the valuable natural and cultural resources of the region, for visitors both from and outside of the Programme area.

Another important challenge of the Programme is counteracting degradation of the natural environment and further protection of the most valuable natural assets. These activities are part of the EU's demand for a more efficient use of environmental resources.

Taking into account the further development of territorial cooperation between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine as well as the current problems and challenges of the Programme area, cooperation between residents and institutions, integration of communities and overcoming socio-cultural barriers should be deepened and improved. Problems with maintaining local cohesion and integration of the inhabitants of the Programme area may be caused by the European Union border dividing Europe therefore it is all the more important to promote and support strong, positive interpersonal relations.

Due to the existing inequalities and problems as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, priority should also be given to residents' health. Further investments should be made in streamlining the border-crossing procedures to strengthen the existing and build



new cross-border links between institutions and people living in the border area of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine.

Actions supported by the Programme will be implemented via projects selected under open calls for proposals – regular projects and microprojects. Additionally, in order to strengthen the impact of the Programme, Large Infrastructure Projects should be implemented. These strategic investments will be implemented under three Programme priorities that demand significant investments in infrastructure development:

- priority Environment;
- priority Health;
- priority Tourism.

1.2.4 CONTINUITY AND COMPLEMENTARITY OF COOPERATION

1.2.4.1 LESSONS LEARNT FROM PAST EXPERIENCE

Institutional cooperation between Poland, Ukraine and Belarus plays an important role within the cooperation of the European Union and its eastern partners under the Eastern Partnership and under the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-border Cooperation Programme.

The Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-border Cooperation Programme supports building and maintaining links between local and regional communities and entities across borders. The 2014-2020 edition was implemented on the same borderland area as the 2021-2027 Programme (excluding the City of Minsk) and had a budget of over 183 mln euro, out of which app. 171 mln euro was allocated for implementation of projects under four thematic objectives: Heritage, Accessibility, Security and Borders. Three types of projects have been supported: Large Infrastructure Projects, regular projects under all thematic objectives and microprojects aimed at the cultural and natural heritage of the Programme area.

In the 2014-2020 Programme edition over 140 projects have been selected for financing, with nearly 460 institutions involved as projects partners. The most popular project topics in this edition of the Programme 2014-2020 were:

- preservation of historical and cultural heritage;
- improving safety including health security;
- preservation of existing natural heritage;
- improvement of transport connections.

The major lessons learnt so far from the implementation of the 2014-2020 edition of the Programme are:

- The Programme is popular among beneficiaries from all 3 countries - large number of organizations involved in project proposals;
- In the first years of the Programme implementation, the focus was on calls for proposals and organizational issues;



- In the first call for proposals organized for regular projects (consuming the majority of the Programme budget), the Heritage and Security thematic objectives (including health protection and social services) enjoyed the greatest interest of applicants;
- Within the Programme there was good cooperation among partner countries which lead to stable and sustainable partnerships;
- There were minor issues reported by the applicants with relation to the e-application software usage;
- There was effective communication with the JTS/MA, the institutions provided (potential) applicants and beneficiaries up to date information and kept direct contact with them during all processes, these relations were the sine qua non conditions for ensuring successful Programme implementation;
- The programme was characterized by insufficient correlation between projects under the same priority (the projects tend to be implemented on a 'individual basis', without having the bigger programme picture).

The 2021-2027 Programme will strengthen the existing links between the three countries and build new ones in the field of: environment, health, tourism, cooperation and borders. The Programme will therefore be a continuation and deepening of the development processes launched in the 2014-2020 programming period. However, as the new challenges for cross-border cooperation between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine arise, the Programme will be more tailor-made to maximize its impact on the Programme area.

1.2.4.2 COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE PROGRAMME

In order to achieve positive synergies, work must be continued to maintain the thematic and spatial links between the various interventions at both supra-regional and regional levels. Obtaining and sustaining the benefits resulting from the current implementation of programmes and projects in the Programme area is possible only if the complementarity of interventions will be maintained in the future. This will help maintaining the positive direction of long-term socio-economic, spatial, environmental and other changes.

1.2.4.2.1 EU strategies and programmes

In terms of planned priority investments, the strategic documents of the European Union should be referred to. The *Strategy Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030* is one of the key documents. The main assumptions of this document are:

- From a linear economy to a circular economy;
- Concept 'farm-to-fork';



- Energy, construction and mobility ready for the challenges of the future;
- Ensuring the transformation of a just Europe from a social point of view.

The European Union is committed to moving towards an economically sustainable Europe in which people "live well within the limits of our planet"². In this context, the investment priorities planned under the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme 2021-2027 to improve energy efficiency, promote sustainable water management, promote transformation towards a circular economy and broadly understood nature, environment and landscape protection are most important. There is a visible link between investment priorities and goals: 1. „From a linear economy to a circular economy” as well as 3. „Energy, construction and mobility ready for the challenges of the future”.

The Multiannual Financial Framework, reinforced by Next Generation EU, will be the main European tool serving creation of jobs and repairing the immediate damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic whilst supporting the Union’s green and digital priorities. It is built on three pillars:

- Pillar 1: Supporting Member States to recover;
- Pillar 2: Kick-starting the economy and helping private investment;
- Pillar 3: Learning lessons from the crisis.

Pillar 1 involves instruments to support Member State efforts to recover, repair and emerge stronger from the crisis. The second pillar assumes measures to boost private investment and support ailing companies. The third pillar covers the reinforcement of key EU programmes to draw lessons from the crisis and make the single market stronger and more resilient and accelerate the twin green and digital transitions. In this context, the activities planned under the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme 2021-2027 also serve digitalisation (e.g. in healthcare, support of tourism (creating jobs), environment by promoting adaptation to climate change, sustainable water management, increasing biodiversity and reducing pollution.

Attention should also be paid to macro-regional strategies: The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the draft Carpathian Strategy.

The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is based on three main thematic pillars: marine protection, increased integration of the region and increased prosperity and a horizontal basis. In this context, the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme will support the achievement of the Strategy goals by increasing integration in the region in the fields of i.a. biodiversity protection.

² „Dobra jakość życia z uwzględnieniem ograniczeń naszej planety” (Dz.Urz. L347 z 28.12.2013, s. 171) and H. Komiyama, K. Takeuchi, Sustainability Science: building a new discipline, “Sustainability Science”, no. 1/2006.



