

# MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME POLAND-BELARUS-UKRAINE 2014-2020

**FINAL REPORT**

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## Summary

The evaluation study is focused on the Cross Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020, implemented under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). The objective of the Programme concerned the support of cross-border development processes in the border area of three neighbouring countries, constituting the continuation of the cooperation previously developed under the Neighbourhood Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine INTERREG III A/Tacis CBC 2004–2006 (Neighbourhood Programme) and the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2007-2013 under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

The objective of the evaluation study was to conduct a mid-term assessment of the degree to which specific objectives set for each priority axis of the Programme were achieved and to estimate the material and financial progress of the Programme. The study was aimed at the identification of factors influencing the scope of implementation of specific objectives set for individual priority axes. The study included the analysis of the degree to which horizontal policies (equality between men and women, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and the principles of sustainable development) were implemented, and the assessment of information and promotion activities. The evaluation study was conducted adopting the criteria of effectiveness, durability, efficiency and usefulness.

The final report consists of three main chapters:

- Chapter 1 introduction to the report, including the scope of conducted research and adopted methodology
- Chapter 2 results of the research concerning following thematic areas: Programme; Projects; Cooperation and Durability; Information and promotion; Horizontal principles and the calculation of Programme indicators
- Chapter 3 research conclusions and recommendations.

**Conclusions constituting the result of conducted study should be considered positive**, however, most of them require confirmation over a longer period of time.



The analysis of existing data and the results of qualitative and quantitative research indicated that **the measures undertaken under the Programme were effective**. The cross-border cooperation was deepened and consolidated due to the continuation of the EU support for the borderlands of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine. Joint implementation of projects contributed to establishing relationships between partners, which in the future may also be developed without the involvement of the Programme.

## Programme

A number of positive changes have been observed since the implementation of the first edition of the Programme, an example of which is the increasing interest of potential beneficiaries in the Programme and its possibilities, or facilities for applicants for EU funding.

**The procedure of applying for funding under the Programme and measures implemented by the Programme institutions were highly assessed** in the quantitative research conducted with beneficiaries of the Programme. Moreover, the majority of ineffective applicants participating in the study indicated that they had received adequate support from representatives of the Programme institutions, and that they intend to apply for funds under the Programme in the next financial perspective.

Furthermore, the research conducted as part of the evaluation **indicated the availability, transparency and completeness of Programme documentation**. The majority of respondents from all groups of participants drew their attention to the fact **that introducing changes to Programme documents is not necessary**. However, proposed changes in this scope included the need to increase the number of practical examples concerning possible project activities, settlement methods, best practices or the most commonly made mistakes.

The qualitative study indicated, however, that **the insufficient budget in relation to the area included in the support** constitutes one of main problems in the Programme, especially given the considerable interest of potential beneficiaries. According to respondents, increasing the Programme funds would contribute to extending the scope of cross-border cooperation and would further increase its effectiveness. Another significant aspect concerned applicants' considerable interest in activities concerning the support and promotion of local culture and history, which, due to the financial constraints, resulted in the rejection of a large number of applications.

## Projects

Respondents participating in the IDI research drew their attention to the **effectively developed mechanism for project selection**, resulting in selecting projects that had a real possibility of achieving planned results, and in the proper supervision of conducted activities. Systematic monitoring of results of project activities led to the early detection of possible irregularities or problems and to a fast reaction.



**The most considerable barriers** for the implementation of projects included the necessity to physically cross the border between partner countries, which often is burdensome and time-consuming due to the applicable legal restrictions and

limitations. However, it was generally emphasized that **the majority of difficulties resulted from factors not connected to the Programme itself**, an example of which is the situation caused by the coronavirus pandemic, language differences or administrative measures undertaken in partner countries. These barriers, however, were not related to the characteristics of individual beneficiaries - in this respect, attention were drawn to equal opportunities and conditions for starting cooperation under the Programme. According to respondents, limitations in cooperation between countries could be overcome with the introduction of facilitations in border traffic, including the introduction of visa-free travel and by simplifying formal and legal provisions. Moreover, identified difficulties could be counteracted with the further cooperation between partner countries.

achieving effects similar to results of implemented activities would be significantly difficult or impossible without the financial aid. **Without the involvement of the Programme funds or with their lesser amount, the effects would be considerably less significant** and the development of cross-border areas would progress slower.

#### Cooperation and durability

**The possibility of establishing and developing cooperation across national borders** is a considerably significant advantage of the Programme. Respondents of qualitative study repeatedly emphasized the fact that the cooperation would not probably be developed without the support of the Programme.



**Therefore, the Programme is not only an incentive to initiate the cooperation between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, but also constitutes a significant reason for such cooperation.** Moreover, undertaking joint activities in partnership will not be

limited merely to the programming period, but will become the basis for developing further cooperation, also outside the Programme.

The 2014-2020 perspective noted a visible **increase in the involvement in starting cooperation by partners from Ukraine and Belarus** (compared to the previous financial perspective), at the same time their position in the Programme was stronger because they more often took the role of project leaders. The most considerable number of beneficiaries/project partners concerned the Lviv region (59 entities) and the Brest region (33 entities). The highest number of connections was recorded in larger urban centres (where the more considerable number of beneficiaries lived, therefore



participating in a greater number of projects). **Differences in types of network of connections within the territory of individual countries** were also identified. In Ukraine and Belarus the beneficiaries were most commonly located in larger urban centres,

which influenced the development of a cooperation network between such units. In Poland, the activity of beneficiaries from smaller towns was more noticeable, resulting in a denser network of geographical connections within the framework of created partnerships (including the density of the network located in Poland). The conducted analysis leads to the conclusion that the relatively lowest intensity of cooperation is recorded in the relationship between Ukraine and Belarus.

The research conducted for the evaluation **emphasized the role of the support received from the JTS in finding a project partner** and the significance of tools used for this purpose (including the organization of the Open Partner Search Forum).

**Results of the research show a strong cross-border effect of the Programme.** According to the beneficiaries, cross-border cooperation was mostly influenced by the results of implemented projects, such as promoting local culture and history, and improving transport accessibility, including the development of road and border infrastructure. It is also especially significant to improve the safety and protection of people from support areas, and to exchange experiences and undertake joint activities across borders. According to the beneficiaries, the protection of nature and the promotion of local culture and history constituted the most important subject to strengthen cooperation across borders, furthermore, in this area joint activities were the most often planned for the future.



**Complicated or burdensome formal and legal procedures, differing depending on the state policy to the most considerable scope limited the process of cross-border**

**integration.** The pandemic situation was also a significant barrier as it often made it impossible for the parties to meet, negatively influencing the possibilities of implementing the intended measures. Increasing the activity of beneficiaries in the scope of cross-border cooperation could be positively influenced by obtaining appropriate funds and improving the infrastructure and capacity of border crossings. Furthermore, the necessity to introduce formal and legal changes and to improve the coordination of cooperation between institutions was declared, although at the same time the level of involvement of the organizations represented by partners in the implementation of projects was rated considerably highly.

According to conducted research, **effects of implemented projects will be present also after their completion**, which might result in long-term benefits and multiplier effects that will affect the target groups. Moreover, the established international cooperation will contribute to the improvement and strengthening of mutual relations, constituting the basis for its continuation.

## Information and promotion

Information and communication tools and activities (used for the promotion of the Programme and for individual projects) were assessed very positively. However, **the need to increase the number of training courses in project communication was also indicated**. Beneficiaries reported the need to provide more practical examples of information and promotion activities that could be used.

Respondents drew their attention to **the effective mechanism of disseminating information about the Programme**, already established in the Programme documentation. In this context it is significant to focus on reasons why the current beneficiaries did not apply for funding from the fund of the Programme in previous financial perspectives. The most commonly indicated reason concerned the lack of information on the Programme or the knowledge in this area, indicated by every fourth



respondent. Therefore, in the current perspective, **the needs of potential applicants in this respect have been met, and the tool used to promote the Programme should be considered effective**.

According to the results of the IDI survey, ensuring adequate information and promotion conditions for future beneficiaries is especially significant due to the fact that these activities had a strong impact on the image of the Programme, implemented projects and partners. Respondents participating in in-depth interviews indicated that **the activities used to promote the undertaken activities had a significant impact on the recognition of projects implemented under the Programme and the Programme itself**. It was also emphasized that these **activities had a positive impact on the image of the partner countries**, especially in terms of the mentality of the society and the stereotypical perception of the neighbours. The project cooperation established a space to deepen relations between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, including the inhabitants of the supported area, leading to the observation of aspects common to all three countries and to the revision of prejudices against each of the countries.

## Horizontal principles

Projects implemented under the Programme implemented EU's horizontal principles to a different extent. Some of projects directly referred to policies in this area, such as measures aimed at environmental protection, while others remained neutral in this scope. However, attention should be drawn to **the relatively low awareness of the meaning and scope of horizontal principles**.



### The level of implementation of Programme indicators

As part of the evaluation, indicators were calculated based on data from the SL2014 system. The main objective of the evaluation was to assess the progress in achieving the target value of the designated output indicators. **At the time of conducting present study the majority of project activities were still in the implementation phase**, therefore, it is difficult to assess the level of implementation of Programme indicators at the current stage of the study (especially due to the ongoing implementation of larger infrastructure projects).



However, taking into consideration results of implemented research (including results of quantitative research conducted with beneficiaries and project partners, and qualitative research with members of the JMC and other representatives of institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme), and information concerning implemented projects available on the Programme website (including current reports and information relating to their implementation), **the evaluator positively assesses the current level of their implementation.**

### Summary



**The Programme should be considered effective** according to the evaluator's assessment. The strengths of the Programme include: its good organization and provided support; completeness and accessibility of the Programme documentation, leading to the efficient and effective implementation of all stages of the Programme starting from the call for proposals, evaluation of project applications and the assistance in finding an appropriate project partner, to enabling the implementation of projects and supervising them. However, **the most significant strength of the Programme is the establishment of partnerships between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine**, the implementation of joint activities aimed at improving the situation in the border area, and successful cross-border cooperation. The success of the Programme is also evidenced by the fact that it was met with considerable interest from applicants. Its **weaknesses** mainly consisted of **the insufficient budget** compared to the scope of interest in the possibility of receiving support. Most of identified difficulties shall be considered external in relation to the Programme, an example of which is **the coronavirus pandemic and corelated limitations, or formal and legal barriers in partner countries**. Another problem regarded the necessity to physically cross the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Belarusian borders, which often would be proven time-consuming and burdensome. However, these difficulties were mostly overcome, with the (often long-term) partnership cooperation minimizing the degree of their impact on the implementation of projects.



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# 1. Introduction

The objective of the study was the **mid-term evaluation** of the Cross Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020.

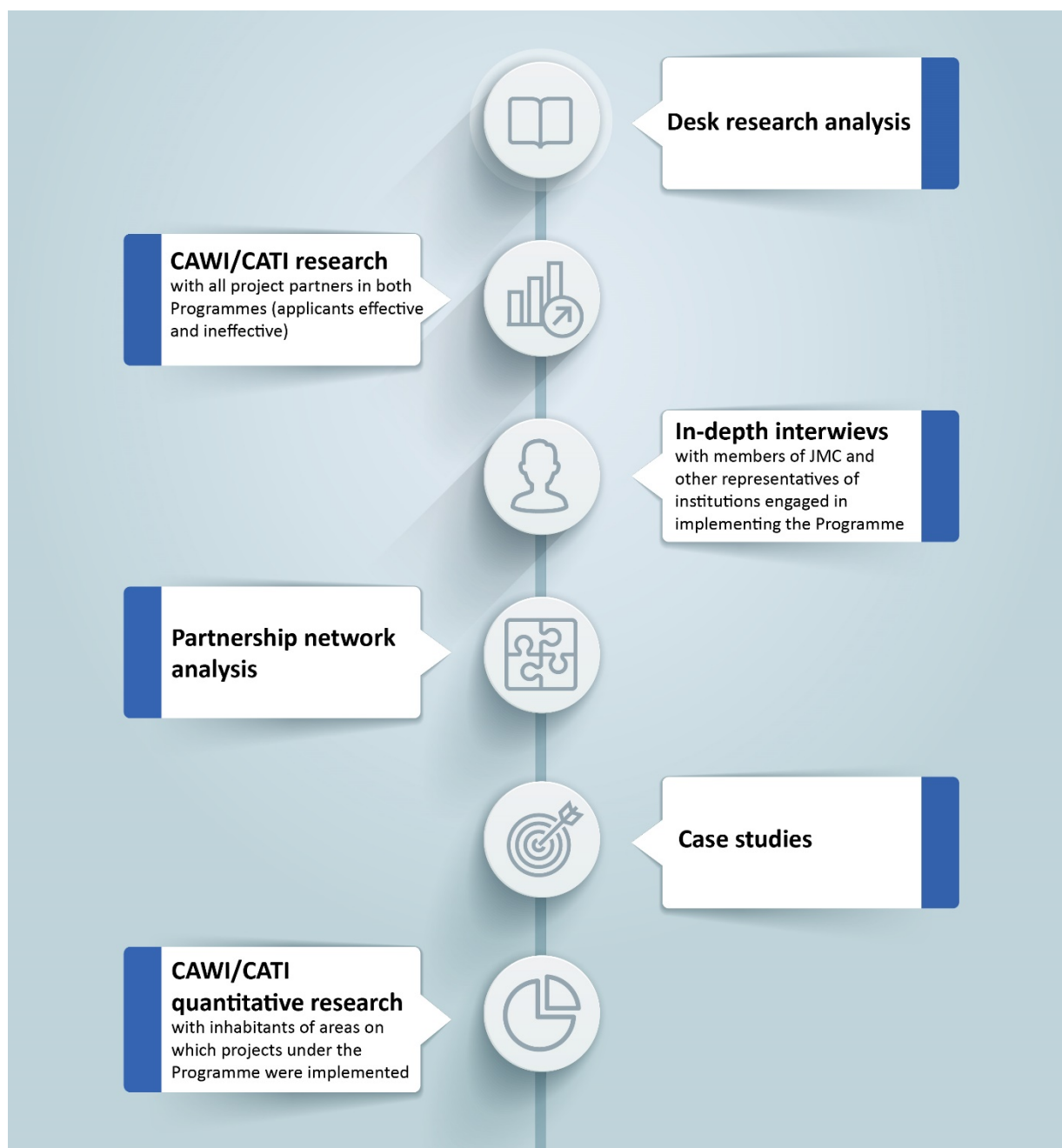
**The objective of the evaluation study** was to conduct a mid-term assessment of the degree to which specific objectives set for *the Cross Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020* were achieved, and to estimate the material and financial progress of the Programme. The study was aimed at the identification of factors influencing the scope of implementation of specific objectives set for individual priority axes. The study included the analysis of the degree to which horizontal principles were implemented, including the equality between men and women, equal opportunities and non-discrimination and the principles of sustainable development, and the assessment of information and promotion activities. Factors influencing the manner of their implementation were also determined, and good practices within these areas were indicated.

The evaluation conducted by the Contractor included a considerable range of **stakeholders**:

- Project partners (lead beneficiaries and beneficiaries) - 382 questionnaires;
- Members of the JMC and other representatives of the institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme (Joint Technical Secretariat, Controller) - 12 in-depth interviews;
- Inhabitants of the areas where projects were implemented under *the Cross Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020* - 900 questionnaires.

A number of **research methods and techniques** were used in the study.

**Figure 1. Used research methods and techniques**



Source: Own research

Detailed information concerning the indicated research methods and techniques is included in the methodological report. However, it should be noted that **the CAWI/CATI research with project partners** (effective and ineffective applicants) was conducted on a representative sample (95% confidence level, maximum error 5%), amounting to 698 (188 project partners and 194 unsuccessful applicants). **The quantitative CAWI/CATI research with inhabitants** of the areas where projects were

implemented covered 900 inhabitants (including 300 participants from Polish regions, 300 from Belarusian regions and 300 from Ukrainian regions).

In the case of **IDI in-depth interviews**, 10 interviews were conducted with representatives of the following institutions:

1. Joint Technical Secretariat in Poland;
2. Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Region;
3. Marshal's Office of the Podlaskie Region;
4. Marshal's Office of the Mazowieckie Region;
5. Marshal's Office of the Lubelskie Region;
6. Euroregion Bug;
7. Euroregion Niemen;
8. Lvivska oblast state administration;
9. Volynska oblast state administration;
10. EU Interational Technical Assistance Centre in the Republic of Belarus.

In order to comply with the principle of **methodological triangulation**, the content of the analysis presented in the next chapter has been marked with icons referring to the research methods/techniques used in the given fragment:



**Conclusions**



**Conclusions from the in-depth interviews**



**Results of surveys**

## 2. Results of conducted study

### 2.1. Programme

#### 2.1.1. Implementation of the objectives of the Programme



**The main objective of the PBU Programme** is to support cross-border development processes in the borderland of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine. The Programme strategy is compliant with national and regional strategies for socio-economic development, implemented through the PBU Strategic Objectives. The *Programming document for EU support to ENI Cross-Border Cooperation (2014-2020)* included 3 Strategic Objectives for cross-border cooperation projects. These are:

1. Promoting economic and social development in the regions on both sides of the common border;
2. Addressing common environmental, public health, safety and security challenges;
3. Promoting better conditions and rules to ensure the mobility of people, goods and capital.

The PBU covered all Strategic Objectives as well as identified regional needs by financing the implementation of non-commercial projects related to the following selected **4 Thematic Objectives (TO)** and their related priorities:

1. TO Heritage
  - Priority 1.1 Promotion of local culture and history;
  - Priority 1.2 Promotion and conservation of natural heritage.
2. TO Accessibility
  - Priority 2.1 Improvement and development of transport services and infrastructure;
  - Priority 2.2 Development of information and communication technology infrastructure.
3. TO Security
  - Priority 3.1 Support for the development of health and social services;
  - Priority 3.2 Addressing common security challenges.
4. TO Borders
  - Priority 4.1 Support for border efficiency and security;

- Priority 4.2 Improvement of border management operations, customs and visa<sup>1</sup> procedures .

It is planned that the implementation will be measured by a number of indicators.

According to the analysis presented in the further part of this document (subchapter 2.6), taking into consideration the stage at which the projects were (at the moment of performing this evaluation), the **progress in achieving target values of indicators should be positively assessed**, and consequently the level of achieving specific objectives of the Programme should be positively assessed.



In the opinion of respondents participating in the IDI qualitative survey, in each of the Programme objectives the activities undertaken turned out to be effective and efficient. Thanks to the support of the Programme, among others, cultural and historical heritage projects, which probably could not have been implemented without

external funding due to high costs (in relation to the financial capacity of the beneficiaries), were carried out. As indicated, joint activities in this field resulted in bringing the borderland residents closer together. Great importance was also attached to projects concerning security.

On the other hand, the effects of projects implemented under the "Accessibility" objective are directly visible and tangible. This is because the changes made can be used by a large number of people, both local residents and visitors, which confirms the cross-border effect. Objective:

"Promotion of border management and security, mobility and migration management" to which a considerable part of the Programme budget was allocated, also turned out to be a much needed direction in the opinion of the respondents. The implementation of projects in this scope contributed to an increase in effectiveness of tasks performed by officers, better equipping them with necessary equipment and improving the security level, e.g. through border monitoring.

Difficulties resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, however, were pointed out, which significantly affected the pace of implementation of the intended projects.

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<sup>1</sup> ENI Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020, Translation of the version approved by the EC (Decision C(2015) 9138 of 17 December 2015), pp. 9-10.





**The case study analysis** confirms the effectiveness and efficiency (the full text of the analysis is contained in the attachment to the report). Projects selected for the analysis were characterised by a particularly high cross-border impact, affecting, inter alia, the infrastructural development of the supported area (construction of a bicycle route, expansion of a sewage treatment plant, modernisation of roads, retrofitting of the hospital, reconstruction and equipment of fire brigades and rescue services, purchase of communication equipment contributing to the improvement of the effectiveness of border checks). Moreover, projects included "soft" activities, influencing the development of participants' competences and enabling the exchange of experiences. The analysis of the projects leads to the conclusion that **the Programme significantly contributed to the development of cross-border cooperation, and the considerable scope of support corresponds to a large range of partners' needs.**



In the opinion of the persons participating in the IDI survey, among the projects implemented, **the greatest contribution to the achievement of the Programme objectives was made by large infrastructural projects**, whose impact is much greater and often multifaceted. The respondents emphasised that projects concerning safety

or protection of cultural and historical heritage are also important, especially those implemented on a large scale, such as the project of the Agency of Euroregion Bug and Ihor Palytsia's Charitable Foundation concerning fire safety or the "New life of an old town" project implemented by the city of Lutsk concerning renovation of the Czartoryski tower. Another of the indicated activities is the construction of the office building of the National Police of Ukraine.

However, it was pointed out that many of the projects are currently in the implementation phase, and it will only be possible to speak of direct effects once they have been completed.

Among the types of beneficiaries which were considered by the respondents of the IDI survey to be the most active and effective, mainly self-governments and NGOs were indicated, although it depended on the type of projects and thematic objectives (particularly high share of NGOs was in CT3). It is also worth mentioning that among all associations which are beneficiaries of PBU, the highest number of them was recorded in Ukraine and Poland (29 and 24 associations, respectively), and in Belarus their number amounted only to 10. Also during the in-depth interview with the respondent from Belarus the problem of insufficient interest of entities from the NGO sector in implementation of projects was emphasised, which, according to the respondent, results from insufficient financial possibilities of these entities to provide the required own contribution. It was



emphasised that NGOs were active mainly in soft projects, whereas self-governments – in large projects.

The effectiveness of cross-border integration was mainly influenced by aspects of the projects such as the multilateral nature of the activities planned and the need to involve partners from abroad.



It is worth noting that the restrictions related to the **pandemic situation had an impact on changing the scope of activities planned in the CBCP PBU** [*Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine*].

Stationary trainings for beneficiaries and scientific conferences were suspended (and organized in the on-line form). The crisis situation also resulted in more flexible rules regarding the allocated funds, especially with regard to medical projects, and in assurances that unusual circumstances would be taken into account when evaluating the implementation of measures<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, additional funding of EUR 3 million was allocated to ongoing medical projects, thus broadening their scope and actively contributing to the fight against the pandemic. Thirteen healthcare projects were identified and additional medical equipment to improve the functioning of medical treatment facilities was purchased<sup>3</sup>.



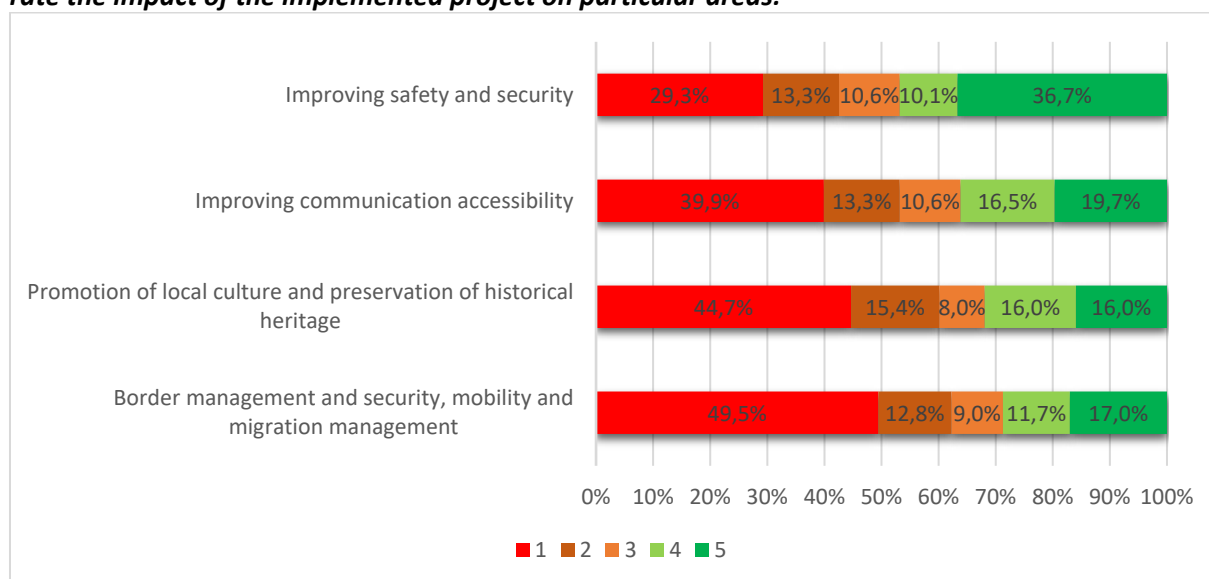
The surveyed beneficiaries (as part of the CAWI/CATI survey) were asked **to evaluate the impact of the project on a number of aspects** (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 meant the least impact and 5 the greatest impact). According to the respondents, the

implementation of the intended activities had the greatest impact on the promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage (in total 46.8% of responses regarded ratings 4 and 5). This result is also consistent with the desk research analysis - the largest number of implemented projects was in TO Heritage. Moreover, also during in-depth IDI interviews, respondents drew their attention to the particularly high impact of this type of projects on the development of cross-border cooperation and the overall recognition of the Programme. The implementation of the projects, according to respondents, was also relatively important for improving safety and security (nearly 47%) and improving transport accessibility (36.2%). The impact on border management and security as well as mobility and migration management was the least frequently specified (28.7%).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pbu2020.eu/pl/news/1460> [accessed on 21.01.2021].

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pbu2020.eu/pl/news/1808> [accessed on 21.01.2021].

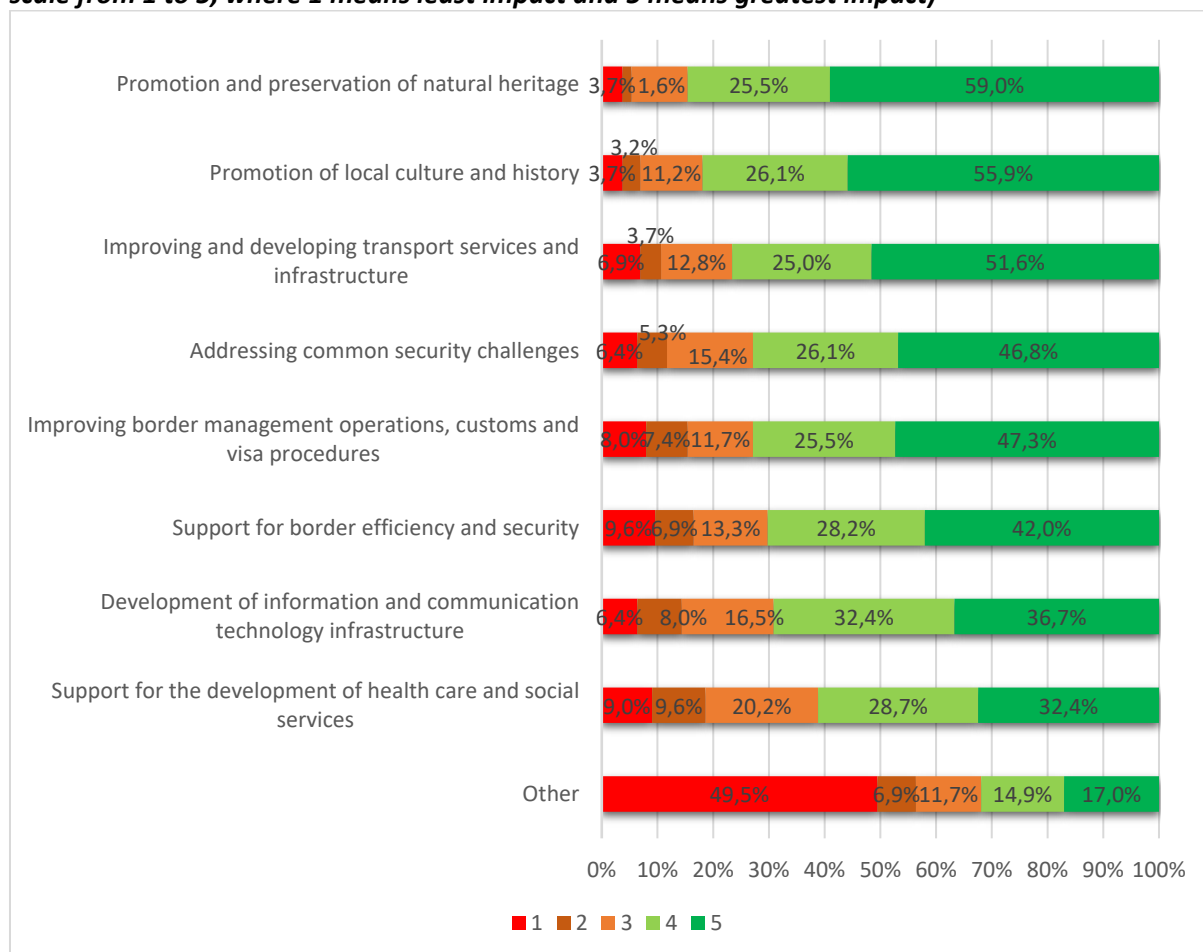
**Chart 1. On a scale from 1-5 (where 1 is the least impact and 5 is the most impact), how would you rate the impact of the implemented project on particular areas:**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020 P, N=188.

