



W H I CROSS F BORDERER

2021 edition



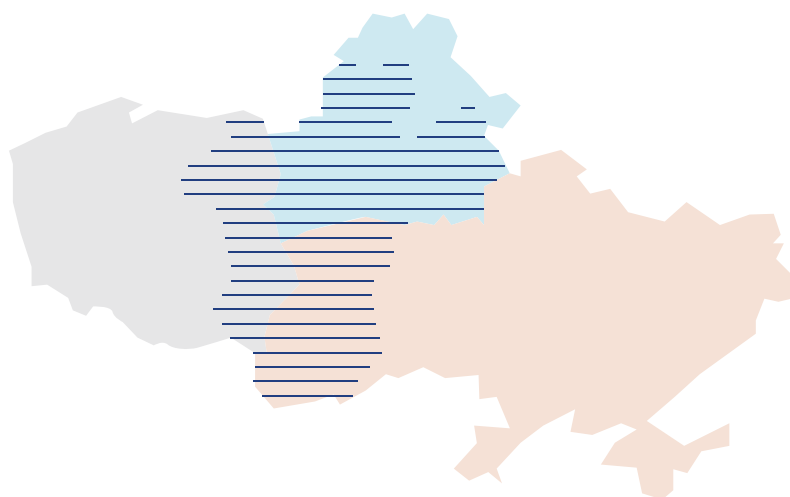
PL-BY-UA
2014-2020

BETWEEN BORDERS

UNDER ONE ROOF

*Interview with Simona Pohlová
Team leader, Neighbourhood
and Interreg NEXT, European Commission*

TOGETHER
FOR GREENER TOMORROW
European Cooperation Day 2020



THE CROSS BORDERER

Dear Friends... – *welcome speech*

BETWEEN BORDERS

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– *interview with Simona Pohlová, Team leader, Neighbourhood and Interreg NEXT, European Commission*

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I consider that we can be proud that it became possible to have all territorial cooperation programmes under one roof and one set of rules...

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Dear Friends,



“Man cannot change the world without changing himself” – I begin with this quote by Stanisław Lem because I believe in the great potential, still untapped, behind the cross-border cooperation projects, even though the landscape for cooperation is changing in our area, not exactly for the better. I mean projects may involve thousands, the young and the older, to promote and adapt new ideas, better solutions, a greener tomorrow. We are a Programme based on European Union values and the rule of partnership. Citizens of the border regions, the final beneficiaries shall be in the focus of the projects. As Commissioner Elisa Ferreira said, a cohesive recovery cannot be left only to Cohesion Policy and our Programme gives a perfect framework for the regions to strengthen the cooperation and develop better place-based policies. Our border regions have outstanding assets and the citizens shall be aware of how to protect, promote and exploit them for a better future. In this “Crossborderer” we visit the Brest and Lviv Oblasts.

“To live, in other words, is to possess a future which will become your present” – another quote by Stanisław Lem inspires us to use carefully all the tools to shape the next decade.

There are many interesting insights on the 2021-2027 perspective both in the interview with Simona Pohlová from the European Commission and in the following “Between borders” article. We can also learn from ‘The Star Diaries’ by Stanisław Lem, that “the more one has the power to accomplish, the less one knows what ought to be accomplished”. Truly it is difficult to focus only on many fields of interventions but equally important is to capitalize on current experiences, results, know-how and encourage projects that can complement each other. With that intention we have attended our annual conference: ‘CBC 2021 – this is not science fiction’ (fortunately, we have avoided adventures by Ijon Tichy from ‘The Futurological Congress’ if you know what I mean...).

Andrzej Słodki
Head of the Joint Technical Secretariat
Cross-border Cooperation Programme
Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020

UNDER ONE ROOF

*Interview
with Simona Pohlová,
Team leader, Neighbourhood
and Interreg NEXT,
European Commission*



THE CROSSBORDERER: For over 17 years, the CBC Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine has been operating on the external border of the European Union. How are the changes taking place in this part of Europe assessed from the perspective of the European Commission?

SIMONA POHLOVÁ: Brussels is unfortunately a bit far away from the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine border, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic we did not have the opportunity to visit neither the border region, nor any projects supported by the programme yet. I hope that this could change some time in the future. However, what we have seen through the communication channels of the Programme and

also thanks to the communication efforts our TESIM colleagues was truly impressive. I am speaking for example about the projects which were adapted to help to tackle the pandemic in 2020, but also about many other projects involving people-to-people cooperation or creating better life conditions for the citizens living in those areas.

Basing inter alia on the achievements of our Programme, do you see the evolution of the EU Member States recognition of the importance of the external cross-border cooperation?

Yes, we do. Member States commitment to these programmes is steadily rising.

We have seen it in particular this year, when the Member States were asked to distribute their European Regional Development Fund envelope for cross-border cooperation among the different borders. Despite the heavy cuts in some national CBC envelopes most Member States have either kept the amounts for external borders, i.e. did not reduce them adequately. And some others have even strongly increased them (including Poland).

The implementation of many ENI 2014-2020 projects was prolonged due to the coronavirus pandemic, many of them are still in the initiation phase. The pandemic caused the necessary changes and shifts and the PL-BY-UA Programme allocated an additional EUR 3 million to support medical projects. How will this global experience affect the cross-border cooperation in the future: will it weaken the quality of mutual contacts or, on the contrary, will it provide us with new tools, ideas and need for even stronger cooperation across the borders?

The signals that we are getting from the programmes – how they coped with the COVID-19 challenges – were, so far, rather positive. Most programmes confirmed that despite borders being closed, travels restricted or completely banned many projects found new ways of cooperation. It seems that the majority of the beneficiaries accepted and made a good use of the virtual modes of communication. They used it not only for the operational cooperation among the different partners, but we understand that some transposed the foreseen activities to the virtual environment. And it was also successful. Some programmes even claim that the cooperation among the programme bodies and the beneficiaries is smoother now, due to the new ways of communication.

It is good to hear that the pandemic did not only have negative effects which, for cross-border cooperation, are obvious.

In the 2021-2027 perspective, the INTERREG family will expand to include programmes such as ours. We will work under the joint leadership of DG Regio basing on the same regulations, principles and indicators. How far this process of unifying the rules should proceed, taking into account that cooperation at the EU's external borders has its own specificity?

Interreg is an extraordinary tool which has an uncontested EU added value. It has developed into

a very strong European label and an instrument how to enhance the development of the EU border areas. I still believe that the governance is the most valuable feature of it. Some say that it is – too – complicated, but what can be better than having – always – to cooperate with your neighbour over the borders to achieve the results of your project? I consider that we can be proud that it became possible to have all territorial cooperation programmes under one roof and one set of rules. I hope that it will bring a lot of practical simplifications, not only for the managing authorities who often know Interreg very well, but also to the beneficiaries.

At the same time I am always saying that the territorial cooperation on EU external borders is a marriage of two important EU policies – the cooperation under the regional (cohesion) policy and the Neighbourhood policy. It has to satisfy both of them. The external policy aspect can never be neglected. REGIO obviously does not have such experience on this front as the external policy DGs, but we are not complete novices either. For example when implementing the macro-regional strategies we work intensively with the Neighbourhood countries such as Ukraine or Moldova. And of course, we consult regularly many issues with our colleagues in the European External Actions Service or DG NEAR.

In the area covered by the PL-BY-UA Programme, the geopolitical situation is very dynamic and sensitive. How do you think this will affect the implementation of the Programme in the new perspective?

Indeed, we are extremely concerned and sad about the situation in Belarus which deteriorates every day. The population is brutally oppressed, civil society organisations and any kind of opposition persecuted, NGOs liquidated. The Belarusian regime systematically, seriously violates human rights – and it happens at our doorstep.

Due to this situation, it is clearly not possible to continue the Programme as before. We have to respect the EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions from October 2020 as well as the sanctions against Belarus. The EU would still like to demonstrate solidarity with the people of Belarus and support the citizens and the civil society: however, not a single euro can be used (and misused) to support the dictatorship. It will certainly be very difficult to have a functioning cross-border cooperation with Belarus in such a context. At the same time, we are strongly convinced that the cooperation with Ukraine should not suffer from this

situation. Let's look together on how to prepare the programme and safeguard the valuable cooperation with Ukraine.

What can the programmes at the external EU borders learn from those at the internal borders and vice versa?

Some programmes started to cooperate under Interreg already 31 years ago and gathered lots of experience with the different practices. More recently, with the establishment of e.g. the Border Focal Point in DG REGIO this cooperation can go even deeper, for example try to remove institutional obstacles hampering cooperation over the borders, even on central level. This gives the internal programmes some comparative advantages.

The programmes on EU external borders are a little younger and they do not operate in the context of the Single Market. On the other hand, very often, they have to cope with complex, difficult political environment of and relations with the partner countries. The capacities of the beneficiaries in the non-EU countries are also likely to be less developed. This makes the external cooperation more challenging. But it certainly does not mean that external programmes work less well.

First of all because each programme – internal or external – is different. I believe that the key ingredient for a good cooperation is trust – one of the essential goals every cooperation programme should aim at. On a trust scale, I bet that the internal and external programmes' scores would be quite mixed. I believe that successful cooperation programmes allow for good, open communication among their partners and seek creative, but at the same time pragmatic solutions to outstanding issues. And they are not afraid of trying something new from time to time.

I am sure that inspiring practices can be found across the various programmes, and I am happy that in 2021-2027 the ENI CBC programmes will be fully part of the Interreg family. This will provide excellent occasions to have exchanges on countless solutions developed by Interreg and ENI CBC community. Interreg/Interreg NEXT programmes operate on overlapping territories, and we do hope that in 2021-2027 they start to be implemented more-or-less at the same time and under the same pace. So, there is a great opportunity to work together and to build on the comparative advantages of each type of programme – be it internal, external,

cross-border or transnational.

Have you privately had an opportunity to visit this part of Europe – the area covered by the PL-BY-UA Programme? If so, please share your impressions briefly. If not, please tell us what you would like to visit or get to know.

I like Poland and Polish culture very much – I visited Poland many times (also during my work as the Commission desk officer for the Czech Republic-Poland Interreg programme). I also visited the western part of Ukraine on the border with Slovakia in the nineties, whose nature I also found stunning. But unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to visit the border regions of Poland-Belarus-Ukraine programme yet. I sincerely regret it as I think that it is one of the most interesting parts of Europe, with a very difficult, tormented past, but very rich in cultural and natural beauties.

In the course of a project visit I would be very keen to visit e.g. the city of Lviv or Białowieża National Park about which I have heard a lot. Let's hope that the pandemic situation will allow us to start travelling again to see what is happening on the ground in ENI CBC programmes.

What would you wish to our Programme for the coming years?

Stable, favourable and trustworthy political environment that rimes with the EU core values and principles – well-defined objectives and methods how to follow them up - open, creative, reliable and experienced programme governance – plentiful potential beneficiaries with innovative project ideas, delivering on the programme's objectives – and good luck with the implementation!

between BORDERS

The PL-BY-UA Programme operates on the external border of the European Union, on the border of cultures, alphabets, economic systems, and now also on the border of two financial perspectives: 2014-2020 and 2021-2027. Many projects of the „old” period are still being implemented, and at the same time - from the work of working teams, discussions and consultations - the shape of the new Programme for the next 7 years is being forged.

At the time of closing this issue of „The CROSSBORDERER” magazine, the strategic part of the new Programme is already known, taking into account the comments collected during consultations in three countries and the recommendations of the European Commission. As a result, we can initially talk about 4 priorities set for the new perspective: ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH, TOURISM and COOPERATION. Within them, specific objectives are set:

ENVIRONMENT
52,7
MEUR

- Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience
- Promoting sustainable water management
- Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment and reducing pollution



HEALTH
44,8
MEUR

- Improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services across borders



TOURISM
40,0
MEUR

- Enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation



COOPERATION
22,4
MEUR

- Increasing the efficiency of public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation as well as cooperation between citizens and institutions, in particular to eliminate legal obstacles and other barriers in border regions
- Creating mutual trust by encouraging actions to facilitate people-to-people contacts



IMPORTANT - the total budget of the Programme 2021-2027 is not approved yet. These are approx. foreseen allocations on priorities.

The total budget of the new Programme is not yet approved, however, we expect to have approx. 160 MEUR to support projects. The level of co-financing will remain unchanged – up to 90%. The Programme area will remain almost unchanged - the only difference is the exclusion of the city of Minsk (BY). The project types will also be the same, so: large infrastructure projects, regular projects and micro-projects. Large infrastructure projects are exceptional as they do not follow the rule of the Call for Proposals. These are projects strategic for the regions' development which are proposed by the regional authorities of each of the involved countries. At the moment, 10 LIPs proposals

were submitted to the main list, which we show on the following pages (8-9).