The Carpathian Strategy is a project of a macro-regional strategy that can significantly contribute to the improvement of security on the EU's eastern border and its stabilization. Currently, it functions mainly in the political dimension. However, its design envisages the implementation of a number of objectives relating to both socio-economic and environmental development. Both the Carpathian Strategy project and the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme provide that the common potentials and development challenges of border countries and regions create an opportunity to strengthen economic cooperation in order to increase the competitiveness of strategic sectors of the economy for macro regions and border regions, taking into account their unique endogenous natural, environmental and cultural resources and values.

The Programme will also be complimentary with the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF finances initiatives that promote a high level of employment, equal opportunities for men and women, sustainable development and economic and social cohesion. Moreover, its components offer the possibility of applying innovative solutions in a cross-border approach, for example to support the mobility of workers in Europe and to help participating countries with healthcare systems. In terms of transnational cooperation, support for activities for health protection and labour markets from the ESF can also strengthen the impact of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine.

With regard to the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world and in Europe, the complementarity between the ESF and the Programme is necessary. Implementation of the Programme priorities will contribute to drawing attention to the issues of health and its protection, which in turn may increase the immunity of citizens, and may also encourage them to a healthy lifestyle, thus complementing ESF activities.

1.2.4.2.2 National strategies and EU-funded programmes

Similarly to the 2014-2020 programming period, the priorities of the Programme 2021-2027 will remain complementary with the wider development priorities of the three involved countries. The Programme is compatible with the following long-term national strategies:

- In Poland: Long-term National Development Strategy "Poland 2030. The Third Wave of Modernity" - this document indicates the need to focus development on improving the competitiveness and innovativeness of the economy, achieving sustainable development of the potential of Polish regions, implementing the effectiveness and efficiency of the country;
- In Ukraine: Ukraine's Development Strategy until 2030 - the document aims to achieve European living standards and a dignified position of Ukraine on a global scale;
- In Belarus: The National Strategy for Sustainable Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2030 - the document aims to provide high living standards for residents and conditions for harmonious individual development through the transition to a high-performance economy based on knowledge and innovation, while maintaining a friendly environment for future generations.



Concerning the Polish part of the Programme area, complementarity with regional (regional operational programmes) and national programmes (e.g. "Eastern Poland 2020+") shall be maintained. The key element of the "Eastern Poland 2020+" Programme, if adopted, will remain the achievement of tangible economic effects related to the development of entrepreneurship and an increase in the level of private investments in the macro region. Aspects related to improving the quality of life of the inhabitants will also remain important. They are clearly linked to the priorities 'Cooperation' and 'Tourism' of the 2021-2027 Programme.

The effects achieved so far thanks to the implementation of the Eastern Poland 2014-2020 Programme have made it possible to significantly reduce or overcome some of the identified development barriers, as well as to support the competitiveness and innovation of regions.

In line with Partnership Agreement between Poland and the European Commission for cohesion funds 2021-2027, Poland is obliged to contribute 30% of the ERDF, i.e. 14.1 billion euro and 37% of the Cohesion Fund (CF), i.e. 4.5 billion euro to expenditure aiming at climate goals achievement. According to estimates, the share of the CF expenditure (after the transfer from ESF + to CF) in Poland for the climate target will amount to approximately 50%. This is a significant surplus in relation to the minimum share expected by the European Commission in the general regulation.

1.2.4.2.3 Regional strategies

The Programme will be implemented in close cooperation with the regional authorities in the Programme area. It will increase the chances of ensuring complementarity with the objectives and strategies of regional development, including: Podlaskie, Mazowieckie, Podkarpackie (until 2030) and Lubelskie Voivodeship for the years 2014-2020 (with a perspective until 2030), Strategy of cross-border cooperation of the Lubelskie Voivodeship, Podkarpackie Voivodeship, Lviv Oblast, Volyn Oblast, Brest Oblast for the years 2021-2027. The Programme is also complementary to the existing provisions of the development strategies of the Lviv, Volyn, Zakarpattia, Rivne, Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil Oblasts, as well as the strategies for sustainable development of the Brest, Grodno, Gomel and Minsk Oblasts for the years 2016-2025. All these documents are aimed at promoting the broadly understood socio-economic development on a regional scale and improving the quality of life of the inhabitants.

Maintaining the complementarity between the above-mentioned supranational, national and regional programmes and strategies is necessary due to the limited budget of the programmes, what means that they are insufficient to meet all challenges and problems. Each of them focuses on the most important issues. Achieving their objectives will lead to synergy effect, and thus effective improvement in the socio-economic, environmental and spatial situation of the Programme area, and as a result, to solving Programme area common problems.

1.3. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE SELECTION OF POLICY OBJECTIVES AND THE INTERREG SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, CORRESPONDING PRIORITIES, SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND THE FORMS OF SUPPORT, ADDRESSING, WHERE APPROPRIATE, MISSING LINKS IN CROSS-BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE

Table 1. Justification for the selection of policy objective 2 and its specific objectives

Selected policy objectives and specific objectives for Interreg	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for the selection
Policy objective 2: A greener, low-carbon Europe	Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience	Environment	<p>The effects of climate change, especially temperature increases, frequency and intensity of extreme phenomena, which have occurred in the last few decades are deepening. Insufficient measures are taken to climate change adaptation in the Programme area. Socio-economic analysis of the Programme area shows that growth of electricity production and insufficient use of renewable energies in most of subregions (especially in Volyn, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Rivne Oblasts in Ukraine, all Oblasts in Belarus and Mazowieckie Voivodship in Poland where share of energy from renewable sources in the total energy production is from 0 to 5%). There is visible increase in air pollution in some subregions (especially in Lubelski, Chełmsko-zamojski, Rzeszowski, Tarnobrzanski, Krośnieński, Suwalski subregion, Lviv Oblast and Brest Oblast). Diagnostic workshops show that environmental awareness of the inhabitants is insufficient. In order to minimize the damage associated with the effects of climate changes, it is proposed to undertake adaptation measures. This process consists of many elements - energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable water management as well as the circular economy or reduction of pollution, as well as increasing the environmental awareness of the inhabitants. Each of these aspects requires significant improvement within the Programme area. Therefore adaptation to climate change should be promoted. This is particularly important in the era of current threats around the world - more frequent drought, fires or global warming. Also important element are activities aimed at raising the awareness of residents about the need to adapt to climate change, not only at the general level of society, but also at the level of individual households, due to the heating with poor-quality fuels and the excessive production of waste and a low degree of their reuse.</p> <p>The assumptions of this specific objective are consistent with policy objective 2: Greener, low-</p>



