

MINUTES

6th meeting of the Monitoring Committee

Interreg NEXT Programme Poland – Ukraine 2021-2027

15 July 2026, Online (Zoom)

1. Opening, objectives of the meeting

- The Chairperson (*Ms Małgorzata Chętko*) opened the meeting, welcomed the participants, and presented the agenda.

2. The Programme – state of play and further steps

2.1. Programme implementation progress, underperforming projects, savings

- The Joint Secretariat (JS) representative (*Mr Tomasz Jędrzejewski*) presented the main implementation milestones, Programme financial progress, project reporting, and Programme savings.
- The JS representative informed the participants about the main challenges affecting the Programme implementation and indicated three at-risk projects:
 - o **PLUA.01.01-IP.01-0030/23** "Preventing and removing the effects of climate change by purchasing vehicles and firefighting equipment to fight forest fires" (regular project),
 - o **PLUA.01.01-IP.01-0001/24** "Environmental Safety – Creation of a Ukrainian-Polish Forest Fire Management Network in the Carpathian Region" (LIP),
 - o **PLUA.01.01-IP.01-0010/23** "Joint efforts enhancing cross-border disaster response capacity" (regular project).

He proposed recommendations on the further implementation of projects facing significant delays for the Monitoring Committee's (Committee) discussion and approval.

- The Chairperson noted that the Managing Authority (MA) is fully aware of the challenges associated with implementing projects in Ukraine. However, the MA had a responsibility to ensure the smooth implementation of the Programme and the timely absorption of the available funds. The Chairperson further stated that the issues identified in relation to the at-risk projects constituted a systemic challenge and that the MA was committed to addressing them in the most effective manner possible.
- The Chairperson initiated a discussion on the proposed Committee decisions regarding the implementation of projects facing significant delays.
- The representative of Lviv region (*Ms Iryna Butynets*) referred to the project PLUA.01.01-IP.01-0030/23 and noted that the Main Department of State Emergency Service of Ukraine in the Lviv region continuously responded to challenges resulting from the ongoing war. She therefore emphasized that the equipment to be purchased should reflect the partner's current operational needs. Ms Butynets informed the Committee that the Ukrainian project partner had already prepared all documentation necessary to launch the procurement procedure and would be ready to accept a six-month extension of the project implementation period to

demonstrate tangible progress. She added that the tender procedure could be launched immediately once the requested changes had been approved in the CST2021 system. The representative assured the Committee that the Ukrainian partner was prepared to demonstrate substantial progress in the project implementation by the end of 2026. After that the Lead Partner could ask for additional prolongation of the project implementation.

- The representative of the National Controllers (*Mr Marcin Migut*) expressed concern about the situation in several projects and the risk that they might not be completed. He asked how Polish partners should proceed in such cases with regard to the settlement of their expenditures.
- The Chairperson confirmed that the Polish partners could submit payment claims and that their expenditures could be verified and settled on the basis of the activities completed.
- The representative of Podkarpackie region (*Ms Maria Michur-Ziemba*) stressed that cooperation was the foundation of the Programme. While acknowledging the difficult situation in Ukraine, she underlined the Committee's responsibility to ensure proper implementation and achievement of the expected results and indicators. Podkarpackie region maintained the proposal to extend the at-risk projects until the end of 2026, noting that their successful completion would remain possible if the Ukrainian partners fulfilled their commitments.
- The representative of Lubelskie region (*Ms Magdalena Fotek*) supported the proposal to give the at-risk projects another opportunity, particularly as they were important to the Ukrainian side and involved institutions providing daily assistance to the population under the current difficult circumstances.

Decisions:

1. Extend the implementation period of project PLUA.01.01-IP.01-0030/23 "Preventing and removing the effects of climate change by purchasing vehicles and firefighting equipment to fight forest fires" until the end of 2026, provided that key milestones for project progress are set and agreed upon between the project partner and the Joint Secretariat.
2. Extensions of project implementation period shall be strictly conditional: future project extensions will be granted only under strict, written conditions requiring the achievement of key milestones (*e.g., successful selection of a works contractor or equipment supplier*).
3. A maximum project implementation period extension limit is set for LIPs under ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH, and TOURISM priorities and the 1st Call for Proposals projects until October 2027.
4. Any LIPs under ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH, and TOURISM priorities and 1st Call for Proposals projects not completed by October 2027 will be formally closed and settled. The use of savings generated, if any, will be up to further Committee decisions.

Poland: 6 votes "YES" (0 votes "NO", 0 votes "ABSTAIN")

Ukraine: 9 votes "YES" (0 votes "NO", 0 votes "ABSTAIN")

The list of at-risk projects is provided in Annex 1.

