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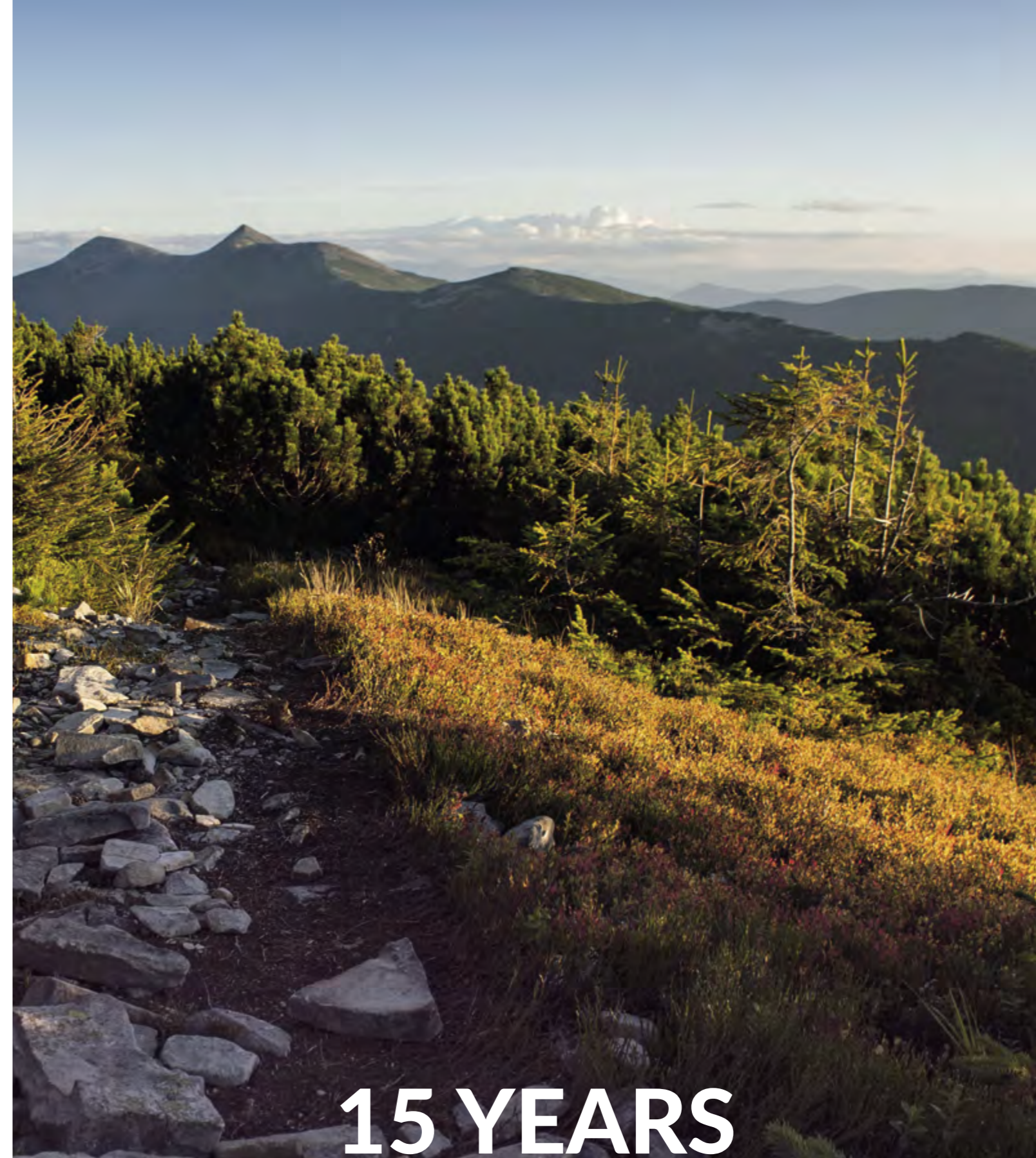
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15 YEARS

of the cross-border cooperation between
Poland-Belarus-Ukraine





PL·BY·UA

15 YEARS

of the cross-border cooperation between
Poland-Belarus-Ukraine



Together for 15 years!



It is my utmost pleasure to announce that the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine is celebrating its 15th anniversary. Today I can declare without any doubts that this is both, an enormous challenge and a huge success of three beautiful countries sharing common history and traditions.