			<p>carbon Europe, which establish adaptation to climate change and risk management, as well as running a low-carbon environment-friendly economy and changing attitude of inhabitants toward pro-ecological.</p>
	<p>Promoting sustainable water management</p>	<p>Environment</p>	<p>Despite the downward trend in total water consumption within the Programme area visible in the socio-economic analysis, it is recommended to constantly promote sustainable water management so that the situation in this area improves constantly. Analysis showed also that the percentage of people using sewage systems is also increasing, but in rural areas it is still low (in most subregions <40%). The efficiency of wastewater treatment plants is declining in some subregions in the Programme area. Because of this, it is proposed to promote measures of sustainable water management. This will minimize the consumption of freshwater resources, which are being exhausted, so it is in the interest of future generations. Particular care should be taken to use water resources sustainably. It is very important to promote sustainable water management in individual households, e.g. in the form of small retention facilities.</p> <p>The assumptions of this specific objective are consistent with policy objective 2: Greener, low-carbon Europe, which establish supporting blue investments, environmentally friendly economy and stable economic growth related to sustainable management of environmental resources (including water) and changing attitude of inhabitants toward pro-ecological.</p>
	<p>Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution</p>	<p>Environment</p>	<p>The implementation of this objective is particularly important because of the densely populated cities found in the Programme area, and thus the development of biologically active areas. Diagnostic workshops and socio-economic analysis show problems related to the lack of coordinated joint plans for the management of the protection zones and differences in nature protection systems between countries. Despite the presence of particularly protected areas, it is important to increase the number of green spaces in the Programme area, which will reduce the generated pollution and increase biodiversity. It is particularly important to protect ecological corridors and natural habitats, as well as to promote the restoration of their conditions for the proper functioning of ecosystems by supporting natural processes that have been disrupted. The creation of new or renovation of broken ecological corridors also has a positive effect on increasing biodiversity. Green infrastructure is an important element of the urban environment as it makes it more attractive and friendly for residents. It is also proposed to promote rainwater retention facilities and plants with high interception capacity.</p> <p>The assumptions of this specific objective are consistent with policy objective 2: Greener, low-carbon Europe, which establish supporting green and blue investments, environment-friendly</p>



economy and stable economic growth related to sustainable management of environmental resources and changing attitude of inhabitants toward pro-ecological.

Table 2. Justification for the selection of policy objective 4 and its specific objectives

Selected policy objectives and specific objectives for Interreg	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for the selection
<p>Policy objective 4: A more social Europe</p>	<p>Improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services across borders</p>	<p>Health</p>	<p>The lack of cross-border emergency procedures and medical personnel as well as the downward trend in the number of available hospital beds per capita are one of the main challenges of the Programme area in terms of healthcare. Crisis situations in this process must also be taken into account. In addition, healthcare should function as part of an integrated system guaranteeing coordinated care and preventing unnecessary expenditure. Relieving emergency care as a result of a better planned health system is an important aspect that should be improved. The socio-economic analysis showed that the main cause of death in the support area, irrespective of the location of the wards or provinces, are mainly caused by cardiovascular disease (In Poland their share in the total number of deaths is 41,5%, in Belarus – 55,5%, and in Ukraine – 56,5%) and cancer (In Poland their share in the total number of deaths is 26,5%, in Belarus – 15,7%, and in Ukraine – 13,4%) in all regions and it may be related to, inter alia, environmental pollution. The results of the analysis indicate a shorter life expectancy of people living in large urban centres compared to those in which urbanization is lower. Due to the above-mentioned problems, measures must be taken to ensure better access to prophylaxis, diagnostics and specialist medical care, including geriatric and palliative care. To increase universal access to healthcare, it is also possible to implement solutions in the field of computerization of healthcare facilities under this objective.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic is a global challenge of unprecedented nature and influences societies across national borders, therefore cooperation is advisable to minimize the impact of the threat on the population living in border areas. The cooperation links that be established can be used in cases of other events.</p>



	<p>Enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation</p>	<p>Tourism</p>	<p>The multiculturalism of the area, the existence of folk traditions, folk crafts and material resources of historical and cultural heritage and unique natural values are great potential, which should be supported to increase the importance of the tourism sector in the support area. Border areas of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine constitute an environmentally and culturally coherent area, with important tourist potential. Such actions taken may also be helpful in addressing challenges such as economic stratification of the population and the resurgence of historical conflicts. In addition, attention should be paid to the risks posed by failure to act in this area - the disappearance of cultural objects as a result of a lack of their financing. Currently, there is no system for joint management of historical and cultural heritage areas.</p> <p>Due to the significant impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (which may turn out to be long-lasting) on the tourism industry and the limitations in the possibility of conducting touristic activities, as well as due to the decline in demand for tourist services, particular attention should be paid to the areas of development of such projects in the support area. It is proposed to take measures to support entrepreneurs find their way in the new reality of tourism.</p>
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Table 3. Justification for the selection of Interreg policy objectives 1 and 2 and its specific objectives

Selected policy objectives and specific objectives for Interreg	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for the selection
<p>Interreg objective 1. Better Interreg governance</p>	<p>Increasing the efficiency of public administration by</p>	<p>Cooperation</p>	<p>There is insufficient cooperation between different stakeholders in the Programme area, mainly due to the legal and administrative barriers (41% of Polish local governments surveyed declare active cooperation with Ukraine³, less cooperation is declared with Belarus). The Programme will</p>

³ A. Skorupska (2015), *Dyplomacja samorządowa. Efektywność i perspektywy rozwoju*, Warszawa: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych.