2.2. NEXTStep call for proposals (under PL-UA 2021-2027)

- The MA representative (*Ms Ewa Termena-Chyży*) presented the NEXTStep initiative, intended to prepare time-consuming projects for implementation immediately after the adoption of the Interreg Plan Chapter Poland – Ukraine 2028-2034, to use the anticipated savings and to respond to the *Commission Communication on Eastern Border Regions*.
- The MA representatives explained that the call could be launched following the Commission's approval of the 2021-2027 Programme modifications and the agreement by the Working Group preparing Interreg Plan Chapter Poland – Ukraine 2028-2034.

2.3. Programme document modifications

- The JS representative (*Mr Andrzej Słodki*) presented the proposed modifications of the Programme Document.

Decisions:

1. To approve the following Programme document modifications:
 - the addition of the new specific objective ISO6.1 under priority COOPERATION, together with the proposed scope of supported actions;
 - the budget transfers and allocations presented by the JS, including EUR 412 474.90 for NEXTStep projects under the new SO 4.2;
 - the proposed updates to the Programme output and result indicator values.
2. To launch the NEXTStep restricted call for proposals by the end of 2026 after approval of the required Programme modification by the Commission and completion of the Programme Manual and call documentation.

Poland: 7 votes "YES" (0 votes "NO", 0 votes "ABSTAIN")

Ukraine: 7 votes "YES" (0 votes "NO", 0 votes "ABSTAIN")

The Programme document modifications are provided in Annex 6.

3. Results of the mid-term evaluation of the Programme

- The evaluator (*Mr Igor Lyubashenko*, EGO S.C.) presented the results of the mid-term evaluation of the Interreg NEXT Poland – Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme. Mr Lyubashenko concluded that the Programme architecture, intervention logic, and project-selection system were coherent and functioning as intended. The evaluation also produced a number of recommendations, most of which are intended to be implemented in the next programming period.
- The National Authority (NA) representatives (*Ms Olena Feleniuk*, *Ms Maryna Nelina*) noted that, in the view of the NA, the sections of the Evaluation Report concerning its role and the specific features of project registration in Ukraine contained information that had not been sufficiently verified and did not accurately reflect the actual arrangements. The NA therefore requested that these sections be either removed from the Report or substantially revised.

- The Chairperson asked the NA to provide all its comments in writing and submit them to the MA for further consideration.
- With reference to the information presented in the Report on the activities of the Regional Contact Points in Ukraine and the Lviv Branch Office, the NA representatives requested further clarification regarding their respective mandates, responsibilities, and expenditure. The NA representatives noted the need for greater transparency concerning the functioning and use of resources of these units and asked the Managing Authority to conduct a formal audit within the Lviv Branch Office to get an impartial and comprehensive review of their activities and expenditures.
- Representatives of the Polish delegation (Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie regions and the Carpathian Euroregion) and representatives of the Ukrainian delegation (Lviv, Rivne, Volyn, Ternopil regions and the National Council of Ukraine for Science and Technology Development Scientific Committee) declared no objections to the implementation of tasks by the Lviv Branch Office and expressed their full support for continued operation of the Lviv Branch Office to secure the Programme implementation.

Table 1. Voting members

POLAND

	Institution	Name
1.	Managing Authority	Chętko Małgorzata
2.	Lubelskie Voivodeship Marshal's Office	Magdalena Fotek-Kuśak
3.	Podkarpackie Voivodeship Marshal's Office	Marek Rainer
4.	Podlaskie Voivodeship Marshal's Office	Izabela Łokić
5.	Euroregion Bug	Anna Kusiak
6.	Konfederacja Lewiatan	Dariusz Jodłowski
7.	Ministry of Interior and Administration of Poland	Mariusz Kasprzyk

UKRAINE

	Institution	Name
1.	National Authority	Olena Feleniuk
2.	Ivano-Frankivsk Regional State (Military) Administration	Oleksandr Zraiko
3.	Lviv Regional State (Military) Administration	Iryna Butynets
4.	Rivne Regional State (Military) Administration	Olga Yutovets
5.	Ternopil Regional State (Military) Administration	Natalia Zarytska
6.	Volyn Regional State (Military) Administration	Olena Behal
7.	Zakarpattia Regional State (Military) Administration	Halyna Loboda
8.	Platform Civil Society Ukraine-EU	Nadija Afanasieva
9.	National Council of Ukraine for Science and Technology Development Scientific Committee	Ivan Kulchytsky

Annexes:

1. Presentation on Programme implementation progress.
2. Factsheets of approved projects (as of July 2026).

3. Documents regarding project no. 01.01.0030.
4. Presentation on the NEXTStep projects.
5. Presentation on the proposed Programme Document modifications.
6. Interreg NEXT PL-UA Programme document (version 5).
7. Mid-term Evaluation Report.
8. Presentation on the Mid-term Evaluation Report: conclusions and recommendations.

Chaired by:

MAŁGORZATA CHĘTKO (MA)

Secretary:

LENA BUDARINA (JS)