

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	Podkarpackie Voivodeship
Conducted by (entity)	Rzeszów Regional Contact Point
Place/venue/address	Poniatowskiego 6, 35-026 Rzeszów (RRCP premises) Hotel "Nowy Dwór", Świlcza 146E, 36-072 Rzeszów (venue of the consultation meeting)
Date	30th October 2024

Part 1.

Information about respondents

Number of participants	89 persons 66 entities
Categories of participants, structure and share of participation	<p>Note: Please register participants in the list that will be further attached to the report (List should obligatory contain name, surname, function, name of entity represented, type of entity, signature).</p> <p>The following groups of stakeholders shall be invited and represented in the meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Regional, urban, local government authorities: 51 self-governments (77,3% of the audience) 2.) Healthcare institutions: 2 (3% of the audience) 3.) Education institutions (schools, universities, academies), training or research centres: 0 4.) Cultural institutions (such as museums, galleries etc.): 2 (3% of the audience) 5.) Organizations responsible for nature/environment protection: 0

	<p>6.) Bodies in charge of disaster and emergency risk management: 2 (3% of the audience)</p> <p>7.) Economic/social partners, associations, SMEs: 3 (4,5% of the audience)</p> <p>8.) NGOs (indicating a sphere of activity): 5 (7,6% of the audience) – civil society, cultural and natural heritage, ecology, upbringing and education of young people</p> <p>Other type (what exactly): 1 (1,5% of the audience) - Sekretarz Komisji Wspólnej Rządu i Samorządu Terytorialnego przy MSWiA</p> <p>Note: it should be taken into account that, for example, poviats run hospitals and submit medical projects, and communes are responsible for waste and water management or culture and education, so they could just as well be included in each of the above mentioned categories.</p>
<p>The level of awareness of the audience about the Poland-(Belarus)-Ukraine / Interreg and EU/Donor funded projects</p>	<p>Please assess the audience according to the level of awareness/involvement of the organisation in the EU funded projects in the region and specify what is the quantity and % share of each group in the total quantity of participants (it is best to cover that in the registration):</p> <p>Low – heard of EU-funded projects without knowing details on the financing conditions, priorities, objectives etc.;</p> <p>61,3%</p> <p>Medium – 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>19,4%</p> <p>High – 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>19,4%</p>

Part 2.

What is Interreg

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. 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.). Highly informed participants may assist in sharing the basic information for enriching the discussion.

Presentation attached

Experience of the region

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.

Presentation attached

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.

<p>1. Is location next to a border an opportunity or a disadvantage?</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Half of the discussants think that living near the border creates more opportunities and these are mainly: cultural heritage, tourist attractions, clean environment and the possibility to jointly invest in infrastructure with the support of cross-border programmes. However, it should be noted that quite a lot of people, about one third, think that it is difficult to assess whether this creates more opportunities or threats.</p>
<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"> - Joint cultural heritage; - Health services and healthy lifestyle promotion; - Protection of environment; - Responding to natural and human related threats and hazards - Cooperation between research / science / academic centres - Promotion of entrepreneurship - Facilitations for SME cross-border operability - Easy employment in the neighbouring country - Tourism development - Networking research and enterprises to innovate - Joint sport events - Border security - Road infrastructure - Public transport crossing the border - Social integration - Strengthening local identity - New technologies / innovativeness development and promotion

	<p>- Other – what exactly?</p> <p>According to the participants, the greatest potential lies in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tourism development, - cultural activities, - joint protection of the environment, especially water and sewage investments, - border security, - public transport facilitating border crossings (in particular increasing cross-border rail links)
<p>3. What currently works well in this cooperation and should be either preserved or reinforced?</p>	<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; Shared health services; Jointly coordinated security/emergency services - fire-fighters operations across the border, etc.</p> <p>1/ Projects raising the level of health services 2/ Projects strengthening emergency services and creating high common standards in this field, thus increasing the level of safety on both sides of the border 3/ Environmental protection measures (although still insufficient) 4/ Protection and promotion of cultural and historical heritage 5/ Tourism as an opportunity for development of border regions</p>
<p>4. What currently does not work well in this cooperation and should be improved?</p>	<p>Please discuss the aspect of cooperation and summarise maximum 5 negative issues agreed in the audience.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Nature preservation practices in a shared river basin are not unified; Exchanges of practical experience between places facing the same issues are complicated.</p> <p>1/ Lack of convergence in environmental standards on both sides of the border 2/ Necessity to use English language in documents. Complicated documentation 3/ Lack of possibility to enter Ukraine due to warfare 4/ Legal differences between the countries involved 5/ Insufficient involvement of the cross-border community, including insufficient cooperation of NGOs</p>