Subsequently, the beneficiaries were asked to specify which topics they thought **were important for strengthening cross-border cooperation**. Individual aspects were rated on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 meant the least impact and 5 the most impact. The promotion and preservation of natural heritage (a total of 84.6% responses for grades 4 and 5) and local culture and history (81.9% of responses) were considered the most important by the respondents. Relatively high importance was also given to improving and developing transport services and infrastructure, addressing common security challenges and improving border management operations, customs and visa procedures. Support for the development of health care and social services (61.2%) appeared to be the least needed, although still very frequently indicated. Among the "other" responses, the development of tourism infrastructure, education, health and environmental protection as well as the development of entrepreneurship were most frequently indicated.

**Chart 2. Which topics do you think are important for strengthening cross-border cooperation? (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means least impact and 5 means greatest impact)**

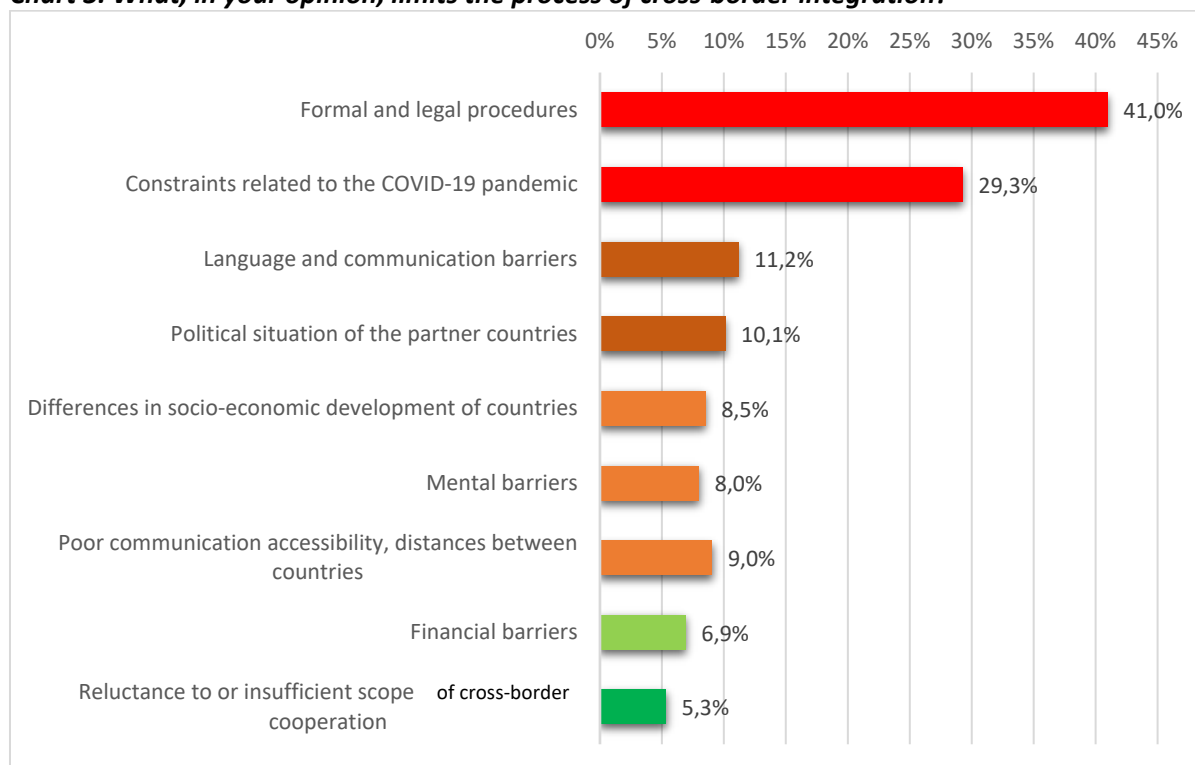


Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

According to beneficiaries under CAWI/CATI survey, **the process of cross-border integration was most limited by** complicated or burdensome formal and legal procedures (41.0% of responses).

Nearly every third respondent indicated problems related to the pandemic situation (29.3%), and every tenth respondent on average – language or communication barriers and the political situation of partner countries (11.2% and 10.1% respectively). The least important were financial barriers and unwillingness to undertake cooperation or its insufficient scope (6.9% and 5.3% respectively). It is worth noting that these results confirm the conclusions from the QCA analysis presented earlier in this document. This is because a high level of co-financing of eligible costs and the possibility of receiving an advance payment for the project were considered key success factors. At the same time, in the analysed results of the survey with beneficiaries, the financial barrier was indicated only by less than 7% of respondents.

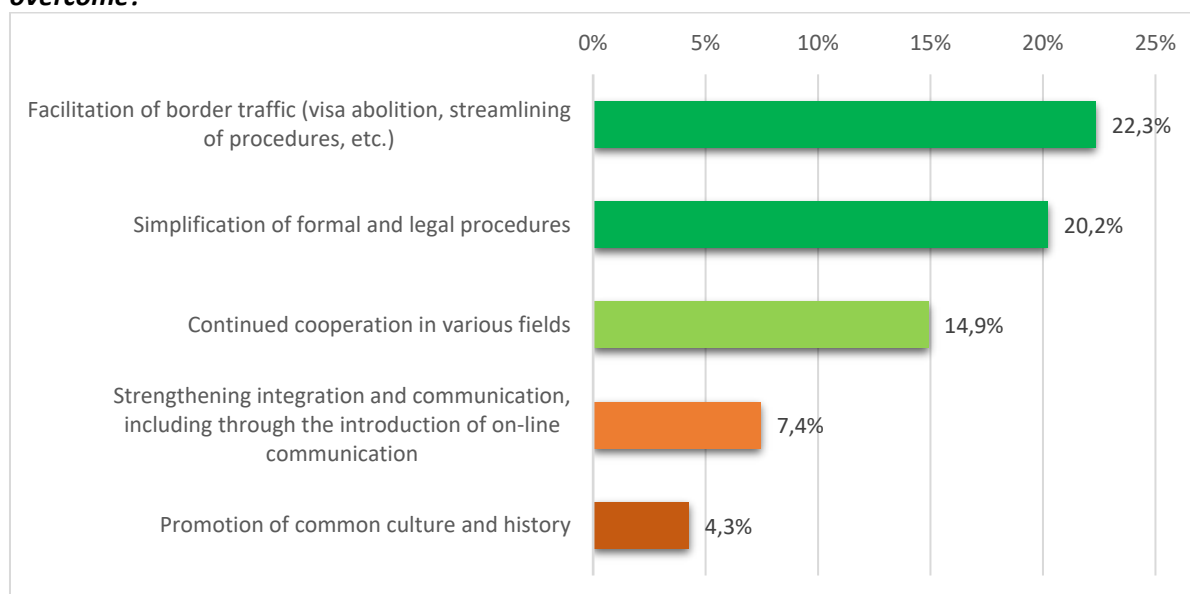
**Chart 3. What, in your opinion, limits the process of cross-border integration?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

The respondents were asked in turn how they think the **constraints** in cross-border cooperation should be **overcome**. The most common responses included the need to facilitate border traffic, including the introduction of visa-free travel (22.3%) and the need to simplify formal and legal procedures (20.2%). 14.9% of the project partners were of the opinion that these limitations can be overcome by further cooperation between the countries and 7.4% of the respondents postulated the strengthening of communication between partners, including through the introduction of on-line communication. There were also responses of promoting a common culture or history (4.3%), and striving to minimise socio-economic differences between countries/regions.

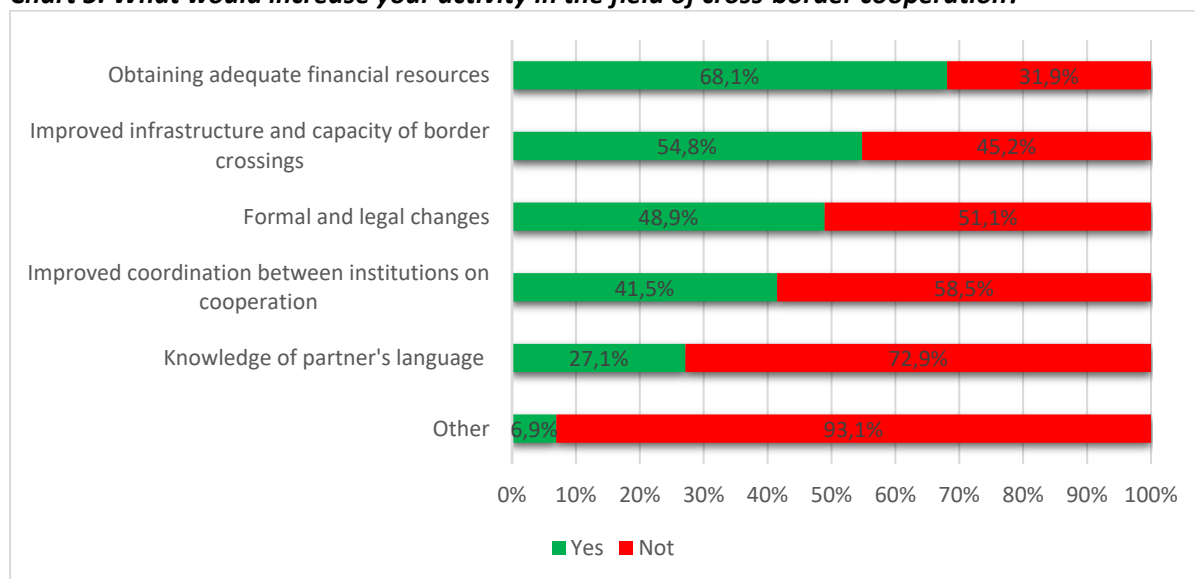
**Chart 4. How do you think the constraints of the cross-border integration process should be overcome?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

The beneficiaries were also asked what in their opinion would **increase their activities in cross-border cooperation**. As much as 68.1% of the project partners indicated **obtaining appropriate funding** (which again confirms the results of the QCA analysis presented earlier) and 54.8% - improving the infrastructure and capacity of border crossings. Almost every second respondent was of the opinion that formal and legal changes would be necessary (48.9%) and 41.5% pointed to improved coordination between institutions in terms of cooperation. The least frequent response was knowledge of the partner's language, which was indicated by 27.1% of respondents. Other important responses included: more frequent contests held within the Programme, reduction of bureaucratic requirements and simplification of application procedures, joining of the EU by Ukraine and Belarus or facilitation of border traffic (6.9% of total responses).

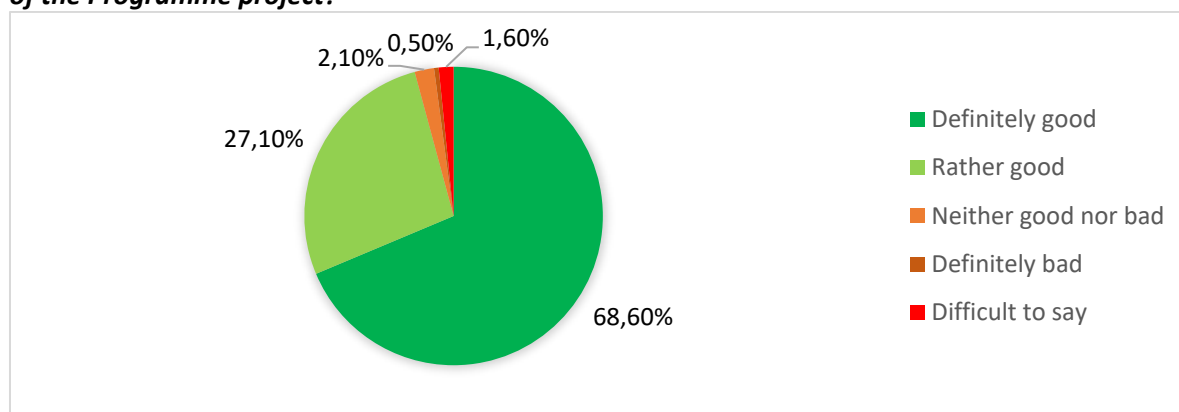
**Chart 5. What would increase your activity in the field of cross-border cooperation?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

Beneficiaries were also asked to assess the level of involvement of the organisations represented by the partners in the projects. Almost all respondents gave positive assessments, with 68.6% rating it as definitely good and 27.1% as good. An average rating was given by 2.1% and a bad rating by only one person.

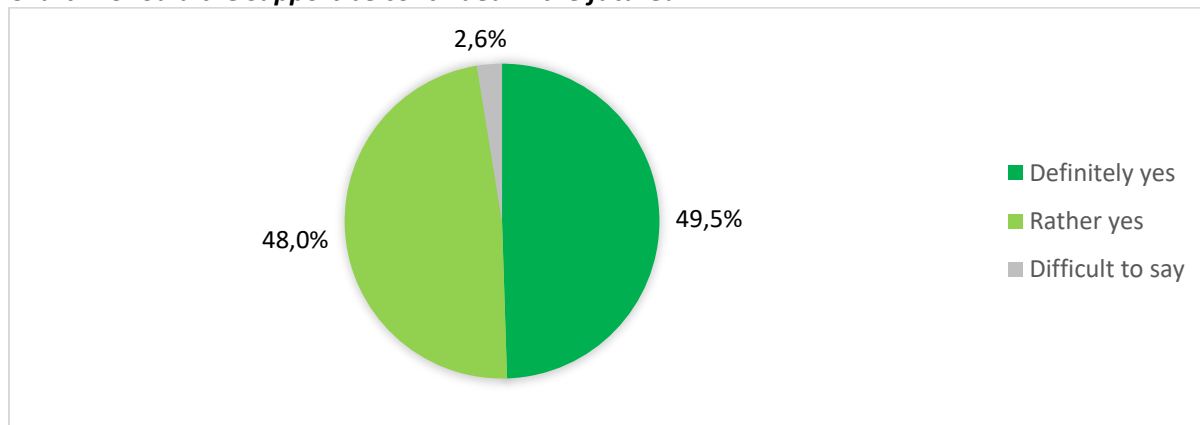
**Chart 6. How would you rate the level of involvement of your organisation in the implementation of the Programme project?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188

It is worth noting that even in the group of unsuccessful beneficiaries **no response indicating no need to continue this kind of support in the future was recorded**. With the exception of 2.6% of respondents who expressed no opinion on this issue, all respondents confirmed the need for further support in this respect.

**Chart 7. Should the support be continued in the future?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.



**Strengths of the Programme** indicated by the respondents participating in the IDI survey include its structure, i.e. a well-developed mechanism of project selection and supervision.

According to the respondents of the IDI survey, it is difficult to determine what was the key aspect without which it would have been impossible to achieve the objectives of the Programme. However, the issue of co-financing and cooperation between countries was pointed out here as well as the importance of communication.

Notwithstanding the most significant advantage of the Programme, it has been pointed out that it is currently the main opportunity to establish and sustain cooperation between countries.

The respondents were then asked how, according to them, the strengths of the Programme should be promoted in order to increase the effectiveness of the projects in terms of increasing the level of cross-border cooperation. Respondents indicated that the mechanism for disseminating information on the Programme itself is quite good, and therefore the mechanism for promoting its success is already established directly in the Programme itself.

In addition, project implementers within the Programme were involved in promoting the results achieved, and the Programme itself also involved such promotion, even despite the pandemic situation and the associated constraints, e.g. in the form of online meetings.

As far as the **Programme's weaknesses** or barriers to achieving the intended effects are concerned, the IDI survey respondents indicated, among others, legal differences between partner countries, or – more broadly – between EU regulations and the law in force in countries not belonging to the European community.



However, according to the respondents, there are tools to eliminate these barriers or at least minimise their impact on the outcome of the cooperation. As it was highlighted, access to the necessary information and due consultation is ensured, appropriate manuals are prepared, and advisory services are guaranteed at JTS facilities.

According to the respondents, another of the identified difficulties is that the funds of the Programme are insufficient in relation to the area covered by support and to the interest of the potential beneficiaries. Therefore it would be necessary to increase the Programme budget which would contribute to broadening the scope of cooperation between countries and increasing its effectiveness.

### 2.1.2. Impact of the programme on cross-border cooperation



So far merely **2 out of 141 projects** have been completed as part of the PBU Programme<sup>4</sup>. These were projects implemented in Polish-Belarusian cooperation under Priority 4.1 TO Borders management in the period from 11.07.2018 to 10.07.2020:

- Project entitled “Reconstruction of customs and passport control pavilions at the road border crossing in Kuźnica Białostocka”;
- Project entitled “Improving capacity, control and security at the road border crossing in Kuźnica Białostocka”.

**Table 1. Completed projects (as at 09.12.2020)**

Priority	Name of the project	Beneficiary Country/City/Name	Lead partner	Project cost (€)
Priority 4.1 Support for border efficiency and security under TO Borders	Re-development of customs and passport control pavilions at the road border crossing in Kuźnica Białostocka	Poland/ Białystok/ Voivode of Podlaskie Voivodeship	Yes	2 130 178.0
		Belarus/Minsk/ State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus	No	0.00
Priority 4.1 Support for border	Improvement of capacity, control and security at the	Poland/ Białystok/ Voivode of Podlaskie Voivodeship	Yes	1 805 328.0

<sup>4</sup> Data from the SL system for January 2021

Priority	Name of the project	Beneficiary Country/City/Name	Lead partner	Project cost (€)
<b>efficiency and security under TO Borders</b>	road border crossing point in Kuźnica Białostocka	Belarus/Minsk/ State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus	No	0.0

*Source: own elaboration based on data from the SL2014 system provided by the Contracting Authority (as at 09.12.2020).*

The first project entitled “Rebuilding of customs and passport control pavilions at Kuźnica Białostocka road border crossing” concerned initiatives related to the extension and improvement of infrastructure at the border crossing in Kuźnica Białostocka. The actions taken were intended to prevent and counteract illegal migration as well as to combat smuggling and organised crime, and to prevent and eliminate illegal trade in rare endangered species. Their implementation contributed to a cross-border effect through more efficient control of vehicles and goods crossing the border, streamlining and facilitating border traffic as well as increasing trade and enhancing Polish-Belarusian business contacts. The increased number of cleared vehicles is associated with shorter and more efficient border controls. The quality of customs clearance at the Kuźnica Białostocka road crossing also improved which is a strategic objective related to fulfilling the Schengen Zone requirements concerning the protection of the EU's external borders. Implementation of the project was also beneficial for the customs service, border guards and employees of the Border Crossing Office using the infrastructure created as part of the project as well as entrepreneurs and local self-government units exporting and importing goods. The investment has had and will have a positive impact on the socio-economic development of the region, affecting local residents. As a result of the planned activities, contacts and cooperation between the partners were established. The Belarusian partner established a logistics centre which significantly improved the capacity of accommodating trucks at the modernised border crossing.

The second project entitled “Improvement of Capacity, Control and Security at the Road Border Crossing in Kuźnica Białostocka” covered activities in the field of improvement and modernisation of border infrastructure. Its implementation served to improve infrastructure, border procedures and safety during crossing the Polish-Belarusian border. The number of lanes for vehicles, both passenger cars and trucks, was increased. Restructuring of the road system contributed to an improvement in the capacity of border crossings and acceleration of the process of controlling vehicles waiting in

queues. This improved border traffic by reducing queues both at the border crossing itself and on the national road No. 19 leading to it. The implementation of the project was beneficial for the Customs Chamber, Border Guard and Border Crossing Office employees using the established infrastructure as well as for local authorities and entrepreneurs. In addition, the action influenced the cross-border effect. The border services regarding people crossing the border crossing, means of transport and the flow of goods in international trade were improved. The strategic effect of the project was the fulfilment of Schengen requirements concerning the protection of the EU external borders<sup>5</sup>.



The IDI survey respondents were also asked to assess how the projects implemented under the Programme contributed to intensification of cross-border cooperation. In their opinion it was important in this case to undertake joint ventures for a clearly defined purpose, serving each of the parties. Recognizing common needs and the ability to meet them with the necessity to ensure a relatively low own contribution had a positive effect on the willingness to cooperate, therefore intensifying cross-border cooperation.



It is worth noting that the level of Programme financing is growing systematically, from edition to edition, with the triple increase in value of funds in the third edition in relation to the first one (that is to the level of EUR 183 million).

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<sup>5</sup> Data from the SL system for January 2021

**Table 2. The level of financing of the Programme from EU funds and the number of projects selected for implementation in particular editions**

Edition of the Programme	Total amount of EU funds allocated to its implementation [in € million]	Number of projects to which co-financing was granted
2004-2006	45.8	167
2007-2013	170.0	117
2014-2020	183	141

Source: own elaboration based on <https://www.pbu2020.eu/pl/pages/53> [accessed on: 20.01.2021] and data from the SL2014 system provided by the Employer (as at 09.12.2020).



The Programme strategy was adopted after carrying out socio-economic analysis, identifying common objectives of countries and regions. It also takes into account the experience of previous programming periods as well as stakeholders' opinions on challenges and common needs in the Programme area. It also reflects the decisions taken by the authorities of these countries, focusing on **thematic areas where participating countries can make use of their resources and jointly solve problems**<sup>6</sup>.



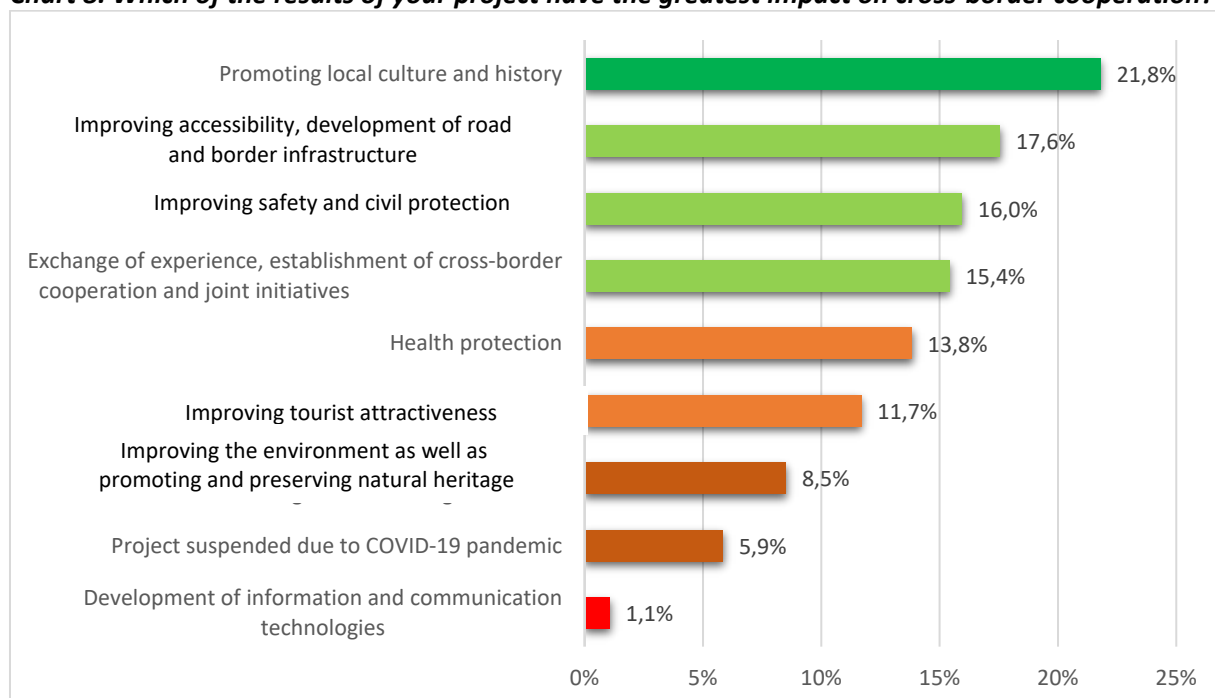
According to the project partners, the greatest impact on cross-border cooperation came **from the following activities**: promoting local culture and history (21.8%), and improving accessibility, mainly by improving road and border infrastructure (17.6%).

Slightly less frequently, the improvement of safety and civil protection (16.0%) and mutual exchange of experiences, establishing cooperation etc. (15.4%) were indicated. (15,4%). Also relatively important were activities related to health care (13.8%) and increasing the attractiveness of tourism (11.7%). In contrast, 5.9% of respondents indicated that project implementation had to be suspended due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In turn, when analysing the number of projects carried out by individual types of action, the projects on the promotion of local culture and history proved to be particularly important, which is confirmed by the presented results of the survey with project partners.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.pbu2020.eu/pl/pages/53> [accessed on 20.01.2020].

**Chart 8. Which of the results of your project have the greatest impact on cross-border cooperation?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

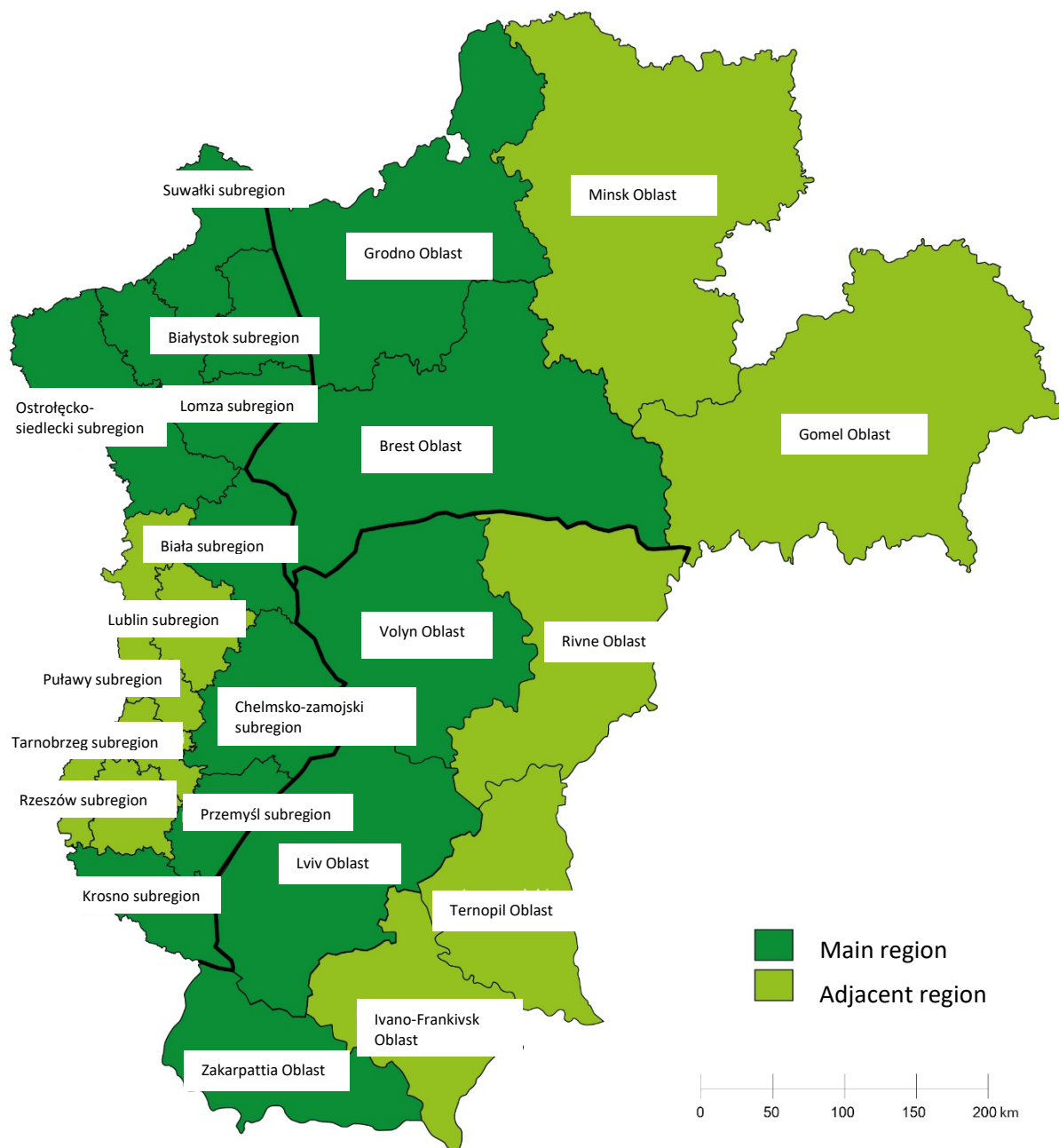


The conducted analysis also allows for identification of the areas (territorial and thematic) in which the greatest progress has been made as a result of Programme implementation. The Programme is targeted at **Polish, Belarusian and Ukrainian border regions. The Programme area on the part of Poland includes NUTS3 units, whereas in Belarus and Ukraine - territorial units at the level of oblasts. The Programme area covers primarily the core support regions and adjacent regions.**

In total, the area covered by the Programme is 316.3 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, including:

- 75.2 thousand km<sup>2</sup> on the part of Poland;
- 138.500 km<sup>2</sup> on the part of Belarus;
- 102.500 km<sup>2</sup> on the part of Ukraine.

