

## Report

### Interreg post 2027 stakeholders' consultation meeting

#### Subject of consultation

#### **Shape of the post 2027 Interreg programme on the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Belarusian borderlands**

#### Objectives of consultation

1. Identify and analyse the key spheres and problems in the region that need solutions and can be addressed by Interreg post 2027 programme;
2. Assess conditions and locate points for cooperation;
3. Collect opinions, propositions and define probable directions of Interreg post 2027 for the region.

#### Administration

Region	Zakarpattia Oblast, Ukraine
Conducted by (entity)	Lviv Branch Office of Joint Secretariat
Place/venue/address	4, Narodna Square Uzhhorod,
Date	10 October 2024

## **Part 1.**

#### Information about respondents

Number of participants	21 persons 17 entities represented
Categories of participants, structure and share of participation	Regional, urban, local government authorities - (4) 24% Healthcare institutions - (1) 6% Education institutions (schools, universities, academies), training or research centers - (2) 12% Cultural institutions (such as museums, galleries etc.) - (4) 24% Organizations responsible for nature/environment protection - (1) 6% Bodies in charge of disaster and emergency risk management - (0) 0% Economic/social partners, associations, SMEs - (0) 0% NGOs (regional development, civil society) (4) 24% Military unit (1) 6%

The level of awareness of the audience about the Poland-(Belarus)-Ukraine / Interreg and EU/Donor funded projects	<p><b>Low</b> – heard of EU-funded projects without knowing details on the financing conditions, priorities, objectives etc.;</p> <p><b>Medium</b> – aware of the EU-funded projects with basic knowledge on conditions, examples of projects in the region or indirectly involved in the implementation;</p> <p><b>High</b> – directly involved in the Programme/projects implementation as a Monitoring Committee member or beneficiary of current or previous Poland-(Belarus)-Ukraine programme edition.</p>
	<p>Low – 4</p> <p>Medium – 11</p> <p>High - 6</p>

## Part 2.

### What is Interreg

<p>The audience should be informed about the basic data on the Programme (PL-UA/PBU) - financing structure, area, cross-border cooperation frame, successful projects in the region.</p> <p>The information should be adapted to the participants' awareness on the issue – if it is medium-high – please communicate rather the analysis of the previous programmes (challenges, resolutions, lessons learnt etc.).</p> <p>Highly informed participants may assist in sharing the basic information for enriching the discussion.</p>
<p>As the majority of participants had medium or low level of awareness about the Programme, more detailed information about the Programme was provided including programme periods, principles of financing, eligibility, types of projects, statistics of the supported projects, current Programme priorities, and future activities in the Programme.</p>

### Experience of the region

<p>Please indicate which PBU/PL-UA projects (or other CBC projects) implemented in the region proved most successful in the stakeholders' opinion, brought strongest results, had highest impact etc.</p>
<p><i>SUMCITINET</i> project in Uzhhorod aimed at sustainable mobility in Uzhhorod, which was a comprehensive approach to solving the problems of accessibility; it contained many innovative elements, some of which were implemented for the first time.</p> <p><i>Rosettes</i> project - amphitheatre in Kolochava village, which boosted cultural life in the village</p> <p><i>RRTB</i> project - the most modern tuberculosis hospital was built in Nyzhnia Apsha, high-end medical equipment was also purchased for Uzhhorod centre for Lung Diseases</p>

2007-2013 period - Revitalization of «Owl's Nest» historical building in Uzhhorod, umbrella micro project on castle revitalization, which gave necessary expertise and was an impetus of further renovation of several castles in Zakarpattia oblast.

*Etnotour* project on Lemko culture study and revitalization

### Part 3.

#### Analysis of feedback and input on key questions

Note: After introductory input and familiarization with the audience please initiate further joint discussion and exchange of opinions of the stakeholders on each of below key questions.

1. Is location next to a border an opportunity or a disadvantage?	As a summary of opinions of stakeholders please put the jointly outlined general answer whether the location next to a border is more opportunity or disadvantage and explain what key arguments state for the chosen answer.
	Advantages 1. Open-mindedness, being open to different mentalities and cultures, being able to see what people in the centre of the country cannot see 2. Ability to learn from each other, share best practices 3. The opportunities to implement joint projects

<p>2. Where is the biggest potential for territorial cooperation in your area ?</p>	<p>Please work on the joint identification of the region's most actual fields to be addressed in frames of Interreg orientation.</p> <p>Please list maximum 5 from below and arrange the list from the most to less actual. If other arise please add to the list.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint cultural heritage;</li> <li>- Health services and healthy lifestyle promotion;</li> <li>- Protection of environment;</li> <li>- Responding to natural and human related threats and hazards</li> <li>- Cooperation between research / science / academic centres</li> <li>- Promotion of entrepreneurship</li> <li>- Facilitations for SME cross-border operability</li> <li>- Easy employment in the neighbouring country</li> <li>- Tourism development</li> <li>- Networking research and enterprises to innovate</li> <li>- Joint sport events</li> <li>- Border security</li> <li>- Road infrastructure</li> <li>- Public transport crossing the border</li> <li>- Social integration</li> <li>- Strengthening local identity</li> <li>- New technologies / innovativeness development and promotion</li> <li>- Other – what exactly?</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<p>3. What currently works well in this cooperation and should be either preserved or reinforced?</p>	<div data-bbox="703 1227 1407 1496"> <p>1. Protection of environment;</p> <p>2. Health services and healthy lifestyle promotion;</p> <p>3. Joint cultural heritage</p> <p>4. Tourism development</p> <p>5. New technologies / innovativeness development and promotion</p> </div> <div data-bbox="703 1496 1407 1832"> <p>Please discuss the aspect of cooperation and summarise maximum 5 positive points agreed in the audience.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Creation of joint natural park areas;</p> <p>Shared health services;</p> <p>Jointly coordinated security/emergency services - fire-fighters operations across the border, etc.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="703 1832 1407 2065"> <p>1. PL-UA Programme is usually very advanced in comparison with other cross-border programmes</p> <p>2. Considerable funding compared to other donor programs</p> <p>3. Multiple events, which allow partner search and communication, also many other promotional</p> </div>