	<p>promoting legal and administrative cooperation as well as cooperation between citizens and institutions, in particular to eliminate legal obstacles and other barriers in border regions</p>		<p>aim to stimulate and support the development of cross-border links between institutions, non-governmental organizations and citizens. This will result in gradual changes in the functioning of public administration, which may facilitate cooperation with residents and institutions. Focusing on increasing the institutional capacity will lead to the development of civil society. The cross-border cooperation so far has been based primarily on formalized activities of i.e. Euroregions or cooperation within projects financed from EU funds. There are 5 Euroregions (Bug Euroregion, Carpathian Euroregion, Niemen Euroregion, Białowieża Forest Euroregion and newly created Roztocze Euroregion) operating in the support area, which represent a great potential for cross-border cooperation. Grassroots movements and other existing institutions, which have great potential for the development of cooperation between e.g. entrepreneurs or NGOs from individual countries should be stimulated</p>
	<p>Creating mutual trust by encouraging actions to facilitate people-to-people contacts</p>	<p>Cooperation</p>	<p>The cooperation within and between communities is a great development opportunity for all three countries. The existing cross-border cooperation between NGOs, residents and entrepreneurs is not very intense, but there is insufficient data to clearly define its scale and nature. It is emphasized, however, that cross-border cooperation is based primarily on already discussed formal activities coordinated by the Euroregions or cooperation within EU financed projects, but not on grassroots movements. All kinds of interactions between the Programme area community are necessary to establish long-term cooperation. In this respect, also small budget, local activities can be very useful. Undertaking such activities can significantly affect trust and establish interpersonal contacts between the inhabitants of the Programme area.</p>



2. PRIORITIES

2.1. PRIORITY: ENVIRONMENT

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: PROMOTING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION, RISK PREVENTION AND DISASTER RESILIENCE

Related types of actions and their expected contribution to achieving these specific objectives and (where applicable) macro-regional strategies and sea basin strategies

As part of the specific objective related to promoting adaptation to climate change, risk prevention and disaster resilience, it is assumed to implement initiatives such as:

1. Joint promotion and implementation of activities related to a low-carbon economy and resilience to climate change.

Due to globally advancing climate changes, it is proposed to take measures to ensure appropriate living conditions. Adequate support is needed to promote a low-carbon economy and climate change adaptation measures, e.g. in the form of developing and implementing strategies, solutions, programmes and infrastructural projects to increase the readiness and adaptability of the population in the Programme area. Activities related to the promotion of a low-emission economy among the inhabitants of the support area are also assumed. This will positively influence the awareness of inhabitants of the economic and environmental advantages of such solutions.

2. Joint actions in the field of adaptation and protection against floods, inundations droughts, desertification, erosion and risk management regarding this area.

Due to the occurring climate change, adequate resources should be allocated to measures aimed at adapting to these changes, preventing flood, inundations, drought, desertification, erosion and managing the risk in this area, e.g. in the form of developing and implementing strategies, solutions, programmes and related to raising enter and protection of the population, including by building systems, infrastructure and purchase equipment for disaster management. These activities are aimed at increasing the readiness and adaptability of the society in the supported area. As part of this course of action, it is also possible to support joint training of uniform services, rescue services and firefighting units. The effect of the implementation of measures in this area will be the promotion of adaptation to the risk associated with floods, inundations droughts, desertification, erosion and the minimization of the effects of such events.

3. Joint actions in the field of adaptation and protection against fire, natural disasters and other local threats as well as risk management regarding this area.



As a result of the occurring climate changes, support will be provided to activities aimed at adapting to these changes, preventing fires, natural disasters and other local threats as well as managing risks in this area, e.g. in the form of developing and implementing strategies, solutions, programmes and innovative projects related to raising awareness and protection of the population, also by creation of systems, infrastructure and purchase of equipment for disaster management. The support for joint trainings of uniform services, rescue services and firefighting units is foreseen. The effect of the implementation of activities in this area will be the promotion of adaptation to the risks associated with fires and minimizing the effects of such events.

4. Joint actions aimed at prevention and management of risks related to anthropogenic activities.

In connection with potential threats and the fairly common occurrence of industry in the support area, it is proposed to take measures to strengthen resistance to the effects of anthropogenic disasters, e.g. industrial accidents and risk management regarding this topic. This will translate into the implementation of specific projects in the area, and thus raise awareness and prevent such threats. As part of this course of action, it is also possible to support joint training of uniformed services, rescue services and firefighting units. The implemented projects will reduce the chance of the above-mentioned disasters, and in the event of their occurrence, they will ensure the minimization of related losses.

Support for infrastructure is assumed as part of the activities under this priority.

Indicators

Table 4. Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate objective (2024)	End objective (2029)
Environment	Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Participation		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

Table 5. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	End objective (2029)	Data source	Comments
Environment	Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				



Main target groups

Inhabitants of the Programme area will be the main target group of actions under this specific objective. Intervention in this area can significantly contribute to reducing the impact of climate change on the life quality of local people. It will also help to reduce the frequency of extreme events and minimize their effects. This will significantly improve the level of safety and comfort of life for all inhabitants of the Programme area.

Actions under this specific objective may be undertaken by beneficiaries such as:

- units of state, regional and local administration, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them,
- rescue units, fire protection units (including fire brigades), police and border services,
- other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies),
- units of higher education and research institutions,
- non-governmental organizations.



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT

Related types of actions and their expected contribution to achieving these specific objectives and (where applicable) macro-regional strategies and sea basin strategies

As part of this specific objective it is assumed to implement initiatives such as:

1. Joint actions aimed at protection and improvement of water resources' condition.

Due to the fact that in some subregions in the Programme area water consumption is increasing, it is important to provide support measures in the field of water management, including management of river basins, development of rainwater retention systems, infrastructure and other activities related to the improvement of water quality. Actions may be related to developing strategies, solutions, programmes and innovative projects, which will enable many activities in the field of water resource protection and will promote sustainable water management in the Programme area. When implementing projects related to the use of transboundary watercourses and international lakes, it is very important to take into account the assumptions resulting from international legal acts, such as the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, drawn up in Helsinki on March 17, 1992.

2. Joint actions aimed at development of sewage infrastructure and improving wastewater management.

The capacity of wastewater treatment plants in some sub-regions is decreasing (in about 40-50% of sub-regions in Poland and Ukraine), and in some sub-regions some of the untreated wastewater still goes to water. Access to the sewage system is insufficient (especially in rural areas, where approx. 70-80% of NUTS3 or comparable units less than 2/5 of the population use sewage). Adequate management of municipal wastewater is essential and aims to maintain sustainable water management in the Programme area. Projects under this measure are aimed at supporting rational management of water resources.