**Map 1. Area of the PBU Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020**



Source: ENI Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020, Translation of the version approved by the EC (Decision C(2015) 9138 of 17 December 2015), p. 7.

In the further part of the document (devoted to analysis at the project level) a **network analysis and a geographical distribution** of beneficiaries of the implemented projects were presented. Taking into account its results, it is possible to notice a particular concentration of Programme beneficiaries in Ukraine and Belarus (it should be noted that in case of the previous edition of the Programme, the highest concentration of beneficiaries was in Poland). The largest number of project beneficiaries/partners occur in Lviv Oblast (as many as 59 entities) and Brest Oblast (33 units). On the other hand, the highest number of connections was recorded for larger urban centres (which formed the seat of a larger number of beneficiaries and therefore participated in a larger number of projects). The particularly dense network of connections is mainly attributable to projects that assumed the cooperation of a significant number of entities (for example, one of the projects is implemented with the participation of as many as 11 entities which necessarily generates a dense network of connections). The highest number of connections (12) was recorded on the Rzeszów - Lviv line. It is also worth noting that the densest network is characterised by larger urban centres, such as Brest, Białystok, Chełm, Lublin, Ivano-Frankivsk and Uzhhorod. Some differentiation was also identified in the types of networks within individual countries. In Ukraine and Belarus, the beneficiaries were in most cases located in larger urban centres, which influenced the creation of cooperation networks between such entities. In Poland, on the other hand, the activity of beneficiaries from smaller towns was more noticeable which at the same time influenced the establishment of a denser network of geographical connections within formed partnerships. At the same time, the network created on the part of Poland is characterised by a (geographically) closer nature – project beneficiaries/partners are often located in a relatively short distance. Moreover, network analysis allowed to confirm the phenomenon of a particularly high number of connections in the area located in the near vicinity of the border (and thus a high density of connections). The further away from the border, the lower the number of beneficiaries/partners and the density of networks. A kind of a white spot was Puławy subregion, where none of the Programme beneficiaries was located (geographic analysis with maps is included in subchapter 2.2.2).

Taking into account the **thematic areas of the projects**<sup>7</sup>, there was a particular concentration of activities in the area of safety and security in the southern part of the programme area, namely the directly neighbouring Krosno, Lviv and Zakarpattia oblasts. In case of transport and communication systems projects, there was no such concentration. The highest number of projects was in Grodno, Biała and Lviv oblasts. Within the thematic objective Borders, the highest concentration of projects

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<sup>7</sup> A detailed geographic analysis divided into subject area is included in the appendix to this report.



occurred in the Białystok subregion. It is worth noting, however, that in case of a considerable part of the poviats located in the Polish cross-border area no projects of this kind were implemented. The last of the analysed thematic areas concerns the promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage. In this case, by far the greatest concentration of projects occurred in Lviv oblast (as many as 39 projects).



According to the IDI survey results, the area where the greatest progress in cross-border cooperation has been identified so far includes first of all subregions in the near vicinity of the border (which confirms the results of the network analysis stated above). According to the respondents, an important factor was the proximity of the border and the functioning of border crossings. Large urban centres, due to greater investment opportunities, a developed base of available specialists in a given field and the attractiveness of the area, were also of equal importance.

### 2.1.3. Absorption of funds



In this part of the study, one should also refer to the **absorption of funds by Thematic Objectives and Programme Priorities**. When analysing the data from the SL2014 system, it should be pointed out that the amount of co-financing from the Community funds in the final settlement reached nearly EUR 174.48 million, and most EU funds were allocated to measures implemented under TO Accessibility (30.08%). Detailed information in this regard is presented in the attachment.



During the CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries, the respondents were asked to indicate what in their opinion causes the **increase in demand for support measures** (open question). Every third of the surveyed partners indicated that the increase in demand for support was caused primarily by lack of own resources for project activities and increased awareness of the possibility of obtaining EU co-financing (33.0% of responses). 1/4 of respondents pointed to unsatisfied local/regional needs and the desire for development (25.0% of responses). There were also responses related to the willingness to start cross-border cooperation and the growing awareness of the benefits of such cooperation.



**In the evaluator's opinion**, an important factor influencing absorption of funds is also beneficiaries' activity in the previous edition of the Programme. As the network analysis shows, at present the highest activity in this field was observed on the Ukrainian and Belarusian parts (contrary to the previous edition of the Project when the Poland was

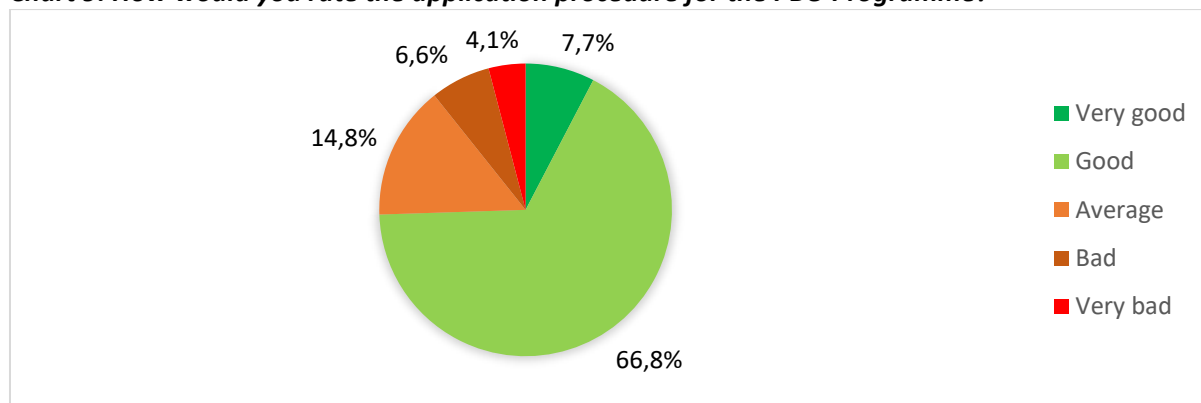
most active). On the one hand, this can indicate that the most urgent needs among Polish beneficiaries have been satisfied, and on the other hand, that there is a higher demand for funds on the Ukrainian and Belarusian parts, while observing the success of projects implemented under the previous edition of the Programme which were carried out largely on the territory of Poland. Taking into account the results of the conducted research, there are still needs in the supported thematic areas which means that the interest in applying for support in the future can be expected to remain. According to the evaluator, high activity of applicants from Ukraine and Belarus observed in the current edition of the Programme will influence the increase of activity on the Polish part in the future. This phenomenon, after experiences of 2007-2013 edition, was a surprise for Polish applicants who did not expect such a high level of competition from foreign potential beneficiaries.



It is also worth referring to the results of the **survey with unsuccessful applicants**.

These results show favourably the procedure of applying for co-financing because despite the fact that this group did not obtain co-financing, the process in most cases (74.5%) was evaluated positively. What is more, almost 15% evaluated it as average, whereas only 10.7% provided as negative (taking into consideration the specificity of the examined group, this result should be considered very favourable). Negative opinions were mainly dictated by the long and complicated procedure and application documentation in English.

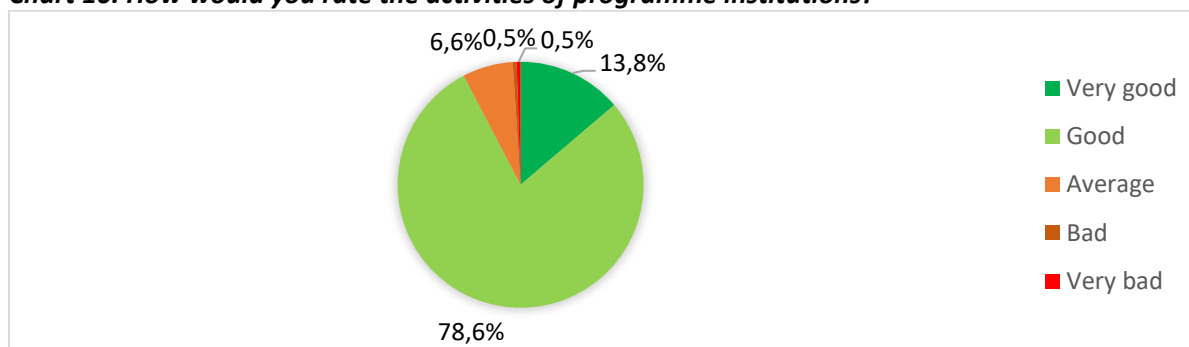
**Chart 9. How would you rate the application procedure for the PBU Programme?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.

The unsuccessful applicants evaluated the activities of the programme institutions even better. In this case, positive evaluations accounted for over 92% of the total number of responses and negative evaluations for only 1% (the justification for this type of evaluation was identical to that indicated earlier in the evaluation of the procedure for applying for co-financing).

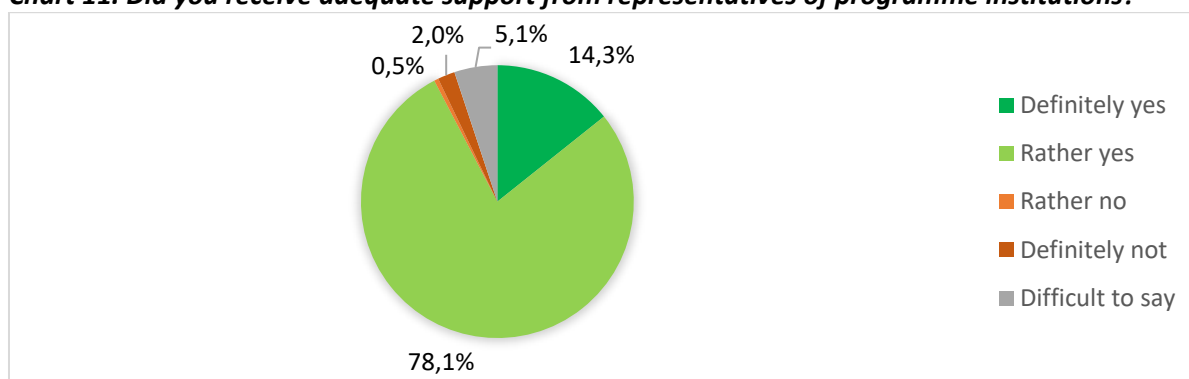
**Chart 10. How would you rate the activities of programme institutions?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.

Similar results were also obtained in case of the question concerning the fact of receiving adequate support from representatives of programme institutions. The vast majority of responses (92.4%) were positive. More than 5% of the respondents had no opinion on the subject which means that only 2.5% of the total number of evaluations were negative.

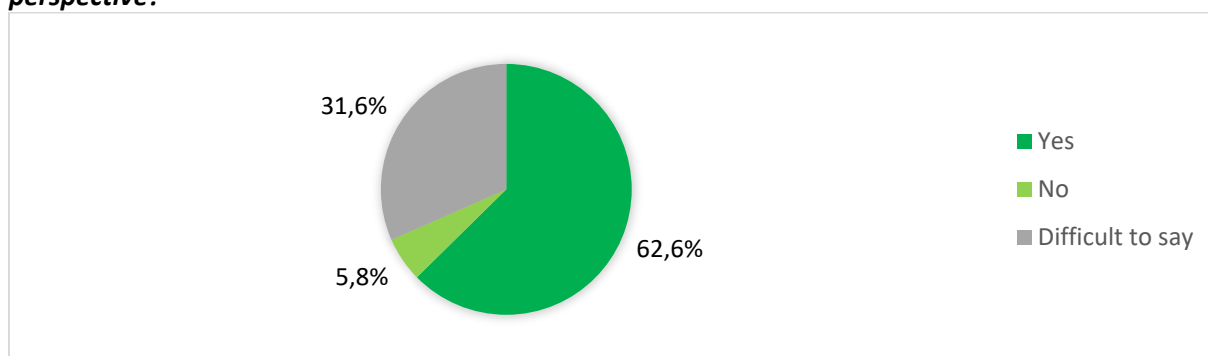
**Chart 11. Did you receive adequate support from representatives of programme institutions?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.

At the same time it is worth noting that over 62% of unsuccessful applicants intend to apply for support in the future (the most frequently indicated fields were cultural and historical heritage and health care). It should be emphasised that almost 32% had no opinion on this issue which means that the share of respondents convinced about not wanting to apply for support from this source was only 5.8% (this was argued by the too complicated application procedure, the desire to obtain financing from other sources or negative experiences related to the previous application process, when they did not receive support for their projects).

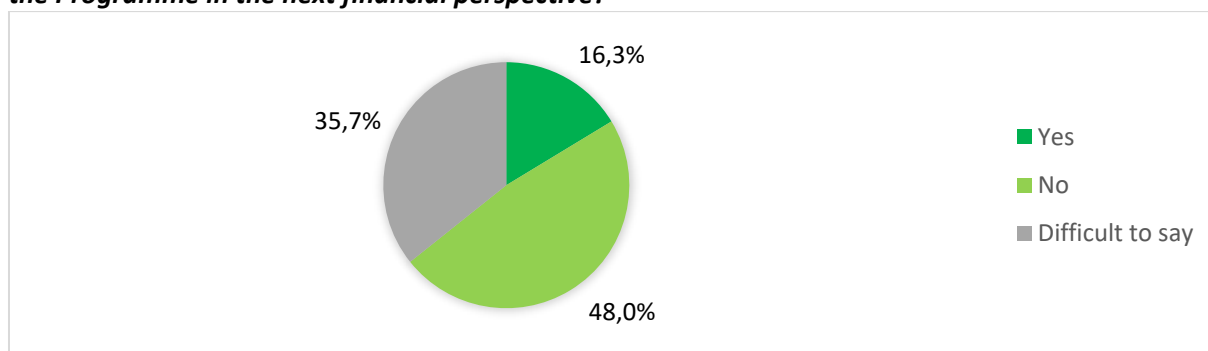
**Chart 1: Are you planning to apply for funds under the Programme in the next financial perspective?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.

As a supplement to the aforementioned issue, the surveyed unsuccessful applicants were also asked whether they would expect the possibility of support in some **other additional activities in the scope of the Programme in the next financial perspective**. Expectations of this kind were confirmed by only 16.3% of the respondents who indicated mainly projects of an educational nature, in the field of entrepreneurship development (e.g. support for the establishment of international start-ups and in the field of cooperation between children and young people).

**Chart 12. Would you expect to be able to support some other additional activities in the scope of the Programme in the next financial perspective?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.



The respondents participating in the IDI survey were in turn asked if they identified different levels of absorption of funds among the supported areas during the implementation of the Programme and which areas needed more and which less funds. It was indicated that **the area that would need more funding includes the activities undertaken in the scope of the objective concerning the promotion and preservation of cultural and historical heritage**.

In contrast, the opposite situation was noted in case of projects concerning border management and border security, where the amount of funds was sufficient and there were no major problems in obtaining funding. At the same time, however, there was a need for further development in this direction in order to optimise border traffic and increase the capacity of border crossings.

The respondents of the IDI survey also indicated that in order to increase the beneficiaries' activity, it would be necessary to put emphasis on the development of necessary competences among the potential applicants, so that they would be able to develop a competitive application that would be up-to-date and aimed at upgrading/improving the existing one. In general, however, the respondents were of the opinion that the present solutions for increasing the activity of the beneficiaries of the Programme were sufficient.

#### 2.1.4. Summary



- Undertaken activities are effective and efficient. Projects that would not have been conducted in this scale without external financing due to high costs (in relation to the financial capacity of the beneficiaries) were implemented);
- Large infrastructure projects to the most considerable extent contributed to the achievement of the Programme objectives, whereas a high number of implemented projects in the area of cultural and historical heritage had a positive effect on the recognition of the Programme (projects in this scope have also the greatest impact on strengthening cross-border cooperation);
- Local governments and NGOs should be considered the most active and effective types of beneficiaries;
- The epidemic situation changed the scope of activities planned in the PBU Programme - trainings for beneficiaries and scientific conferences were suspended, the provisions regarding granted funds were characterised by more considerable flexibility, and EUR 3 million of additional funds were allocated to medical projects, extending their scope and actively participating in counteracting the pandemic;
- The process of cross-border integration was mostly limited by complicated or burdensome formal and legal procedures and limitations related to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Decisions to apply for support were usually connected to financial reasons - beneficiaries do not have their own funds that would allow for the comprehensive implementation of planned projects, whereas the Programme is valued for the possibility of obtaining relatively high funds (with an inconsiderable own contribution);

- None of the current (surveyed) beneficiaries questioned the need to continue the Programme in the future;
- The amount of co-financing from the EU funds is nearly EUR 174.48 million, with the largest number of funds allocated to activities implemented under TO Accessibility (30,08%);
- Contrary to the previous edition of the Programme, the highest activity in applying for support was recorded on the Ukrainian and Belarusian sides;
- In the perspective of the next edition of the Programme, allocating more funds for projects related to the preservation of cultural and historical heritage should be taken into consideration. Such projects are characterised by considerable interest, and the need for their implementation is still identified.

## 2.2. Projects

### 2.2.1. Outputs and results of implemented projects

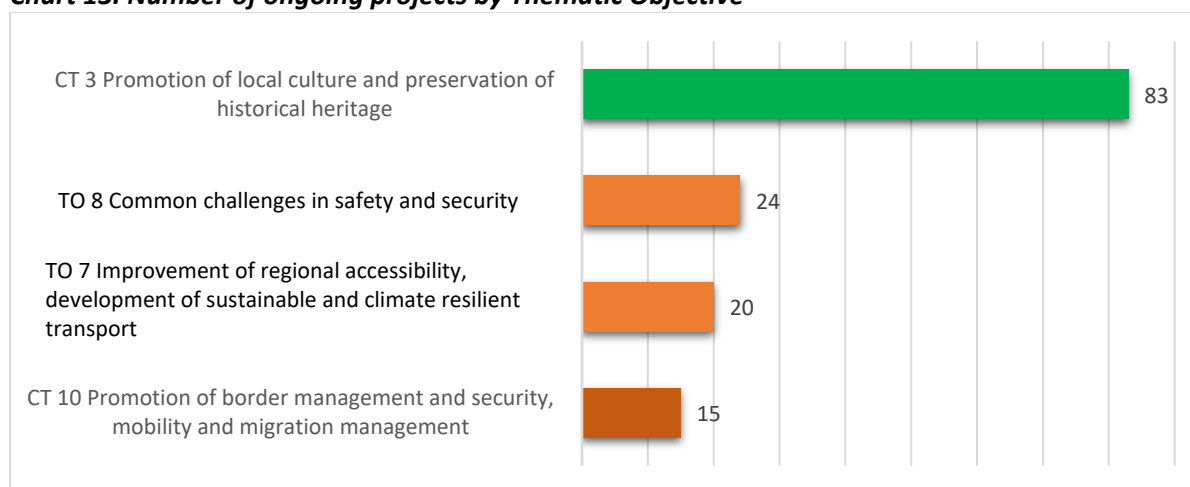


The outputs to be achieved vary depending on the Thematic Objective. In case of **TO heritage**, it is assumed, among others, that 30 facilities will be improved and a total of 160 events will be organised (followed by an increase in the number of visitors). In the case of **TO Accessibility** it is assumed above all to modernise and construct over 100 km of roads (which is connected with shortening travel time). In turn, **TO Security** assumes mainly facilitating access to the health care system and fire protection measures. **TO Borders** assumes increasing the capacity of border crossings.



The performed analysis allows for identification of the **types of projects and types of beneficiaries that are the most effective**. Within the Programme a total of 398 agreements were signed with the beneficiaries concerning the implementation of 141 projects<sup>8</sup>. In the scope of TO Heritage, 83 projects were accepted for implementation, in the scope of TO Accessibility – 20 projects, in the scope of TO Security, 24 projects were selected, and in the scope of TO Borders – 15 projects were selected. Thus, as can be seen, the number of projects for the promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage definitely stands out. At the same time, it should be noted that the allocation of funds for this Objective was significantly lower than in the case of TO Accessibility and Security. On the one hand, this is due to the nature of the activities supported in the individual Objectives (and the level of costs required for their implementation) and on the other hand, to the particularly high interest in the implementation of projects within TO Heritage.

**Chart 13. Number of ongoing projects by Thematic Objective**



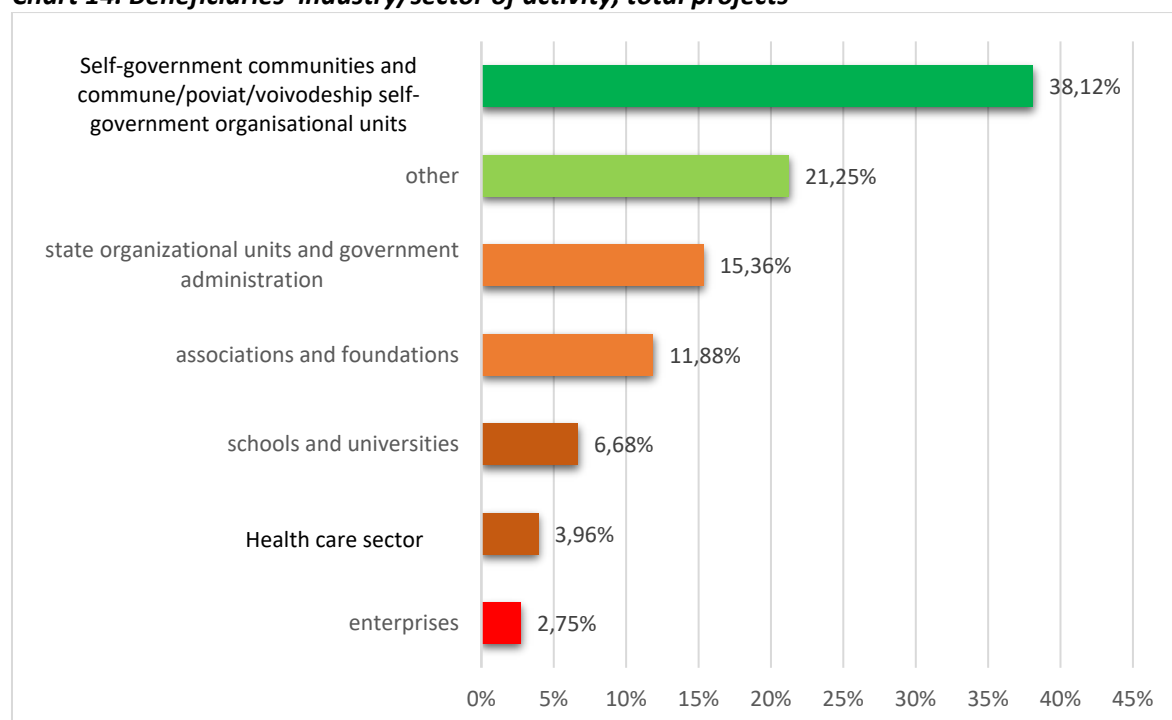
<sup>8</sup> Data from the SL system for January 2021. Agreements were signed with each of the beneficiaries/partners.



Source: own study based on data from the SL2014 system provided by the Contracting Authority (as at 09.12.2020).

When analysing the population of project beneficiaries/partners in terms of **industry/sector of activity**, it can be noted that the most numerous were **self-government communities and self-government organisational units** (over 38% of the total population), **state organisational units and government administration** (15.36%) and **associations and foundations** (almost 12%).

**Chart 14. Beneficiaries' industry/sector of activity, total projects**



Source: own study based on data from the SL2014 system provided by the Contracting Authority (as at 09.12.2020).



Due to the stage at which the analysed projects are (only 2 out of 141 have been implemented), **it is not possible at present to evaluate the degree of effectiveness by type of project and type of beneficiaries.** On the other hand, the respondents of the

IDI survey were of the opinion that the results of projects approved by the Monitoring Committee, or more broadly –undertaking cooperation in order to implement approved project activities, had a strong positive impact on intensifying cross-border cooperation. Moreover, in comparison to the previous perspectives, an increased interest and involvement of the Ukrainian and Belarusian part was observed. Due to the fact that the vast majority of project activities have not been completed yet, it is difficult to talk about the most effective types of projects or types of beneficiaries. However,

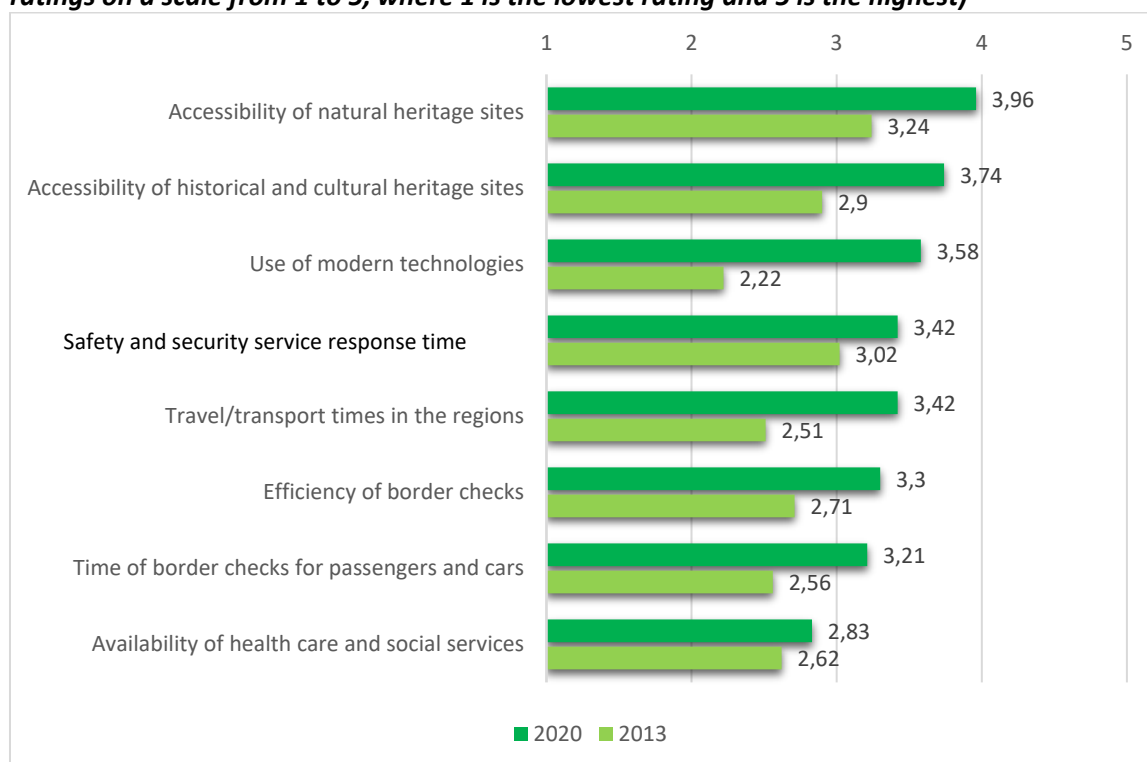
in the qualitative IDI survey, high activity of local self-government units and NGOs was underlined, although this activity was focused on different areas. It was pointed out that while local self-government units were predominant in the scope of large-scale activities, NGOs were most active in smaller projects, mainly in soft activities.



In the scope of the quantitative survey carried out among the residents of the support area on the Polish, Belarusian and Ukrainian parts, the respondents were asked how **their place of residence changed between 2013 and 2020**, i.e. the year preceding the implementation of the Programme and the year in which work on the implementation of projects contracted or completed under it is performed. The respondents were asked to rate each of the indicated areas on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant the lowest rating, while 5 – the highest. Then, the obtained values were used to calculate the arithmetic mean for each of the areas among which there were also thematic areas of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020

The obtained results showed that the residents of the analysed sub-regions of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine see positive changes that have taken place in the areas where they reside. Higher average ratings in 2020 concerned all surveyed categories. Some of the highest changes were perceived in the use of modern technologies (an increase of 1.4) and in Programme areas such as travel/transport time in the regions (0.9), accessibility of historical and cultural heritage sites (0.8) as well as time of passenger and car border checks and accessibility of natural heritage sites (0.7 each).

**Chart 15. How would you rate your place of residence in 2013 and 2020 in terms of: (average of ratings on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest rating and 5 is the highest)**

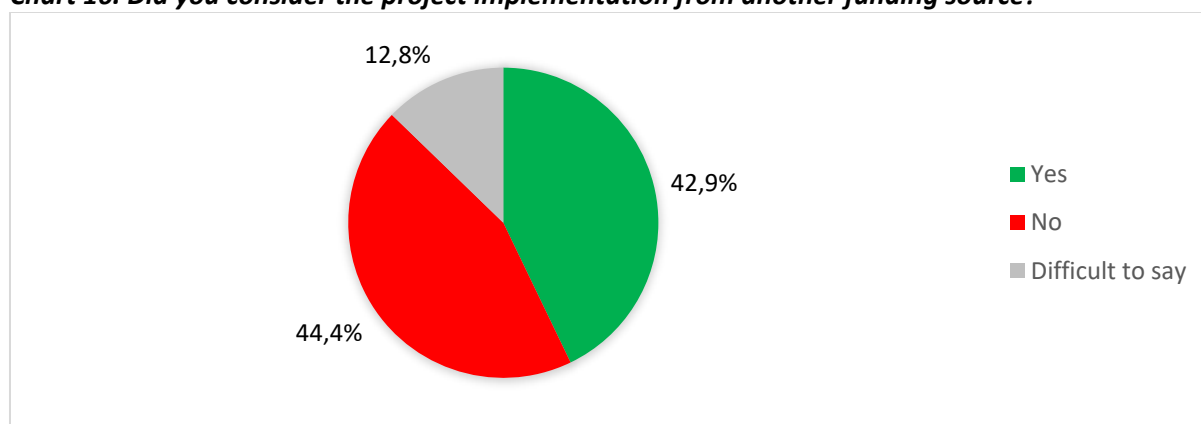


Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with residents of support area with regard to CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=900.