What started as a small-scale initiative in 2003 grew into the biggest land-border Programme within European Neighbourhood Policy within the framework of EU external aid actions. There was clearly a justified need to develop border regions of the EU and its closest neighbours and the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme has worked tirelessly to meet these expectations and to stimulate borderland local economic growth. Over the last 15 years, the Programme has provided over EUR 460 million to reduce social and economic disparities of bordering regions, promote equality of opportunity, border security, environmental sustainability and a decent standard of living for the target population.

We strongly believe that the improvement of border regions accessibility, investments in roads and border crossing points, modernization of health care infrastructure and improvement of access to public services have a tangible impact on the daily life of local residents. However, what is more important and even invaluable in a span of 15 years of Polish-Ukrainian-Belarusian cooperation, the supported initiatives foster good neighbourly relations through direct people-to-people cooperation.

Partnership is at the core of the Programme. Therefore, I would like to thank our foreign partners in Belarus and Ukraine for intense cooperation over the last 15 years for the sake of cross-border development processes in the borderland of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine. Taking this opportunity let me express my sincere gratitude to all the organisations that have participated in the 349 projects – your enthusiasm and dynamism has boosted the economic growth of the entire borderland regions.

To mark this momentous occasion, this year we will organize special anniversary events in each region across the Programme area including: conferences, concerts, celebrations and high-level political debates. Join us to celebrate together the 15th anniversary of CBC Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine!

*Sincerely Yours,
Mateusz Morawiecki,
Prime Minister of Poland*

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With no doubt, all these joint undertakings support the objective that the borders of our nations do not separate us, but rather connect us.

Leonid Orlov

Introduction

The Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme has been implemented since 2004. Preceded by a year of preparations and consultations, the efforts resulted in a Programme that has been continuously operating for 15 years¹. The 15th anniversary of the Programme is an opportunity to sum up and present undertakings and achievements accomplished during these years. Among many benefits of the Programme, the implementation of its objectives on the eastern border of the European Union resulted in the socio-economic development of the border regions of participating neighbouring countries. Because of the cooperation of participants, joint actions of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine support cross-border development processes and their equalization on this area.

Publication concerns 3 editions of the Programme implemented up to date – the Neighbourhood Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine INTERREG IIIA/TACIS² CBC 2004-2006, Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes – Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2007-2013 (ENPI)³ and 2014-2020 (ENI)⁴.



1. The term "Programme" is used in this publication to describe all three Programme editions as a whole. Term "Programme" with indication of years relates to its particular editions further described.
 2. TACIS – Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States.
 3. Implemented within the framework of European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument – ENPI.
 4. Implemented within the framework of European Neighbourhood Instrument – ENI.

Financing

The first Programme edition – Neighbourhood Programme 2004-2006 was financed from two sources: in Poland, costs were covered by the European Regional Development Fund, while the Belarusian and Ukrainian sides were financed from the TACIS funds. For the next editions the budget for the whole Programme area was common and it contained funds from the European Regional Development Fund and European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (in 2007-2013), as well as European Neighbourhood Instrument (in 2014-2020).

Significant difference between the budgets of the first and next two editions of the Programme resulted mainly from the fact that first Programme was implemented only in part of the EU financial perspective – years 2004-2006. Years 2007-2013 constituted the first full financing period in which the Programme was implemented, therefore the funds allocated for its implementation were considerably higher. What counts in the allocation of the EU financial resources for the Programme is the number of the population of its core area.

The Budget of the Programme in individual editions⁵



5. About 80% of funds in the first edition of the Programme and nearly 90% in its next editions was allocated by the European Union.

Area

The Programme covers the common Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian border area, which includes territorial units NUTS III⁶ in Poland and administrative units at the level of oblasts in Belarus and Ukraine.

Over the years, the support area of the Programme has changed its range. Since the second edition, this area is much bigger: it has increased by more than 40% in comparison to the years 2004-2006.