	<p>events (competitions, educational campaign, wandering academy), which foster integration, help to build capacities</p> <p>4. Having a strong representation in Ukraine (Lviv Branch Office), which facilitates communication and helps to solve different issues</p>
4. What currently does not work well in this cooperation and should be improved?	<p>Please discuss the aspect of cooperation and summarise a maximum 5 negative issues agreed in the audience.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Nature preservation practices in a shared river basin are not unified;</p> <p>Exchanges of practical experience between places facing the same issues are complicated.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Extremely user-unfriendly application form, many bugs</li> <li>2. State Audit Service appointed as a controller of the projects</li> <li>3. Unclearity in requirements to procurement and controls</li> <li>4. Multiple small payments in projects, which requires the reserve of own funds</li> <li>5. Applying currency rates as on the date of reporting instead of monthly rates (like it was in 2024-2020) leads to considerable financial loss,</li> <li>6. Low «flat rate» for salary (6%)</li> <li>7. It's impossible to cover own funding by a Polish partner only</li> </ol>
5. What are major obstacles for a good cross-border cooperation in your area?	<p>On the issues summarized above please provide the major obstacles that interfere these issues to be duly solved.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Low and uneven economic development;</p> <p>Little knowledge of the programme and/or partner country language;</p> <p>Uneven competence and salary level of local authorities personnel, etc.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of border crossing point with Poland</li> <li>2. Few direct links with Polish partners because of geography, no common history or heritage</li> <li>3. It's difficult to find a Polish partner as Polish partners have more funding opportunities</li> </ol>

6. Are there things you would like to do under Interreg but cannot? Why?	Please collect probable measures/goals and reasons. Examples: Involvement of SME as partners to strengthen financial and operational capability cannot be done to regulative limitations of programme rules;
	1. Education, Tourism, Culture priorities 2. Participate in international events outside the Programme area, e.g. for best practices sharing, promotion
7. What is the most important novelty that you would like to see in the future Interreg?	Please put the propositions that are new to the programme.
	1. Organize thematic meetings, forums for institutions in specific spheres jointly with other countries/programmes 2. Create a separate control body responsible for donor project
8. Is there a need for some infrastructure projects?	Please collect opinions/propositions of joint infrastructure projects may be established in the region in cooperation with adjacent region of the partner country.
	Yes, adaptation of spaces for people with disabilities, comprehensive approach to city planning; healthcare facilities
9. What should be done to facilitate the work with your counterparts in another country (governance)?	Please list measures on governance that would be applicable for improvement of the cooperation between bordering countries/regions.
	More events to match partners from Zakapattia and Polish regions (as the links and knowledge about each other are insufficient)

#### Part 4.

##### Conclusions, other topics of discussion

Please put here everything what was not covered above, but raised/expressed during discussion.
The bilateral format of the Programme is more preferable than trilateral one as it's easy to manage and there are more funds available

### Overall assessment of the meeting by the organizer

Were the objectives of the consultation achieved?

Please refer to each objective and describe the level of engagement of the stakeholders into discussion.

All but 2 target groups were represented at the event. The discussion was active, almost all participants made input in the discussion. Like in other cities, the beneficiaries of the current and past projects were the most active participants, focusing on many practical issues.

Zakarpattia oblast is unique in having the borders with 4 countries; it participates in two other CBC programmes. Although the links with Poland are not as strong as with Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, Zakarpattia is one of key regions in our Programme implementing a considerable number of successful projects. The border is perceived as an advantage, even as a privilege. Proximity of the border and ability to interact closely with people from other countries helps to develop human capital and introduce new practices and innovative solutions.

The priorities as identified by the group are the following: Protection of environment; Health services and healthy lifestyle promotion; Joint cultural heritage, Tourism development, New technologies / innovativeness development and promotion. Lack of border crossing with Poland and weak links with this neighbouring country are seen as a barrier. Still, local institutions are willing to cooperate and have sufficient capacities to design and implement projects.

Several proposals have been made on technical aspects of the Programme which should be improved, concerning, in particular, the application form, control system, currency exchange rates, flat rates. Also, more partner search events and thematic events are desirable.

The infrastructural projects are required, in particular, for adaptation of spaces for people with disabilities (as a part of comprehensive approach to city planning) and improvement of healthcare facilities.

### Interesting quotes

Please collect interesting, important quotes from the participants on the matter of future post 27 programme.

Please put Name of participant, Quote in "".

*The border always means problems. Problems require the projects to solve them, the projects mean we are needed.* – Ievhen Luksha, NGO Project Managers Association YADRO

*The border greatly expands the horizons. As a rule, there is an intersection of different nationalities and ethnic groups at the border. We are always different than people in the center... Also, the border gives us a certain security at the moment. It is also important for residents. On the other hand, the border gives an opportunity to study and implement projects. After all, projects are not only activities*

*and infrastructure. They are about building relationships between people. - Kseniia Okhotnyk, NGO Project Managers Association YADRO*

### Questionnaires

As a final point of the consultation – 10-15 minutes – please ask participants to fill the questionnaire for stakeholders on-line e.g. on their smartphones/laptops using the link (QR-code) to questionnaire for stakeholders (3 language versions available).

Participants that had already filled the survey before the meeting may share the experience and discuss whether consultation allow to improve replies given earlier.

QR code was distributed

### Attachments:

1. Agenda.
2. List of Participants.