In order to answer the question whether it **would have been possible to achieve similar effects without the support provided**, it is worth referring to the results of the survey conducted among unsuccessful applicants. As it turns out, **only less than 43% of unsuccessful applicants considered implementing the project using another source of funding.**

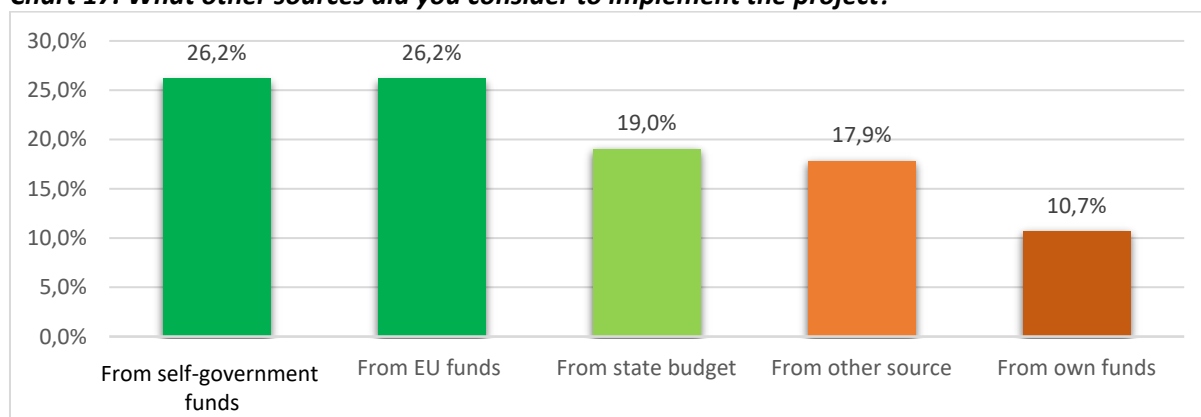
**Chart 16. Did you consider the project implementation from another funding source?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.

Among the respondents who confirmed considering the project implementation with other sources of financing, such responses as self-government funds and EU funds (26.2% each) or state budget funds (just under 18%) predominated. The implementation of the project using own funds was only indicated at 10.7%.

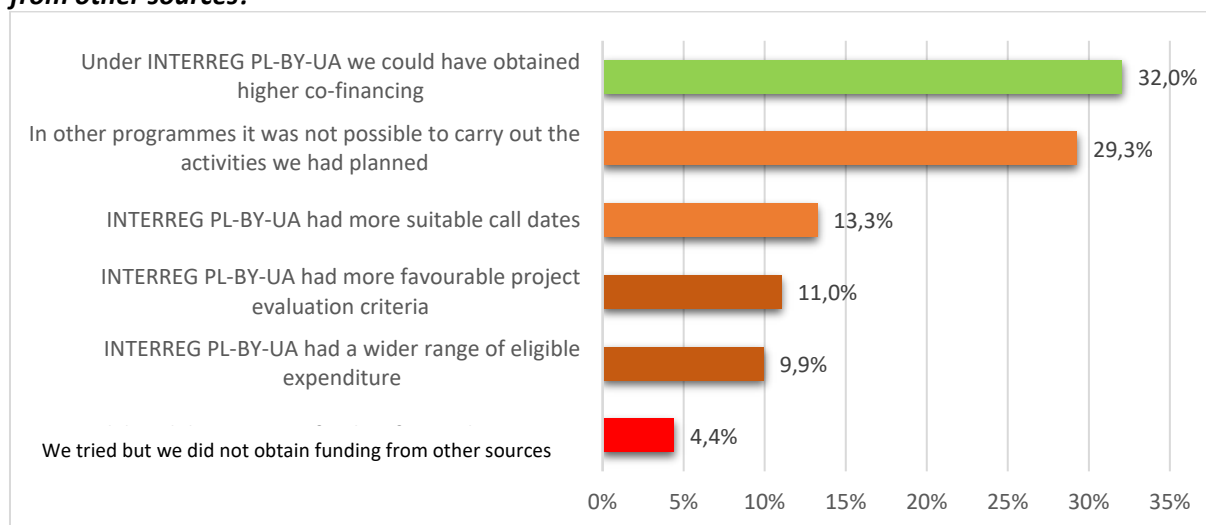
**Chart 17. What other sources did you consider to implement the project?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.

The aforementioned issue was supplemented by a question referring to the **reasons behind applying for project support from PBU Programme funds**. The main reasons turned out to be the amount of funding available and the possibility to carry out the planned activities which were not financed from other sources (responses of 32% and 29.3% respectively). The call date, project evaluation criteria or the scope of eligible expenditure were relatively less important elements (responses from 10 to 13%).

**Chart 18. Why did you apply for support for project implementation from PBU Programme and not from other sources?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.



Taking into account the aforementioned conclusions, according to the evaluator, **it would not have been possible to achieve similar effects without the support of the Project.** Financial considerations were the key factor in selecting the source of financing. This conclusion is also confirmed by the results of the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) which identified the high level of eligible costs as the main success factor for the projects. In addition, despite the possibility of obtaining support also through ROP funds, the applicants first decided to apply for the PBU Programme because of the desire to implement the project in partnership – as emphasised by unsuccessful applicants, the nature of their needs was usually identical to those of the foreign partner. At the same time, the reason for implementing the project through the PBU Programme was already established partnerships and willingness to continue joint projects.

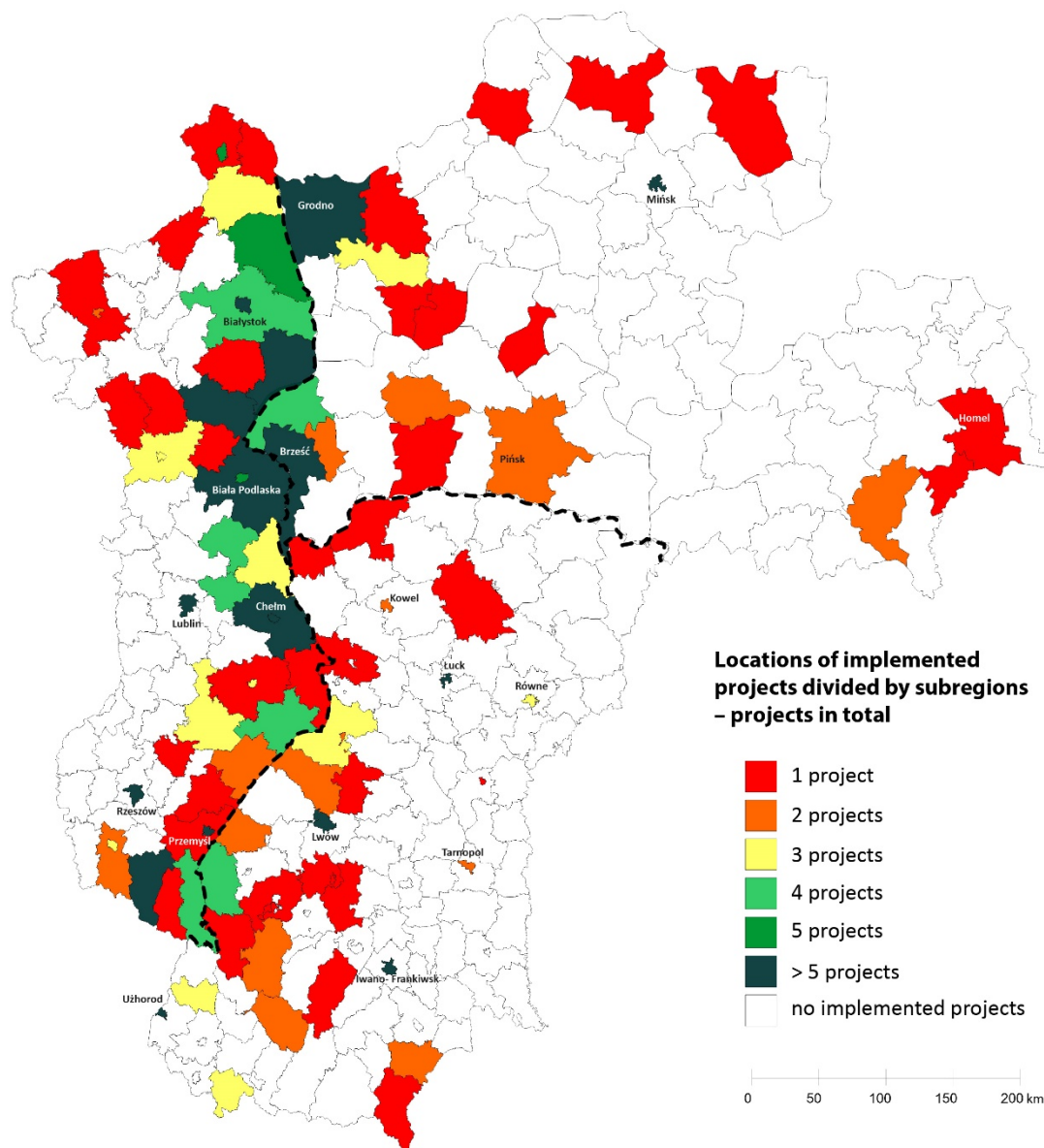


The persons who took part in the qualitative IDI survey unanimously indicated that without the support from the Programme it would not have been possible to implement equally effective actions. What is more, it was emphasised that without this intervention the cross-border cooperation between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine would probably cease. The programme is therefore the main incentive to initiate, maintain and develop this cooperation.

### 2.2.2. Geographical characteristics of the implemented projects

When analysing **the locations of project beneficiaries and partners**, it is possible to notice their particular concentration in Ukraine and Belarus which is new in comparison to the previous financial perspective. The largest number of project beneficiaries/ partners was in Lviv Oblast (as many as 59 entities, among which 38 are located in the city Lviv). Brest Oblast was in the second place (33 entities, among which 33 are located in the Brest Oblast). In Poland, the most numerous group of entities participating in the implementation of project activities occurred in the Białystok and Przemyśl subregions.

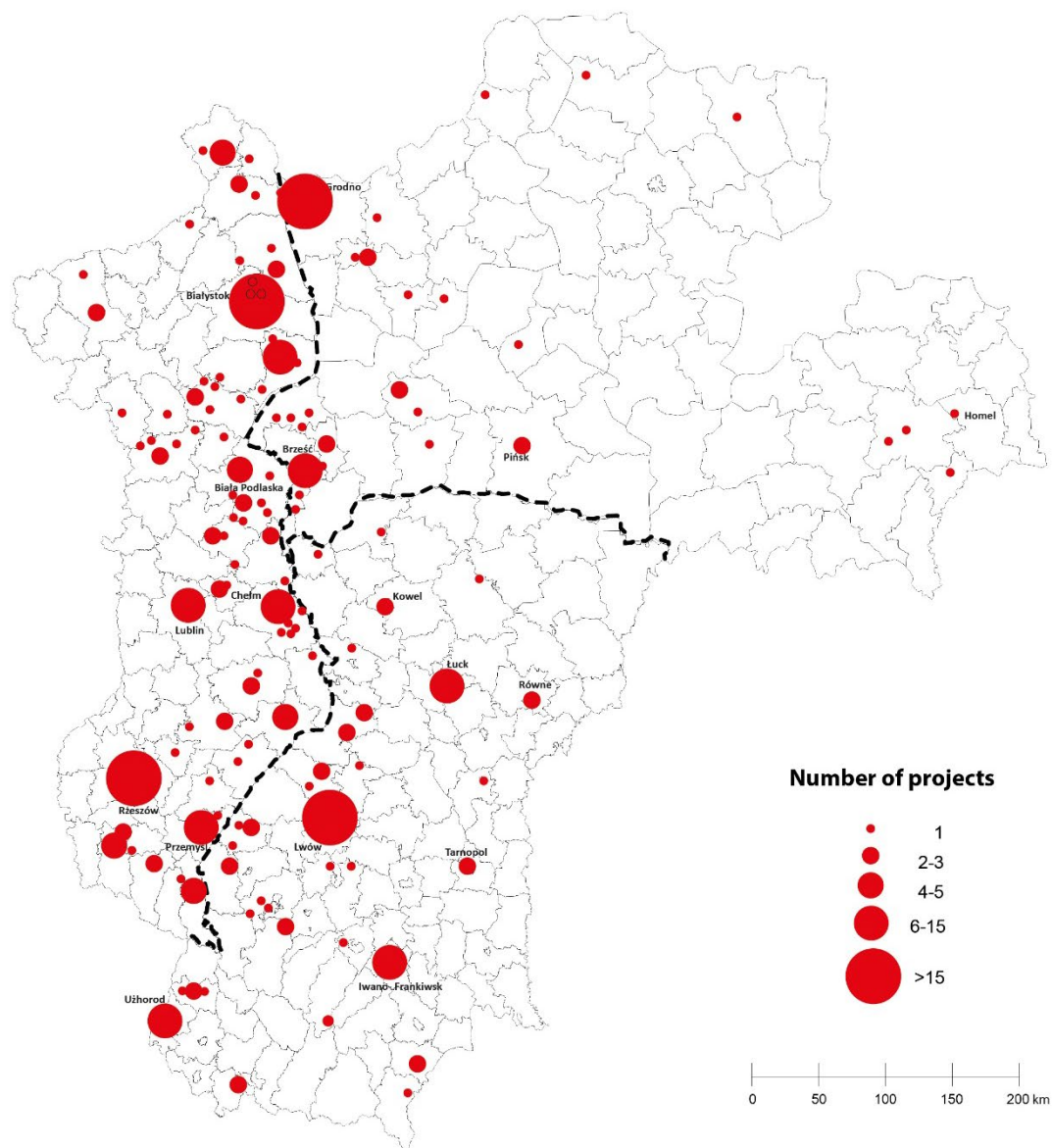
**Map 2. Location of beneficiaries by poviats/subregions - total projects**



*Source: own elaboration based on data from the SL2014 system provided by the Contracting Authority (as at 09.12.2020).*

A map of the location of project beneficiaries/project shows that the largest number of entities was identified in Lviv (as many as 38) and Grodno (27). In Poland, the largest number of entities occurred in Rzeszów (20) and Białystok (18).

**Map 3. Number of ongoing projects by location of location of beneficiaries/project partners**



*Source: own elaboration based on data from the SL2014 system provided by the Contracting Authority (as at 09.12.2020).*

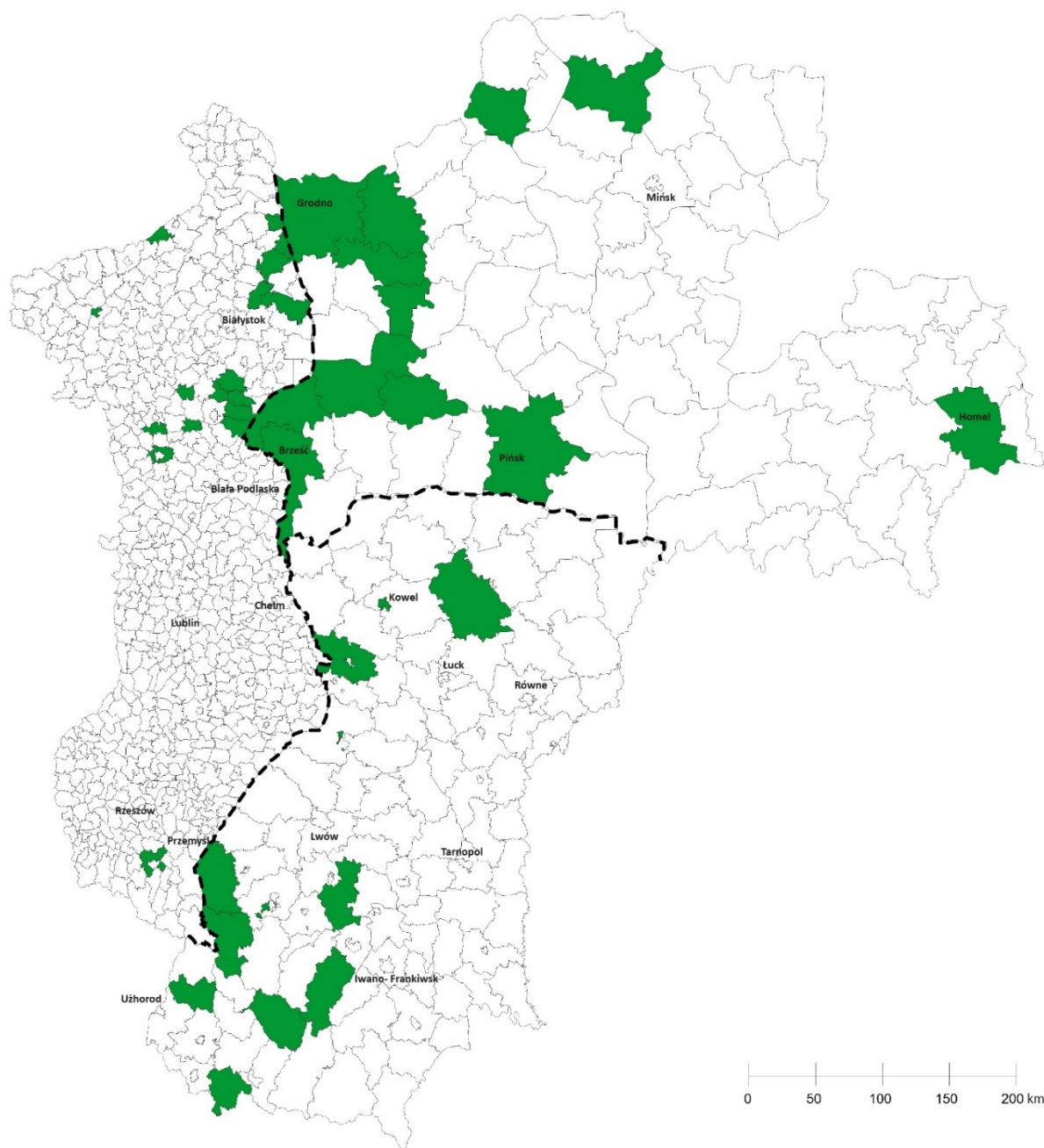
In the Appendix to this study, additional analyses are presented in relation to the value of ongoing projects and the thematic breakdown of projects by geography.



The analysis of data from the SL2014 system and the list of signed grant agreements allowed to select those self-government units **which obtained co-financing in the scope of the Programme in the 2014-2020 perspective but did not implement a project in the scope of the Programme in 2007-2013** (did not implement and were not unsuccessful applicants). 53 such local self-government units were identified in total, among of which the largest number were in Ukraine and Belarus, which in the current edition of the Programme were much more active in applying for support (compared to the previous edition).



**Map 4. List of communes and regions according to location of beneficiaries of PBU (local self-government units) 2014-2020 which did not implement projects under PBU 2007-2013 (and did not apply for this type of support)**



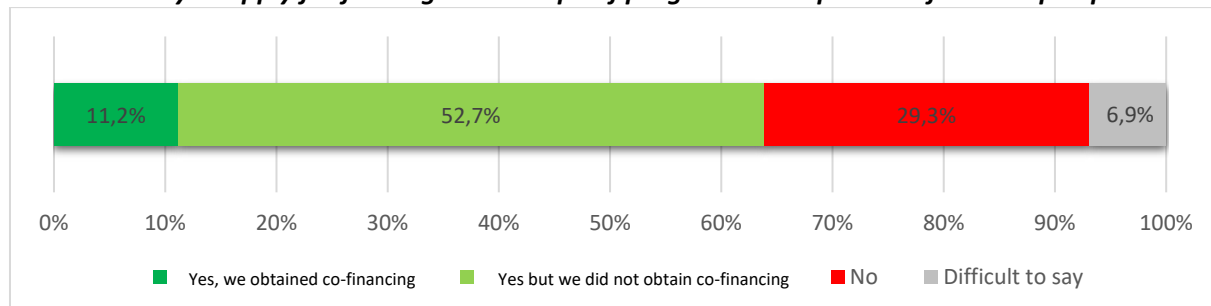
Source: own study based on data from the SL2014 system provided by the Contracting Authority (as at 09.12.2020) and List of beneficiaries of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes 2007-2013 – as at 2 January 2019 on the basis of KSI SIMIK 07-13.



According to the CAWI/CATI survey, as much as 63.9% of the current project partners (not only local self-government units but all partners as a whole) **applied for funds in the scope of the programs in the previous financial perspectives**, of which, however,

only 11.2% received co-financing. The share of respondents, who did not apply for support before, amounted to 29.3%.

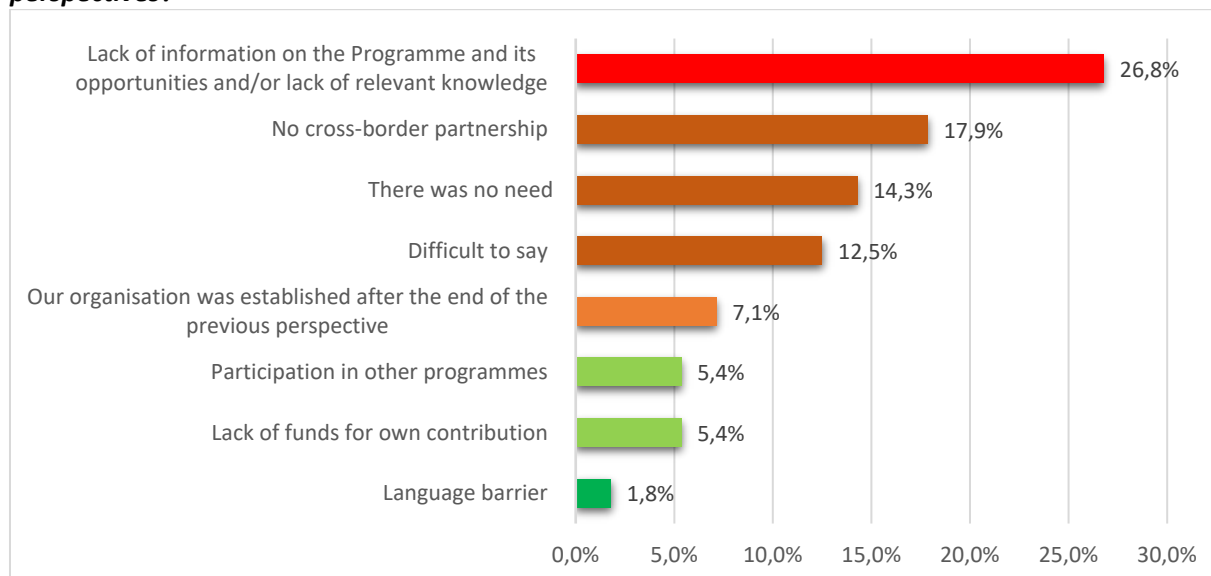
**Chart 19. Did you apply for funding in the scope of programmes in previous financial perspectives?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

Respondents who did not apply for funds in the scope of programmes in previous financial perspectives were asked about the **reasons for their inactivity** in this respect. The most frequently mentioned reasons were lack of information on the programme and its possibilities or lack of proper knowledge in this respect (26.8%) and lack of cross-border partnership (17.9%). The lack of such a need (14.3%) also had a relatively high share.

**Chart 20. Why did you not apply for funding in the scope of programmes in previous financial perspectives?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=55



Respondents of the IDI survey indicated **high activity of local self-government units** in terms of applying for funds from Program. As it was stressed, due to budget limitations, without external support most of them would not be able to implement activities similar to those undertaken in the scope of the Project.

It was also indicated that most of the local self-government units in support area had very good contacts with neighbouring countries and had been cooperating with them for years.

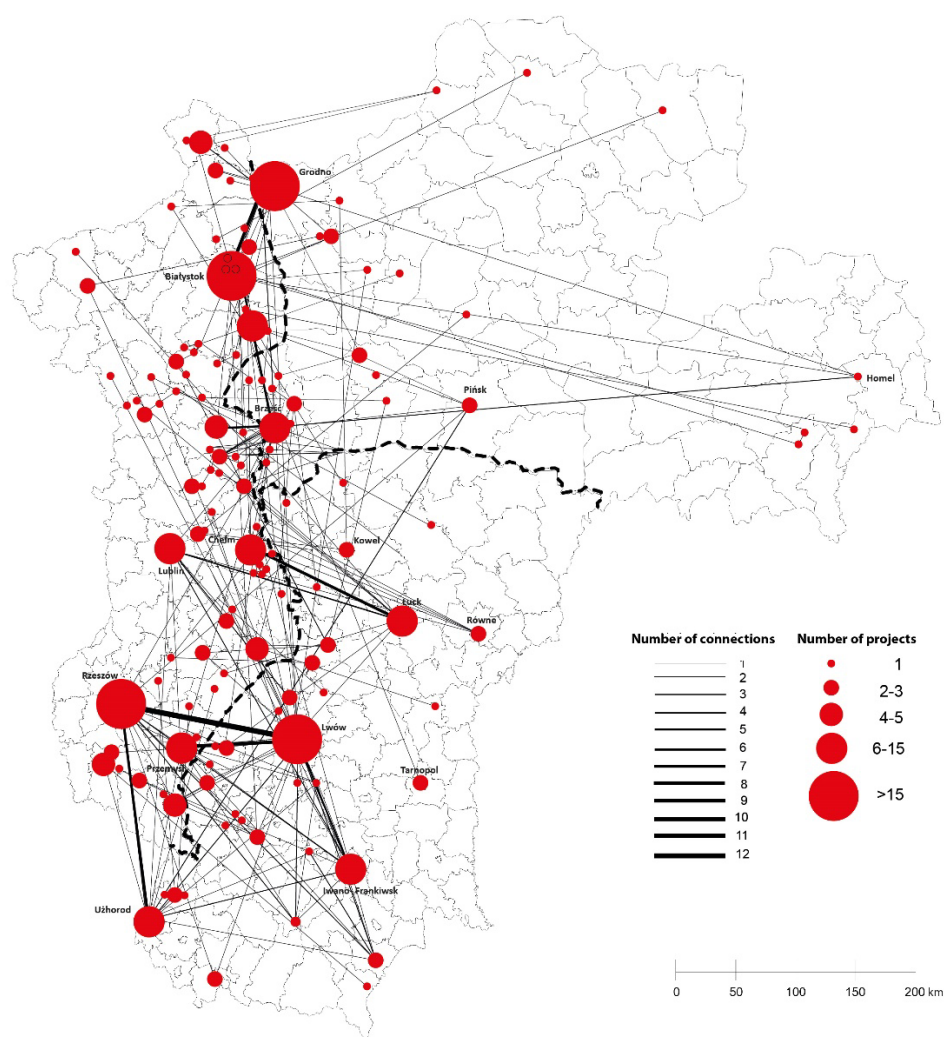


A **map of connections** shows connections between individual beneficiaries/project partners was also developed (taking into account the location of the seat of the aforementioned entities). As it can be observed, the particularly high numbers of connections occurred in case of larger urban centres which took part in a larger number of projects. A particularly dense network of connections is mainly due to projects that assumed the cooperation of a significant number of entities (for example, one of the projects is implemented with the participation of as many as 11 entities which generates a dense network of connections itself). It is worth noting that when analysing connections between specific locations, the highest number of connections (12) occurred on the line Rzeszów - Lviv. Moreover, a particularly dense network of connections is characterised by larger urban centres, such as Brest, Białystok, Chełm, Lublin, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv and Uzhhorod. Taking into account the previously indicated concentration of project beneficiaries/partners on the part of Ukraine and Belarus, it should be noted that it results mainly from **high activity of entities from larger urban centres. As it can be observed, in Poland a definitely a greater share is applicable to the entities located in smaller towns**, which means that the network of connections is denser. Moreover, as the analysis shown, the network of connections between smaller towns is usually (geographically) closer than in case of projects carried out with the participation of entities from larger urban areas which relatively more often carry out projects in cooperation with entities more distant from each other. Due to the nature of the support, a particular concentration, both in terms of the number of entities and the connections between them, occurs in the area of subregions near the vicinity of the border. Proportionally, the higher the distance from the border, the lower the number of partners and networks created. Entities located in the furthest places (in relation to the country's borders) are at the same time characterised by a relatively low density of network of connections, which results from involvement in single projects, bringing together relatively few entities.