3. Joint promotional and educational actions related to sustainable water management.

Due to problems related to water management in the Programme area, activities focused on promoting sustainable water management are proposed, e.g. in the form of developing strategies, solutions, programmes and innovative projects, as well as promotional campaigns and educational activities addressed mainly to residents, because that influencing the management of waters in this group will be particularly effective.

Indicators

Table 6. Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate objective (2024)	End objective (2029)
Environment	Promoting sustainable water management	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Participation		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

Table 7. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	End objective (2029)	Data source	Comments
Environment	Promoting sustainable water management	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				



Main target groups

Inhabitants of the Programme area will be the main target group of actions under this specific objective. These activities will have a positive impact on the quality of life of the local population. They will also increase the tourist attractiveness of the support area, providing new opportunities for the entrepreneurship development.

In reference to investment activities, additional initiatives are planned aimed at promoting sustainable water management, e.g. organizing events, meetings, workshops and conferences, as well as promotional campaigns and educational activities. Participants of such events may be anyone interested in the subject related to the specific objective, e.g. residents, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations, research centres, local government units and other entities.

Actions under this specific objective may be undertaken by beneficiaries such as:

- units of state, regional and local administration, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them;
- other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies);
- units of higher education and research institutions;
- non-governmental organizations.



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND REDUCING POLLUTION

Related types of actions and their expected contribution to achieving these specific objectives and (where applicable) macro-regional strategies and sea basin strategies

As part of this specific objective it is assumed to implement initiatives such as:

1. Joint actions aimed at protection, regeneration and sustainable use of valuable natural areas, with particular emphasis on cross-border areas.

The supported area is diversified in terms of the percentage of legally protected areas in the area of individual subregions/oblasts (from 0% of the area in the Lviv Oblast to 75% in the Krośnieński subregion). In order to maintain these areas in good condition, measures should be taken to protect and regenerate them in order to neutralize harmful anthropogenic activities. It is also important to expand the existing and create new legally protected areas. This may contribute to reducing pollution in the Programme area and increasing its tourist attractiveness. The cross-border nature protection areas (also including areas belonging to the Natura 2000 and Emerald networks), which have high potential for creating cross-border nature protection networks like Białowieża Forest (Polish-Belarusian border), Bug River Valley, Western Polesie (Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian border), Roztocze and the Eastern Beskids (Polish-Ukrainian) are important. They constitute an environmentally and culturally coherent area, and, at the same time, they have important tourist potential in the neighbouring three countries.

2. Joint promotional and educational actions expanding knowledge of residents about nature protection and raising awareness of natural valuable areas.

Due to the insufficient level of environmental education of inhabitants of the Programme area, actions aimed at increasing environmental awareness and knowledge about common natural heritage, protected areas and their unique value should be taken. It is proposed to implement educational projects and information campaigns aimed at all social groups living in the Programme area.

3. Joint actions aimed at protection of nature and biodiversity and development of green infrastructure.

Due to the diagnosed problems, such as the presence of illegal landfills, poor air and water quality, and insufficient level of environmental education for the inhabitants of part of the support area, existing biodiversity in the support area should be strengthened through an appropriate approach to nature protection. Preservation of the local flora will make it possible to eliminate pollution, and thus improve the quality of life in the support area. In order to protect nature, it is also important to raise environmental awareness of the inhabitants of the support area.



4. Joint actions aimed at monitoring the condition of the environment, as well as identifying and improving the condition of areas with exceeded environmental quality standards.

Due to the diagnosed problems, such as the presence of wild landfills, poor air and water quality, and insufficient levels of environmental education for the inhabitants of the support area, it is recommended to support common monitoring of the condition of the environment, as well as identify and improve the condition of areas with exceeded environmental quality standards. This will help prevent potential threats on an ongoing basis and ensure a constant increase in biodiversity and reduction of pollution. Acquiring data regarding the existing environmental situation will allow for over time comparisons of changes taking place in the Programme area.



Indicators

Table 8. Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate objective (2024)	End objective (2029)
Environment	Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment and reducing pollution	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Participation		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

Table 9. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	End objective (2029)	Data source	Comments
Environment	Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment and reducing pollution	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				



Main target groups

Inhabitants of the Programme area will be the main target group of actions under this specific objective. Intervention in this area may significantly improve the condition of the entire natural environment, thus having a positive impact on the quality of life of the local population. It may also increase the tourist attractiveness of the support area, providing new opportunities for the entrepreneurship development.

Additional initiatives are planned, aimed at enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment and reducing pollution, e.g. organizing events, meetings, or jointly creating a strategy. Participants/recipients of such events may be anyone interested in the subject related to the specific objective, e.g. residents, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations, research centres, local government units and other entities.

Actions under this specific objective may be undertaken by beneficiaries such as::

- state, regional and local administration units, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them,
- other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies),
- administrations and managements of nature protection areas, such as national parks, nature parks, landscape parks, biosphere reserves, etc.,
- entities administering forest areas and state forest holdings with their organizational units,
- units of higher education and research institutions,
- non-governmental organizations.



2.2. PRIORITY: HEALTH

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY, EFFECTIVENESS AND RESILIENCE OF HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS AND LONG-TERM CARE SERVICES ACROSS BORDERS

Related types of actions and their expected contribution to achieving these specific objectives and (where applicable) macro-regional strategies and sea basin strategies

In order to ensure equal access to healthcare through joint improvement of qualifications of medical and rescue personnel, development of infrastructure and purchase of medical and rescue equipment, including primary healthcare, it is assumed to implement initiatives such as:

1. Joint actions improving access and infrastructure development of diagnostic and prophylactic tools and resources in various areas of medicine.

The visible high mortality from cardiovascular diseases and cancer among the inhabitants of the Programme area requires measures to promote, as well as increase the availability and quality of prophylactic (including health screening) and diagnostics. Health infrastructure should be supported in order to ensure better access to medical services for the inhabitants of the Programme area, and thus increase their life expectancy and quality of life. Consideration of the elderly and people with disabilities who require adaptation of the infrastructure that will allow them to use places providing health services is especially important (e.g. slipways, toilets). Activities may include the purchase of equipment, reconstruction, expansion, renovation of facilities providing services in the field of prevention, diagnostics, including those introducing facilities for people with disabilities. The efficiency of patient registration should be improved, as well as other activities which improve the system. It is also proposed to undertake activities for the benefit of a joint cross-border offer of care facilities providing services in the field of prevention and diagnostics in the entire Programme area.