The area of the Programme in individual editions

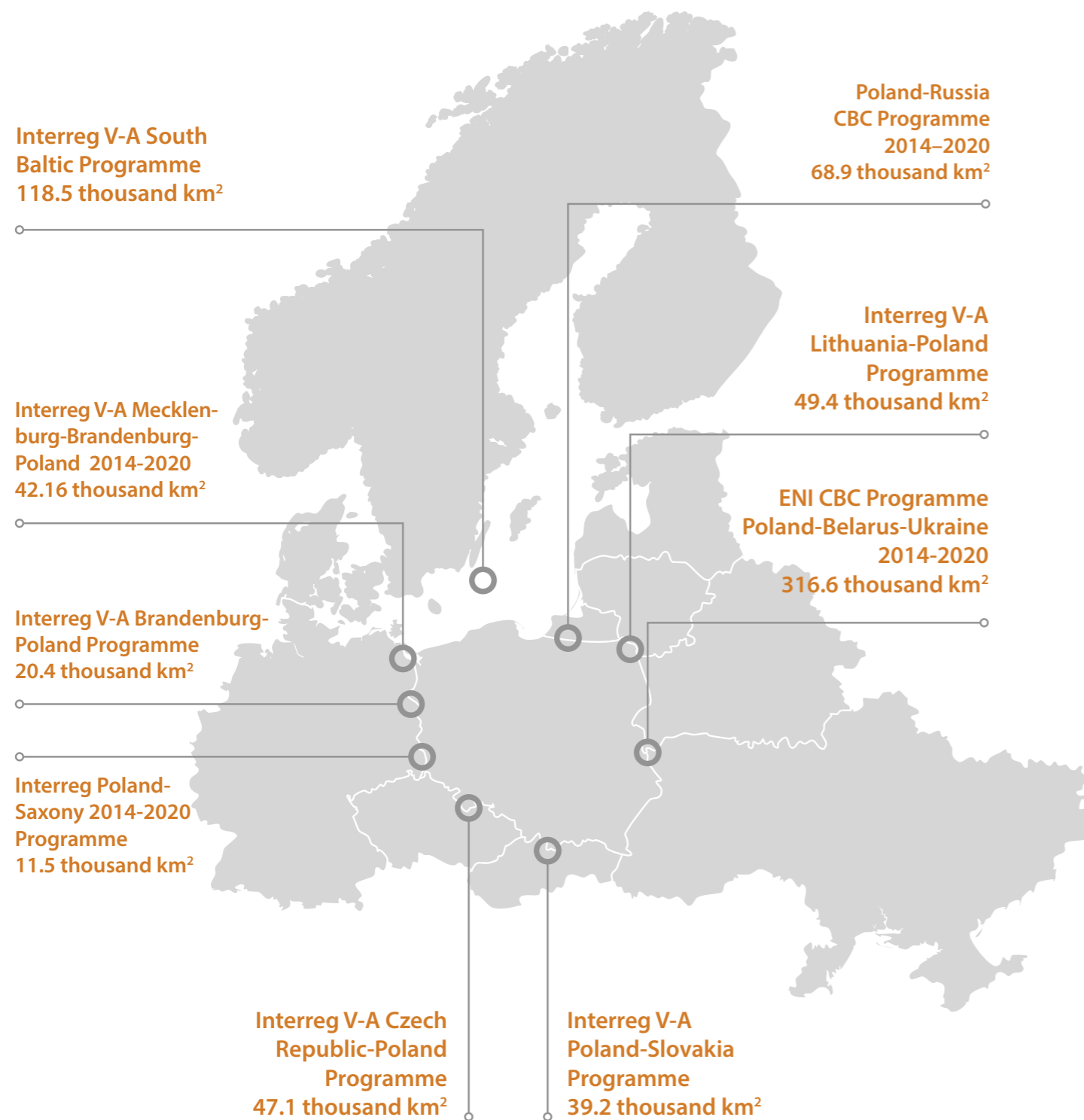


The area covered by the Programme was always divided into core and adjacent regions. Until 2013, the focus of the support was on core regions – those regions directly neighbouring Polish-Belarusian and Polish-Ukrainian borders. Maximum 20% of the total budget of the Programme could be allocated to the adjacent regions. This situation positively changed for inhabitants of the whole Programme area in the years 2014-2020 – there are no restrictions on financial resources directed to adjacent regions and institutions from the entire Programme area operate under the same terms in this edition.