It should be noted that **two main complexes characterised by the densest network of cooperation** can be identified. The first one is located in the north of the support area and includes such cities as

Grodno, Białystok and Brest. The second complex is located in the southern part of the support area and includes Rzeszów, Lviv, Uzhhorod and Ivano-Frankivsk. Attention should be drawn to the fact that these complexes include towns from two countries, so there are no larger complexes involving partners from all three countries covered by the Programme. Furthermore, cooperation between partners from Ukraine and Belarus has been rarely undertaken so far - usually this cooperation was focused on the Poland-Ukraine and Poland-Belarus (as in the case of the above-mentioned larger complexes of partners).

**Map 5. Project connections between beneficiaries and partners**



Source: own elaboration

### 2.2.3. Identified success factors and barriers



As the **qualitative comparative analysis** (QCA) shows, several **key success factors** can be identified (i.e. occurring in all or almost all (4/5) of the projects analysed):

- High level of co-financing of eligible costs;
- Possibility of obtaining an advance payment for the project;
- Information and promotional activities of the Programme;
- High level of Programme administration;
- Common history of regions located in the borderland of countries.



These conclusions are confirmed by the results of the CAWI/CATI survey conducted with beneficiaries, according to whom **the process of cross-border integration was limited to the least extent by financial barriers**, which should be viewed as a

particularly significant impact of the Programme. Also, taking into account the results of surveys with ineffective applicants, a particularly important element influencing the application under the Programme regarded the possibility of obtaining adequate funds allowing for the implementation of planned projects.



The qualitative IDI survey emphasised that the distance from the border and the size of a given centre were the main **factors determining the establishment of project cooperation** within the Programme.

When asked about **barriers limiting the possibility of establishing project co-operation** within the Programme, the respondents of the IDI survey indicated that most of these barriers were external to the Programme itself, such as limitations related to the pandemic situation (problems and restrictions related to the necessity of physically crossing borders between countries), language differences or administrative solutions in partner countries. Another issue mentioned by the respondents was difficulties in communication by phone with Ukrainian partners. These problems were solved by using instant messaging technology or other tools. **However, these barriers or limitations were not related to the nature of individual beneficiaries.** In this respect, equal opportunities and conditions for undertaking cooperation were emphasised.

As indicated in the previous subchapter, due to the nature of the support, a particular concentration, both in terms of the number of entities and the connections between them, occurs in the area of subregions in the near vicinity of the border. Proportionally, the higher the distance from the border, the lower the number of partners and established cooperation networks. Entities located in the furthest places (in relation to the national borders) are at the same time characterised by a relatively

low density of network of connection which results from involvement in single projects, grouping together relatively few entities.



The analysis showed a relatively **low correlation between the level of GDP (per capita) and the activity of applicants**. In case of some regions, such a correlation can indeed be identified (e.g. Lviv Oblast which is characterised by both a high number (and value) of implemented projects and a relatively high level of GDP per capita. However, these correlations decrease considerably in relation to the distance from the border which is a much more significant determinant of applicants' activity. The districts far from the border, despite significantly higher values of GDP per capita, were characterised by significantly lower activity of applicants.

## 2.2.4. NGO activity in the Programme



**Among the beneficiaries of the Programme there were 75 NGOs in total** (18.6% of all beneficiaries). Most NGOs received funding under TO Heritage (59 organisations, 27.0% of all beneficiaries), while under TO Borders there were no such organisations among the beneficiaries<sup>9</sup>.

**Table 3. Share of NGOs in total number of beneficiaries by priority**

Priority	Number of NGOs	% share of NGOs in total number of beneficiaries of a given priority
Priority 1.1 and 1.2. under TO Heritage	59	27
Priority 2.1 and 2.2. under TO Accessibility	4	7
Priority 3.1 and 3.2. under TO 8 Security	12	16
Priority 4.1 and 4.2. under TO 10 Borders	0	0

*Source: own study based on data from the SL2014 system provided by the Contracting Authority (as at 09.12.2020).*

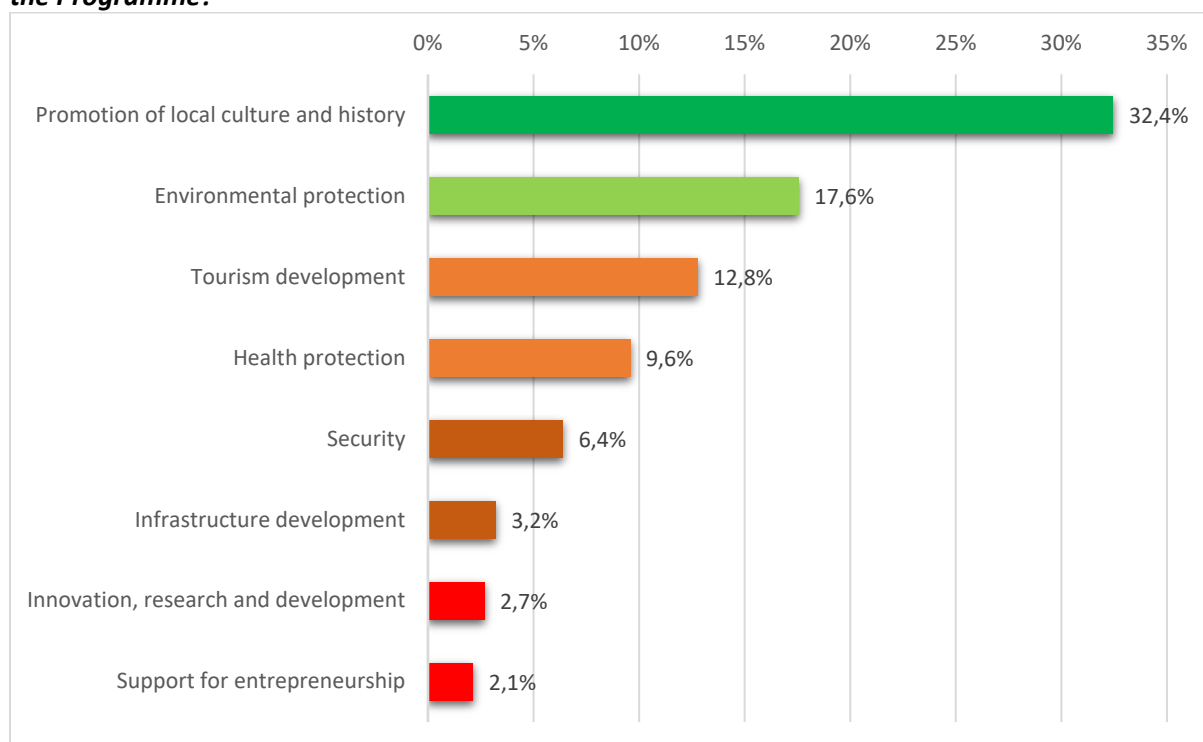


In the opinion of the surveyed project partners, the area **in which cooperation with NGOs should be intensified within the Programme** is, above all, the area of cultural and historical heritage which was indicated by almost 1/3 of the surveyed. The need for joint activities in the field of environmental protection was declared by 17.6% of partners, and the need to develop tourism by 12.8%. Less than one in ten respondents drew attention to the issue of health protection, relatively often also the need to intensify cooperation in the sphere of security (6.4%). There were also responses regarding infrastructure development, research and development and innovation activities or the need to support entrepreneurship in the Programme area.

<sup>9</sup> Data from the SL system for January 2021



**Chart 21. In which thematic areas do you think cooperation with NGOs should be intensified within the Programme?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.



The respondents of the IDI survey were also asked to **evaluate the activity of NGOs** in terms of applying for funds from the Programme. The respondents pointed out the high activity of these units, especially in the field of smaller scale activities as well as sufficient number and quality of tools used to provide them with adequate support, such as JTS activities or information points.

The respondents emphasised that while high interest from Polish organisations and their general activity was not surprising (in relation to the previous perspective), a positive change in this respect is now perceived in partner countries.

It was also pointed out that NGOs implement mainly soft actions, smaller scale projects, and it is in this area that the intensification of their cooperation under the Programme should be supported. Issues related to local culture and history, tourism or environmental protection, including awareness-raising activities, were mentioned as appropriate thematic areas for NGOs.



Also according to the evaluator, the **projects under TO Heritage** in project activities. On the one hand, it is supported by their knowledge of local culture and history, and on the other hand, participation in such projects does not involve spending relatively high financial resources (the fear of participating in larger projects was identified as one of the main



reasons for NGO inactivity). It is also worth mentioning that taking into account the currently implemented projects, it is in the scope of TO Heritage where the highest number of projects is observed which forms a wide field for cooperation.

#### 2.2.5. Summary

- A total of 398 contracts were signed with beneficiaries for the implementation of 141 projects under the Programme, the largest number of which concerned TO Heritage (83 projects)<sup>10</sup>;
- The most numerous among the beneficiaries/project partners were local government communities and local government organizational units (over 38% of the total population), state organizational units and government administration (15.36%), and associations and foundations (almost 12%)<sup>11</sup>;
- Compared to the previous financial perspectives, the interest and commitment of the Ukrainian and Belarusian sides has increased;
- The most considerable number of beneficiaries/project partners was recorded on the Lviv region (59 entities, 38 of which are located in the city of Lviv). Brest Oblast was characterised by the second highest value (33 entities, 22 of which are located in the Brest region). On the Polish side, the largest group of entities participating in the implementation of project activities was in the Białystok and Przemyśl sub-regions<sup>12</sup>;
- A characteristic feature of Ukrainian and Belarusian beneficiaries is their particular concentration in larger urban centres. On the Polish side, entities located in smaller towns were represented more often, resulting in a denser network of connections;
- Due to the nature of the support, a particular concentration of both the number of entities and the connections between them occurs in the area of subregions in the near vicinity of the border. Proportionally, the greater the distance from the border, the smaller the number of partners and the created cooperation networks;
- Two main complexes characterized by the densest network of cooperation can be identified. The first complex is located in the north of the support area and includes such cities as Grodno, Białystok and Brest. The second complex is located in the southern part of the support area and includes Rzeszów, Lviv, Uzhhorod and Ivano-Frankivsk;

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<sup>10</sup> Data from the SL system for January 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

- A total of 75 NGOs constituted 18.6% of all Programme beneficiaries. They preferred smaller projects, mainly implementing soft activities (projects in the field of preserving the cultural and historical heritage)<sup>13</sup>;
- Residents observed positive changes in their place of residence (mainly concerning the use of modern technologies, shorter travel/transport time in the regions, accessibility of historical and cultural heritage facilities and shorter time of border checks for passengers and cars;
- The main factor influencing the success of the Programme and implemented projects was the relatively high financing with a low own contribution from the beneficiaries;
- It would not be possible to achieve similar effects without the support under the Programme, especially considering the scale of undertaken measures and limited own resources of beneficiaries;
- Conducted analysis resulted in the identification of over 50 local government units that received funding under the Programme in the 2014-2020 perspective, but did not implement the project under the Programme in 2007-2013 (observed mainly in Ukraine and Belarus, resulting from the current growing interest in applying among applicants from these countries);
- In the case of beneficiaries who applied for the first time, the lack of previous activity resulted from the insufficient information about the Programme and its possibilities, or the lack of adequate knowledge in this regard (which reflects the significance of information concerning the increasing interest in the Programme).

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<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

## 2.3. Cooperation and sustainability

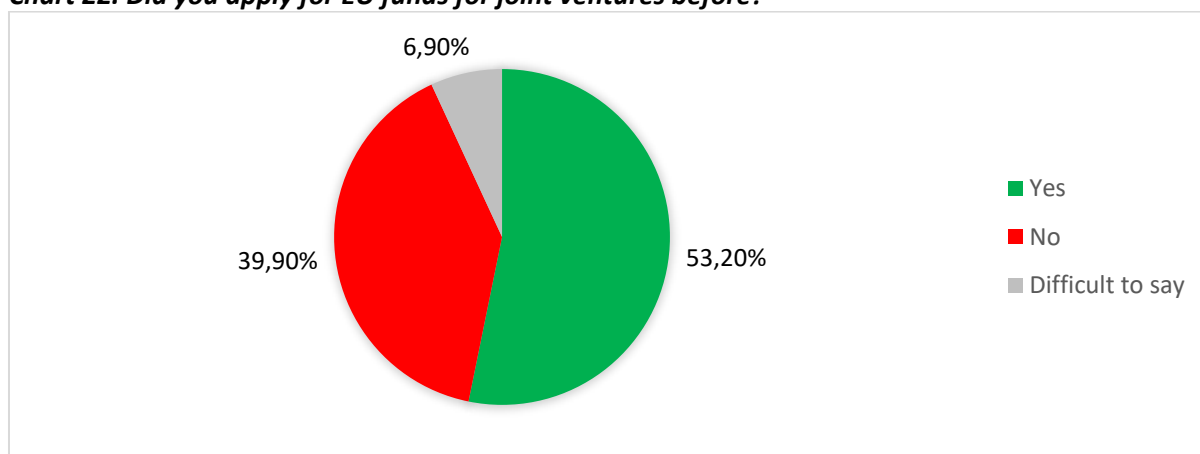
### 2.3.1. Characteristics of the established partnerships



According to the survey conducted among unsuccessful applicants, some of the **project partnerships were concluded even before applying for the support**. Indeed, it was the possibility of implementing a cross-border project, taking into account the needs of both one's own and the foreign partner, that was an important aspect for which applicants decided to participate in the application process.

However, it is impossible to talk about the predominant nature of such partnerships (i.e. previously concluded). As the survey carried out among the beneficiaries shows, about a half of them had not applied for the EU support in the past (therefore, the partnerships established now cannot form a continuation of the cooperation started earlier). It is worth mentioning that among the respondents who confirmed application for support in the past, the previous edition of the PBU Programme was mainly indicated (approx. 60%). Among other sources, ROPs and other Interreg programmes were mentioned first of all.

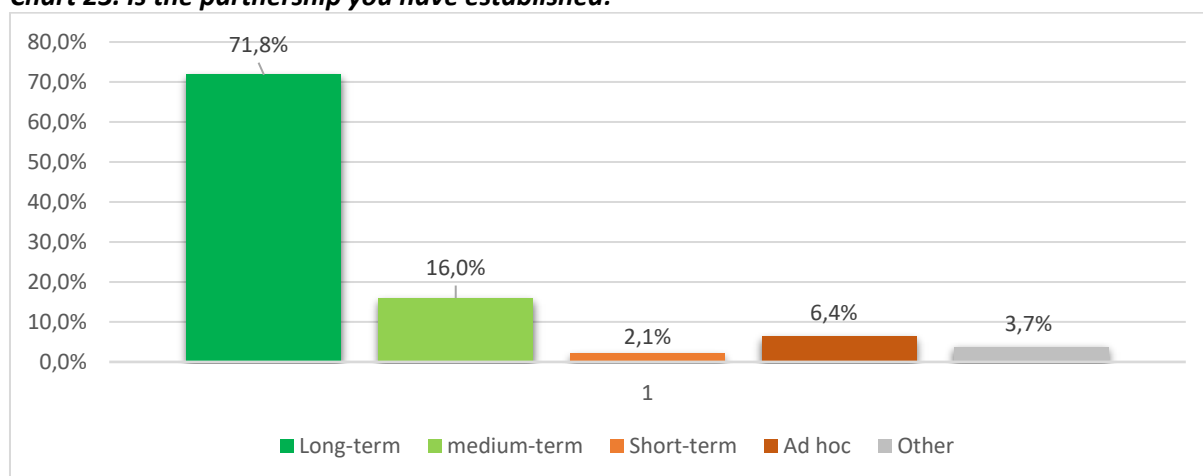
**Chart 22. Did you apply for EU funds for joint ventures before?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

Taking into account the duration of the established cooperation, **the long-term partnerships forming 71.8% of all partnerships were predominant**. Medium-term (16.0%) or ad hoc (3.7%) partnerships were also relatively numerous. However, short-term cooperation was the rarest (2.1%). The respondents, who responded: "Other", most often indicated a desire to establish another cross-border cooperation.

**Chart 23. Is the partnership you have established:**

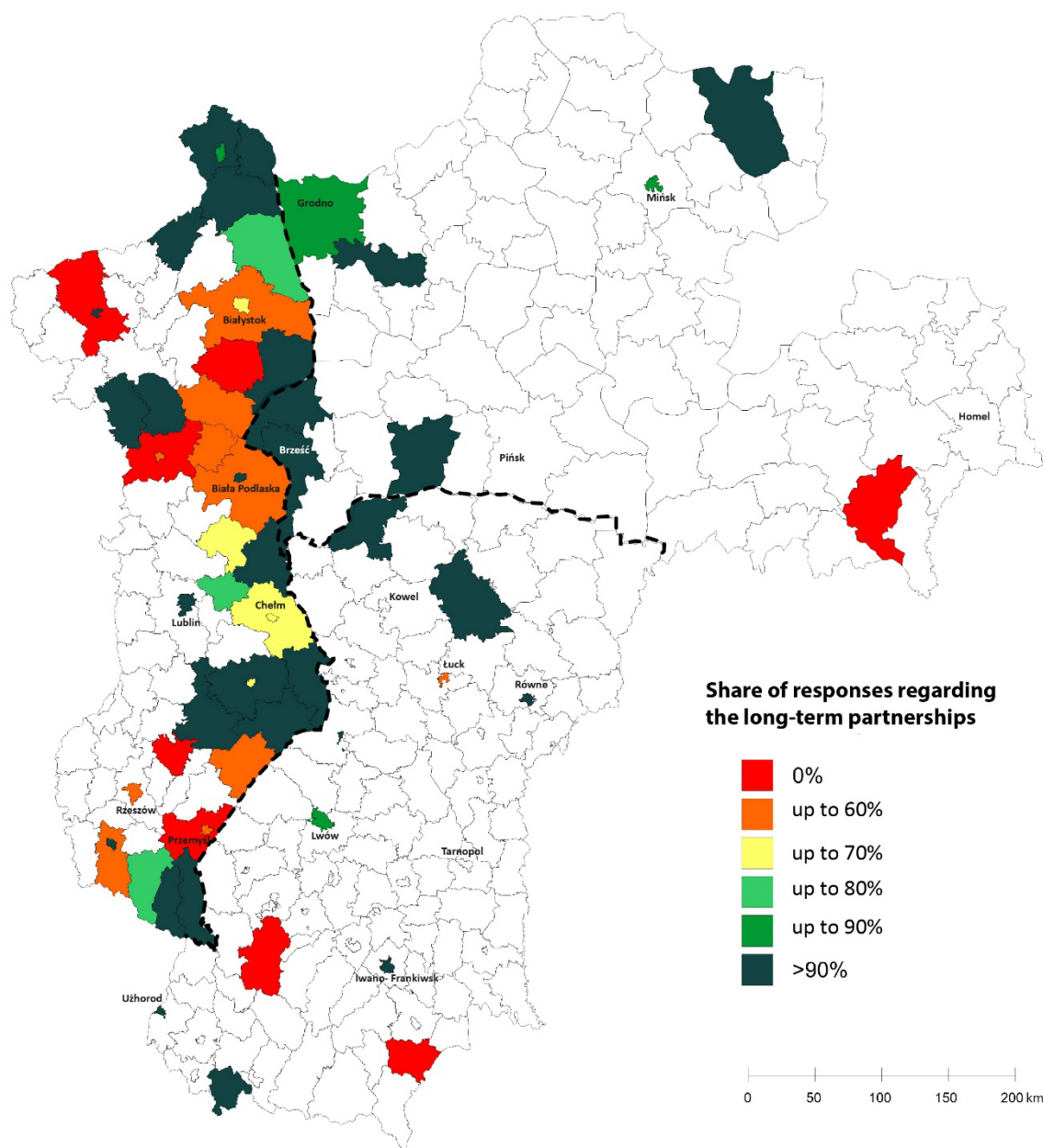


Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.



The aforementioned plans with regard to the long-term nature of the established partnerships mainly referred to the entities located in Belarus and Ukraine (Brest, Rivne and Zakarpattia Oblasts). Analysing results of the research considering the level of poviats, the lower share of long-term partnerships among beneficiaries located in Poland is noteworthy. According to the evaluator, this situation results from a differencing density of the network of connections on the Polish side. Compared to Ukraine and Belarus, in Poland beneficiaries and project partners to a greater extent were located in smaller towns (located in different poviats), and the partnerships were often established only for the needs of a given project.

**Map 6. Share of responses on the long-term nature of the partnership**

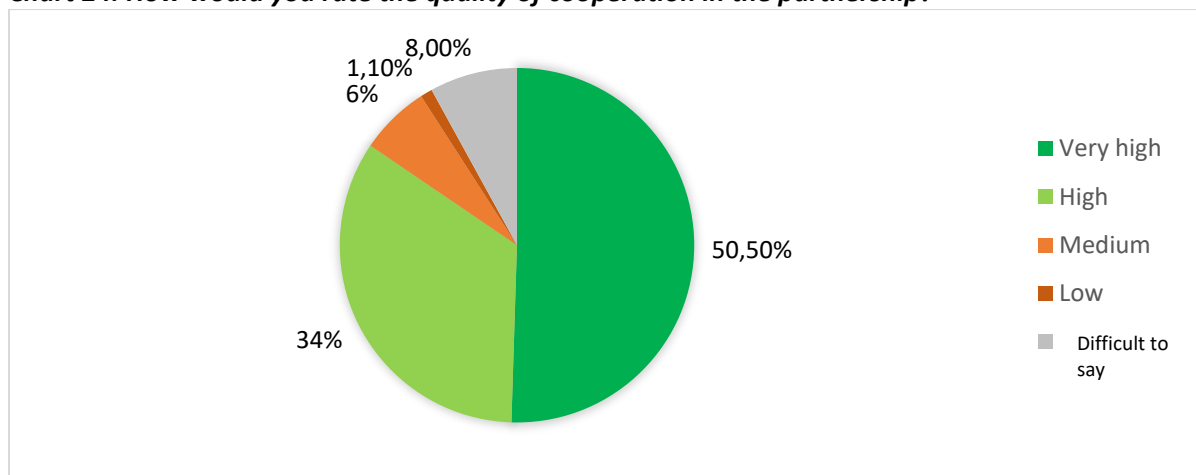


Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

As part of the survey conducted among beneficiaries and project partners, the respondents were also asked to **evaluate the quality of cooperation in the partnership**. The vast majority evaluated it as definitely good or rather good (a total of 84.5% of responses). It was evaluated as average by 6.4% of respondents and as rather bad by 1.1% of respondents. Difficulties in communicating with the

foreign partner and the resulting lengthening of the project implementation process were provided as the reason for the low evaluation.

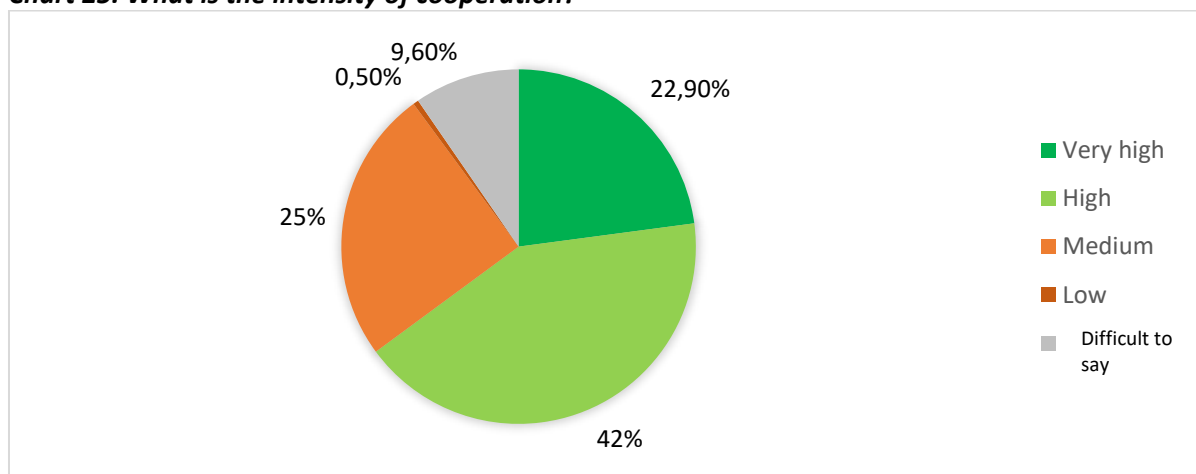
**Chart 24. How would you rate the quality of cooperation in the partnership?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

Moreover, as many as 64.9% of respondents indicated that **the cooperation with partners was very intensive** (total of “very high” and “high” responses). One in four respondents evaluated it as average and only one respondent as low, providing the COVID-19 pandemic constraints as the reason.

**Chart 25. What is the intensity of cooperation?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

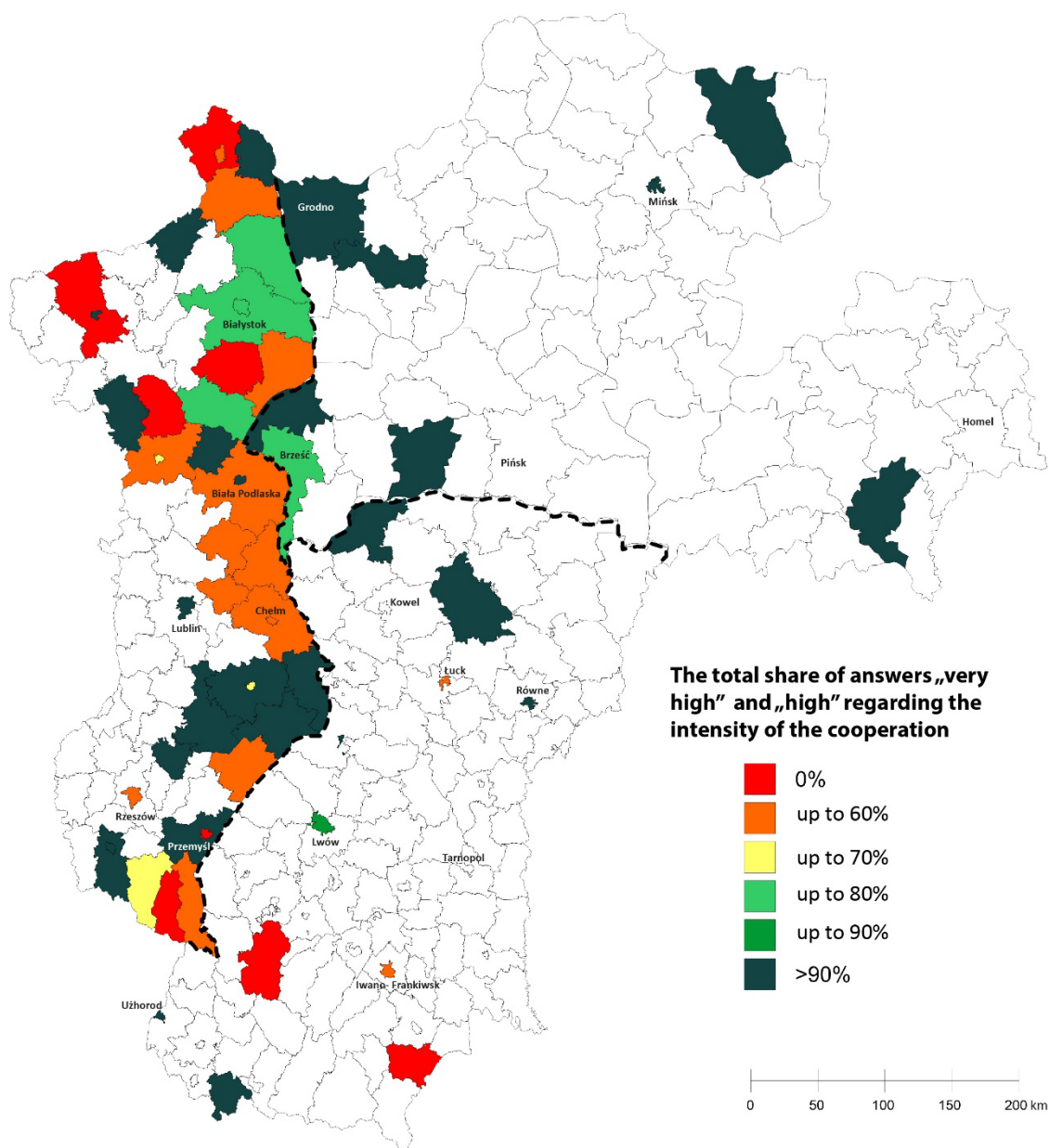


When analysing the results of the survey by poviats/raions, a lesser number of regions on the Ukrainian and Belarusian sides, which are characterised by a relatively low intensity of cooperation (compared to poviats located in Poland) might be observed. It results from the nature of the network of connections on the part of these countries,

i.e. the concentration of the location of beneficiaries and project partners in the area of larger urban areas.

Therefore, partnerships in Poland were more often established between a larger number of partners, often located in smaller towns, and cooperation was established just for the needs of a given project. Thus, cooperation of an ad hoc nature could influence the subjectively lower evaluation of the intensity of this type of cooperation by the respondents.