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

10 LIPs (large infrastructure projects) submitted to the main list for the years 2021-2027



The Carpathian narrow-gauge railways – a journey in the footsteps of the Carpathian forest railways

The project concerns two areas in the Eastern Carpathians connected with the history and location of the surviving forest railways – the historic infrastructure of the narrow-gauge railway in Majdan (PL) and in Vyhoda (UA). It will consist of building an infrastructure of the Bieszczady Forest Railway Station in Majdan (point of tourist traffic service), also construction of a tourist route – an educational footbridge in the treetops and creating an alternative offer of bicycle trolley rides on the route of the railway. On the Ukrainian side, this includes the building of an infrastructure of the Vyhoda Heritage Railway Station and surrounding area – construction of Station Museum. Cross-border workshops and joint familiarisation visits will support the promotion of the project and the idea of the Carpathian Forest Railways.



Belarusian-Polish borderland health care institutions capacity strengthening to overcome epidemiological threats

This area is characterized by consistently high rates of various infectious diseases because of its important meaning as a transport corridor. That is why strengthening the capacity of hospitals to diagnose those diseases including the creation of a specialized bacteriological laboratory in Brest, joint medical research based on the implemented digital medical systems and increasing the technical capacity of emergency medical services in Brest and Biała Podlaska is so important. Project will also include experience exchange between beneficiaries and education campaign.



Joint model network of cross-border emergency care services

This healthcare project will improve PL-BY emergency system through construction and expansion of infrastructure as well as the purchase of modern medical equipment and devices in partner hospitals in Grodno, Suwałki, Lida and Volkovysk. These activities will go together with specialized trainings for medical staff from both sides, conferences exchanging of experience in terms of good practice and know-how in the practical use of modern equipment and the application of infrastructural solutions for the most effective provision of EMS and health-oriented campaign. It will help to solve complex problems common for PL-BY borderland – higher level of health and life threats of complex nature, including road traffic, volumes of tourism and long-term effects chronic diseases.



Early diagnostics and timely treatment – is the way to the health of the border regions population

The most important public health problems in the border regions of Poland and Belarus are the prevalence of mortality rate over the birth rate, and an increase of morbidity index. Implementation of the project will include reconstruction of the former catering unit building of the Hospital in Minsk into diagnostic housing, the joint programme of early diagnostics, development and maintenance of ultrasound and tomographic imaging database as well as repairs and renovations of diagnostic and treatment rooms of the Hospital in Siedlce and additional modern medical equipment installation. The most beneficial is the exchange of experience, medical and operational knowledge between the staff of both hospitals through the organization of medical seminars and workshops in Minsk and Siedlce.



Creation of Cross-Border Centers for Preventive Examinations in Lubelskie and Volyn Regions

Overall objective is the improvement of accessibility and effectiveness of preventive health care and occupational medicine systems in the Polish-Ukrainian border area. It will be achieved by extension and adaptation of the premises or organizing a housing base with VOMC in Lublin by securing the hardware base necessary to carry out preventive and diagnostic tests for a Preventive and Consultative Research Center at the Volyn Regional Mother and Child Health Care Center in Lutsk. Preventive programmes will be created together with trainings, consultations and information campaign for medical personnel.



A joint initiative of The Dr. Józef Psarski Mazovian Specialist Hospital in Ostrołęka as increasing the availability of health care services through construction landing pads for rescue helicopters and purchase, delivery and assembly of lifting equipment

The most important problem and need justifying the implementation of the project is the limited access to modern, fast and effective health care – both in the Ostrołęka and Minsk regions. Actions in Ostrołęka will concern construction of a landing pad for rescue helicopters with an installation of lifting equipment whereas in Minsk modernisation of the Neurological Department of patients with acute cerebrovascular accident and purchase of medical equipment. It also includes development and implementation of cross-border action plans and strategies, organization of conferences, workshops and exchange of good practice between project partners.



Construction of bicycle infrastructure on the route Mikaszówka–Rudawka and Grodno– Ratichi located on the border of Podlaskie Voivodeship and Grodno District

The main objective of the project is the extension of the cross-border tourist route and creation of a joint Polish-

Belarusian tourist offer which will attract tourists from both sides of the border and strengthen the role of tourism and culture in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation. On both sides of the border the bicycle path will be constructed along the Augustów Canal. These activities will be supported by a rich information and promotion offer (information boards, points, websites, posters, brochures, promotional film).



Environmental safety – creation of a Ukrainian-Polish forest fire management network in the Carpathian region

The purpose of the project is to protect the biodiversity of valuable ecosystems of the Carpathian region by preventing or minimizing the impact of forest fires. These goals will be achieved by information and communication activities, common development of a strategic regulatory framework, creating and setting-up the infrastructure component with the necessary technical means (specialized vehicles and equipment), purchase of Geographic Information System for Monitoring and Elimination of Forest Fires (GIS).

To respond to forest fires properly it will be supported by a number of improved training programmes for joint training of partners staff based on the developed instructions on interaction.



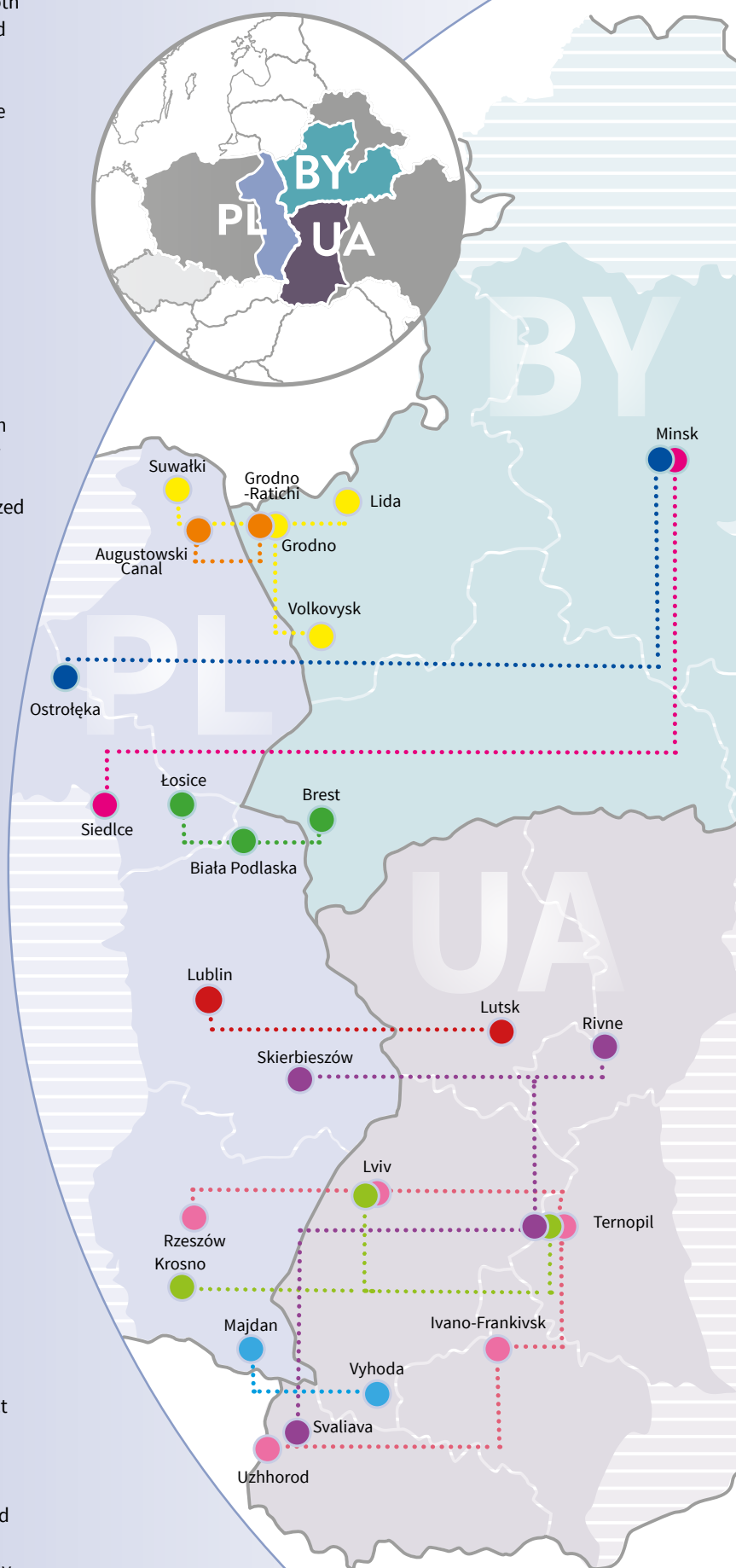
Development of palliative, geriatric and treatment care, and also improving the quality of medical services for cancer patients in hospitals of Lviv, Ternopil and Krosno

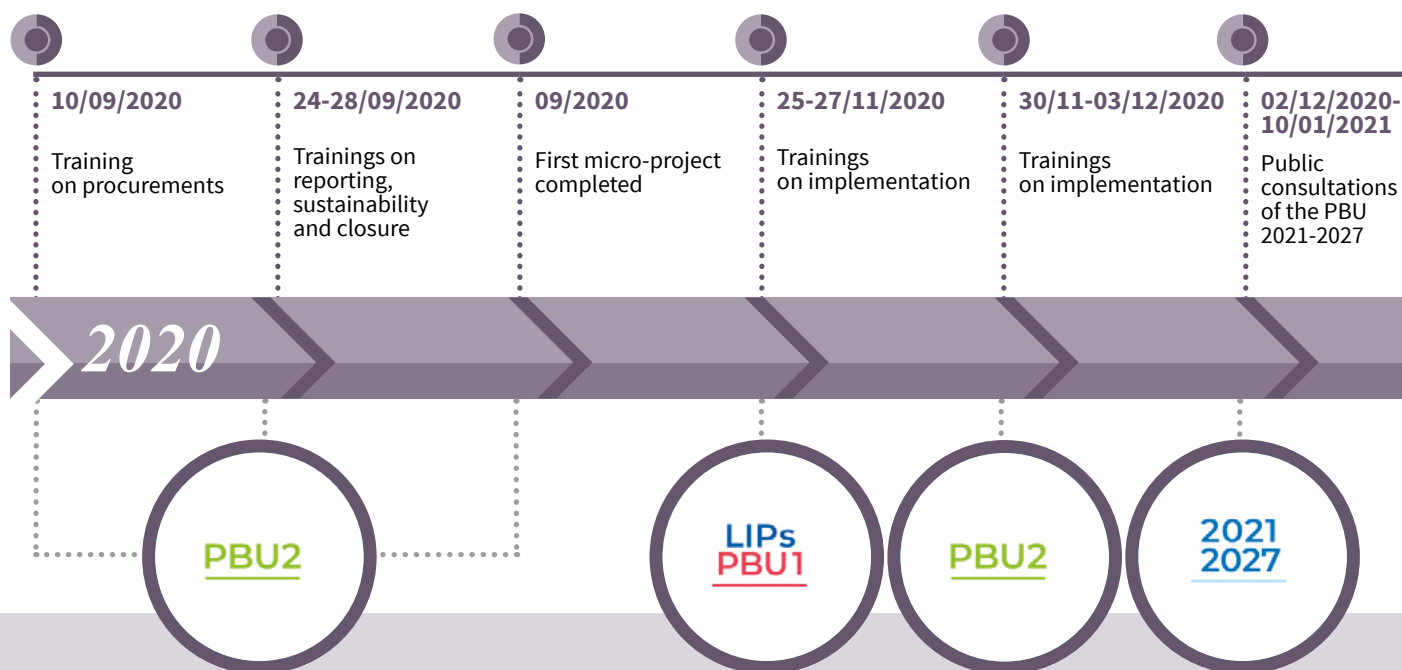
Increasing the share of the population over the age of 65 in Poland and Ukraine requires the development of healthcare, including geriatric, rehabilitation and palliative care. This project will respond to this demand by creation of care wards, mobile treatment groups and oncology units in hospitals (new buildings and adaptations), preparation and implementation of the Ukrainian-Polish cross-border palliative, geriatric and rehabilitation care programmes with promotional and informational activities. Improvement in safety and in the quality of living in cross-border regions of Poland and Ukraine will be a result of increasing the availability and bettering in the sphere of geriatric, palliative and cancer patients' healthcare.