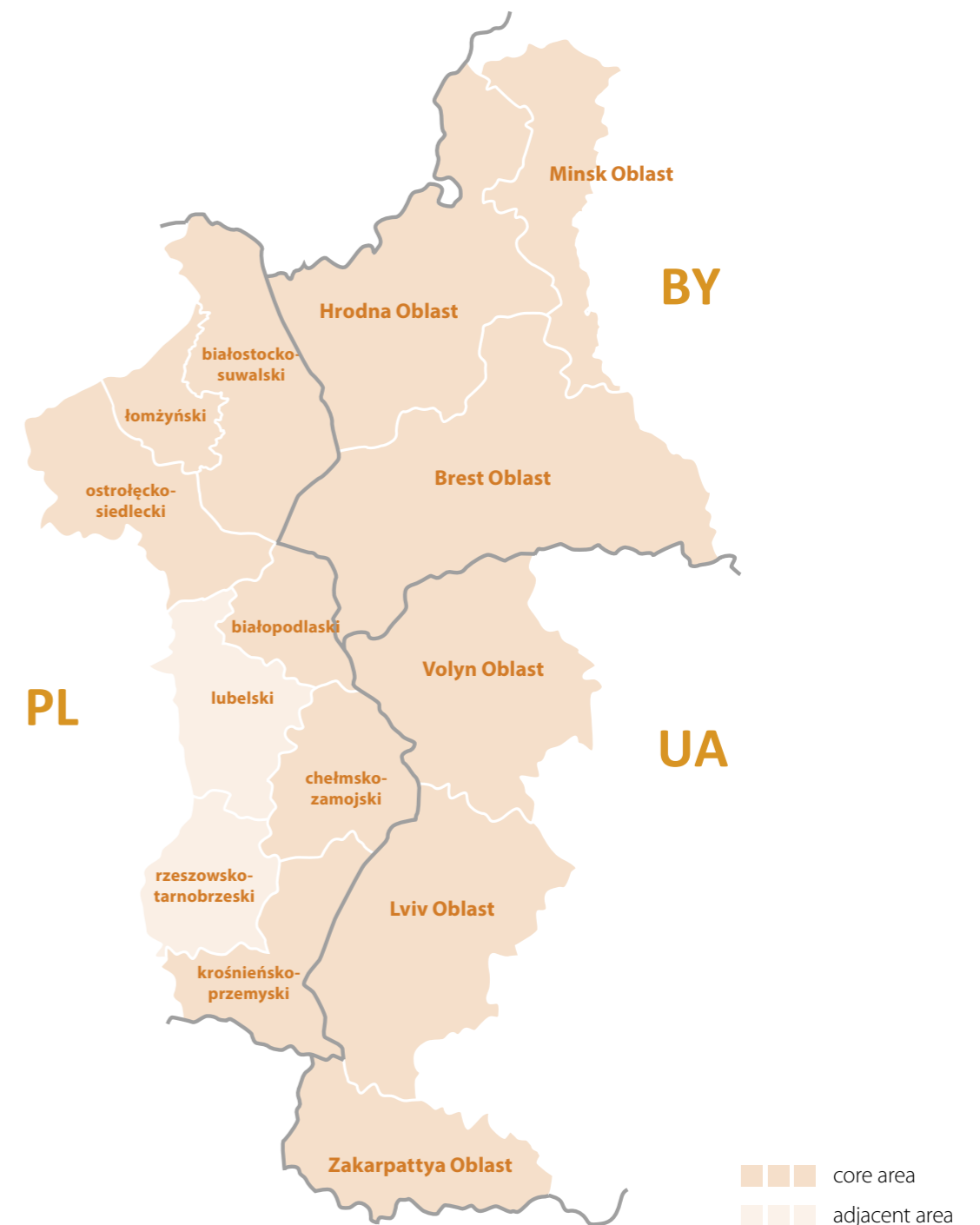
The entire support area (316.3 thousand km²) is larger than the total area of Poland (312.7 thousand km²) and than the total area of Belarus (207.6 thousand km²). It is equal to half of the area of Ukraine!

6. NUTS (the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) is a three-level classification developed to identify areas eligible for support under the structural policy of the European Union. In case of Poland, NUTS III are the subregions (grouping poviats).