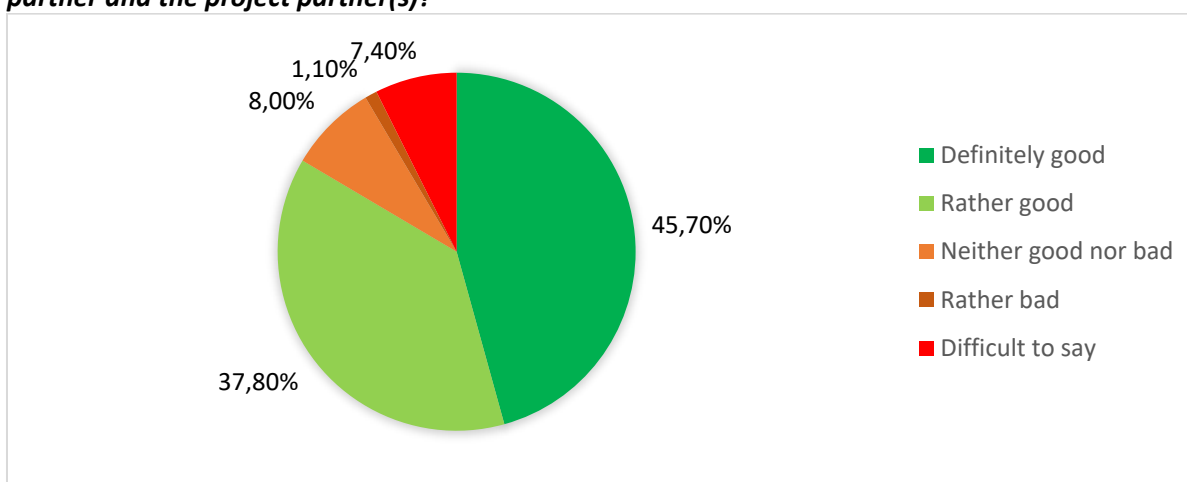
**Map 7. What is the intensity of cooperation? (sum of share of "very high" and "high" responses)**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

In order to complete the examined issue, the respondents were also asked **to assess the effectiveness of inter-partner communication between the lead partner and project partners**. The vast majority, as many as 83.5% of respondents assessed it as definitely or rather good. In the opinion of 8.0% of respondents this communication was at an average level, and 1.1% of respondents assessed it negatively. The reasons for such low assessments included difficult contact with the lead partner and lack of quick response to requests or questions, low activity in solving current problems – waiting for proposals from the lead partner.

**Chart 26. How would you evaluate the efficiency/effectiveness of communication between the lead partner and the project partner(s)?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.



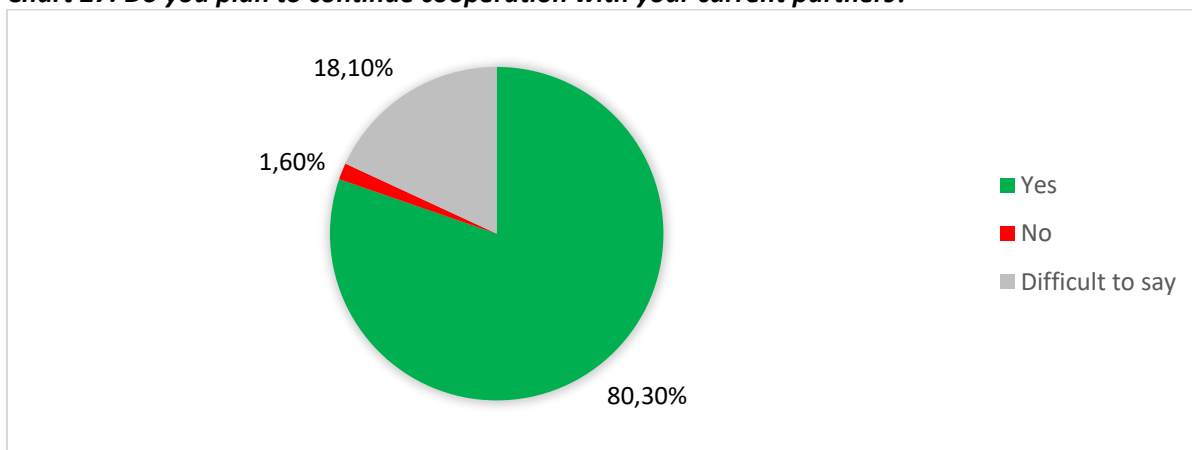
Respondents participating in the IDI survey indicated that in the vast majority of cases **the project cooperation was smooth**. However, there were problems resulting from the uneven activity of both partners which resulted in an excessive burden on one of the parties or other problems. There is therefore a need to establish good and strong partnerships relations and to clearly define the tasks of each party in order to successfully implement projects. Difficulties related to different legal regulations in partner countries were also pointed out, as well as the issue of the language barrier which can prove to be a major challenge, especially for the beneficiaries themselves. It was emphasised, however, that constant, long-term partnership cooperation makes it possible to develop appropriate solutions also in these areas, and consequently – to implement joint projects effectively. With time, the trust between partners increases, and thanks to that – as one of the respondents indicated – the cooperation enters “a higher level”.





According to the survey, 80,3% of the surveyed project partners declared that **they plan to continue cooperation in the future**. Only 1,6% of respondents gave the opposite response and the remaining 18,1% were not able to response clearly to this question.

**Chart 27. Do you plan to continue cooperation with your current partners?**

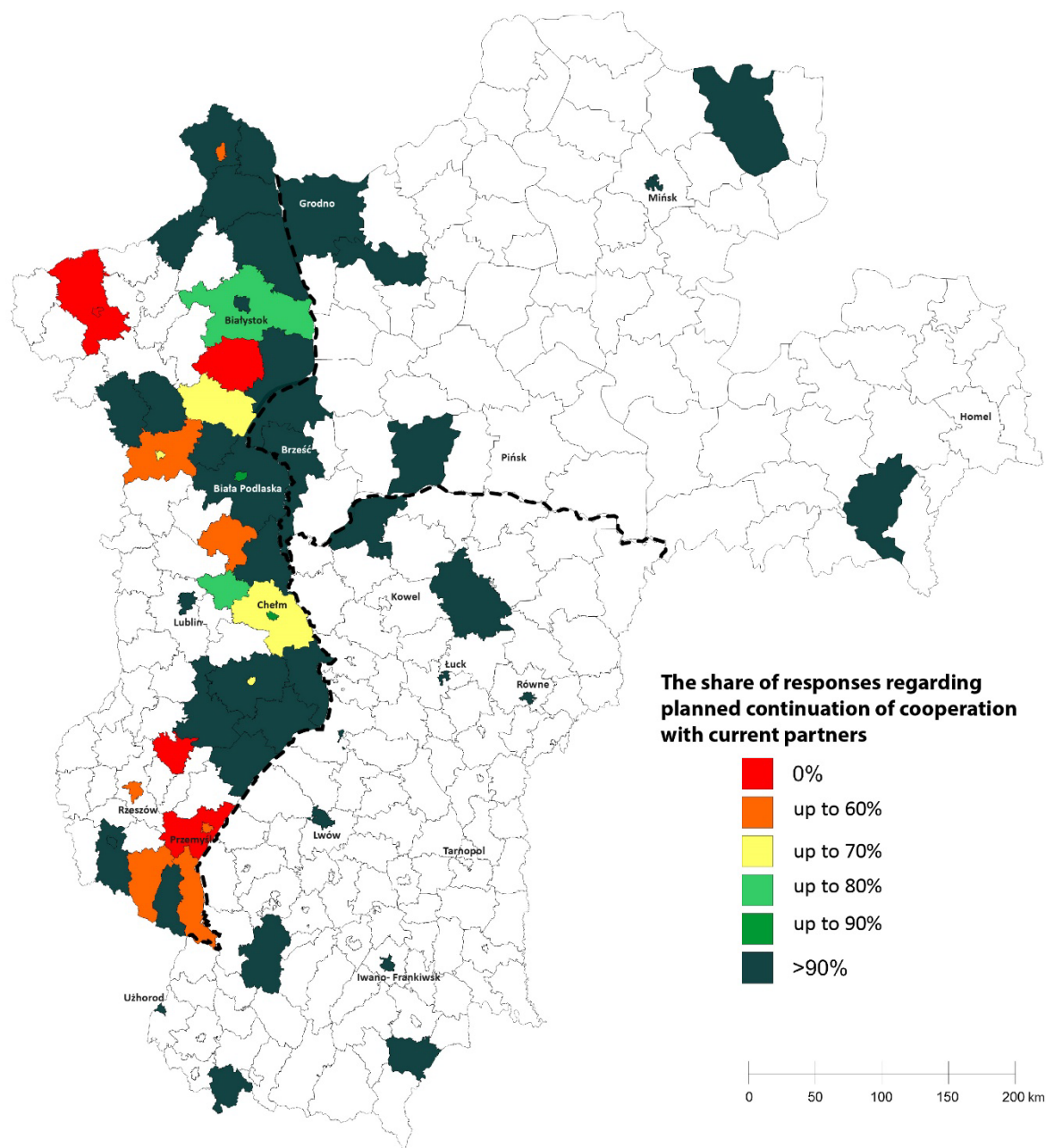


Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.



As in case of the previously analysed intensity of cooperation, also in terms of plans to continue cooperation, a definitely higher (total) share of positive responses regards the territory of Belarus and Ukraine. In case of Poland, the situation is different and the share of respondents who plan to continue cooperation is lower. In the evaluator's opinion, this situation can result from relatively higher needs on the part of Ukraine and Belarus (which in turn results from relatively lower activity of entities from these areas in the previous edition of the Programme) and the nature of established partnerships (on the Polish side establishment of ad hoc project partnerships between entities located in a larger number of smaller towns is observed).

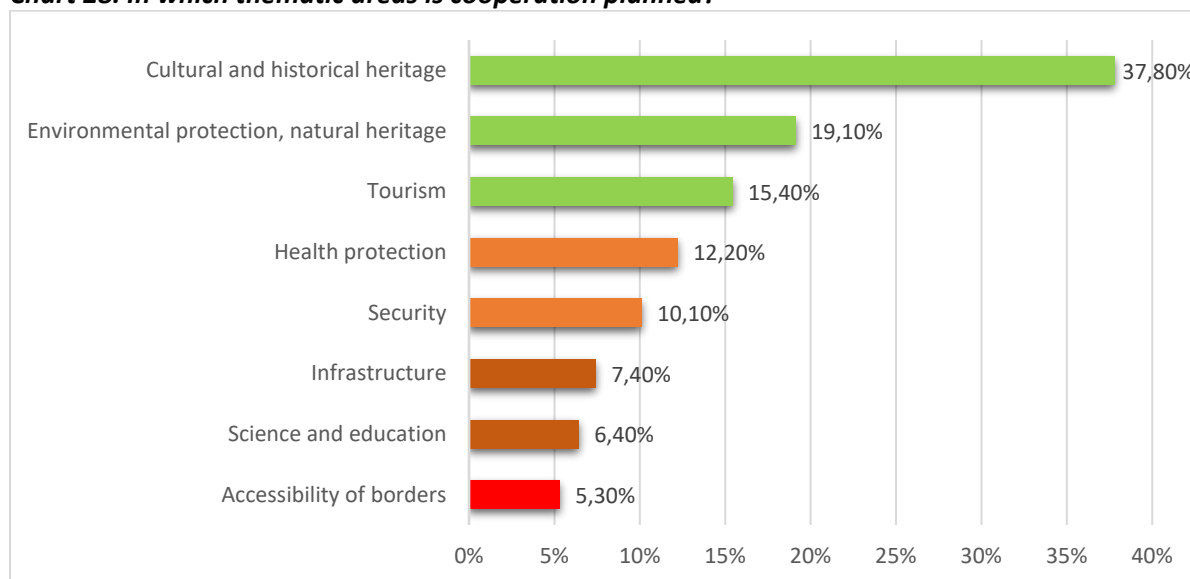
**Map 8. Do you plan to continue cooperation with your current partners? (share of positive responses)**



*Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.*

Most frequently, cooperation was planned in the field of promoting cultural and historical heritage (37.8%) and protecting the natural environment (19.1%). Joint activities related to the development of tourism potential (15.4%) or health care (12.2%) were also relatively frequently planned. Every tenth respondent indicated the area of security. There were also responses concerning infrastructure projects or increasing the accessibility of borders.

**Chart 28. In which thematic areas is cooperation planned?**



Source: author's study based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188



**Sustainability of the undertaken cooperation** is also confirmed by the results of the IDI survey. In the opinion of beneficiaries, the project cooperation contributed to a large extent to the establishment of strong sustainable relations between partners.

Taking into account the cross-border impact of individual projects, the respondents to the qualitative IDI survey unanimously confirmed that the effects in this respect will be maintained and further developed in the future. It was emphasised that the project collaborations established within the Programme are not of a short-term nature but lay the foundations for later cooperation between partners.

**The permanent manner of implementing the cooperation also was reflected in conclusions of the**



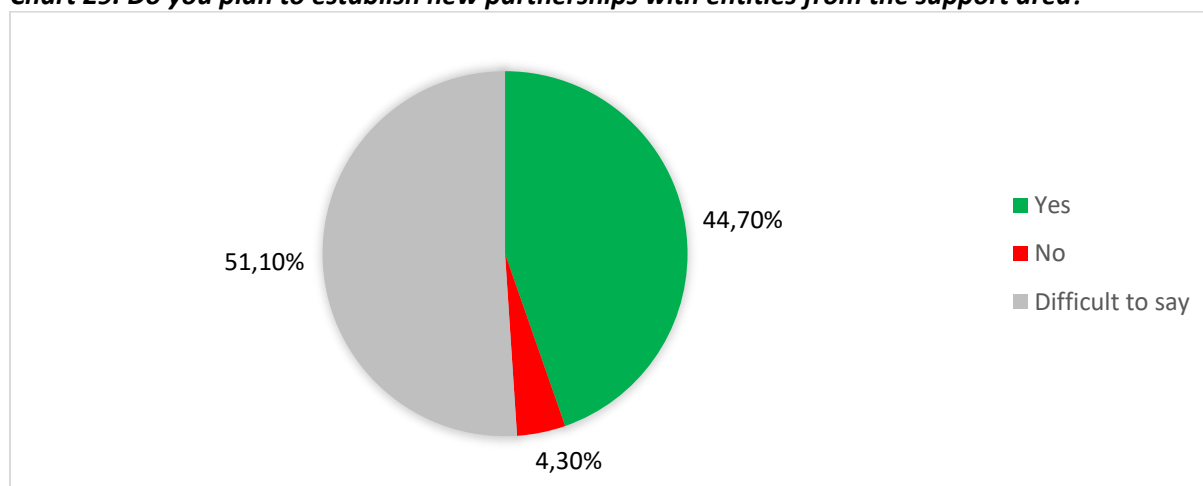
**case study analysis.** Project activities enabled the exchange of experiences and good practices, the implementation of joint trainings and outdoor events. Cross-border cooperation within the analysed projects led to gaining the knowledge about partners, their problems and expectations. Moreover, these projects strengthened already existing ones, and developed new forms of long-term cooperation between citizens, organizations, the sphere of business, institutions and other entities of social life from Poland, Ukraine and Belarus.



In the scope of the survey conducted with beneficiaries and project partners, the respondents were also asked **whether they planned to establish new partnerships** with entities from the area supported under the Programme. A positive response was given by 44.7% of respondents. 4.3% of respondents were of an opposite opinion and the remaining

51.1% were not able to state explicitly whether they planned this type of activity. The lack of opinion in this respect can be influenced by a relatively high percentage of entities that plan to continue cooperation within the currently undertaken network of connections (while seeing no reason to extend it further).

**Chart 29. Do you plan to establish new partnerships with entities from the support area?**



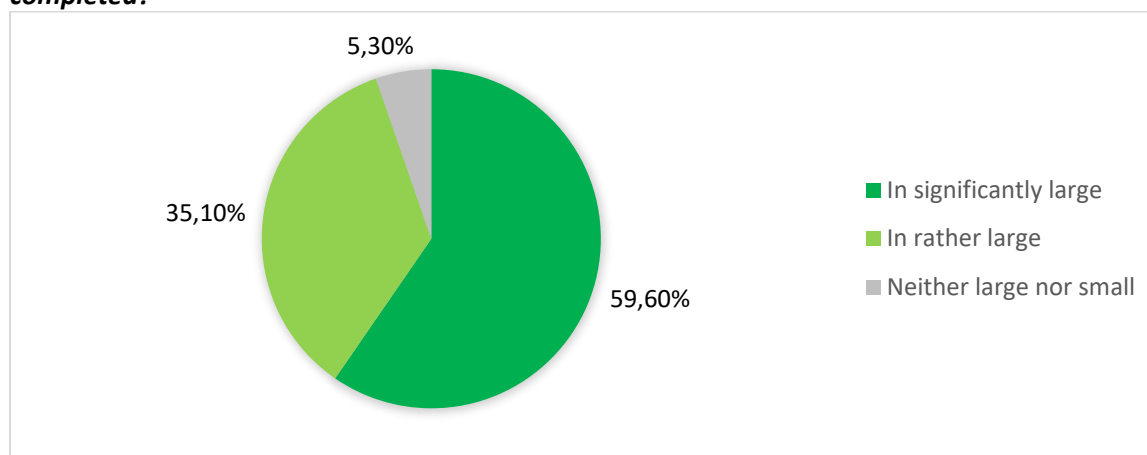
Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

### 2.3.2. Sustainability of projects



The vast majority of the surveyed project partners responded that the results of the projects will be definitely **tangible** to a large or rather large extent **also after their completion** (94.7% in total). The remaining 5.3% of respondents declared that the project activities will have an average effect afterwards. There were no responses concerning lower ratings.

**Chart 30. To what extent will the effects of your projects continue to be tangible after they are completed?**

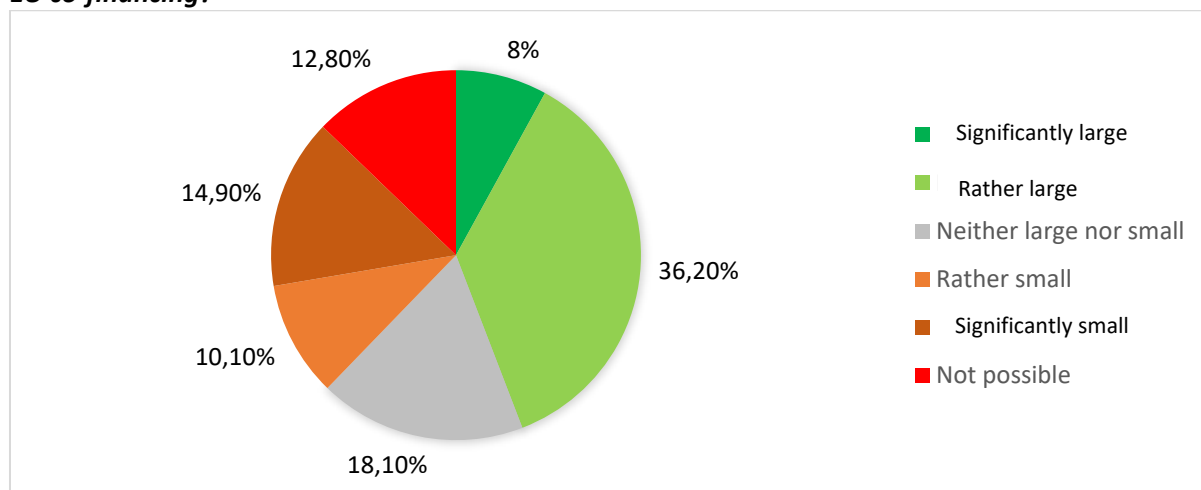


Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

It was also pointed out that the implementation of the projects will bring long-term benefits and multiplier effects that will affect the target groups. Moreover, the established international cooperation will contribute to the improvement and strengthening of mutual relations and will provide a basis for its continuation and deepening. According to the respondents, significant results important for the residents of the support area, have been achieved which will allow for further development of the supported area.

According to 37.8% of respondents, **maintaining the effects of individual projects will not be possible without further EU co-financing** or it will be possible only to a small extent. Respondents who marked the answer: “it is not possible” underlined the necessity to provide too high financial expenditures in relation to the possibilities. On the contrary, 42.6% of partners responded that further co-financing will not be necessary, although only 8.0% of respondents declared definitely high probability.

**Chart 31. To what extent is it possible to maintain the effects of individual projects without further EU co-financing?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

The Respondents who declared that it would be possible to maintain the effects of particular projects without further EU co-financing most often underlined the permanent character of changes introduced as part of project activities or financial sufficiency due to raising funds (including national funds) or ensuring revenues for maintaining the effects achieved (mainly from tourism).



On the other hand, the participants of the IDI survey underlined that **it is already difficult to talk about sustainability of projects implemented under individual thematic objectives**. This is because a significant part of them is still being implemented – first of all large infrastructure projects which are more time consuming

– while their effects are more sustainable and visible. At the time when the survey was carried out, the most tangible were the results of small projects which had a short implementation period. When asked to what extent, in their opinion, the effects of the projects will be tangible also after their completion, the respondents of the qualitative IDI survey underlined that it largely depends on the scale and nature of the implemented activities.

The respondents of the IDI survey were also asked to respond to the question regarding the extent to which maintaining the effects of individual projects would be possible without further EU co-financing. The responses underlined that although it depends mainly on the specificity of a given project, in many cases further maintenance of the developed results without external support, even if possible, would probably involve the need to reduce the scope of projects and/or extend the time of their implementation.



Also in the opinion of the evaluator, now it is difficult to accurately assess the sustainability of projects. However, taking into account the infrastructural character of a significant part of the currently implemented projects and the long-term nature of the established partnerships (declared by the beneficiaries), the evaluator **does not foresee any problems in ensuring appropriate sustainability of the implemented projects.**

### 2.3.3. Summary

- Some project partnerships were established before applying for support - the possibility of implementing a cross-border project answering the needs of both partners was a significant aspect behind the decision to participate in the application process;
- Long-term partnerships accounted for 71.8% of all established co-operations, whereas short-term cooperation was observed to the lesser extent (2,1%);
- The quality of cooperation was positively assessed by 84.5% of respondents and its intense nature was confirmed by nearly 65% of respondents;
- The barriers for cooperation include difficulties related to different legal regulations in partner countries and language barriers;
- 80.3% of surveyed project partners declared that they plan to continue cooperation in the future (most often in the field of promotion of cultural and historical heritage and environmental protection);
- At the time of the present evaluation study it is not possible to determine the sustainability of projects implemented under individual priority axes due to the fact that numerous of them are still implemented, including mainly large infrastructure projects which are more

time-consuming, and their effects are more durable and visible. However, the evaluator does not expect any problems in ensuring the appropriate sustainability of the implemented projects.

## 2.4. Information and promotion

### 2.4.1. Characteristics of the Programme communication strategy



Information on tools and actions suggested to beneficiaries for promotion of their projects was included in the *Programme Manual*. **Communication channels used to disseminate information on the Programme**, included:

- Internet – the Programme website was launched and the IB was responsible for its administration and updating. Basic information on the Programme is published in Polish, English, Russian and Ukrainian;
- Traditional media (press, radio, television);
- Publications;
- Events, including information meetings, conferences, workshops or trainings are a key instrument for administrative units responsible for the Programme implementation, beneficiaries and other institutions.

In order to increase the level of identification with the PBU Programme, a special logo was designed, referring to the logo of the *Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2007-2013*, to be placed in the promotional and information materials, website and in the offices of the institutions that disseminate information to beneficiaries. According to the assumptions, the logo is also used for the promotion of specific projects<sup>14</sup>.



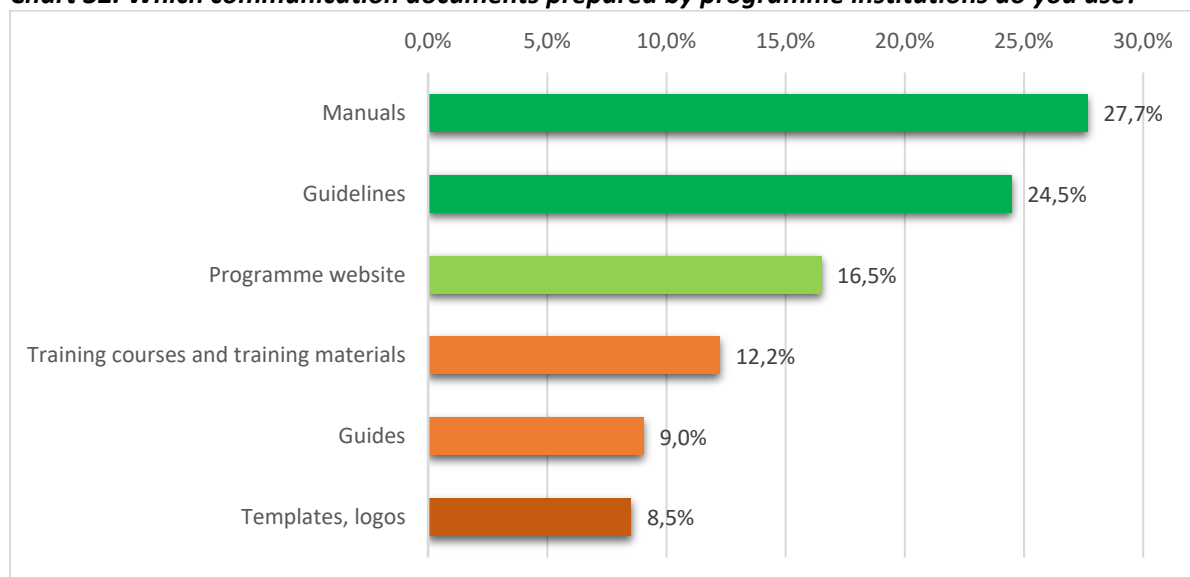
During the survey with beneficiaries and project partners, a question was asked about the **communication documents used by them which were developed by the Programme institutions**. The most frequently underlined were manuals (27.7%) and

guidelines (24.5%). There was also a relatively large number of respondents using online materials on the Programme website (16.5%) or knowledge and materials provided during trainings (12.2%). This positively underlines the usefulness of the communication strategy of the Project. The least frequently used were guides, templates and logos (9.0% and 8.5% respectively).

<sup>14</sup> ENI Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020, Translation of the version approved by the EC (Decision C(2015) 9138 of 17 December 2015), pp. 78-79.



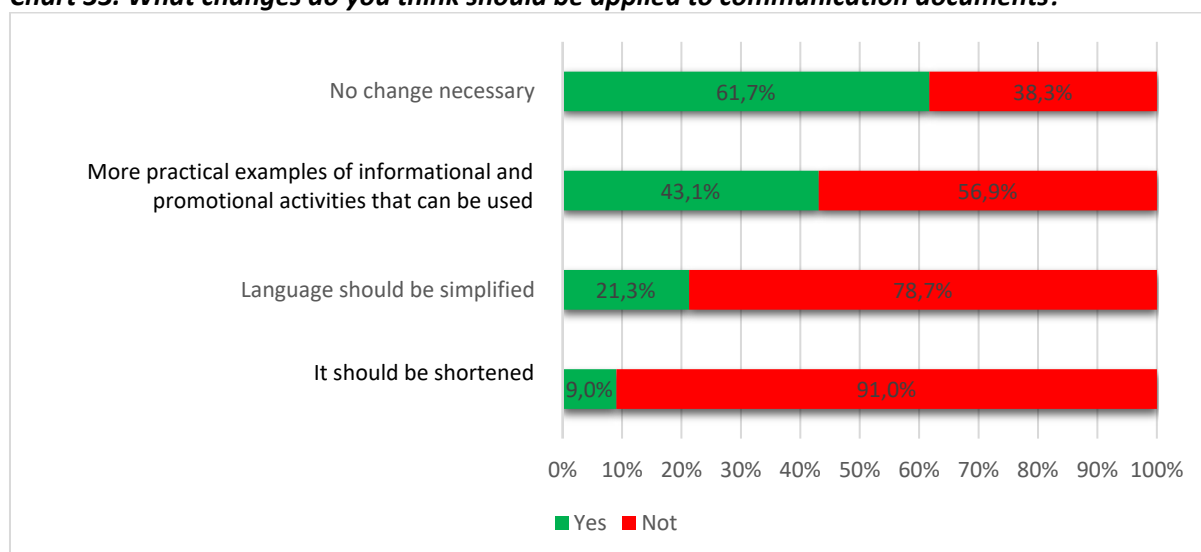
**Chart 32. Which communication documents prepared by programme institutions do you use?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

The next question concerned the **changes**, which according to the respondents (project partners) **should be applied to the communication documents**. It is worth noting that the majority (61.7%) of the respondents were of the opinion that there is **no need for modifications in this area**. However, according to 43.1% of the partners, it would be useful to provide more practical examples of informational and promotional activities that could be used and this was the most frequently requested change. Nearly one in five respondents pointed out the necessity to simplify the language used in documentation and less than one in ten to shorten it.