Sustainable Water Management: a Way to Revitalise Western Ukraine and Eastern Poland

The problem of quality drinking water supply and wastewater treatment is highly relevant for all regions of Ukraine and Poland. The overall objective of the project is improving the environmental situation in Western Ukraine and Eastern Poland by addressing the provision and conservation of water resources. It will be achieved by the construction and rehabilitation of water supply and sewerage systems in the project areas, advanced training of specialists responsible for the operation of water supply and sewerage systems supported by digitalization of water supply and sewerage networks, joint research and creating a network of control wells.





Programme insight

The period covered by this issue of THE CROSSBORDERER magazine, i.e. from 1st September 2020 to the end of the summer holiday 2021, will be remembered primarily as the time of functioning in difficult conditions imposed by the global coronavirus pandemic. For the Programme and its beneficiaries, it meant the necessity to transfer many events to the virtual world, mastering online communication tools, numerous changes in projects, revision of schedules and budgets, the necessity to annex grant contracts and solve many other previously unheard of problems. Nevertheless, thanks to the joint effort, the life of the Programme and its projects continued...

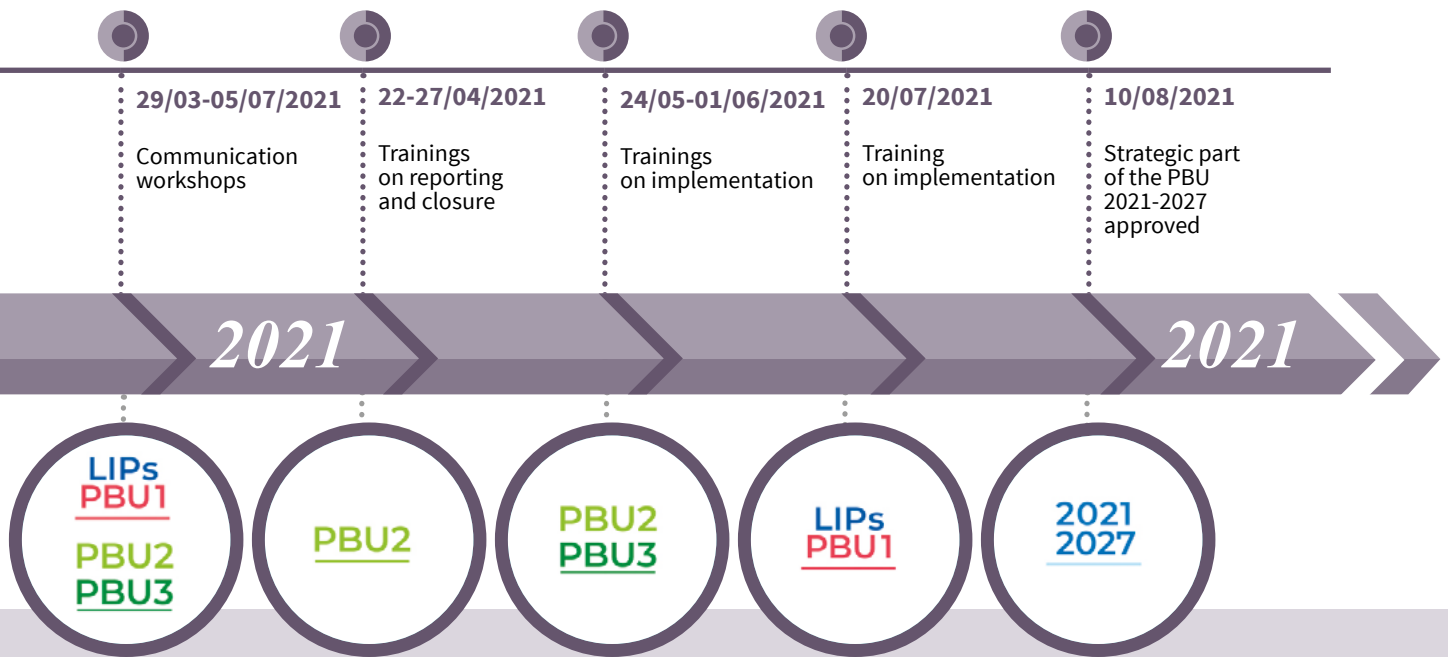
TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS

The beneficiaries of all types of projects had the opportunity to benefit from trainings and workshops conducted mainly on virtual communication platforms. Partners of the large infrastructure projects (LIPs) and regular projects (PBU1) were trained on the most important issues related to the implementation of projects, including reporting, changes in projects

and closing projects. The beneficiaries of PBU2 micro-projects raised their skills in the field of public procurement to EUR 30,000 - how to prepare, conduct and document procurement below this threshold. They also trained in the implementation, changes, reporting and sustainability of projects and other issues related to their closure. Beneficiaries of PBU2 and PBU3 micro-projects, which were just entering the implementation phase, learned the general principles of project implementation, preparation of a partnership agreement, reporting, audits and permissible changes to projects. Everyone – from micro-projects to LIPs – had the opportunity to take part in the communication workshops, during which they learned not only about the general principles of visibility and promotion of the Programme, but also learned how to make short promotional movies.

„SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL”...

Although the recruitment for micro-projects took place last, we had the opportunity to enjoy their first effects. In autumn 2020, the implementation of the first “micro” was completed. The first one among micro-projects was the *VIRTOUR* project („Prince Sanguszko’s Family By-Ways Virtual Tour – let’s reveal



new pages of shared Ukrainian and Polish history”). The project addressed the challenge of insufficient knowledge of common heritage, which hinders cross-border cooperation and negatively affect the tourist flow. The overall aim of the project was to foster the use of cultural and historical heritage of the cross-border area to increase the visibility of its touristic potential and promote its attractiveness. As a part of the *VIRTOUR* project, a common, thematic, cross-border tourist route was developed, related to the history of Sanguszeko Family, who held important administrative, political and military positions in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Rzeczpospolita, and was closely connected with Volyn and Lubelskie. Congratulations!

... BIG IS BEING FORGED

The same period was the time of intense work on the new PBU Programme for the years 2021-2027. Thanks to this, at the turn of 2020/2021, all interested parties had the opportunity to comment on its strategic part in public consultations. They were open to all interested in development of the Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian borderland, especially representatives of central

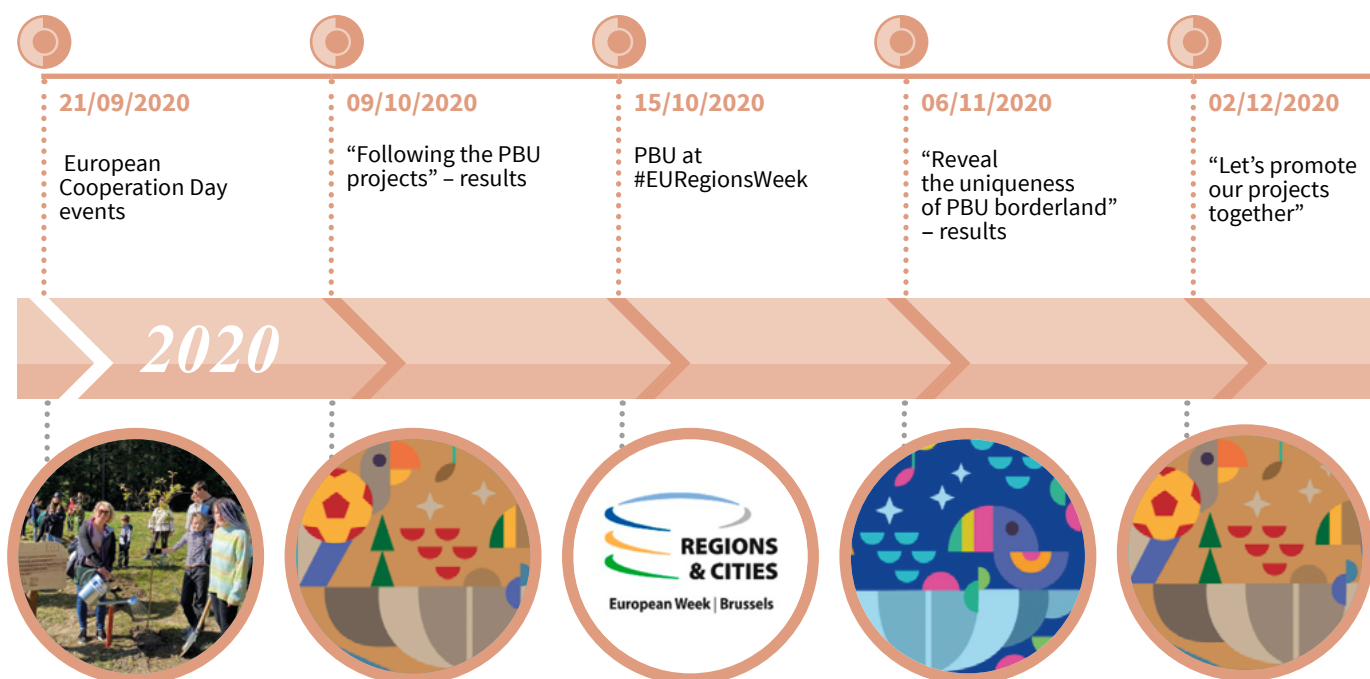
authorities, local governments and their units, socio-economic partners, NGOs, academic circles. The consultations were held in two ways: via the Programme website where we had published the Programme document and online form to comment on that, as well as thanks to the special online events.

As a result of consultations, broad public opinion, stakeholders, potential applicants and beneficiaries were informed about the proposed assumptions of the Interreg CBC Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2021-2027. In total 155 of opinions/remarks were submitted via online forms and during three conferences. In most of



Training on project implementation for the beneficiaries of LIPs and PBU1 projects, held on 20 July 2021 in Lublin (photo: JTS' stock)

them their authors suggested to enlarge or precise the description of particular specific objectives and expand the list of indicative actions. 166 people in total attended the online consultation events. All comments and remarks to the Programme were considered in the preparation of the final version of the document. Some of them were directly included, some partly and finally, some, for various reasons, were rejected and did not influence the final wordings of the Programme.



Promotion in motion

Virtual, hybrid, direct – despite the pandemic our promotion was still in motion. Competitions, virtual international lessons and project tours, internal and external events. We hope that everyone has found something interesting for themselves, and the effects of the Programme and its projects are finding more and more audiences.

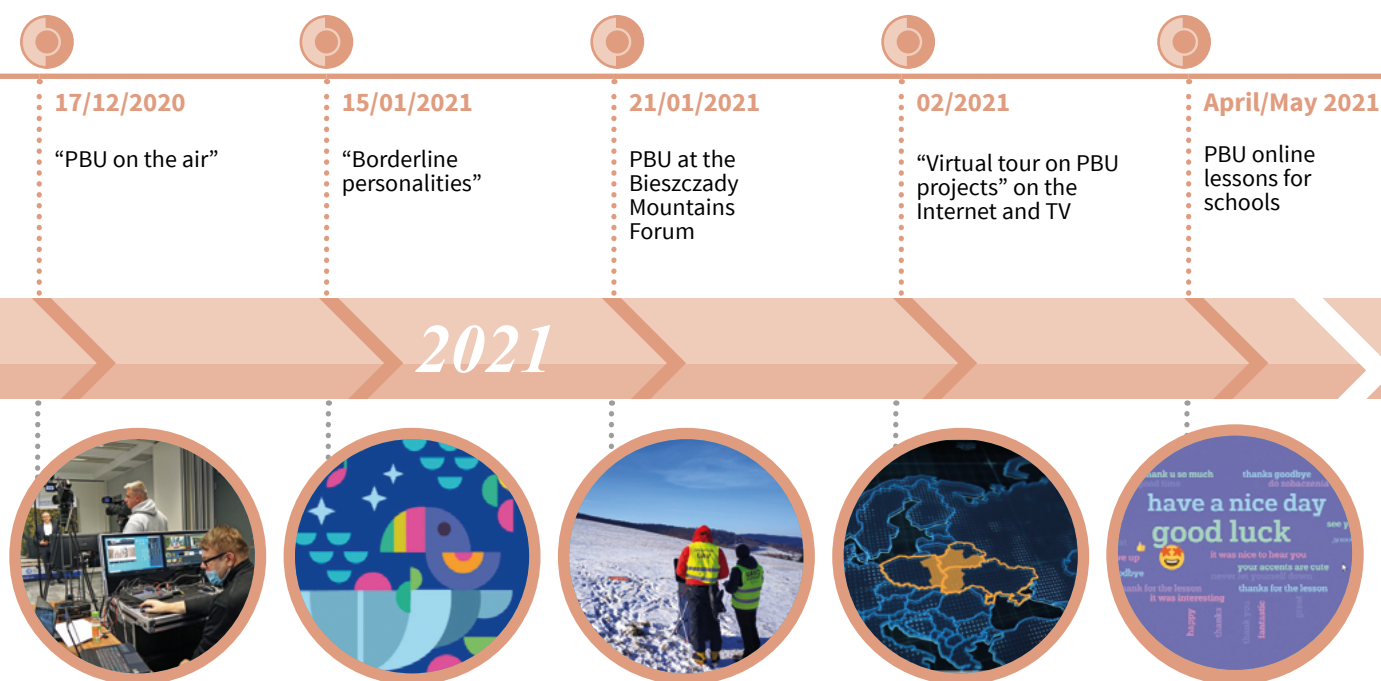
CONTESTS, CONTESTS...