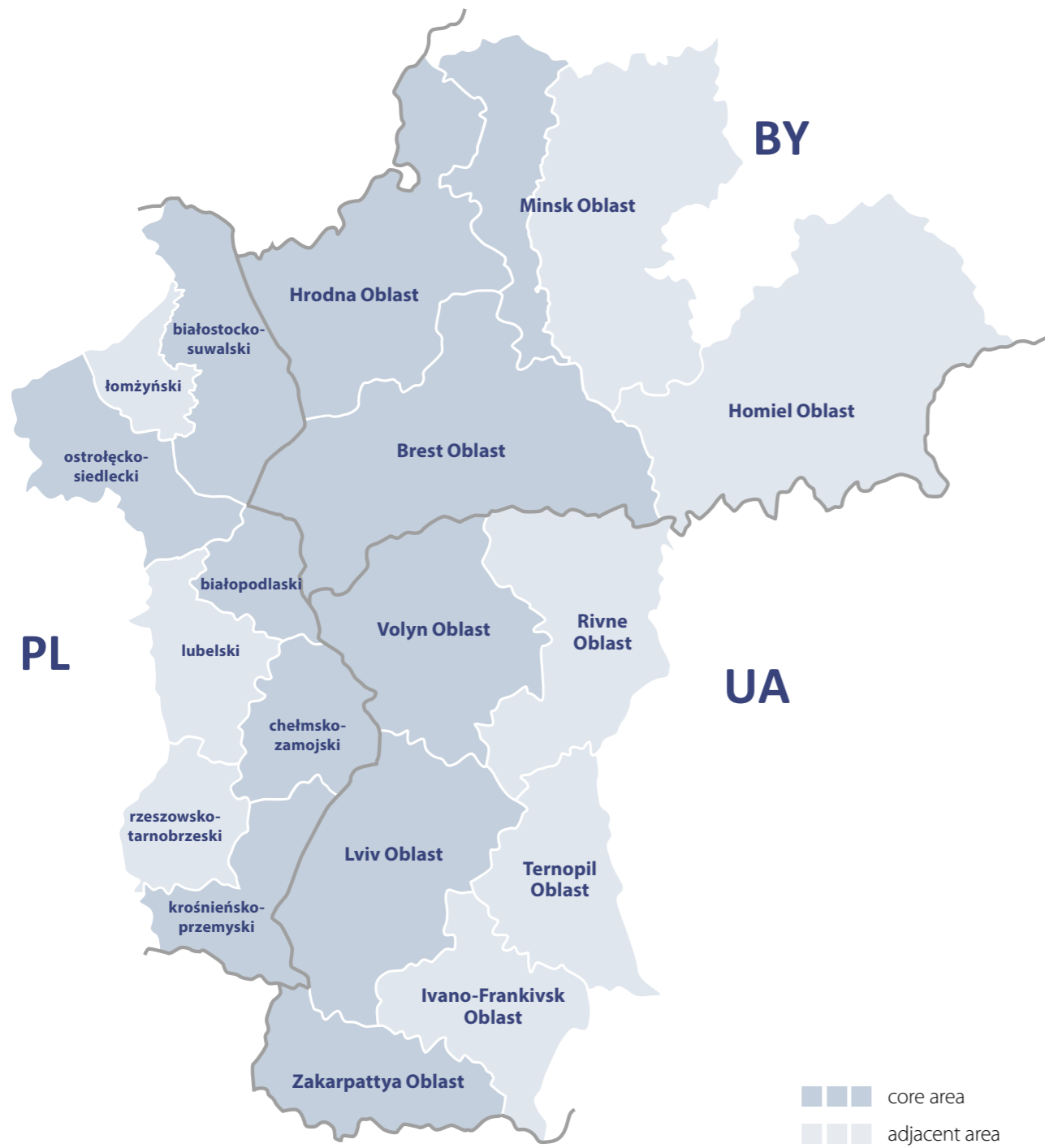


Area covered by support of the Programme in 2004-2006



Maps on the next page illustrate the change of the area covered by the Programme in individual editions, including the core regions and adjacent regions in each country.

Area covered by support of the Programme in 2007-2013



Area covered by support of the Programme in 2014-2020



Priorities and projects

Due to the effort of representatives of participating countries, the Programme has developed over the years – it can be observed not only in increase of its area but primarily in scope of the support.