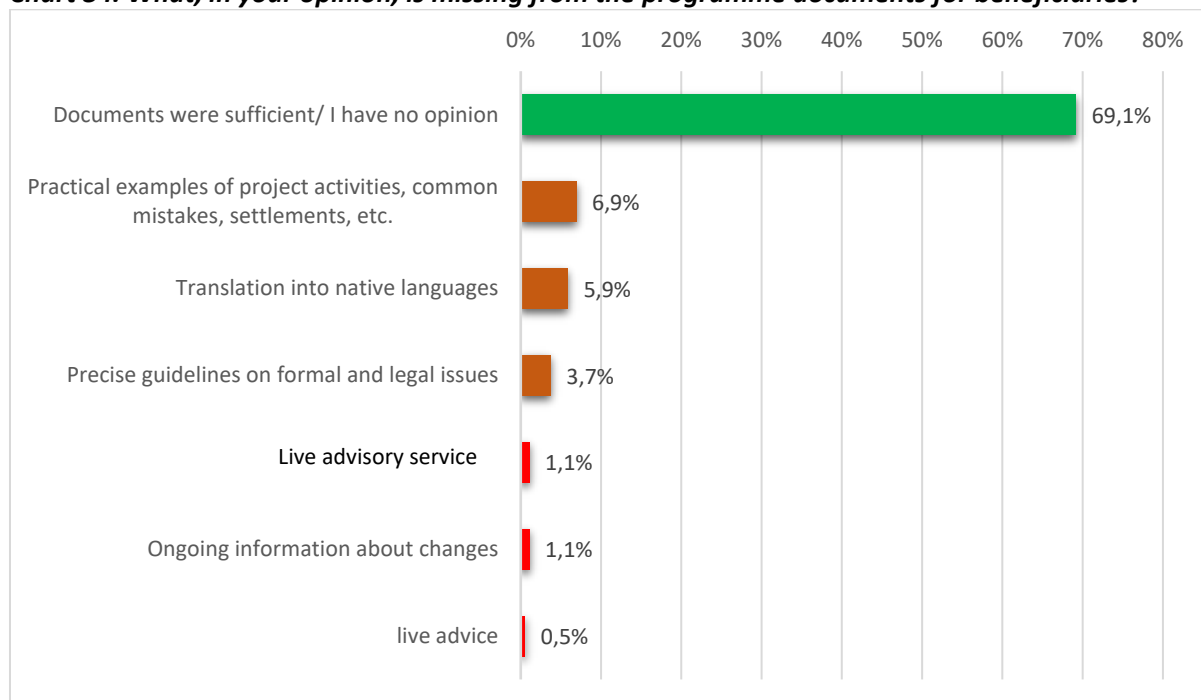
**Chart 33. What changes do you think should be applied to communication documents?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

The project partners were also asked what in their opinion was **missing from the programme documents for beneficiaries**. The vast majority underlined the completeness and sufficiency of documentation (69.1%). Other responses most frequently included more practical examples of possible project activities, settlement methods, good practices or most frequent mistakes (6.9%) and translation into native languages (5.9%) and translation into native languages (5.9%).

**Chart 34. What, in your opinion, is missing from the programme documents for beneficiaries?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.



In the scope of the IDI survey, the respondents were asked to **evaluate the effectiveness of tools and activities included in the programme documents on communication** (in terms of increasing effectiveness). The respondents were of the opinion that in general they were sufficient and allowed to achieve the assumed objectives. However, they indicated a progressive change in the attitude of the population towards the already commonly used practices in this area. It was emphasised that in previous programming periods, when the measures implemented with the use of the EU funds were new, the public focused on the information boards on the sources of financing or other "traditional" tools or measures in a different way. It was also pointed out that the JTS played an important and significant role in the field of communication (i.e. organisation of conferences and competitions). The respondents of the IDI survey also rated highly the **effectiveness of communication within programme institutions**. It was underlined that this communication had been timely and had a clear,

specified course. The respondents declared that this communication was not a new aspect but it had been developed and deepened over the years.



**The effectiveness of used promotion tools** was also confirmed by the **case study analysis**. Planned information and promotion activities include a considerably wide range of tools, including distribution of promotional gadgets, leaflets, cooperation with the media, project publications, organisation of promotional events or the use of VR technology for promotional purposes.



Taking into consideration the results of the survey, the tools and actions specified in strategic documents concerning communication should be evaluated positively in the evaluator's opinion. The assumed objectives of the Programme were implemented in an effective and efficient manner with them. However, in case of future, planned actions, it is worth taking into account the presentation of good project practices taken from the projects implemented so far to a greater extent.

#### 2.4.2. Applied promotional tools and activities and their impact on Programme recognition and partners' image



In order to increase the effectiveness of flow of information and the efficiency and quality of PBU Programme implementation, it was assumed that informational and promotional activities would be carried out on both the external and internal levels. The first was associated with relations with beneficiaries – current and potential, including in particular:

- Local and regional authorities and other public institutions;
- Local and regional entities;
- Euroregions;
- Professional associations;
- NGOs and non-profit organisations active primarily in supporting entrepreneurship and education, environmental protection, tourism development as well as organisations active in the field of culture, training institutions, etc;
- General public, including the media and those with an interest in the Programme from a research perspective.

As far as the level of internal communication is concerned, it mainly referred to the institutions<sup>15</sup> involved in the Programme implementation.

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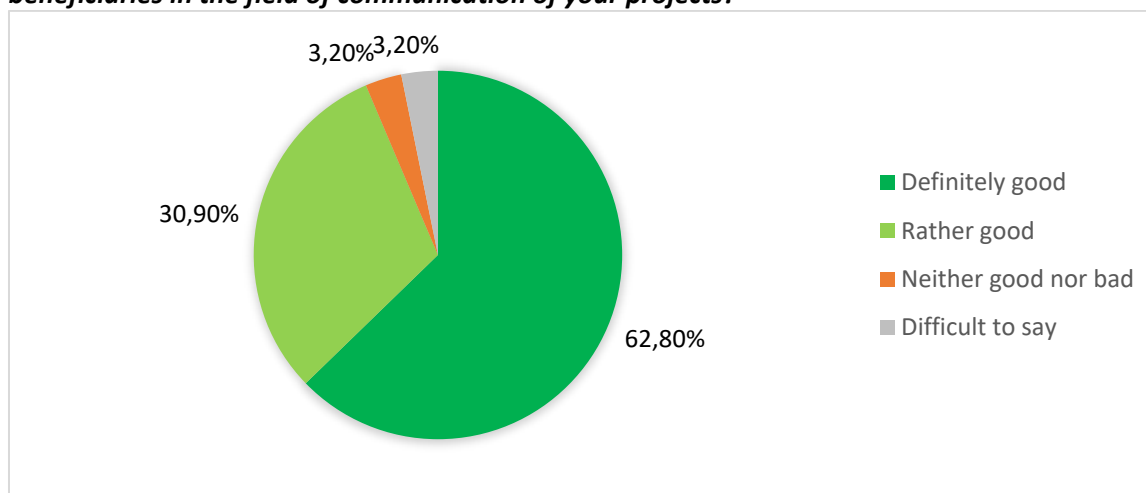
<sup>15</sup> ENI Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020, Translation of the version approved by the EC (Decision C(2015) 9138 of 17 December 2015), p. 77.



Within the conducted survey, the project partners were asked to **evaluate the activities and support provided to the beneficiaries by the Programme institutions in the scope of project communication**. As much as 93.6% of respondents evaluated it

positively (a total of definitely good and rather good responses). The remaining partners assessed the activities and support in this scope as average or did not have a clear opinion (3.2% of responses respectively). At the same time, no one assessed it negatively.

**Chart 35. How would you evaluate the activities and support of programme institutions provided to beneficiaries in the field of communication of your projects?**



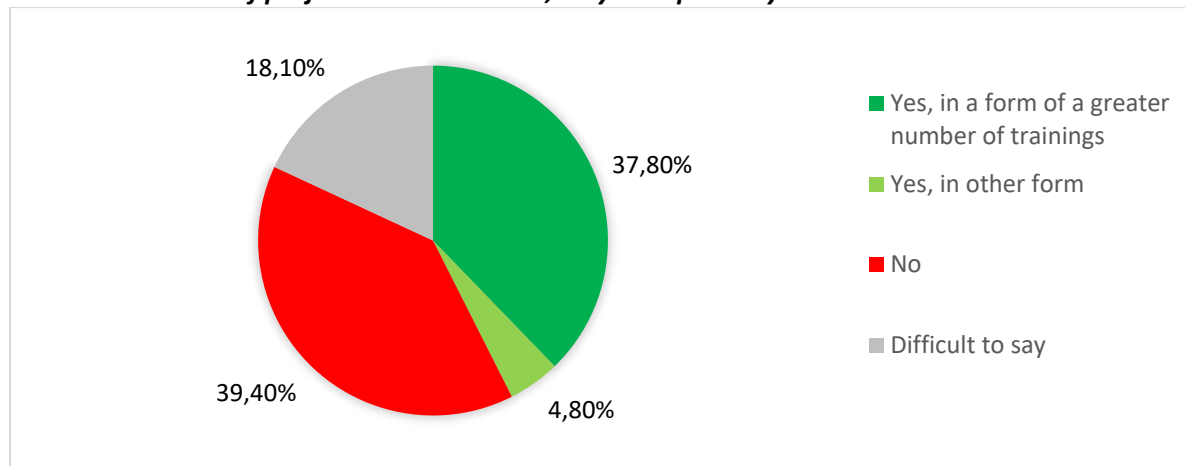
Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020 N=188.

As many as 42.6% of the respondents **expected additional support** in the area of project communication. The majority underlined the need for more training (37.8 p.p.). The remaining 4.8 p.p. of responses concerned issues such as:

- Need to continue to issue project publications;
- Promotion of projects in the media;
- Specification of examples of well-implemented projects and their effectiveness after several years;
- Implementation of joint workshops on project communication;
- Better quality on the indicated topics;
- Making available templates of the required logos in different colour variants and examples of their use (publications, gadgets, purchased equipment, etc.);
- Face-to-face meetings with JTS employees with the participation of all partners and perspective participants in order to share experiences and analyse results.

However, for 39.4% of the partners the current activities in this field were sufficient and almost every second respondent had no clear opinion on this issue.

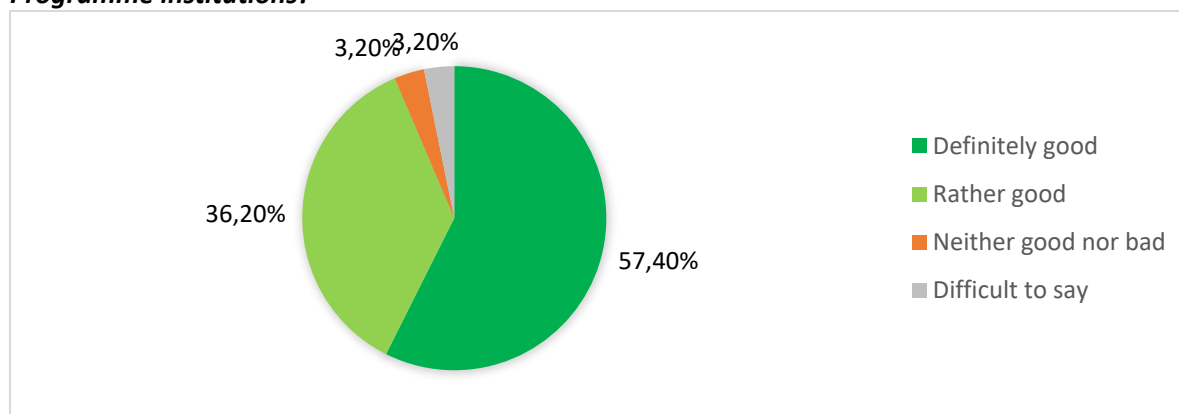
**Chart 36. In terms of project communication, do you expect any additional assistance?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020 LTP, N=188.

In the vast majority, **informational and promotional tools and activities of programme institutions** were assessed positively by project partners. 57.4% of respondents assessed them as definitely good, another 36.2% as good (a total of 93.6%). Accordingly, 3.2% of the respondents were of the opinion that the activities were of an average level or had no clear opinion on the matter. Thus, once again, no negative response was recorded.

**Chart 37. How would you evaluate the informational/promotional tools and activities of the Programme institutions?**



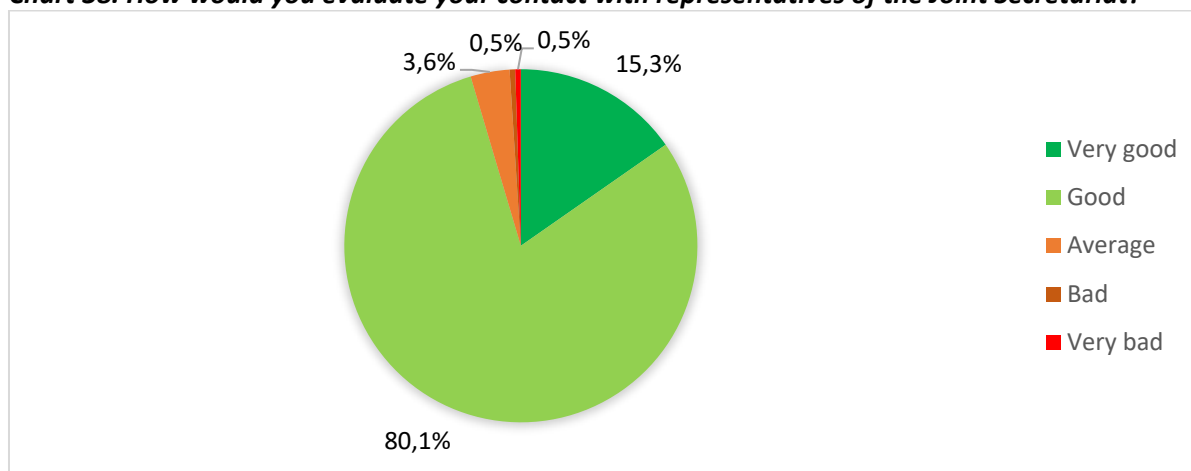
Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.



The unsuccessful beneficiaries were also asked about issues related to communication.

**Contact with representatives of the Joint Secretariat** was assessed positively by a vast majority of the respondents (95.4%), with 3.6% giving a negative opinion. Thus, negative opinions accounted for only 1% of all responses.

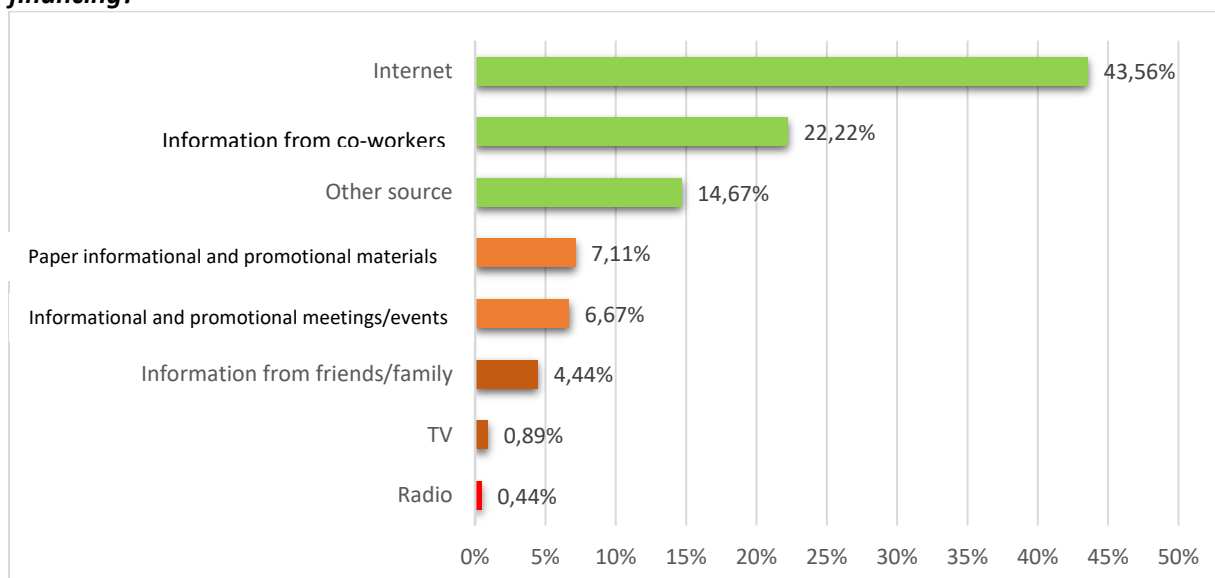
**Chart 38. How would you evaluate your contact with representatives of the Joint Secretariat?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.

Interestingly, almost 44% of the surveyed unsuccessful applicants **found out about the possibility of obtaining PBU Programme co-financing** from the Internet. Moreover, more than 22% of responses pertained to the category of information from co-workers. A relatively high share of responses was associated with the “other source” option as well. Within it the respondents underlined that they did not remember the source of information or obtained information from companies, local self-government units or foreign partner.

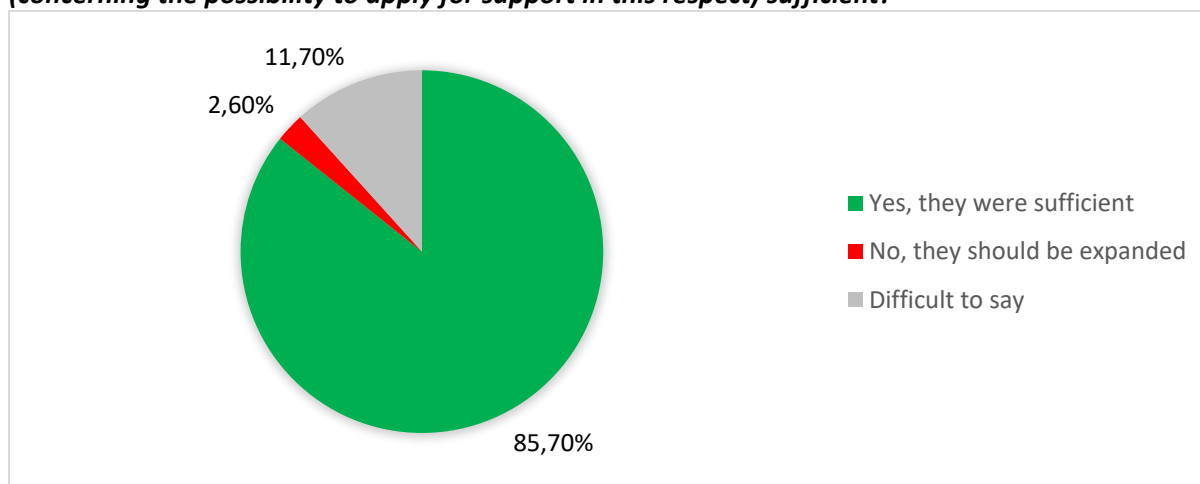
**Chart 39. From which source did you learn about the possibility of obtaining PBU Programme co-financing?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020 LTP, N=194.

It should also be noted that almost 86% of unsuccessful applicants stated that the **informational and promotional activities applied by the programme institutions were sufficient**. Almost 12% of the surveyed had no opinion on this subject, which means that only 2.6% of the total number of responses referred to the need to extend these activities. Such activities as providing the partners from Ukraine and Belarus with information about the Programme, increasing the number of informational meetings or publishing information on the partners' websites were mentioned.

**Chart 40. Were the informational and promotional activities applied by programme institutions (concerning the possibility to apply for support in this respect) sufficient?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with unsuccessful applicants of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=194.



Respondents participating in the IDI survey emphasised the **high level of external communication** in the Programme and its effectiveness (including in particular the events organised). Moreover, these activities were perceived and appreciated also in the EU scale at meetings in Brussels.



Due to the pandemic, JTS had to cancel some of the events planned for 2020 and 2021 or change the operating form to e.g. remote. The analysis of the *Programme information and communication plans* showed that within the external communication, **a range of available channels and tools were used, aiming at the increase of the Programme recognition**. For this purpose, both traditional tools (face-to-face meetings, printed materials) and the Internet (Programme website, social media) were used. The basic tools of communication of the Programme included: programme events (such as trainings, workshops, cycling trips, conferences, forums, etc.) and the Internet (mainly the Programme website but also social media profiles and articles or references on other websites).

The undertaken activities were mainly aimed at informing about the Programme, its impact and EU funding, and about the implemented projects, exchange of good practice, information and transfer of knowledge as well as highlighting and promoting the Programme. Initiatives were also undertaken to attract new groups of recipients and to promote the concept of cross-border cooperation to a wider audience as well as to increase the knowledge and awareness of the recipients about the Programme itself and related issues.



The respondents participating in the in-depth interviews underlined that **informational and promotional activities used for promotion of the actions undertaken largely influenced the recognition of projects** implemented under the Programme and the Programme itself. The respondents emphasised that as a result of the Programme activities, the **image of partner countries had changed**, especially taking into account the issue of mentality and stereotypical perception of neighbours. Implementation of joint projects created a space for establishing closer relations between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine and their residents. It made it possible to see the aspects that unite these countries and revise previously held misconceptions about a given country.

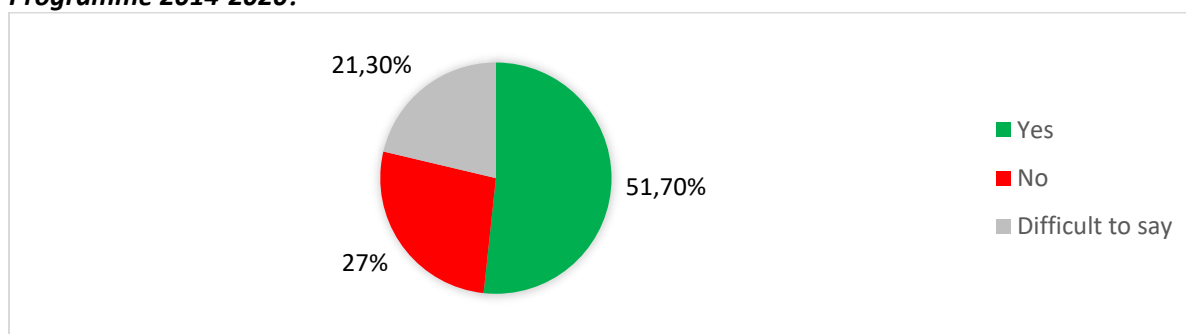
As far as the **effectiveness of particular tools and activities used to promote projects** implemented in the scope of the Programme is concerned, the IDI survey emphasised mainly such activities as gadgets or gifts for participants of a given event which were to remind about the implemented activities in a direct and material way. The role of photographic documentation and promotional publications was also emphasised.



More than half of the surveyed residents of the support area underlined that **they have knowledge about the projects implemented under the Programme** (51.7%). Only 27.0% of respondents did not hear about them. Taking into account the size of the survey sample and its random character, this result should be regarded as positive and demonstrating the positive influence of informational and promotional activities in the scope of the Programme.



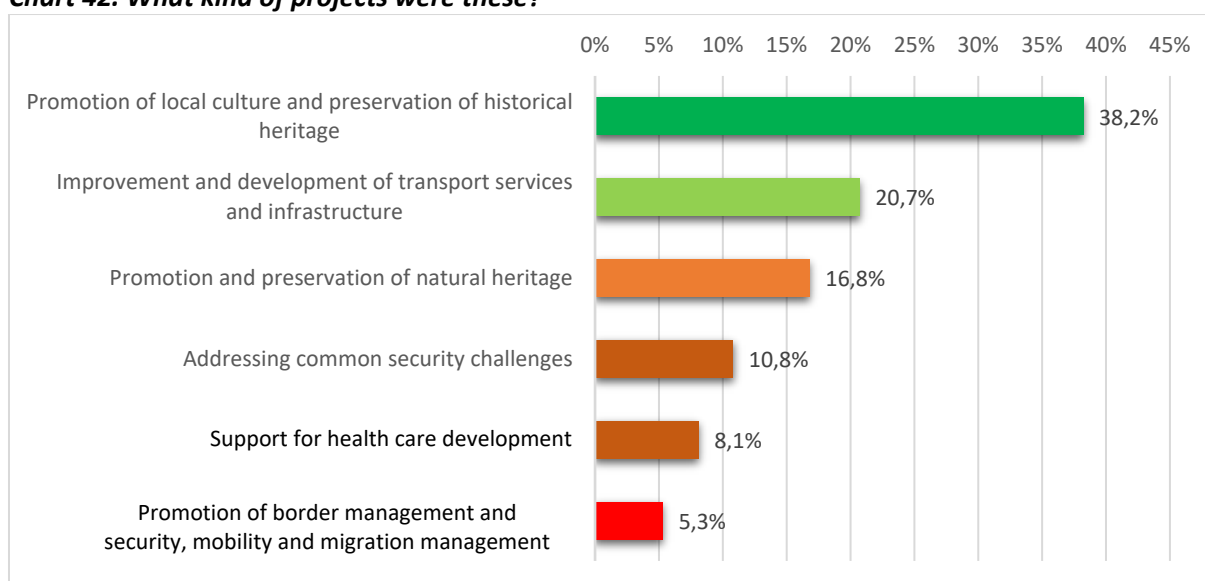
**Chart 41. Did you hear or see/Are you aware of the projects implemented in the scope of CBCP PBU Programme 2014-2020?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with residents of the support area CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=900.

The residents of the support area who gave affirmative responses were also asked to specify the **projects they heard about**. The largest number of responses concerned activities related to the promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage (38.2% of responses). According to the evaluator, this is due to the very high number of projects implemented under this Thematic Objective. In turn, every fifth respondent underlined projects on the improvement and development of transport services and infrastructure, especially roads. There were also relatively numerous responses concerning the promotion and preservation of natural heritage (16.8%) or safety (10.8%). Support for the development of health care and promotion of border management and security were underlined the least often, probably due to the fact that these areas are not usually used on a regular basis.

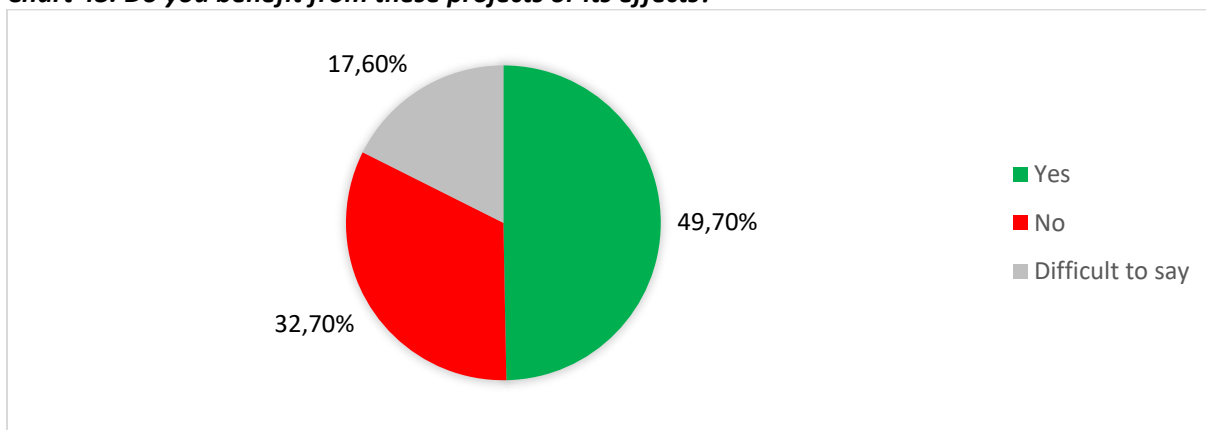
**Chart 42. What kind of projects were these?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with residents of the support area CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=465.

In order to supplement the aforementioned issue, it is worth noting that **as many as almost half of the residents** who heard about the projects implemented in the scope of the Programme **benefited from those projects** or their effects.

**Chart 43. Do you benefit from these projects or its effects?**

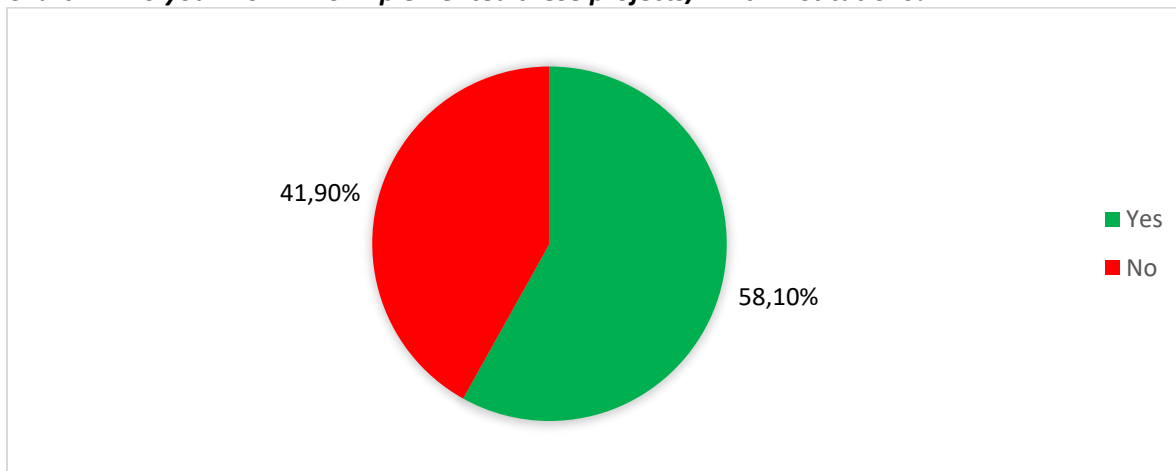


Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with residents of the support area CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=465.