Over the past 12 months, as many as 2 editions of the movie contest "Following the PBU projects" have taken place. The task was very simple – to show the projects financed by the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme from whatever angles and points of view. It was just important that our projects or Programme activities play the main role. As a result, we have received a lot of interesting promotional films from projects.

For talented writers we prepared the contest "Borderline personalities". The aim of the competition

was to bring into the spotlight the outstanding personalities, those who connected our nations, made an extraordinary contribution to history and culture or in other positive way influenced the Programme area. The idea was to write a literary piece with an original approach to the given subject. It was a challenging task that required creativity and persistence in getting to know the personality. We received 63 applications from all three Programme countries. The youngest participant was 10 years old, while the most grown-up 'teen' was 30 years old.

The competition "Reveal the uniqueness of PBU borderland" was dedicated to professional photographers and amateurs. The aim of the competition was to promote the richness, diversity and values that Programme supports and the effects of projects implemented under the Programme on the borderland of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine. You can find the best photos on pages 15-17.



For journalists, the contest "Let's promote our projects together!" was held. It was organized on the occasion of 30th anniversary of Interreg initiative. Its aim was to popularize the effects of all three editions of the Programme (2004-2006, 2007-2013, and 2014-2020) by showing projects implemented under the Programme in text, audio, and video/TV materials.

At the same time, we organized a series of short competitions on the Programme's social profile on Facebook. Last year, the number of followers of our profile increased to over 2,000 people. Thank you!

VIRTUAL TOURS AND LESSONS

Due to the restrictions on access to various places, we decided to take you on virtual tours through the projects implemented within the Programme. We visited 6 project sites on the Polish side of the border and 6 sites on the Belarusian side. The projects represented 6 main thematic areas of the Programme – historical heritage, natural heritage, infrastructural accessibility, health, safety, and border. The "Virtual Tours" were available on TV and Internet.

In April and May, we organized around 30 lessons within our promotional campaign "How are you

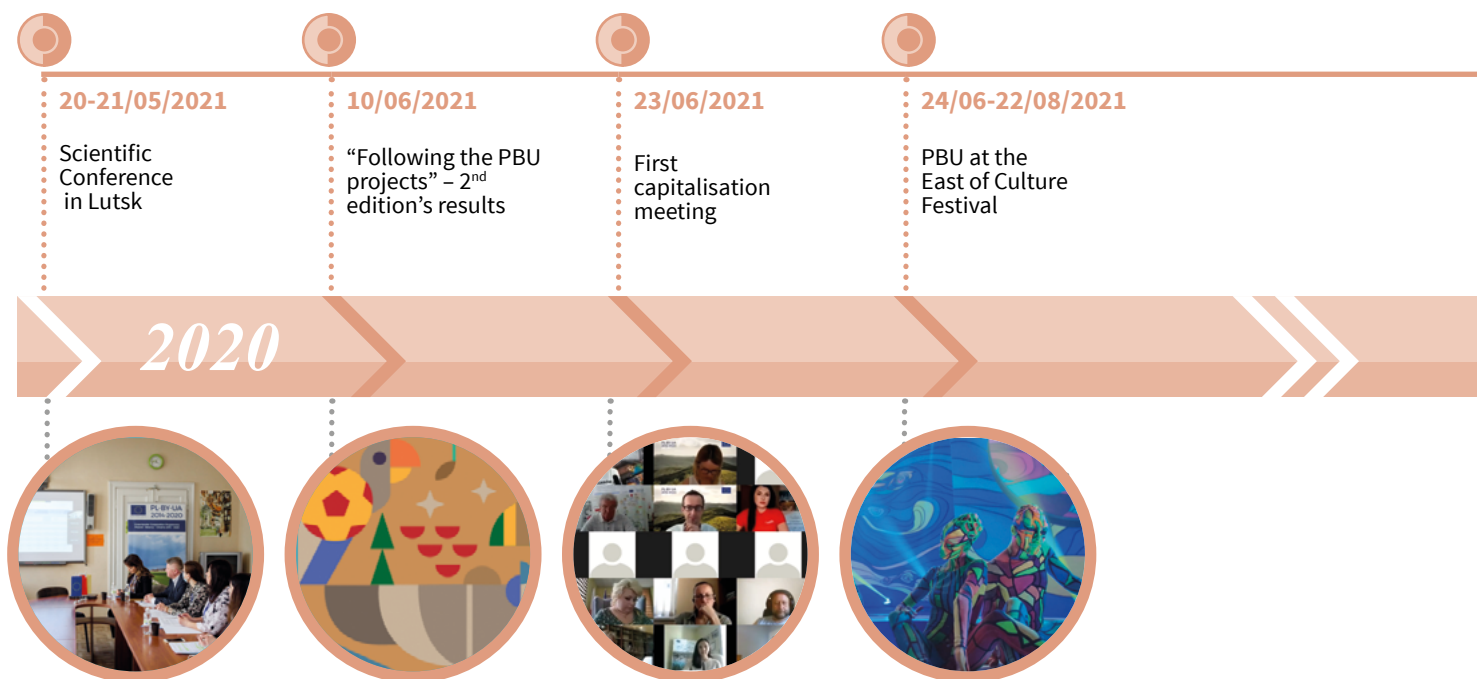
doing?". They involved more than 30 schools from Poland, 10 from Belarus, and 20 from Ukraine. The lessons, similarly to the projects implemented within the Programme, were held in cross-border partnerships, i.e. each lesson involved a Polish school and a school from Belarus or Ukraine.

During the lessons, we familiarized students with the subject of cross-border cooperation by showing examples of projects implemented with the use of European funds in particular regions.

Young people had an opportunity to practice their English by presenting their school, hobbies and nearest neighbourhood to colleagues participating in the lesson and inviting them to visit in the future.

INVITING AND INVITED TO THE EVENTS

About the most important Programme events of the last 12 months – the Annual Event and Scientific Conference we are writing on page 22. In the meantime the Programme was present at many external events. As a Programme actively involved in healthcare and fighting against the coronavirus pandemic, we were invited by the European Commission to take part in the discussion panel during the European Week of Regions and Cities titled

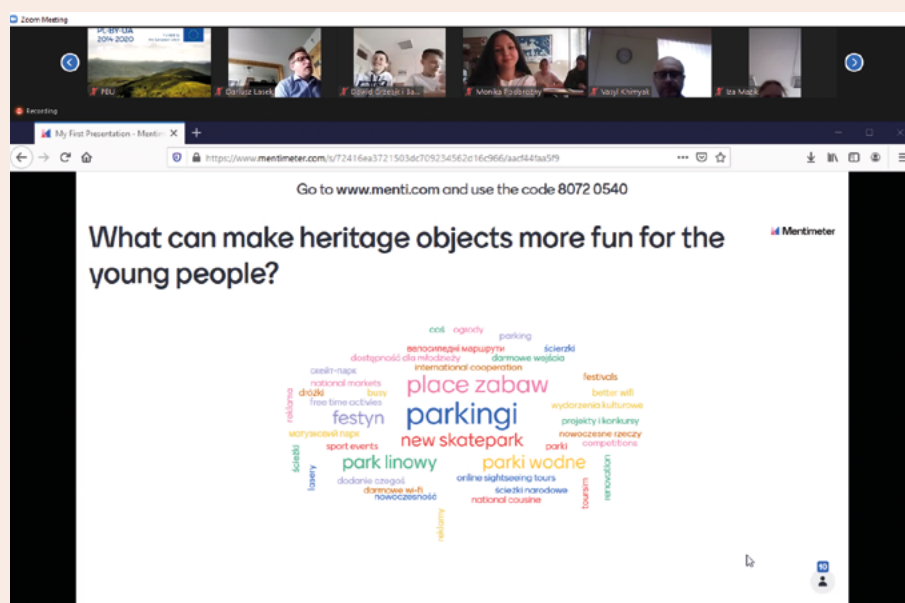


“Health: cross-border cooperation in action” and to present our concept of supporting the inhabitants of borderlands through the projects implemented within the Programme.

In January 2021 we participated in the online “Forum for the Bieszczady Mountains”, organized by the Polish Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, the Programme’s Managing Authority. Cross-border cooperation was one of the important topics of the Forum. The Programme in its subsequent editions strives to protect the environment in that part of the Carpathians, increase accessibility, enhance access to healthcare and promote cultural and natural heritage.

Once again, the PBU Programme was an official partner of the events within the East of Culture Festival. It is the largest festival of this type in Poland, fostering

the dialogue between the cultures of Eastern Europe and Eastern Partnership countries, combining various artistic fields, styles and genres. This is an open event, which takes place in three cities: Lublin, Rzeszów and Białystok, every year attracting hundreds and thousands of people from many countries. For the events of the Festival, we have prepared a special promotional movie spot.



Screenshot of a virtual lesson

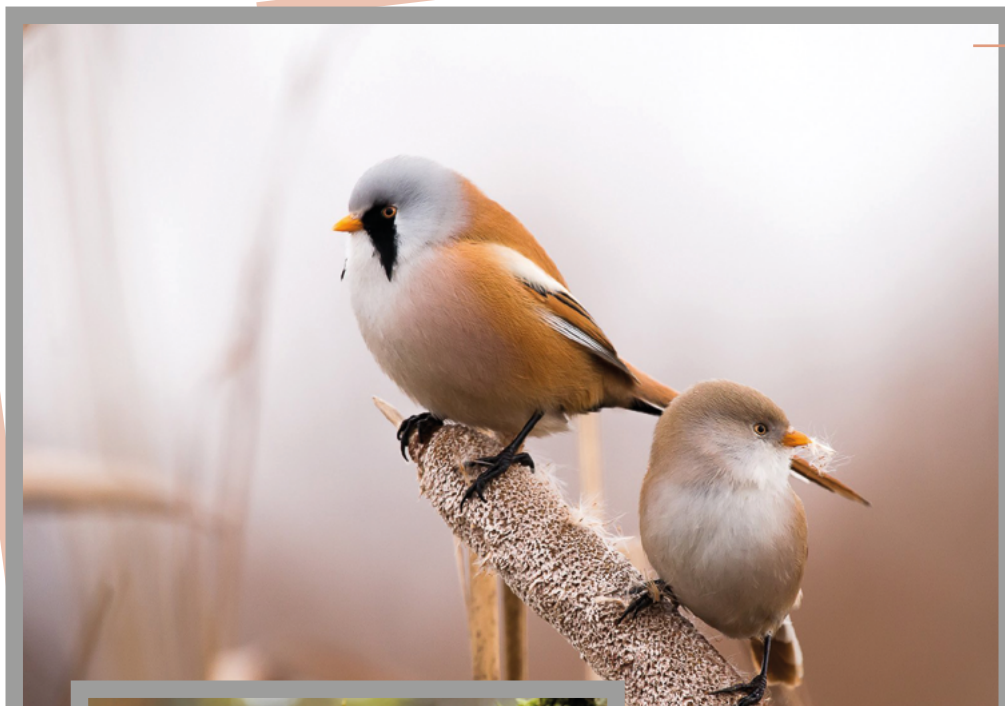
Reveal the uniqueness of PBU borderland...

As promised, you can find here some selected works awarded within the photo contest „Reveal the uniqueness of PBU borderland” organized in autumn 2020. The competition had four categories under which participants could submit their photos:

- I category: Around the PBU projects
- II category: The glory of cultural and historical heritage sites
- III category: The beauty of nature
- IV category: Traditions, customs and rituals
– the richness and diversity of culture

We received many beautiful pictures that are worth sharing. The Programme area, projects and traditions shown through the eyes of the participants present its richness, diversity and beauty.