2. Joint actions improving access to specialist medicine, in particular medicine related to cardiovascular diseases, cancer (development of health infrastructure, support for the equipment of healthcare facilities) and emergency medicine.

The Programme area faces problems such as a declining number of beds in hospitals, high mortality from cardiovascular diseases and cancer and an insufficient number of doctors per capita in some sub-regions (despite a favourable upward trend) and an aging population (requiring more frequent and more intensive care). Another problem is the limited access to specialised psychiatric care (including child care), which is increasing especially as a result of social isolation due to the pandemic. Therefore, it is planned to support the health infrastructure and equipment of healthcare facilities in order to provide better access to specialized health services (in



particular regarding cardiovascular diseases, cancer and mental illness) to the inhabitants of the Programme area, thus increasing their life expectancy and quality of life. Activities may include the purchase of equipment, reconstruction, expansion, renovation of facilities providing specialized health services, support in the field of management improvements to improve the efficiency and resilience of existing systems, as well as facilities for people with disabilities. Projects may also include support for medical universities in the purchase of equipment or the creation and promotion of fields of study related to medicine. It is also proposed to undertake actions for the joint cross-border offer of healthcare institutions and hospitals in the entire area of support.

3. Joint actions improving access to long-term care, especially infrastructure development for geriatric and palliative care.

Due to the aging of the population in the Programme area and the related demand for employees providing basic care and nursing services, as well as specialist medical services, it is proposed to support infrastructure development, courses and training, as well as promote related professions as a constantly developing, perspective industry. This will ensure better access to long-term care, which is expected to be in growing demand due to the increasing number of older people. Projects may also include support for medical universities in the purchase of equipment or the creation and promotion of fields of study related to medicine. It is also planned to increase the availability of care services for people in economic disadvantage and excluded people.

4. Joint actions preventing the occurrence and effects of adverse events such as epidemics (with particular emphasis on local phenomena).

Activities aimed at preventing the occurrence and effects of adverse events should be supported e.g. developing and implementing strategies, action plans, solutions, innovative programmes and projects, as well as working out solutions to the issue of volunteering in rescue services and working out cross-border rescue procedures. The effect of the implementation of activities in this area will be the minimization of the effects of adverse events. These actions should be complementary to national solutions in the field of healthcare and should be implemented at the local level depending on the cross-border needs.

5. Joint actions aimed at development of digitization in healthcare (including the development of telemedicine).

In order to provide more effective and modern healthcare and integration between healthcare providers in the Programme area, it is proposed to support digitization in healthcare. Assistance may be provided in the scope of co-financing IT devices, software (incl. telemedicine services), storage and service of medical records in digital form as well as in the scope of employee training in the field of system operation. Information technology is seen as a means to improve the process of providing



healthcare - from prevention, through diagnosis, to monitoring the effects of treatment and health. Taking action in this area will enable joint operation of medical personnel from the three countries in difficult cases. It is also proposed to create an integrated information system about the possibilities and principles of using healthcare in the neighbouring country. The creation of this type of system will definitely facilitate the access to medical services for all residents of the Programme area.

6. Joint actions improving the qualifications of medical and rescue personnel.

Acquiring new skills in the field of medical care among medical and rescue staff in the Programme area will improve its quality, which will positively affect the effectiveness of disease treatment, and as a result eliminate problems related to the relatively short life expectancy in the Programme area. It is proposed to organize joint meetings to exchange good practices, trainings, workshops or conferences aimed at improving qualifications and drawing attention to common problems in the field of healthcare and emergency services in the Programme area.

Support for infrastructure is assumed as part of the activities under this priority.



Indicators

Table 10. Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate goal (2024)	Final goal (2029)
Health	Improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services across borders	RCO69	Capacity of new or modernised healthcare facilities	Persons/year		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

Table 11. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	Final goal (2029)	Data source	Comments
Health	Improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services across borders	RCR73	Annual users of new or modernised healthcare facilities	Users/year	0				
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				



Main target groups

The main target groups for actions under this specific objective will be the **inhabitants of the Programme area**. Intervention in this area may significantly improve the health services provided, and thus improve the health condition of residents. Activities related to long-term care will have a positive impact on the quality of life of elderly and terminally ill residents. Investments in infrastructure, equipment and improving the qualifications of medical and rescue personnel will significantly affect the comfort of work and the number of successes achieved by healthcare and emergency services workers.

In relation to the investment activities, additional initiatives are planned aimed at improving the accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services across borders, e.g. organization of events, training, exchange of good practices among specialists operating in the Programme area.

Activities under this specific objective may be undertaken by the following beneficiaries:

- state, regional and local administration units, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them that deal with medical care,
- public entities providing medical services and long-term care services,
- rescue services (i.e. mountain rescue services),
- entities of higher education, e.g. medical universities, educational entities in the field of health protection, etc.,
- non-governmental organizations (including rescue organizations and associations).



2.3. PRIORITY: TOURISM

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: ENHANCING THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND TOURISM IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

Related types of actions and their expected contribution to achieving these specific objectives and (where applicable) macro-regional strategies and sea basin strategies.

Nurturing and promoting local traditions and tourist attractions draws attention, and thus encourages tourists to visit specific attractions. As a result, tourist traffic generates profit, which increases the role of tourism in economic development.

The multiculturalism of the area, active cultural units, valuable natural areas, the existence of folk traditions, folk crafts and material resources of historical and cultural heritage constitute capital, the proper use of which may enable the economic and social development of the Programme area. Cultivating and promoting local traditions, joint cross-border cultural undertakings, caring for valuable natural areas and joint heritage sites, and other activities for the use and tourism values are essential in the development of the cross-border area. As part of the specific objective related to enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation, the Programme shall support activities such as:

1. Joint actions aimed at protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and services in the field of culture, including development of tourist infrastructure.