Themes supported under the Programme



Subsequent editions of the Programme were changing along with the challenges affecting the countries involved in its implementation as well as the Europe as a whole. The socio-economic analysis of the Programme regions conducted before each of its edition helped to identify objectives and priorities that shall be addressed. An example of this is the 2014-2020 edition with priorities such as:



Preservation of historical heritage and local culture



Information and communication technology



Health care and social care



Security

The table presented on the next page is a summary of the thematic objectives and measures under which Programme was offering support during its 15 years and number of projects implemented under each of them.

2004-2006	Number of projects	2007-2013	Number of projects	2014-2020 ⁷	Number of projects
Priority 1 Increase of competitiveness of border regions through modernization and development of cross-border infrastructure	79	Priority 1 Increasing competitiveness of the border area	40	Thematic objective HERITAGE	17
Measure 1.1 Modernization and extension of existing transport systems to improve the accessibility of the region	29	Measure 1.1 Better conditions for entrepreneurship	9	Priority 1.1 Promotion of local culture and history	10
Measure 1.2 Development of a common cross-border environmental protection system	30	Measure 1.2 Tourism development	21	Priority 1.2 Promotion and preservation of natural heritage	7
Measure 1.3 Development of business-related infrastructure and tourism	20	Measure 1.3 Improving access to the region	10		
Priority 2 Development of human capital and institutional forms of cross-border cooperation as well as improvement of security at the borders of the European Union	88	Priority 2 Improving the quality of life	26	Thematic objective ACCESSIBILITY	18
Measure 2.1 Strengthening cross-border institutional cooperation and improving the quality of human capital	79	Measure 2.1 Natural environment protection in the borderland	16	Priority 2.1 Improvement and development of transport services and infrastructure	17
Measure 2.2 Supporting initiatives of local communities	9	Measure 2.2 Efficient and secure borders	10	Priority 2.2 Development of ICT infrastructure	1
		Priority 3 Networking and people-to-people cooperation	51	Thematic objective SECURITY	17
		Measure 3.1 Regional and local cross-border cooperation capacity building	45	Priority 3.1 Support to the development of health protection and social services	11
		Measure 3.2 Local communities' initiatives	6	Priority 3.2 Addressing common security challenges	6
				Thematic objective BORDERS	13
				Priority 4.1 Support to border efficiency and security	7
				Priority 4.2 Improvement of border management operations, customs and visas procedures	6

Successfully implemented projects in the scope of all objectives of the Programme in its two previous editions were the result of inter alia the adequate adaptation of priorities and measures to the needs of the regions and their inhabitants.

⁷ In relation to the 2014-2020 edition data in this publication reflects only the results of the 1st Call for Proposals.



Partnership as the crucial aspect of three Programme editions

Implementation of projects in partnership is one of the fundamental rules of the Programme. Partners who want to implement a project choose among themselves a lead partner (lead beneficiary) before submitting the application. The lead partner's role is to submit the application and, once project is selected for financing, sign the contract with the Managing Authority of the Programme.⁸ It has also the legal and financial responsibility for the implementation of the entire project. The remaining project partners are responsible for the implementation of the project in the scope of their competences, they are also obliged to cooperate with the lead partner. As a rule, one of the project partners should be located in the territory of the European Union – which in case of the Programme is Poland, and the second one – must be located in the territory of one of the two partner countries – Belarus or Ukraine.

Partnership composition



2004-2006



Not being a member of the Union yet, we learned how mechanisms function inside, what are the elements of European politics: that is a very large educational role for country such as Ukraine which has European aspirations, also, to some extent, for Belarus.

Mariusz Kasprzyk

In the first edition of the Programme as many as 167 projects were financed, even though the time for implementation of projects was relatively short. Measure 2.1 "Developing the human capital and institutional cross-border cooperation" was the most popular among beneficiaries, resulting in 84 implemented projects – nearly the half of all projects implemented in that Programme edition.

⁸ This role is assigned to the Polish Ministry responsible for the regional development (currently the Ministry of Investment and Economic Development). The exception was in the Programme 2004-2006 where grant contracts were signed between the Intermediate Bodies (Polish Voivode Offices) for EFRR funds or Representatives of the European Commission for TACIS funds and the lead beneficiaries.

Almost half of all projects implemented in 2004-2006 related to the strengthening of institutional cross-border cooperation and the improvement of the quality of human capital.