Enjoy watching!



III category – 1st place,
Andrei Shevchik,
Pripyat River, Kalinkovichi
(Homiel Oblast, BY)

III category – 2nd place,
Szymon Ziemia, Smerek
(Podkarpackie Voivodeship, PL)

II category
– distinction,
Wiesław Huk,
Stare Brusno
(Podkarpackie
Voivodeship, PL)



II category
– distinction,
Olga Zhiharko,
village Novaya Mysh
(Brest Oblast, BY)



II category – 2nd place,
Małgorzata Wołoszyn,
The ruins of the church and the old cemetery,
Kniazie (Lubelskie Voivodeship, PL)



IV category – 2nd place,
Viktoria Kislaya,
Ceremony of driving a bush in Khmelevo
(Brest Oblast, BY)

III category – 3rd place,
Marek Bednarz,
Cisowa Góra, Gulbieniszki
(Podlaskie Voivodeship, PL)



II category – 3rd place,
Aliaksei Kantseal,
Neman River, Hrodna
(Hrodna Oblast, BY)

III category
– distinction,
Marina Serebryakova,
Turov
(Homiel Oblast, BY)



III category – 1st place,
Svietlana Kislaya,
Dipping into the water
during the Epiphany
(Brest Oblast, BY)

TOGETHER *for* *greener* *TOMORROW!*

*European
Cooperation
Day 2020*

European Cooperation Day is celebrated all over Europe on **21st September** every year, promoting achievements of cooperation among the regions. During this period, many events are organized in different European regions in order to commemorate the benefits of cooperation: film festivals, concerts, running races, local markets, gastronomic fairs and more.

As we all know, 2020 was a very special year for human history and for Europe in particular. We have all had to accept the challenge of dealing with a pandemic and the enormous restrictions introduced in our countries. So 2020 became the year of transformation to distance working and online learning, meeting, etc. for the majority of people. But thanks to this we have been able to keep up the level of communication also

in our Cross-border Cooperation Programme and to continue our common activities via online format.

So, the celebration of the 2020 European Cooperation Day was transferred, for the first time, onto our computer screens and smartphones, which in itself was a new experience for most.



„Give a tree to the Carpathians” action (photos: LBO’s stock)

Announcing the start of our yearly Cross-Border Educational Campaign for Schools within European Cooperation Day in early 2020, we’ve invited schools from the Programme area to take part with their applications focused on preserving our common nature under the slogan **“TOGETHER FOR GREENER TOMORROW!”** The topic of environmental protection and the development of new green approaches seemed to us, as the main organizers, extremely relevant on the one hand, and at the same time creative enough to enthuse teenagers on the other.

24 teams from Poland, Belarus and Ukraine (8 teams per country) were selected during the Campaign, which was launched in spring. The teenagers demonstrated their creativity, skills and knowledge

with the aim to preserve our joint cross-border nature. Each school should have delegated a team and fulfilled 3 tasks indicated in the application form. The first task was to present a local green initiative which had real benefits for the cross-border environment in the format of a short video. The next task was to create an eco-billboard encouraging people to live an eco-friendly life style. And the last task in the application was about developing an idea of a common cross-border eco-project, describing an ecological problem or challenge an existing one in the Polish-Belarusian or Polish-Ukrainian borderland, planning joint actions helping to solve the problem/ face the challenge, and present main results achieved due to the project.



In total, from all three countries we received 33 impressive video-presentations with really useful initiatives and creative ideas. The winners received eco-friendly prizes as a huge thank you for their activity. And their project ideas have become really worthwhile findings and we hope that they will continue to expand their eco-initiatives in the future.

Special events

Additionally, depending on the precautions against the coronavirus pandemic, we have also organized other special events to celebrate the 2020 EC Day: the online photo contest “Traveling through projects” prepared by the Polish Branch Office and in Ukraine – the action “Give a tree to the Carpathians”.

The idea of „Traveling through projects” contest was to promote European cooperation by showing the results of the projects implemented (or being implemented) in the Polish, Belarusian and Ukrainian areas of the PBU Programme during the last 15 years (three editions of the Programme). The event was intended for family and/or friend groups. The participants’ task was to travel to a project and take

a common photo with its results/objects (e.g. an amphitheatre, restored historic building, modernized road or equipped museum) in the background. We have received 37 applications in total. The winning teams was awarded a 4-person set of attractive tourist gadgets.

In Ukraine, on 19th September, on the occasion of 30th Anniversary of the INTERREG family and the EC Day celebrations, 30 trees were planted on the territory of the Skolivski Beskydy National Park within the “Give a tree to the Carpathians” action.

– By planting trees in the National Park, we make our small contribution to preserving the ecology of the Carpathians, but also commemorate the achievements of cooperation between our three countries, which is symbolized by these trees

– explained Olga Parasotska, the Head of the Ukrainian Branch Office, which organized the celebration.

As many as five PBU projects were being implemented at that moment in the Skole district (Lviv oblast) and all these projects were actively involved in the event

„Give a tree to the Carpathians” action (photos: LBO's stock)



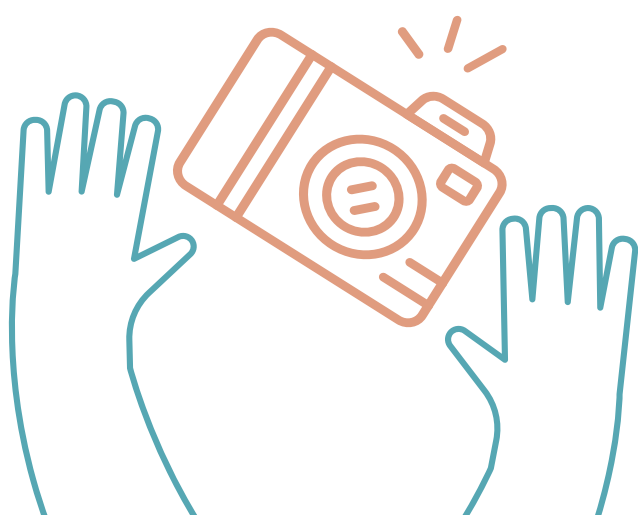


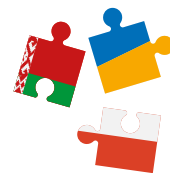
– National Park staff from the *Protect_Nature* project prepared a site for the future alley, teenagers from the *MichaelAndYouth* project planted trees and sang songs by the guitar. Additionally, the *MountainTaste* project team treated everyone to traditional Boyko dishes. Two more local projects presented their activities, including *SOSRESCUE* project, which is dealing with improving the safety of tourism in the Carpathians, and *ROSETTES*, which is creating a network of Carpathian cultural centres (one of them is based in the Boyko heritage museum called “House in Hluboke”). The event was attended by the authorities’ representatives and residents of Skole.

– *Trees and bushes of eight species have been planted in the alley. All of them are natives of the Carpathians. In a few years they will grow into a real grove, will become a real ornament of this area. This is the imprint we will leave behind – just like this building of the shelter, where tourists will be able to leave their things, relax or hide from the rain...*

The same can be said about other projects – they all make tangible changes, they are something we can be proud of

– said Vasyl Pryndak,
the coordinator
of the *Protect_Nature* project.





Programme Annual Event

On 17th December 2020 we celebrated the Programme Annual Event “PBU on the air”. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, for the first time it was held in the online, virtual version.

This was a challenge! 172 people participated in the Zoom conference part. However, we were glad that we could meet with our beneficiaries and stakeholders, although distanced, and spend this time together, celebrating the projects’ achievements so far.

We tried to show what benefits have been brought by the projects implemented within the Programme and how our beneficiaries together change the lives of local communities. During the event, we presented a selection of projects and their results in the following topics: historical heritage, natural heritage,

infrastructure accessibility, health, security and border crossings. We talked also about the plans related to the NEXT Programme edition. In the evening, we invited our guests to a concert prepared especially for this event, played by „Kapela ze Wsi Warszawa”.

Scientific Conference in Lutsk

From 20th to 21st May 2021 in Lutsk (Ukraine), together with the Volyn National University named after Lesya Ukrainka, we organized the International Scientific Conference “Health security in the cross-border cooperation area of the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme 2014-2020”. The conference had a hybrid form – the main participants took part in person at the university premises, others through the Zoom online platform.

During the conference, scientists from the three Programme countries analysed health safety issues in the context of projects implemented under the Programme. They discussed the issues of effective prevention and control of infectious diseases, socio-economic effects and epidemics, and coordination of the activities of services in the event of an epidemiological threat. The topic of counteracting pandemic threats and the policy of communicating about them has sparked a lively debate. The topics of the conference were presented in the publication, which contains a collection of articles by scientists participating in the conference.

than before. The Programme responds to these needs by implementing the thematic objective SECURITY, which serves, inter alia, increasing access to healthcare, preventing disease infection across borders, and developing social services.

The Programme was also actively involved in fighting the pandemic – hospitals implementing co-financed projects received an additional 3 MEUR for the purchase of medical equipment (respirators, oxygen devices, etc.), COVID-19 tests and personal protective equipment.

Limited access to health care or insufficient access to medical infrastructure are just some of the problems faced by the inhabitants of the Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian borderland. Due to the coronavirus pandemic we think about health safety more often





On the „Face to face” page, we present the most interesting fragments from the discussions of expert panellists invited to conferences and other events organized and/or participated by the Programme. They are often held in a narrow group of specialists, so thanks to „The CROSSBORDERER” they have the opportunity to reach a wider audience. This time, some extracts from the discussion panel organized as part of the „Cross-border Cooperation Congress” in Lublin (6-9th October 2020).

It was attended by, among others:

- Krzysztof Czyżewski, Director of the Centre „Borderland – arts, cultures, nations”, Poland (**KC**)
- Marharyta Zhenchuk, International Partners Manager, „Teple Misto Platform”, Ukraine (**MZ**)
- Maciej Hofman – Policy Officer at the European Commission’s Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Poland (**MH**)
- Monika Grochowska, Deputy Director, Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Poland (**MG**)

MH: The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that the Union is to contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the member states, while respecting their national and regional diversity, and at the same time emphasizing the importance of the common cultural heritage.

MG: The pandemic gave us a chance to reflect the longing for community, creating culture, values on which the community focuses. (...) The creators did not deal with the coronavirus (...), the topics which compounded were spirituality, community building.

MZ: The time since we were isolated from one another was a great test for us, but it also showed how valuable we are to each other, how valuable we are to the community in which we operate...

KC: The reality in which we live is very disintegrated, atomized - brought about by modernity, a phenomenon which may be intensified by culture (...). This individualization of culture leaves a certain gap, in some ways it supports the atomization of our life, the creation of sharp subcultural boundaries, different separate cultures which we are proud of in Europe – their diversity, multiplicity of languages, freedom of expression, very different cultural and environmental identities (...). On the other hand, we feel the lack of a “connective tissue” – something that also tries to connect this diversity, integrate it, and establish a dialogue. This disease of “connective tissue” is a disease of crisis of a multicultural society. (...) If the connective tissue dies, the whole organism dies.

KC: Without deep rooting, without deep culture, it is very difficult to build a community and reach the universe. This is the mystery of modernity which opens up in front of us – the more we can get rooted in our place, build new traditions around it, the more prepared we are to open up, to coexist with others. (...) Rooting was understood as a tradition that keeps us somewhere - in old places, in small homelands, in the worlds we came out of, closed, and we wanted to get out of it, feel open to the whole world, be citizens of the whole world. But it cost and costs still, that is, there was a price for building such modernity: eradicating, not settling down, such a need for spirituality which roots us, deeper and deeper in this place. That is why I want to reverse this paradigm, and therefore: the deeper we go the closer to the common we get.

*Waters, forests,
fortress and...
a transport hub*





Brest Oblast

What makes the Brest Oblast different from other Belarusian regions? Here, just a few facts about the so-called western gateway to Belarus, and it's not all about the Belovezhskaya Pushcha and Brest Fortress.



Brest Oblast is situated in the south-west of Belarus and is one of six oblasts (regions) in the country, covering an area of 32.7 thousand km² with a population of over 1.3 million. Most of the area lies within the Poleskaya Lowland with its characteristic flat landscape with many rivers and lakes. One third of the region's territory is covered by forests, 15% of which are specially protected natural areas such as well-known National Park "Belovezhskaya Pushcha" and other reserves.



Brest Oblast (photo: Svetlana Kislaya)

Brest Oblast shares a common border with Poland and Ukraine, and its capital Brest with its 340 thousand residents is located very close to the Polish border. Due to this geographical location, the Brest Oblast became an important transport hub for the region. National and international transport lines, such as rail, road, air and water, have well developed specific infrastructure. The railway hub here is one of the largest in Central Europe and provides transit between East and West.