The respondents who declared that they benefit from the effects of the implemented projects were asked to **specify how they do it**. The responses related primarily to the use of newly built or modernised road/transport infrastructure which contributed to shorter travel time and/or increased driving comfort as well as opportunities in the field of culture or history, such as visiting a museum or amphitheatre, broadening knowledge on local history due to participation in trainings and workshops, attending cultural events etc. (about 1/3 of respondents each). There were also numerous responses underlining an increased sense of security or a higher level and access to health services. Some of the respondents declared that their houses had been connected to the sewage system as part of the projects or underlined the establishment of a sewage treatment plant. There were also responses emphasising improved environmental protection. Some of the surveyed residents were directly involved in the implementation of project activities.

**The majority, i.e. 58.1%, of the surveyed residents were aware of who or what institutions were involved in the projects.**

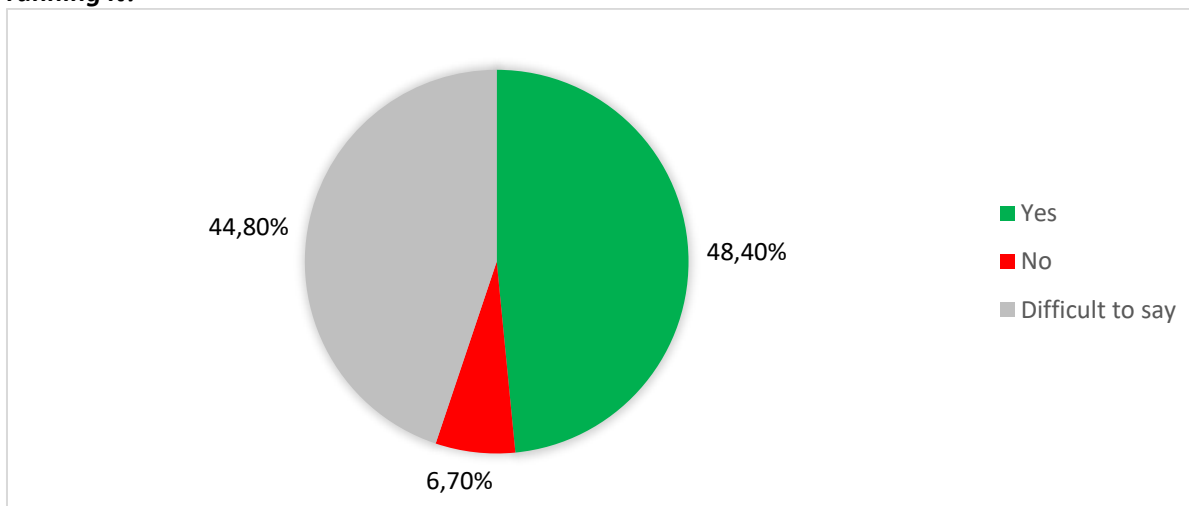
**Chart 44. Do you know who implemented these projects/which institutions?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with residents of the support area CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=900.

The residents of the Programme area were also asked whether the **implementation of the project had an impact on the image of the entities running it**. Almost every second respondent gave the affirmative response. Only 6.7% of the surveyed residents were of an opposite opinion (as many as 45% had no opinion on the subject).

**Chart 45. How do you think the implementation of the project affects the image of the entities running it?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with residents of the support area CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=900.

Among the responses to the question **how the implementation of the project influences the image of the entities running it**, there were responses regarding the establishment of a more positive image of a given entity in the perception of the social environment. The implementation of this type of activity contributed to the feeling that the implementing party takes care of improving the living conditions of the residents and is not indifferent to local challenges. This raised the rank of the

entities implementing the projects, thanks to which their recognition in the region increased which was also a promotion of the given entity. It also influenced, according to the surveyed residents, the perception of the entity as modern, open to dialogue and cross-border cooperation.



In the evaluator's opinion, the applied **promotional tools and activities fulfil their role and ensure high Programme recognition at the same time positively and strongly influencing the image of the very beneficiaries** implementing projects under the Programme. Particularly positive conclusions are associated with the results of surveys conducted on a random group of residents from the support area among whom a high level of Programme recognition was noted (with simultaneous ability to specify the type of projects implemented near their place of residence).

#### 2.4.3. Summary

- Concerning the communication documents developed by the Programme institutions, surveyed beneficiaries most often used textbooks (27.7%) and guidelines (24.5%). Numerous respondents used also materials available on-line on the Programme website (16,5%);
- 61.7% respondents stated that introducing modifications to communication documents is not necessary;
- Changes proposed for implementation in the scope of documents included the idea to use more practical examples of information and promotion activities, and the fact that the language used in the documentation should be simplified and documents shortened;
- Tools and measures adopted in the communication programming documents should be considered sufficient. They led to the achievement of assumed objectives, with the range of used communication channels being sufficient and not reflecting the need to extend it;
- Nearly 70% of respondents confirmed the completeness of the Programme documentation. Other respondents mainly observed the need to include more practical examples in the scope of feasible project activities, settlement methods, good practices or the most common mistakes;
- Nearly 94% of surveyed beneficiaries/project partners positively assessed conducted activities and the support in the field of project communication, which they were provided by the Programme institutions;
- The same share of respondents positively assessed the information and promotion tools and activities of Programme institutions;
- Contact with representatives of the Joint Secretariat was positively assessed by over 95.4% of respondents;

- 44% of surveyed ineffective applicants found out about the possibility of obtaining funding from the PBU Programme via the Internet;
- Information and promotion activities used to promote the undertaken activities largely influenced the recognition of projects. The image of the partner countries has also changed, especially taking into consideration the mentality and stereotypical perception of neighbours;
- More than half of surveyed inhabitants of the supported area indicated that they have knowledge of projects implemented under the Programme. Taking into consideration the size of the research sample and its random nature, this result should be considered positive and demonstrating a positive impact of information and promotion activities under the Programme.

## 2.5. Horizontal principles

### 2.5.1. Implementation of the principle of promoting equality between men and women and non-discrimination



According to the *ENI Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020*, the respect for human rights should be ensured during the implementation of the Programme and all activities financed under the Programme are to reflect this.

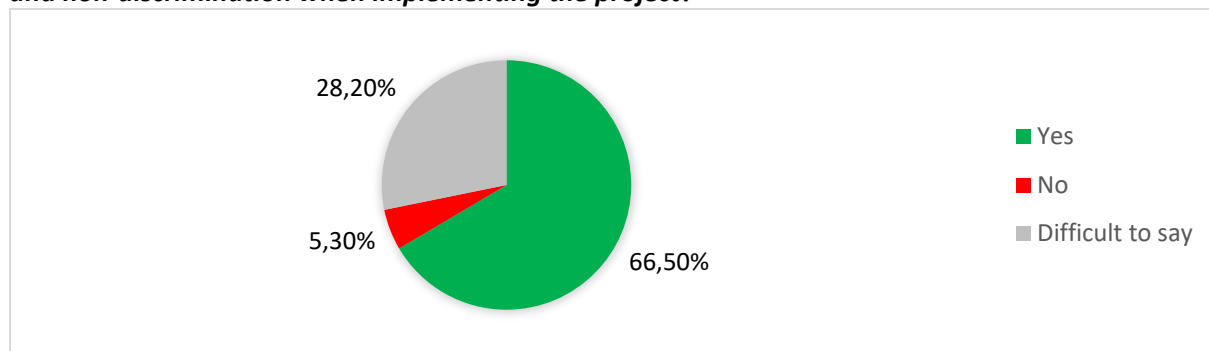
One of the fundamental human rights is gender equality



According to the survey, **66.5% of the project partners** participating in the survey **took into account the principle of promoting equality between men and women and non-discrimination** when implementing projects. This standard was not taken into account

by 5.3% of the respondents who stated that their projects were neutral. The remaining 28.2% of respondents were not able to give a clearly response to this question.

**Chart 46. Did you take into account the principle of promoting equality between men and women and non-discrimination when implementing the project?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

The respondents who gave an affirmative response were also asked to specify **the ways in which the principle of promoting equality between men and women and non-discrimination was taken into account**. Among the responses there were declarations of such practices as:

- Equality in access to employment, training, career advancement and working conditions;
- Selection of contractors for services and works with respect to all principles of equality between men and women;
- Selection of project staff according to experience and references;
- Selection of representatives of both sexes for project management due to the possibility of ensuring work-life balance with regard to the entire team (flexible working arrangements, convenient meeting times);
- The results of the project activities are accessible to everyone regardless of gender, race, religion, nationality or disability.

There were also numerous responses regarding the neutrality of the project in this respect and their non-discriminatory nature.



When asked **about the degree of considering the principles of promoting equality between men and women and non-discrimination during implementation of the Programme**, the respondents of IDI survey stated that due to the horizontal principles applicable within the Programme, they had to be compulsorily obeyed by the beneficiaries. It was also underlined that it was necessary to take measures aimed at increasing the awareness of the society, and therefore also beneficiaries, on the idea of these principles. There is a risk that they have become just a slogan without deeper meaning.



Also in the evaluator's opinion, this phenomenon is not characteristic of the analysed Programme only but it forms a more common problem related to all EU programmes.

As in other programmes, also in case of PBU Programme, the ways of taking the analysed principle into account (indicated by the surveyed beneficiaries and project partners) **are to a large extent limited to demonstrating the neutral impact of the project or the use of typical solutions, routinely undertaken in most of the previous projects, aimed only at fulfilling the requirement**. It would be advisable to prepare a publication on good practices in applying the analysed principle at project level and make it available on the Programme website.

## 2.5.2. Implementing the principle of sustainable development

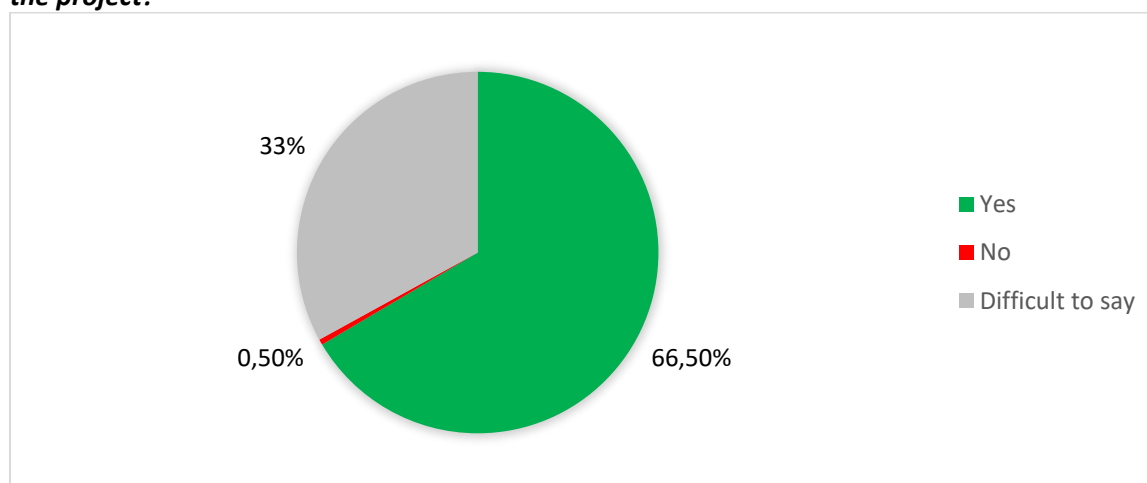


According to the PBU programme documentation, environmental sustainability forms an important cross-cutting issue in the implementation of the Programme and should be evident at each stage of its implementation. Projects that would have a direct negative impact on the environment could not be financed under the Programme. In order to assess and take into account the impact on the natural environment during the preparation of the Programme, an environmental impact assessment was elaborated simultaneously with the preparation of the Programme document<sup>16</sup>.



According to the survey, the **sustainable development principle was taken into account by 66.5% of beneficiaries/project partners**. This rule was not taken into account by only one respondent who underlined the neutrality of the implemented project. Every third respondent could not clearly respond to this question.

**Chart 47. Did you take the principle of sustainable development into account when implementing the project?**



Source: own elaboration based on CAWI/CATI survey with beneficiaries of the CBCP PBU 2014-2020, N=188.

The respondents who gave an affirmative response were asked **to indicate the ways in which the principle of sustainable development was taken into account during project implementation**. In many cases it was underlined that the activities were environmentally neutral, however, there were also numerous responses concerning the application of such practices as

- Use of environmentally friendly technologies;

<sup>16</sup> ENI Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020, Translation of the version approved by the EC (Decision C(2015) 9138 of 17 December 2015), p. 32.

- Undertaking actions under the Environmental Protection Act and other strategic documents concerning the environment protection;
- Maintaining contact between partners by electronic means without using printed documents, where possible;
- Real impact on the improvement of the environment as a result of the implemented project (including e.g. replacement of outdated sewage infrastructure, reconstruction of sewage treatment plants, promotion of ecology, reduction of emissions of harmful components of exhaust gases due to the reduction of travel time etc.).



The respondents of the in-depth interviews confirmed that the sustainable development principle was taken into account during implementation of the Project which manifested itself first of all in a long-term approach to the undertaken activities (i.e. taking into account a longer perspective). In many cases it was emphasised that project activities were either concentrated precisely on preservation or protection of the natural environment or they had no impact on the natural aspects, i.e. were neutral.



In the evaluator's opinion, similarly as in case of the previously analysed principle, the activities undertaken by the beneficiaries in the scope of the implementation of the sustainable development principle also in the vast majority of cases do not include innovative solutions and focus only on fulfilling the requirement set for them. Therefore, again **the need to develop a publication on good practices in application of the analysed principle at the project level and making it available on the Programme website seems justified.**

### 2.5.3. Assessment of the level of administrative burden



As it was stated in the Programme documentation, a key factor for the later success of the project is the proper development of the Concept itself. Therefore, the Programme authorities provided a number of electronic tools from the initial stage of call for proposals as well as organised events in all partner countries to **facilitate the preparation of the project idea and to support beneficiaries in its development.** This support covered both stages of application development<sup>17</sup>. Detailed information on activities supporting applicants and beneficiaries is described in the Appendix to this document.

<sup>17</sup> Programme Manual Part I - Applicant 1st Call For Proposals. V Version, 2020, p. 35.





The respondents of the IDI survey were asked to comment on the policy of reducing administrative burdens for applicants and beneficiaries. It was stated that in the current perspective **these burdens have been reduced to a minimum and they do not represent a major difficulty for participants**. Among the actions under this principle the following aspects were specified:

- Reduction of the amount of information required in application forms;
- Not requiring technical documentation at the time of submitting applications;
- Application of project concepts before preparing full applications;
- Division of tasks;
- Carrying out two stages of assessments:

The important actions of the JTS in terms of support in finding project partners (organisation of cross-border events) were also highlighted.



- Taking into consideration the scale and scope of activities aimed at reducing administrative burdens, **in the evaluator's opinion they should be assessed positively**.

These activities included many aspects, from the application stage to the implementation of the project itself, which directly contributed to reducing the level of administrative burdens for applicants and beneficiaries.

#### 2.5.4. Summary

- Programme Beneficiaries were aware of the principle of promoting equality between men and women and non-discrimination, and the principle of sustainable development. Measures conducted in this area are, however, characterised by routine and lack of innovative solutions;
- According to the evaluator, it should be taken into consideration to prepare a publication on good practices in the application of the analysed principle at the project level. Such publication should be available on the Programme website;
- The administrative burden on the beneficiaries should be assessed as low due to the proper preparation of the Programme and the activities undertaken by its institutions.

## 2.6. Assessment of the progress in achieving the target value of indicators



Due to the **considerably low share of projects completed by the time of present study** (only 2/141 projects), most of the analyzed indicators have not yet been achieved (except for the indicators *Increased capacity of people at land border crossing points*)<sup>18</sup>.

A share of indicators has not yet achieved implementation values, but it should be noted that such situation mainly regards larger infrastructure projects at the implementation stage during conducted study. Furthermore, attention shall be drawn to the fact that **presented values of indicators refer to the values already achieved by beneficiaries and not to the values estimated** on the basis of concluded grant agreements.

However, taking into consideration results of conducted research (including results of quantitative research with beneficiaries and project partners, and qualitative research with members of the JMC and other representatives of institutions involved in the Programme implementation), and information on implemented projects available on the Programme website<sup>19</sup> (including current reports and information relating to their implementation), the evaluator **positively assesses the current level of implementation**. However, there is a possibility of a risk for the achievement of assumed values of indicators relating to the organized events and the number of their participants, and visitors to the supported facilities. The introduced restrictions related to the epidemic situation directly negatively impact the possibility of organizing such events and the functioning of e.g. historical and cultural facilities. Given difficulties in forecasting the future epidemic situation, the evaluator recommends introducing possible changes (after consultation with the beneficiaries) in the scope of those indicators which are directly affected by the introduced restrictions.

<sup>18</sup> Data from SL for January 2021.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.pbu2020.eu/pl/projects2020>

**Table 4. Level of implementation of output and result indicators of PBU 2014-2020**

Thematic objective	Number and name of the indicator	Measurement unit	Base value	Achieved value	Target value assumed in projects	Target value of the Programme	Implementation level for the Programme [%]
<b>Thematic objective TO Heritage   Priority 1. Promotion of local culture and history</b>	Output indicator 1: Number of improved cultural and historical heritage sites as a direct result of Programme support (ENI/CBC 7)	Piece	0	0	44	30	0,0%
	Output indicator 2: Number of cross-border cultural events organised with the support of the Programme (ENI/CBC 8)	Piece	0	2	281	97	2,1%
	Result indicator 1: Increase in the number of visitors to historical and cultural heritage sites;	People	0	0	7 821 189	16.6%	0,0%
<b>Thematic objective TO Heritage   Priority 2. Promotion and preservation of natural heritage</b>	Output indicator 1: Number of cross-border events organised with the support of the Programme	Piece	0	8	107	63	12,7%
	Output indicator 2: Number of promoted and/or protected natural sites as a direct result of Programme support	Piece	0	1	60	15	6,7%
	Result indicator 1: Increase in the number of visitors to natural heritage sites	People	0	0	4 102 400	13.1%	0,0%
<b>Thematic Objective TO Accessibility   Priority 1: Improving and developing transport services and infrastructure</b>	Output indicator 1: Total length of newly constructed roads (ENI /CBC 26)	Kilometres	0	0,66	9,46	5,6	12,8%
	Output indicator 2: Total length of renovated or upgraded roads (ENI /CBC 27)	Kilometres	0	41,84	193,94	102.9	40,7%
	Output indicator 3: Number of poviats (PL)/regions (BY/UA) benefiting from modernised/newly built transport services and infrastructure	Piece	0	7	34	28	25,0%
	Output indicator 4: Number of partnerships established to modernise / establish environmentally friendly transport systems or services	Piece	0	6	12	14	42,9%

Thematic objective	Number and name of the indicator	Measurement unit	Base value	Achieved value	Target value assumed in projects	Target value of the Programme	Implementation level for the Programme [%]
	Result indicator 1: Reduction of travel/transport time in regions	Minutes	0	0	204	7.5%	0,0%
<b>Thematic Objective TO Accessibility   Priority 2: Development of information and communication technology infrastructure</b>	Output indicator 1: Number of partnerships established to develop ICT infrastructure	Piece	0	0	1	7	0,0%
	Result indicator 1: Increase in the use of modern technologies	Piece	0	0	5	18 [number of poviats]	0,0%
<b>Thematic objective TO Security  Priority 1: Support for the development of health and social services</b>	Output indicator 1: Population with improved access to health system as a direct result of support (ENI /CBC 30)	People	0	2 107 382	10 583 993	7 890 573	26,7%
	Result indicator 1: Improved access to health care and social services	People	0	0	10 084 251	36.2%	0,0%
	Output indicator 2: Population benefiting from newly created or improved social services	People	0	0	100 548	27 960	0,0%
<b>Thematic objective TO Security  Priority 2: Addressing common security challenges</b>	Output indicator 1: Population benefiting from fire protection measures as a direct result of support	People	0	1 812 877	11 387 619	3 689 232	49,1%
	Output indicator 2: Number of security institutions that have undertaken cooperation across borders	Piece	0	14	83	22	63,6%
<b>Thematic objective TO Borders  Priority 1: Support for border efficiency and security;</b>	Output indicator 1: Number of border crossing points with increased capacity (ENI /CBC 35)	Piece	0	0	14	7	0,0%
<b>Thematic objective TO Borders  Priority 2: Improvement of border management operations,</b>	Output Indicator 2: Increased passenger capacity at land border crossing points (ENI /CBC 38)	People	0	12 912	110 115	10,200 [persons/24 hours]	126,6%



Thematic objective	Number and name of the indicator	Measurement unit	Base value	Achieved value	Target value assumed in projects	Target value of the Programme	Implementation level for the Programme [%]
<b>customs and visa procedures</b>							

Source: own elaboration based on the Metrics of the output and result indicators of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020 and data from the SL2014 system made available by the Contracting Authority (as at 09.12.2020).

### 3. Conclusions and recommendations

**Table 5. Table of conclusions and recommendations**

No.	Conclusion - identified problems and needs	The significance of the problem/ need (scale 1-5)	Recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Manner of implementation	Time of the implementation	Expected effect
1	Activities undertaken in the cooperation are effective. Implemented projects contribute to positive changes occurring in the supported area. A considerably high interest of potential beneficiaries in the Programme and their willingness to apply for funds under the next financial perspective was observed even among ineffective applicants. The qualitative study indicated that the insufficient budget in relation to the area included in	5	It is recommended to continue the support under the Programme with the amount of allocation adequate to the needs.	MA	The amount of the allocation should be carefully estimated when developing programming documents for the future financial perspective, aiming at the achievement of the assumed Programme objectives. Taking into consideration	II-III quarter of 2021	Consolidation of the current effects, continuation of support and the ability to meet current needs of potential beneficiaries

No.	Conclusion - identified problems and needs	The significance of the problem/ need (scale 1-5)	Recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Manner of implementation	Time of the implementation	Expected effect
	the support constitutes one of main problems in the Programme. According to respondents, increasing the Programme funds would contribute to extending the scope of cross-border cooperation and would further increase its effectiveness. (p. 23)				continued interest and the scale of identified needs, it is recommended to increase the share of funds allocated to projects concerning the preservation of cultural and historical heritage.		
2.	According to participants of the survey, the Programme documentation is clear and complete. However, there are no examples of feasible project activities, good practices and a list of the most common mistakes. The studies should be prepared in	3	It is recommended to prepare additional materials for applicants, containing all information on the Programme	MA	Additional materials for applicants should be prepared, presenting all information related to the Programme, i.e. good practices,	III quarter of 2021	Providing future applicants and beneficiaries with information material on feasible project activities, good practices and a list of the most common mistakes.

No.	Conclusion - identified problems and needs	The significance of the problem/ need (scale 1-5)	Recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Manner of implementation	Time of the implementation	Expected effect
	the native languages of the applicants. (p.72)		presented in a comprehensive manner, including particularly project assumptions and examples of common mistakes.		the most common mistakes, etc. Developed materials are recommended to be published on the Programme website, in the tab dedicated to good practices and practical examples of implementation projects.		
3.	According to the data analysis, Ukrainian and Belarusian partners are more often taking the role of the project leader, reflecting a more considerable interest of foreign partners and an increase in their involvement. However, it	3	It is recommended to continue the use of various tools and information channels in the future financial	MA	The available information channels should be used in order to reach the largest possible group of	IV quarter of 2021	Increasing the number of project partners and increasing the density of cooperation networks.



No.	Conclusion - identified problems and needs	The significance of the problem/ need (scale 1-5)	Recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Manner of implementation	Time of the implementation	Expected effect
	should be emphasized that the greatest intensity of cooperation concerns mainly large urban units. According to experts, a strong cross-border effect was noted, however, formal and legal procedures negatively influenced its maximization. (p.18)		perspective to inform about the Programme and implemented projects.		potential respondents and recipients - especially those located in smaller towns. Promotion with the use of the Internet and social media is particularly significant. In order to increase the activity of NGOs it is recommended to conduct a mailing campaign aimed at this group of potential project partners with information about		

No.	Conclusion - identified problems and needs	The significance of the problem/ need (scale 1-5)	Recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Manner of implementation	Time of the implementation	Expected effect
					the possibility of implementing projects under the next edition of the Programme.		
4.	Among the most significant barriers limiting cross-border integration, beneficiaries indicated the epidemic situation, limitations in the scope of the possibility of crossing the border, legal and administrative barriers, and language and communication problems. (p.62)	4	It is recommended to conduct meetings and trainings at least partially on-line, also after the end of the epidemic situation in the country. Enabling participation in the organized events in a remote form will not only reduce the risk related to the	MA	Organization of meetings and trainings in the hybrid manner. Furthermore, it is recommended that project partners establish dedicated sub-accounts on a platform that enables online meetings (e.g. Google Meet, Zoom, Whereby,	III-IV quarter of 2021	Increasing the level of cooperation of participants of the Programme.



No.	Conclusion - identified problems and needs	The significance of the problem/ need (scale 1-5)	Recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Manner of implementation	Time of the implementation	Expected effect
			epidemic situation but will also have a positive effect on the possibility of maintaining proper project cooperation between foreign partners.		Skype) and the organization of periodic (at least monthly) project meetings. When developing the content of the guidelines in this respect, it is also recommended to inform the beneficiaries/project partners about the possibilities of simultaneous interpretation for meetings organized in this manner (e.g. using a Skype interpreter).		

No.	Conclusion - identified problems and needs	The significance of the problem/ need (scale 1-5)	Recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Manner of implementation	Time of the implementation	Expected effect
5.	Beneficiaries indicated the need to increase the number of trainings concerning communication in the project. Ensuring appropriate conditions in this respect is especially significant due to the fact that these activities had a strong impact on the image of the Programme, implemented projects and partners. Measures used to promote undertaken activities had a significant impact on the recognition of projects implemented under the Programme and the Programme itself. It was also observed that these activities had a positive impact on the image of the partner countries. (p.74)	2	It is recommended to continue the use of communication channels based on the segmentation of target groups.	MA	<p>The use of tools and means of communication should be continued, preparing content adequate to needs of recipients.</p> <p>Development of a database of good practices in the scope of information and promotion means used in projects (the database could be shared on the Programme website as part of</p>	II-III quarter of 2021	Maintaining a considerable recognition of the Programme and a positive impact on the image of beneficiaries and partner countries.

No.	Conclusion - identified problems and needs	The significance of the problem/ need (scale 1-5)	Recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Manner of implementation	Time of the implementation	Expected effect
					the tab concerning good practices).  Organization of trainings (on-line) on the effective conduct of information and promotion activities under the project.		
6.	Projects implemented under the Programme included horizontal principles to a different extent. Beneficiaries are characterised by a relatively low level of awareness concerning the significance and scope of horizontal principles. (p. 78-81)	3	It is recommended to take measures aimed at the increase of awareness concerning the significance and scope of EU horizontal policies,	MA	Trainings should be organized (including on-line/hybrid formula) in a manner that would take into consideration topics related to	III-IV quarter of 2021	The use of new, innovative solutions in projects, positively affecting the implementation of horizontal principles.



No.	Conclusion - identified problems and needs	The significance of the problem/ need (scale 1-5)	Recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Manner of implementation	Time of the implementation	Expected effect
			and to prepare training materials.		horizontal principles and a catalog of good practices in the scope of innovative, practical solutions to be used in implemented projects, ensuring the implementation of horizontal principles (it could be shared on the Programme website, under the tab concerning good practices).		

No.	Conclusion - identified problems and needs	The significance of the problem/ need (scale 1-5)	Recommendation	Addressee of the recommendation	Manner of implementation	Time of the implementation	Expected effect
7.	Observed a possible risk for achieving the assumed values of indicators concerning organized events and the number of their participants, and visitors to the supported facilities. Introduced restrictions related to the epidemic situation directly influence the possibility of organizing such events and the functioning of e.g. historical and cultural facilities. (p. 83-88)	4	It is recommended to take into consideration possible changes in the scope of these indicators which are directly affected by the introduced restrictions.	MA	Conducting consultations (on-line) with beneficiaries concerning the identification of the risk level for the possibility of not achieving indicators' assumed values due to the restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.	II-III quarter of 2021	Achieving all the assumed values of the product and result indicators.

## List of attachments

Attachments are in a separate file:

- Elements supplementing desk research analysis;
- Case Study Analysis;
- Qualitative benchmarking;
- Analysis of the surroundings of the support area.



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