<p>5. What are major obstacles for a good cross-border cooperation in your area?</p>	<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; Little knowledge of programme and/or partner country language; Uneven competence and salary level of local authorities personnel, etc.</p>
	<p>1/ Political situation, low level of trust in partners 2/ Unresolved historical issues and lack of reliable knowledge on these issues on the Ukrainian side (especially in schools) 3/ Necessity to use English when submitting projects 4/ Low level of grants and at the same time complicated procedures and large number of documents 5/ The fact that the Programme is managed from Warsaw. According to the interviewees, the Programme should be managed as close to the border as possible (as other Interreg programmes), because the point of view of Warsaw or Brussels is too distant and often inadequate to the needs of the border area inhabitants and the realities of life in the area</p>
<p>6. Are there things you would like to do under Interreg but cannot? Why?</p>	<p>Please collect probable measures/goals and reasons.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Involvement of SME as partners to strengthen financial and operational capability cannot be done to regulative limitations of programme rules;</p>
<p>7. What is the most important novelty that you would like to see in the future Interreg?</p>	<p>Creation of an International Meeting Centre, and in the meantime there is no possibility of submitting investment projects in the field of cooperation</p>
<p>8. Is there a need for some infrastructure projects?</p>	<p>Please put the propositions that are new to the programme.</p> <p>1/ Bringing the management of the Programme within its eligible area, as close as possible to the Polish-Ukrainian border 2/ Use of national languages in the project application and implementation procedure 3/ Larger Programme budget 4/ Higher level of grants 5/ Simplified rules for settling costs</p>
	<p>Please collect opinions/propositions of joint infrastructure projects may be established in the region in cooperation with adjacent region of the partner country.</p> <p>Yes, especially for water and sewage infrastructure. Border municipalities still have significant needs in this</p>

	area, and such investments are no longer possible in other programmes.
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.
	<p>Commitment of the partner to maintain contact (responsiveness).</p> <p>Safeguarding the project leader against irresponsible behaviour of the partner (e.g. non-performance or improper performance of tasks, investments, purchases) - it must be clear that the leader will not suffer financial consequences, and vice versa.</p>

Part 4.

Conclusions, other topics of discussion

Please put here everything what was not covered above, but raised/expressed during discussion.
<p>Participants expressed worries about the tendency towards centralisation in the management of Interreg programmes. The perspective of Warsaw or Brussels is often too distant and detached from the realities of life in the border region, and therefore, according to the participants, these programmes should be managed as close to the borders as possible.</p> <p>There are also concerns about the levelling of Interreg rules across Europe, without taking into account the specific operation of programmes at the European Union's external border. At the same time, the rules are still very complicated and not very accessible (friendly).</p> <p>According to the participants, there is also a worrying tendency to marginalise Interreg programmes compared to other sources of funding (low budgets, low grants), so that assistance to historically underinvested border areas is only superficial, symbolic and not real. Meanwhile, the Russian aggression against Ukraine has posed a number of challenges for the Polish-Ukrainian border area, where millions of refugees have been received on both sides, putting a strain on infrastructure, hospitals, services, administration, causing wear and tear on equipment, adaptation difficulties, people's exhaustion and burnout, and thus a growing reluctance to cooperate.</p>

Overall assessment of the meeting by the organizer

<p>Were the objectives of the consultation achieved? Please refer to each objective and describe the level of engagement of the stakeholders into discussion.</p>
<p>The objectives of the consultations were achieved, as they were attended by representatives of various groups of potential beneficiaries: non-governmental organisations involved in the protection of cultural heritage, ecology, education and upbringing of young people, development of civil society and international dialogue; representatives of services responsible for security: the police and the state fire brigade, health services and emergency medical services, as well as representatives of self-governments at all levels: municipal, district and voivodeship local governments, which – by reason of their competences – deal with almost all areas of borderland life: road, water and sewage infrastructure, IT, tourism, social infrastructure, hospitals, rescue services, education, environmental protection and waste management, renewable energy sources, support for entrepreneurship, protection of cultural</p>

heritage, economic and tourist promotion of the region, and many other fields. Everyone took an active, involved part - by speaking out and/or filling in consultation questionnaires.

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 "".

„My dream project? With a free Ukraine.”

„My dream project? With good communication and mutual trust.”

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.

34 questionnaires – filled in electronically or in paper.

Attachments:

1. Agenda.
2. List of Participants.