The industry is dominated by food production and processing, and agriculture. The Brest region is the leader in the country in terms of exports of agricultural products and foodstuffs produced by local enterprises.

Due to its favourable geopolitical location, a large number of highly qualified labour force, and a strong transport and engineering infrastructure, the Brest region has great potential for attracting investment and development of a wide variety of projects.

All these features make the region attractive for cross-border projects. In the Programme period 2014-2020, in total 71 projects with the participation of Belarusian organizations have so far been approved for funding. Among them, 32 projects with the participation of the Brest region organizations with the amount of Belarusian financing from the European Union funds

amounting to about 19.2 MEUR.

All projects are making a significant contribution to the development of the Brest region - from improving the border infrastructure, accessibility and security of the region, to healthcare and education developing, as well as preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

The following are some examples of joint projects in which the benefits were primarily, but not exclusively, received by the Brest region and its inhabitants.

Large infrastructure project "Improvement of border region road infrastructure ensuring sustainable access to the border region (modernization and construction of road P-16)" (*SafeRoad*), is implemented within the Thematic Objective ACCESSIBILITY with the EU financial support on the Belarusian side amounts 4.6 MEUR. Lead beneficiary - Public Unitary Enterprise of Motorway Roads "Brestautodor" (BY) and its project partner - Podlaskie Voivodeship Roads Management in Białystok (PL) joined forces to improve access to the Polish-Belarusian border crossing point "Piaschatka-Połowce".

Main results of the project on the Belarusian side are:

- improvement of existing (3.85 km) and construction of new (9.46 km) sections of road P-16;
- use of road P-16 for international traffic directly to



Pripjat River overflow (photo: BBO's stock)

the border crossing without having to pass through settlements.

This project has continued the cross-border infrastructure development within the EU financial support, and it is, in particular, a kind of follow-up project to the Programme 2007-2013, under which the above-mentioned border crossing points were completely modernized in both countries.

Another one LIP “Polish-Belarusian Cross-Border Safety. Strengthen of fire and rescue services potential” (SAFETY), is implemented in Brest region within the Thematic Objective SECURITY, addressing common security challenges.

The leading partner, Brest Regional Department of the Ministry of Emergency Situations (BY), together with partners from Hrodna Regional Department (BY) and Regional Headquarter of the State Fire Service in Bialystok (PL) and Municipal Commandant of the State Fire Service in Biała Podlaska (PL) received a grant from the EU for the project implementation of over 4 MEUR.

Main results of the project on the Belarusian side are:

- construction of a new fire station in Kamianets and provision of specific equipment for fire brigades;
- setting up and equipping of two training and educational centres for rescue forces in Brest and Hrodna.

In the Programme period 2014-2020, in total 71 projects with the participation of Belarusian organizations have so far been approved for funding. Among them, 32 projects with the participation of the Brest region organizations with the amount of Belarusian financing from the European Union funds amounting to about 19.2 MEUR.

The unexpected project output was that the new fire station in Kamianets has become not only an important facility to ensure the safety of residents, but also a kind of local sightseeing attraction. The architectural design of the building was awarded a prize in a prestigious professional design competition and visitors now come here on excursions, so it becomes a new tourist sight of the town.

In addition to its impressive natural resources, the Brest Oblast is home to many significant historical sites, the preservation and restoration of which requires large investments.

Project “Restoration of common culture heritage as a base for youth and creative groups from Poland and Belarus cross-border cooperation” (ROCCO),



Dnieper-Bug Canal (photo: Alexander Korobov)

implemented as part of Thematic Objective HERITAGE, address huge potential of local historical objects and plan to activate tourism in the region. In the Brest Oblast, the investment focuses on complex renovation of an ancient classical Rejtan Family Manor House in Hrušaŭka. Rejtan's Homestead should become a new cultural institution – Tourist, History and Cultural Centre in Hrušaŭka. The leading partner in the project, the Puchaczów Commune (PL), and its Belarusian partner, Department for Ideological Work, Culture and Youth Affairs of Liachavičy Raion Executive Committee, received from the EU a grant of 2.4 MEUR for realization of project plans.

The main results of the project on the Belarusian side are following:

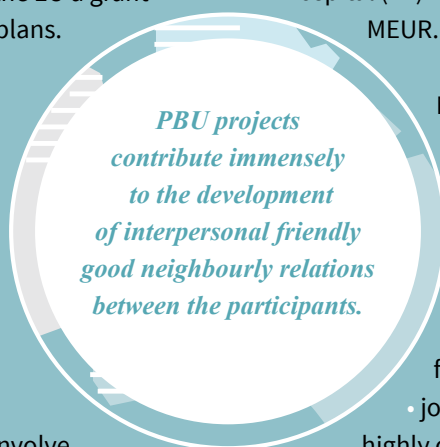
- restoration and conservation of the Rejtans' estate in the village Hrušaŭka (restoration of the manor house facades, roof, basement and conservation of the family burial chapel);
- establishment of a Tourist Historical and Cultural Centre in Hrušaŭka to involve youth and cultural workers in various activities related to the common history of the cross-border region.

This project will literally make the foundation for a further restoration of the entire Hrušaŭka manor complex and turn it into an exciting tourist attraction in Brest Oblast.

An important part of the CBC Programme is support for health care. Several projects are being implemented in the Brest Oblast to improve the quality of medical care, better access to medical

services, developing infrastructure and equipment of local hospitals.

The project “Improvement of epidemiological safety at the Polish-Belarusian border area” (*EpidSafe*), implemented under the Thematic Objective SECURITY, focused on development of health protection and social services in two neighbouring regions – Brest and Biła Podlaska. The lead partner is the Regional Specialist Hospital in Biła Podlaska (PL) and Belarusian partner, Brest Regional Clinical Hospital (BY) received from the EU a grant over 2.1 MEUR.



Main results on the Belarusian side are as follows:

- equipping the new laboratory and the infectious diseases department of Brest Regional Clinical Hospital with new medical equipment;
- free screening for hepatitis C virus for thousands of people;
- joint Polish-Belarusian training on highly dangerous infectious diseases for medical staff;
- provision of additional equipment to fight COVID-19.

For the Brest Oblast, as a transboundary region, the Thematic Objective BORDERS is relevant at all times. Border management operations, customs and visas procedures are being improved within PBU Programme funding, as well border efficiency and security supported.

Project “Improvement of customs control efficiency at the road border checkpoint Damačava”



Brest Fortress from a bird's eye view (photo: BBO's stock)

(*WeightComplex*) represented by Belarusian State Customs Committee together with Brest Custom House (BY) and Lublin Executive Board for Maintenance of Border Crossings (PL) raised investment in the amount of almost 0,23 MEUR.

Main result on the Belarusian side is following:

- installation of weighing metric complexes for trucks at Damačava border crossing point for operative and safe crossing the border in two directions and increase the border crossing capacity.

The Oblast capital, Brest, is also the beneficiary of many projects that improve the infrastructure and make the city more welcoming and accessible. On the one hand it is important to ensure the fastest possible transit through the city for travellers through the border crossing point located directly in Brest, and on the other hand to make the city more attractive for visitors wishing to stay longer and learn more about its culture and history.

The first purpose is achieved by the project "Improvement the transport accessibility in Brest and Biała Podlaska" (*OurBetterStreet*), which is implemented as part of the Thematic Objective "ACCESSIBILITY". The lead partner, Road Maintenance Company in Brest (BY), together with partner City of Biała Podlaska (PL) raised investment from the EU in the amount over 2.2 MEUR.

Main project outputs on the Belarusian side are following:

- reconstruction of 7 key intersections and 11.3 km of road in Brest (Warsaw highway, Moskowska street and Respubliki avenue);
- creation of an Intelligent Transport System Centre

in Brest (where traffic lights will be automatically controlled by smart system).

With the installation of a smart traffic system, transit through Brest should be as fast as possible, and citizens will be able to drive through key intersections faster on green waves, saving travel time and reducing emissions.

And for history and cycling enthusiasts, Brest is implementing a project "Introduction of a new bicycle route along with a mobile application "VeloFort" through the forts of the Brest Fortress" (*VeloFort*). Local Charitable Foundation "Brest Fortress Development Foundation" (BY) and its partner Digital Culture Institute Foundation (PL) promote local history among a wide audience. The EU-grant of over 50 thousand EUR will ensure the creation of bicycle route through the forts of the Brest Fortress with information boards and a mobile application "VeloFort". Cycling around the fortifications around Brest and the surrounding area - an unusual symbiosis of active tourism and immersion in the history of the region is increasingly attracting locals and travellers.

And this is by no means a complete list of projects which aim to further develop the infrastructure in the Brest Oblast, improve the quality of life of local residents, and preserve the common cultural and historical heritage. PBU projects contribute immensely to the development of interpersonal friendly good neighbourly relations between the participants. Thus, the circle of beneficiaries of the projects is very large.

STRENGTHENING CROSS-BORDER PARTNERSHIPS



*We are very interested in making the new period
of the Programme effective for us
– declares the Deputy Head of Brest Oblast
Executive Committee Dzmitry Haradzetski*

THE CROSSBORDERER: What are the main results of the activities within the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020 for the Brest Oblast as one of the Programme region?

DZMITRY HARADZETSKI: During 3 Programme editions the Brest Oblast took part in the implementation of more than 80 cross-border projects with the financial contribution from the EU in the amount of almost 44 MEUR. And this has yielded good results in terms of both infrastructure development and strengthening cross-border partnerships with our neighbours. Most importantly is that the residents of the Brest Oblast benefit from the results of cross-border projects implemented here. These are modern medical

equipment in local healthcare institutions, high-quality roads, developed and marked bicycle, water and ecological tourist routes, built museums, modernized border crossing points, new treatment facilities, a modern cross-border emergencies response system, objects of cultural, historical and natural heritage of the Brest oblast.

On what projects, already implemented or still being implemented in the Brest oblast, would you like to lay special emphasis and why?

Large infrastructure projects rightfully hold a special place among the most significant projects. Within the Programme current edition, the Brest Regional



City of Pinsk, monument to the Pinchuk (photo: Raman Chmel)

Department of the Ministry of Emergency Situations is implementing the project “Polish-Belarusian Cross-Border Safety. Strengthen of fire and rescue services potential”, aimed at creating a joint effective system for monitoring and prompt response to various emergencies that may arise on the territory of both countries.

Another LIP project being implemented in Brest oblast concerns the reconstruction of the P-16 road, which leads directly to the border checkpoint “Piaschatka” and plays a strategic role in the development of international traffic of buses and vehicles.

And I’d like to highlight our medical projects, which are implemented by the Brest Regional Clinical Hospital

and Brest Regional Paediatric Hospital. The last one was able to modernize the oxygen supply system, to buy new medical equipment and to improve support for palliative children. The project of Brest Regional Clinical Hospital made it possible to create a new laboratory and equip the infectious disease department, which is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What promising areas of cooperation do you see today in the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine?

As promising I see projects aimed at protection and improvement of the water resources state, increase

КАМЕНЕЦКИЙ РАЙОННЫЙ
ОТДЕЛ ПО ЧРЕЗВЫЧАЙНЫМ
СИТУАЦИЯМ

ул. Матросова 5



1. Fire station in Kamianets, built as part of the SAFETY project (photo: BBO's stocks)

2. Reconstruction of cross-border road P-16 within the SafeRoad project (photo: BBO's stocks)

of energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emission reduction, development of the concept for sustainable urban development, including creation of a “green infrastructure”, as well as the concept of transition to

a circular economy. Improving the infrastructure of healthcare institutions, equipping them with modern diagnostic and therapeutic equipment, supporting measures aimed at preventing and minimizing the consequences of epidemics (such as COVID-19) are still relevant. Stimulating economic ties and creating

Stimulating economic ties and creating conditions for business activity can become a significant vector of cross-border projects.



conditions for business activity can become a significant vector of cross-border projects.

I would also like to notice such an important focus area for our region as tourism, for the development of which we have a favourable geographical position and the biosphere

reserve Belovezhskaya Pushcha known for its unique untouched nature.

We are close to a new financial perspective of the Programme for the years 2021-2027. In your opinion, which directions (objectives, priorities) should be targeted over the next 7 years, so that



3. One of the 7 Brest intersections equipped with a smart traffic control system created as part of the Ourbetterstreet project (photo: BBO's stocks)

4. Diagnostic laboratory at Brest Clinical Regional Hospital, equipped under the EpidSAFE project (photo: BBO's stocks)

the Programme can respond to the needs of your region and the entire eligible Belarusian area?