In the Programme area 10 sites (or groups of sites) are on the UNESCO World Heritage List, other sites and areas of particular cultural and historical value, and facilities providing cultural services, e.g. museums, open-air museums, art galleries etc. are also present in the Programme area. The area has a particular potential for the development of tourism through promotion of culturally valuable areas and objects, as well as intangible heritage. Countries included in the Programme area share many historical experiences, the positive aspects of which are worth highlighting in order to strengthen ties between local communities. The potential increase in the number of tourists provides space for development of enterprises providing services in the tourism industry, e.g. accommodation, gastronomy or other recreational, entertainment or cultural services. Creating new (e.g. museums) and renovating existing cultural heritage sites, allowing them to be preserved for future generations, as well as increasing the accessibility to the existing sites of historical and cultural heritage, e.g. for people with disabilities will be supported through development of infrastructure and investments. Involvement in the activities of local authorities as well as entrepreneurs and local leaders will strengthen social integration and allow for better promotion of the historical and cultural heritage of the area. Initiatives aimed at supporting cultural activities (carried out also by non-governmental organizations),



e.g. organizing events promoting the intangible heritage of the area covered by the Programme. It is also proposed to undertake activities involving the establishment of long-term, cross-border cooperation between institutions dealing with particularly valuable heritage objects and cultural institutions.

2. Joint actions aimed at protection, infrastructure development and promotion of natural heritage and ecotourism.

Due to the fact that the Programme area includes valuable natural areas, such as the Białowieża Primeval Forest, post-glacial areas of Northern Podlasie, Augustów Canal, limestone and loess uplands of the Lublin region, Eastern Carpathians, the Bug River Valley, Western Polesie, Roztocze, as well as other valuable natural objects and areas, it has a high touristic potential. The potential increase in the number of tourists makes space for the development of enterprises providing services in the tourism industry, e.g. accommodation, gastronomy or other recreational, entertainment or cultural services. As part of the measures, support is provided for nature protection, allowing for its preservation for future generations. Involvement in these activities by local authorities, entrepreneurs and local leaders will strengthen social integration and allow for better promotion of the natural heritage of the area. Initiatives aimed at supporting promotional activities carried out by non-governmental organizations, e.g. organizing events promoting the natural heritage of the area covered by the Programme assumptions, will also be important. Actions involving the establishment of long-term, cross-border cooperation between institutions dealing with the protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and ecotourism are suggested.

3. Joint actions aimed at adaptation of skills and professional qualifications in the field of tourism to the needs of the tourism market and changes within.

Due to the special touristic values (historical, cultural and natural), insufficiently used touristic potential and outflow of human resources (especially educated young people) to regions with higher development potential, it is proposed to take measures aimed at increasing tourism-related entrepreneurship in the Programme area. This will allow more effective use of the area's potential. Support is planned by e.g. courses, trainings or workshops on how to set up and promote an enterprise in the tourism industry and how to manage it effectively. One of the key factors in the development of tourism is the accommodation and catering base adapted to the needs of visitors (mainly private entities), therefore stimulating the development of these entities may particularly contribute to increasing the tourist attractiveness of the Programme area. It is also proposed to promote tourism clusters (including their creation) and active participation in them by entities involved in tourism or cultural activities. Moreover, measures promoting and creating joint touristic products and cross-border trails (eg. walking, hiking, cycling, water trails, etc.) connecting facilities across borders will be supported.

The Programme area has a high potential for the development of agritourism, e.g. due to the large share of rural and valuable natural areas. Actions involving creation



of e.g. joint brochures, tourist guides, films, advertising campaigns and study visits are proposed in order to promote the area as attractive, with a coherent touristic offer. Involvement in the activities of local authorities, entrepreneurs as well as local leaders, will strengthen social integration and allow for better protection, development and promotion of tourist values.

Support for infrastructure is assumed as part of the activities under this priority.

Indicators

Table 12. Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate goal (2024)	Final goal (2029)
Tourism	Enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	RCO77	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported	Cultural and tourism sites		
		RCO115	Public events across borders jointly organised	Events		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

Table 13. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	Final goal (2029)	Data source	Comments
Tourism	Enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	RCR77	Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported	Visitors/year	0				
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				



Main target groups

The primary target groups of the actions under this specific objective will be **people visiting the Programme area and its inhabitants**. Interventions in this respect may significantly increase the tourist attractiveness of the support area and thus provide a great potential for the development of entrepreneurship.

In relation to investment activities, additional initiatives are planned in the field of enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation, e.g. organization of events, workshops, trainings, conferences, exchange of good practices among specialists operating in the Programme area. The participants of such events may be all, i.e. residents, entrepreneurs, local government units, non-governmental organizations operating in the Programme area.

Activities under this specific objective may be undertaken by the following beneficiaries:

- state, regional and local administration units, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them,
- other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies),
- units of higher education and research institutions,
- administrations and managements of nature protection areas, such as national parks, nature parks, landscape parks, biosphere reserves, etc.,
- personnel development institutions,
- non-governmental organizations.



2.4. PRIORITY: COOPERATION

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION BY PROMOTING LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE COOPERATION AS WELL AS COOPERATION BETWEEN CITIZENS AND INSTITUTIONS, IN PARTICULAR TO ELIMINATE LEGAL OBSTACLES AND OTHER BARRIERS IN BORDER REGIONS

Related types of actions and their expected contribution to achieving these specific objectives and (where applicable) macro-regional strategies and sea basin strategies

One of the challenges facing the Programme area is the effective and efficient functioning of public administration, inter alia implementing common actions for the development of this area.

In order to increase the efficiency of public administration through the promotion of legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions it is planned to take joint actions such as:

1. Increasing and improving the quality of cross-border cooperation between entities in the Programme area,
2. Improving the access to information on legal, fiscal and formal conditions related to e.g. running a business in each country of the Programme area, stimulating economic ties, supporting clusters or promoting jointly operating organizations of entrepreneurs and organizing joint ventures, which may result in the economic development of the support area,
3. Support in the implementation of consulting services assistance to entities applying for additional financial resources (e.g. by helping in creating business plans, drawing up contracts, filling out applications etc.),
4. The creation of open data banks regarding the Programme area, including statistics on the socio-economic, environmental situation and prospects for sustainable development of the area, changes taking place and available investment areas, which may result in the economic development of the support area.
5. Promoting cooperation between border services, customs services and other services related to the operation of border crossings (including phytosanitary and veterinary services) by common trainings and improving the quality of service on border crossings, including purchase of necessary equipment⁴;

⁴ Eligible beneficiaries are entities from Poland and Ukraine.