We are very interested in making the new period of the Programme effective for us, therefore our representatives are actively involved in the work of the Joint Programming Committee on its preparation. At this stage, local organizations got involved in the elaboration of ideas for future cross-border projects. In addition to the aforementioned areas, another set of our interests concerns social issues that are relevant to the Brest Oblast. These include increasing the availability of medical services, developing the infrastructure of healthcare institutions, improving occupational medicine, and medical staff development. We see today there is a great demand for projects in

the field of preserving cultural and historical heritage, and such priorities as "Tourism" and "Cooperation" – will contribute to the preservation and promotion of traditions of the border region. We are also very attached to the idea of innovation in various fields of activity, so we will welcome projects containing innovative solutions and best practices in any of the aforementioned areas.



Lviv

Oblast

One can find so many things here – mountains and plains, charming small towns and hectic urban streets, centuries-old traditions and cutting-edge technologies, authenticity and multiculturalism. One can get lost in the crowd at a music festival in Lviv or find solitude in the Carpathian wilderness, get adrenaline-pumping experience while doing extreme sports or refresh body and mind at one of spa resorts. No matter if you are attending a business fair or just sipping your coffee in a Lviv café, you can feel the vibes of this area.



Panorama of Lviv downtown (photo: Serhiy Neupokoyev)

*Charming,
hectic,
multicultural...*





What makes it so special? First of all, it is its location on the cross roads from East to West. Trading routes made the city prosper in the past. Today, its location

sector and creative industries as well as world-renowned events. Natural resources were another source of Lviv oblast prosperity. Oil boom, which shook Galicia in the 19th century, made this region an active player in the world markets. Other resources such as natural gas and coal as well as combustible shale, potassium and rock salts, sulfur, gypsum, building and refractory clays, marl, limestone have been contributing to the region's economy throughout the years. Healing of local mineral waters



Festival of Music in Lviv (photo: Liubov Zayshla)

near the Polish border and EU border makes it an important transportation and logistical hub. One more reason to come here is historical heritage and interesting and diverse cultural life. You can often hear Lviv referred to as a cultural capital of Ukraine, its "soul". It has been the centre of cultural and academic life and many prominent names of the past are interwoven into its history. This is also true about the whole Lviv oblast. Turbulent, yet glorious history lives in the beautiful buildings in Lviv downtown and beyond (castles and palaces of nobility, churches and monasteries). The reputation of the cultural capital is also supported by numerous initiatives in cultural

gave rise to numerous spa resorts. During the Soviet times the region was important economically with a number of mining and industrial facilities located here. After Ukraine regained its independence in 1991, Lviv Oblast inherited ineffective Soviet economy and had to struggle through transformations and reforms. Centralized economy with large state-owned industrial enterprises gave way to smaller businesses and international companies. Tourism, hotel and restaurant/catering businesses have been developing rapidly as tourist inflow plummeted. Another rapidly growing sector is IT. A number of businesses in the areas of farming, agriculture, food processing, light



Lviv downtown (photo: Serhiy Neupokoyev)

industry, retail business are successfully operating. Lviv is also a venue of large-scale international business events.

Decentralization processes in Ukraine has shown, that local communities are ready to address the needs of their towns or villages such as infrastructure, accessibility, social sector, ecology. At the same time, not all problems can be solved easily due to the lack of funds and competencies, especially in small towns and villages. In this respect, cross-border cooperation is an effective tool, leading to material improvements and changes in thinking, increased

capacities of institutions and giving an impulse to further development and new initiatives. 17 years of cooperation of Lviv Oblast institutions with their Polish partners within the CBC Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine illustrate this. In the previous programme perspectives the region was a leader in the number of projects in Ukraine. Currently, about 50 projects are being implemented in Lviv Oblast.

Cross-border cooperation strongly depends on accessibility of the areas. 5 projects targeted at reconstruction of roads and road infrastructure are being implemented in the Oblast: *TransBorder*,

ECORoads, PaNTher, LUBANOVO, SouthWay. They concern both regional and local roads and streets, enabling fast and easy transportation both for local people and for those travelling to border crossing points with Poland. Combined with promotional and educational activities, they will also increase the safety of traffic and promote eco-friendly transport solutions.

The projects *SECINCARP* and *SOSRESCUE* aim to increase security in the mountain areas of the region. Usually associated with breath-taking sceneries,

operations. A large infrastructure project, entitled *SoDR*, will make Lviv a safer place both for its citizens and visitors. To that end, a new administrative building will be completed and equipped, six police stations will be reconstructed, an integrated multiservice telecommunication system will be created.

Medical professionals are another group of people striving for human lives and well-being. Ukrainian doctors and nurses, together with their Polish and Belarusian partners joined their efforts in improving



Boyko Cuisine Festival within the MountainTaste project in Dovhe village (photo: project team)

relaxation and active sports, the Carpathian Mountains are not free from dangers. In contrast to areas with well-established infrastructure, factors specific to alpine terrain make rescues more difficult. The rescue-workers of Lviv regional department of the Ministry of Emergency Situations received new fully equipped vehicles and have been trained on how to respond to emergencies in the specific situations. To make hiking in the mountains safe and enjoyable, the rescue service point in Slavsko will open a training centre for organizing and operating cross-border rescue actions. Equipment and vehicles purchased within the project will help to co-ordinate rescue

capacities of their medical institutions and increasing their expertise. Lviv Regional Children's Clinical Hospital in cooperation with their Polish partner will take surgical operation to the next level through advanced, equipment, improved facilities and knowledge exchange within *HSC* project. As a result of *RESCUE* project located in Sokal rayon, more efficient response to medical emergencies in the cross-border areas will be achieved thanks to new vehicles and first-aid equipment. *HealthOnTheBorderPLUA* project focused on cardiovascular diseases and cancer, which are the leading causes of deaths in Poland and Ukraine alike. The purchase of a new ambulance

and medical devices will improve the situation significantly.

Protection of natural heritage and our common environment is one of acute issues of the cross border areas. In this respect, effective wastewater treatment solutions are urgently needed. Thanks to the Programme, water treatment facilities in Dobromyl, Chervonohrad and Skhidnytsia will make underground waters cleaner, which will impact people's health and general attractiveness of these areas. When it comes to using tourist

in Lviv Oblast. *Protect_Nature* project will enhance sustainable tourism in natural parks, primarily in mountainous areas. Bio-reserve project is targeted at promotion of UNESCO Roztochchia Cross-border Biosphere Reserve through extensive media campaign and educational activities for children. The main task of *SlowRivers* project is to use the potential of the San and Strviazh rivers basins by introducing different forms of water activities such as canoeing, pontoon trips and rafting, combined with exploration of local fauna. Another "water" project entitled *FISH* brings into the spotlight a common nase – local fish



Castle in Pidhirtsi (photo: Serhiy Neupokoyev)

potential of natural sites, promotion of sustainable tourism initiatives and eco-friendly lifestyle is an effective approach. One of the examples is *PLUARoztocze* project, aimed at development of cycling infrastructure in the cross-border Roztochchia area as a way to discover its natural beauty without causing harm to environment. Kayaking on the Bug River, which will be facilitated and promoted by *BugUnitesUs* project, is another example of eco-friendly active leisure.

Protection and promotion of natural heritage is also the subject of many micro-projects implemented

species, which has interesting migration habit, similar to Alaska salmon. *Apis* project team aims to preserve Carpathian bee, a bee indigenous to the Carpathian Mountains, and promote beekeeping traditions. *BugGuardians* project is involving school children into educational eco-activities raising the new generation of people caring about the environment.

Richness and diversity of local historical and cultural heritage can explain why this priority was the most popular among the beneficiaries from Lviv Oblast. Project partners address the issues such as deterioration of historic buildings, forgotten pages of



"Khata v Hlubokim" museum renovated within the Rosettes project (photo: Serhiy Neupokoyev)

history or elements of intangible culture by providing innovative solutions and creative approaches. Within our *CBCPilgrim* project, Monastery in Pidkamin, which was once one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in Europe, will get a new life. The project includes not only restoration of the 15th century belfry and arrangement of a courtyard but also the activities for revival of religious tourism. Within *TwinMonasteries* project two sacral buildings will be renovated and adapted for the Centres for Dialogue of Culture. The heritage of Reformati order will be brought to the attention and the buildings will serve the needs of family-type orphanages. In Skole, Culture and History Centre for young people will be built as a part of *MichaelAndYouth* project. It will continue the traditions of Bronisław

Markiewicz, Father Salesian, in providing children and young people with educational and active leisure opportunities. *ROSETTES* project is a joint initiative of mountainous regions of Ukraine and Poland, aimed at preservation of unique Carpathian culture, based on local ethnic groups. In Lviv Oblast, Boyko museum in Urych (Hluboke) will be improved and promoted.

Micro-projects in this priority show a great diversity. There are the projects targeted at protection and promotion of architectural heritage and the history related to it. The examples are: *Promo2Castles* project (Zhovkva Castle), *Touch_history* (Dobromyl castle), *WoodenRoute* and *WoodenArch* projects (wooden churches), *LUKASIEWICZ* and *OilCradle* projects remind us about the industrial history of the area,

Svirzh Castle (photo: LBO's stock)





Carpathian mountains (photo: Serhiy Neupokoyev)

connected with oil exploration while *HunGalRail* project draws attention to the past of Hungarian-Galician railway. Local lore and crafts are the subjects of *K&K:PolUA*, *JointHeritage*. Religious musical culture will be popularized within *SupSyn* and *Songs4Seasons* projects. The forgotten history of Lviv Veterinary University will be presented under *VetHeritage* project. Thanks to *ACCESSIBLE* project, Lviv will become more convenient for the disabled people. *MountainTaste* and *BugCuisine* projects promote culinary heritage of the area. Other initiatives in this field include *Wide_Horizons*, *JointHeritage*, *VOLUNTEERS*, *TogetherNow*, *SaltyHistory* and other projects, which will help to promote heritage of small towns and build strong links between the local cross-border communities.

Lviv Oblast being a doorway to Europe, safety of borders and smooth operation of border crossing points are among its priorities. The projects *IBSSCenter*, *IBSSSouth* and *BCPmonitoring* will enhance the effectiveness of border guards services through the equipment purchased, i.e., high-level surveillance systems, vehicles, thermal vision complexes, radio stations.

Successful implementation of these projects will contribute to the development of Lviv Oblast, welfare of its citizens and make it even more attractive as a tourist destination. It will also strengthen the cooperation with Polish partners and lay the groundwork for future initiatives.

Bicycle service point produced within the PLUARoztocze project (photo: project team)



GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES



I hope that Lviv Oblast will retain its position as a leader among Ukrainian oblasts and that our cooperation will be successful in the new programming period – says Andriy Hodyk, the First Deputy Head of Lviv Oblast State Administration

THE CROSSBORDERER: Speaking of the projects implemented in Lviv Oblast in the current programming period, what is special about them? Why are they important for the Oblast?

ANDRIY HODYK: First of all, it is crucial that all our projects are grassroots initiatives coming from the local communities. It shows that people are aware of their challenges and strive for improvement. It is also remarkable that a majority of projects are located outside of the centre, i.e. Lviv. It means that less known historic buildings (like monasteries in Pidkamin and Rava-Ruska) are being renovated. In Skole, a modern Culture and History Centre is being built. Small towns and villages such as Chervonohrad, Dobromyl, Skhidnytsia, Nyzhankovychi will become cleaner and

more accessible thanks to new sewage systems and roads. Local hospitals and emergency services will be able to save human lives thanks to new vehicles and equipment.

What can you say about soft project activities and micro-projects?

Our small communities have an immense potential for development. A soft project can be the first step to open this potential by making people aware of it, proud of it and by providing necessary promotion of their tourist resources such as interesting history, unique crafts, or beautiful nature. The examples of heritage turned into tourist attractions include Boyko cuisine and Boyko culture and lifestyle, nature-based tourism initiatives

such as hiking in natural parks, water sports. Some projects draw the attention to the forgotten aspects of our history like industrial heritage of oil extraction in Boryslav, Hungarian-Galician railway route with interesting landmarks on the way, Herbert Castle in Dobromyl, old religious songs. Even people who live in Lviv Oblast don't know much about this heritage. Another micro-project we needed badly is the project targeted at increasing the accessibility of Lviv for the people with special needs. So, as we can see, small projects can make a big difference.

What does cooperation with Polish partners mean to you?

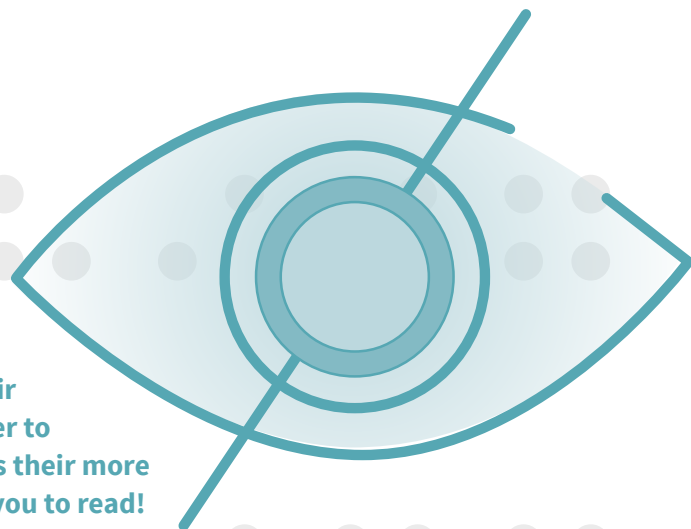
For many project beneficiaries from Ukraine cooperating with a partner from across the border is an eye-opening experience. In many aspects, the practical knowledge of Polish institutions (both public entities and NGOs) is invaluable. The processes they have undergone some years ago are similar to those we are going through now. At the same time, Ukrainian

partners want to make the cooperation mutually beneficial, helping each other, finding common solutions. We have so many things in common in terms of culture and mentality and so many common challenges to be addressed!

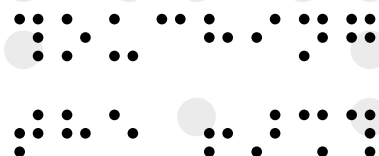
What are your expectations for the new Programme?

It is remarkable that the forthcoming Programme has ecology as one of the priorities, because pollution and related emergencies are acute problems of our area. It is also good news that tourism is on a list as it is one of our region's priorities. Healthcare, cooperation and borders are the areas, where significant improvements are needed. Our institutions are eager to cooperate within these priorities and already have their vision of new projects. I hope that Lviv Oblast will retain its position as a leader among Ukrainian oblasts and that our cooperation will be successful in the new programming period.

The projects implemented under the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020 are not just indicators, budgets, reports and payments. Although these are inseparable elements, above all each project hides the specific ideas, values and dreams of people implementing it, as well as the stories of those who benefited from their implementation. We want to bring some of them closer to you by the „Project stories” - the cycle which presents their more human dimension of our selected projects. We invite you to read!



TOUCHING the PAST



Project story

Three lines drawn on a sheet of paper. Two horizontal, one vertical. The first is a platform to which you must climb. The vertical one is a handrail that you must hold. The second horizontal line is a seat on which you must sit not to fall over. Together they make...

the bus. This is how a child blind from birth, who has no memory of any images, shapes, colours, because they have NEVER seen them, imagines it.

This drawing still deeply touches prof. Bogusław Marek, who devoted his scientific activity to the blind and visually impaired.

There is still another drawing which moves me. It was made by a 16-year-old girl, also blind from birth – a kind of circle with a zigzag in the middle, and a lot of lines scattered around.

It turned out that they were arms, legs and hair, completely disconnected from each other. The girl had no idea how to merge them together, what a man looks like...

And these are just the first steps, in a foreign world made for those who were lucky enough to be born with healthy eyes.

I can only associate colours with items or ideas. I associate black with sadness, but also with elegance, e.g. an elegant dress. I know the sea is blue, but the tones are completely abstract to me...



– says Izabela, who is blind from birth. She comes from Warsaw but is studying in Lublin. Luckily, from childhood, she could enjoy a good education for the blind. However, contact with art: museums, galleries, architecture is still a major problem.

Generally, this is not very well organized.

In museums, it is forbidden to touch the exhibits. Sometimes during visits for the blind we could touch something, but it required a special permit from the institution and only thanks to our teachers we were able to obtain them. The only place where I came across the exhibits prepared for us was the Museum of the History of the City of Lublin.

This is an institution with which prof. Bogusław Marek – initiator and coordinator of the *TouchingThePast* project

– had cooperated before. Mr. Marek specializes in teaching English to the blind. Until February 2021 he was the Director of the University Centre for the Activation of People with Disabilities. He shared his experiences, among others in India, Nepal and Japan. His work was appreciated even by the Queen Elizabeth II, from whom he received the Order of the British Empire. His project implemented within the PBU Programme allows him to share his extensive

knowledge and experience with neighbours from across the eastern border.

I chose Ivano-Frankivsk in Ukraine because it lies quite close. I also checked on the website what monuments were there and that's how it all started...

The invitation for cooperation sent by the Catholic University of Lublin was accepted by the Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University in Ukraine. At the beginning, the partners had to answer the question: how to bring art and monuments to the blind – not only tactile sculptures, but also flat two-dimensional paintings, small jewellery, coins or high architecture?

Even the very notion of perspective without explanation was an abstraction for me...

– says Izabela who hopes that the venture will help people like her.

Therefore, the authors of the project decided to adapt selected exhibits and historic sites to the needs of people with visual impairments. Only in the Lubelskie Voivodeship there are about 4,000 such people. As part of the project, i.e. three-dimensional models of buildings, tactile graphics and so-called „talking” images and diagrams are being prepared. *Special software makes that a person pressing a selected part of a drawing hears a verbal comment on that...*

– explains prof. Marek. Audio and Braille descriptions will accompany selected museum exhibits. Specially designed guidebooks for Lublin and Ivano-Frankivsk

which are prepared will help visitors with low vision and those totally blind get acquainted with important monuments and historic buildings in the two cities. For preparing accessible adaptations of museum exhibits and historic specialist equipment is used (3-D printers, a laser plotter, UV printer and

a thermographic powder heater), but some adaptations involve also manual work, particularly needed in preparing masters for thermoformed tactile images intended for tactile guidebooks. Tourist guides and museum staff in both cities have received specialist training in the area of serving visitors with various visual impairments. Persons with a visual impairment will also undergo training to help them perceive art. In addition, they will have an opportunity to test the tourist offer prepared for them (a guided trip along

a tourist paths, accompanied by a tactile guidebook). A closing conference planned for December 2021 will sum up all activities provided within the project.

The authors of the project hope that the partnership established between Lublin and Ivano-Frankivsk will give rise to many further activities. A good example of selected museums will encourage other museums, art galleries and cultural centres to prepare for the reception of people with disabilities, especially the blind and visually impaired.

However, for all this to come true, in a joint project they first had to draw the first three lines...



photos: project team

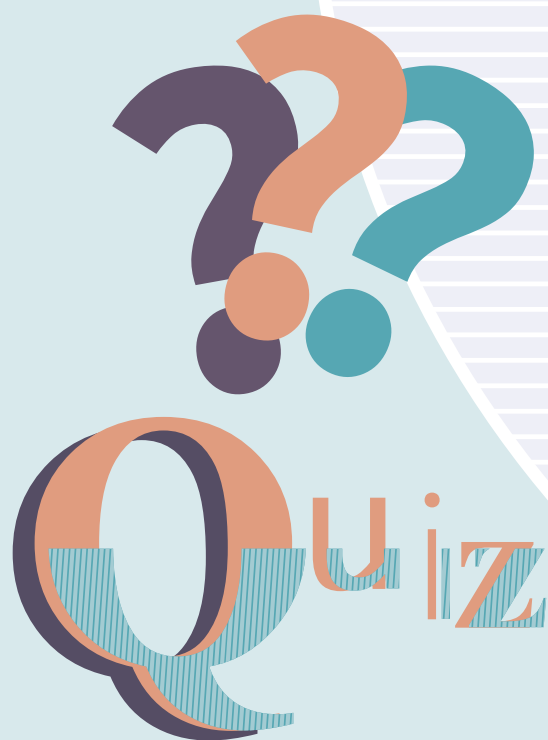
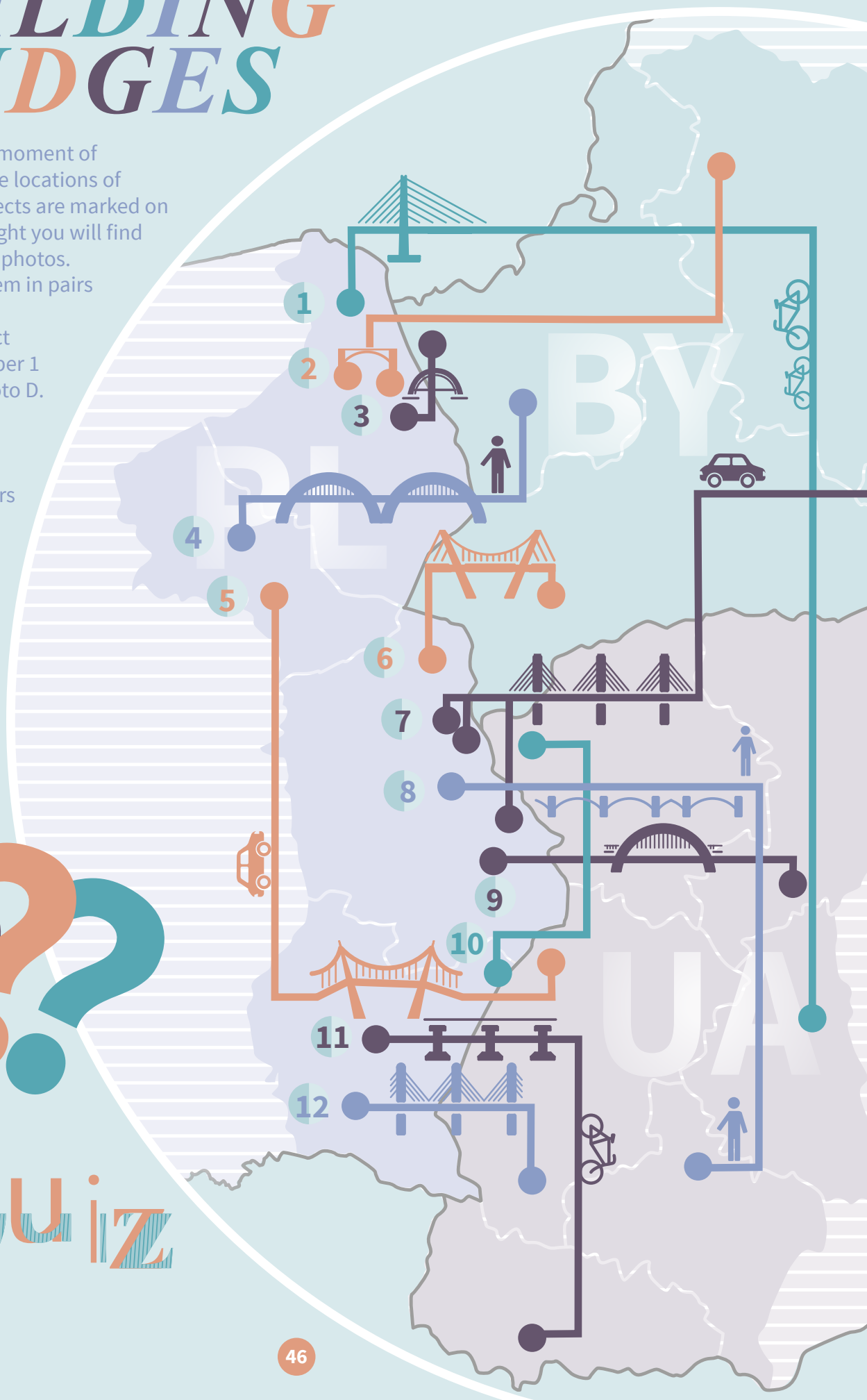


BUILDING BRIDGES

Finally, we offer a moment of entertainment. The locations of selected PBU projects are marked on the map. On the right you will find their effects in the photos. Try to combine them in pairs – for example the effect of the project marked with number 1 can be seen in photo D.

Have fun!

The correct answers are at the bottom of the page 47. More information about these projects can be found on our website www.pbu2020.eu



A



4_SEASONS

C



CraftNet

D



EACH

F



MichaelandYouth

G



MUCHAVIEC

K



TwinMonasteries

L



ICTCompetic

B



CBC4animals

E



MATSYK

H



Tyzenhauz

I



TouchingThePast

J



Muzea PL/BY



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photo: Dmitriy Gurinovich