Support for minor infrastructure and investments under this priority will be possible in order to enhance the impact of activities.

Indicators

Table 14. Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate goal (2024)	Final goal (2029)
Cooperation	Increasing the efficiency of public administration by promoting legal and administrative and cooperation between citizens and institutions, in particular to eliminate legal obstacles and other barriers in border regions	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

Table 15. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	Final goal (2029)	Data source	Comments
Cooperation	Increasing the efficiency of public administration by promoting legal and administrative and cooperation between citizens and institutions, in particular to eliminate legal obstacles and other barriers in border regions	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy / action plan	0				
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				



Main target groups

The main target groups of the actions under this specific objective will be the **inhabitants of the Programme area and representatives of all institutions operating on the area**, primarily, entrepreneurs and representatives of local government units.

Activities planned are aimed at increasing the efficiency of public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation as well as cooperation between citizens and institutions, especially to eliminate legal obstacles and other barriers in border regions (e.g. in the form of public consultations, workshops and conferences in the supported area). Everybody can participate in such events, i.e. residents, entrepreneurs, local government units, non-governmental organizations and scientific and research institutions operating in the Programme area.

Activities under this specific objective may be undertaken by the following beneficiaries:

- state, regional and local administration units, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them,
- other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies),
- rescue units, fire protection units (including fire brigades) and the police, non-governmental organizations,
- units of higher education and research institutions,
- societies and organizations for activating the economy, technological centres (e.g. chambers of economy or trade, Business Environment Institutions).



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: CREATING MUTUAL TRUST BY ENCOURAGING ACTIONS TO FACILITATE PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS

Related types of actions and their expected contribution to achieving these specific objectives and (where applicable) macro-regional strategies and sea basin strategies

As part of the specific objective related to mutual trust creation by encouraging activities facilitating people-to-people contacts, it is assumed to implement thematic activities to increase the involvement and participation of the inhabitants of the Programme area in cross-border cooperation such as:

1. Joint bottom-up initiatives for the integration of the inhabitants of the Programme area, including the promotion of volunteering.

Due to the need to integrate the inhabitants, it is proposed to provide appropriate funds enabling the inhabitants to jointly create initiatives, which will result in building or strengthening interpersonal connections within the Programme area. It is assumed that it is possible to support activities related to e.g. organization of events, implementation of projects shaping the identity of border residents. Volunteering will also be promoted. Through voluntary work the residents of the Programme area will have the chance to get to know each other and understand each other's needs. This will also stimulate empathy for others, which will result in building mutual trust. It is proposed to implement projects such as social campaigns, events promoting volunteering among the inhabitants of the Programme area, etc.

2. Integrating residents through cross-border events related to environment, art, culture and heritage of the Programme area.

Due to the need of integration of the inhabitants of the Programme area, it is proposed to create opportunities to strengthen contacts between people of various environments, including natural environment, art, culture and heritage. Creating such events will contribute to establishing lasting relationships between representatives of entities, which may pay off in the future. The implementation of such events will contribute to building lasting cultural cooperation (also related to art and heritage) and the integration of experts and activists in the field of the natural environment at the supranational level.

3. Joint actions aimed at supporting local initiatives and leadership.

The role of local leaders is to lead a group of people – thanks to the education of such leaders in the Programme area, the grassroots activities by the local communities will be more likely. Taking action in this area will enable the development of social capital in the Programme area. Under the measure, support may be given to exchange of experiences and best practices between local leaders from various areas of the region, joint training sessions, workshops and conferences.



4. Cross-border cooperation of educational facilities including integration and educational activities.

Promotion and organization of exchanges of youth or exchanges of good practices and innovative solutions at the local cross-border level and among schoolchildren or students of universities teach young people tolerance, mutual respect and understanding. This will enable shaping regional awareness across borders and show the socio-cultural similarity between the inhabitants of the Programme area. Such educational programmes and initiatives should be related to the unique character of the borderland, in particular related to the common cultural and natural heritage and strengthening its potential, but also generating opportunities for better linking the non-compulsory educational offer with the possibility of employment in the service sector based on the shared heritage. It will also allow for the establishment of long-term cooperation between educational and business environment institutions⁵, which may pay off in the future. These exchanges provide the opportunity to strengthen ties between participants and create long-term relationships.

5. Cross-border transfer of innovative solutions aimed at undertaking and strengthening further cooperation between research and scientific centres.

Due to the low level of international cooperation of scientific and research centres in the Programme area, it is proposed to organize trainings, meetings and conferences focused on the transfer of innovative solutions. The implementation of these type of activities will facilitate the integration of experts from specific fields and the introduction of joint innovative solutions in the Programme area.

⁵ Business Environment Institution should be understood as any entity, regardless of its legal form, conducting business activity within the meaning of EU law, which conducts activities aimed at creating favourable conditions for the development of entrepreneurship, which does not operate for profit or allocates profit to statutory purposes. The activity aimed at creating favourable conditions for the development of entrepreneurship is mentioned as one of the main statutory objectives of the entity.

Indicators

Table 16. Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate objective (2024)	End objective (2029)
Cooperation	Creating mutual trust by encouraging actions to facilitate people-to-people contacts	RCO85	Participations in joint training schemes	Participation		
		RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations		
		RCO115	Public events across borders jointly organised	Events		

Table 17. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	End objective (2029)	Data source	Comments
Cooperation	Creating mutual trust by encouraging actions to facilitate people-to-people contacts	RCR81	Completion of joint training schemes	Participants completion	0				
		RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0				
		RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Participation	0				



Main target groups

The main target groups of measures under this specific objective will be the **inhabitants of the Programme area**. Intervention in this area may contribute to the integration of local communities, youth, employees of educational institutions and research staff across borders.

Activities under this specific objective may be undertaken by the following beneficiaries:

- state, regional and local administration units, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them,
- other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies),
- schools and educational institutions,
- units of higher education and research institutions,
- non-governmental organizations,
- other entities conducting cultural or educational activity.