Ukrainian institutions were involved in implementation of 68% of projects 2004-2006 and Belarusian institutions in 26% of them.⁹

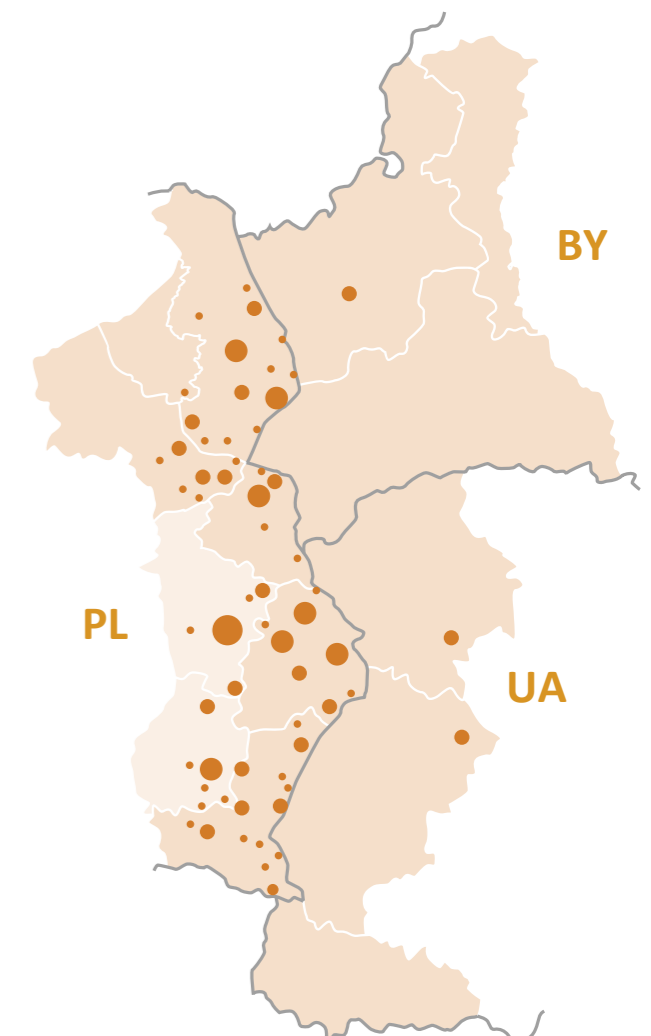
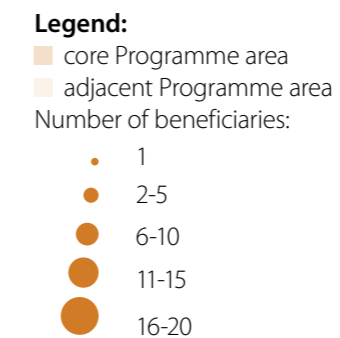
167
projects

88.5%
projects implemented
in the partnership

322
micro-projects under
8 umbrella projects

486
partners from
three countries

Programme 2004-2006 – location of the lead beneficiaries



⁹ Ukrainian and Belarusian institutions were the lead partner of 6 projects.

2007-2013

This period introduced new possibilities and resulted in the total number of 117 co-financed projects with 9 strategic projects and 6 umbrella projects¹⁰ (conducted within measure 3.2 "Initiatives of local communities" and including in total 56 micro-projects).



The Programme Poland-Ukraine-Belarus 2007-2013 was one of the most actively implemented EU cross-border cooperation programmes in Belarus. This provided a significant contribution to the socio-economic issues of Belarus cross-border areas, assisting Republican state administration bodies, local governments, institutions in the scope of education, health, social ones and other organisations.

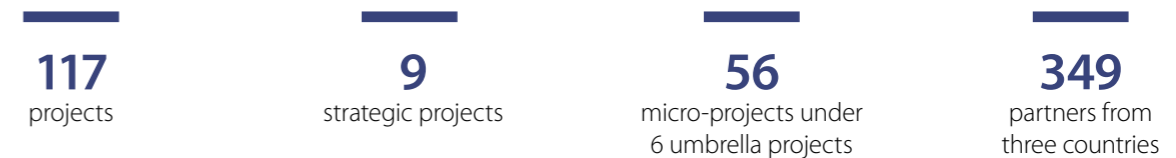
Dina Goncharova

The highest number of contracts was signed for projects within measure 3.1. "Development of regional and local opportunities for cross-border cooperation" – they accounted for nearly 40% of all projects implemented in this period.

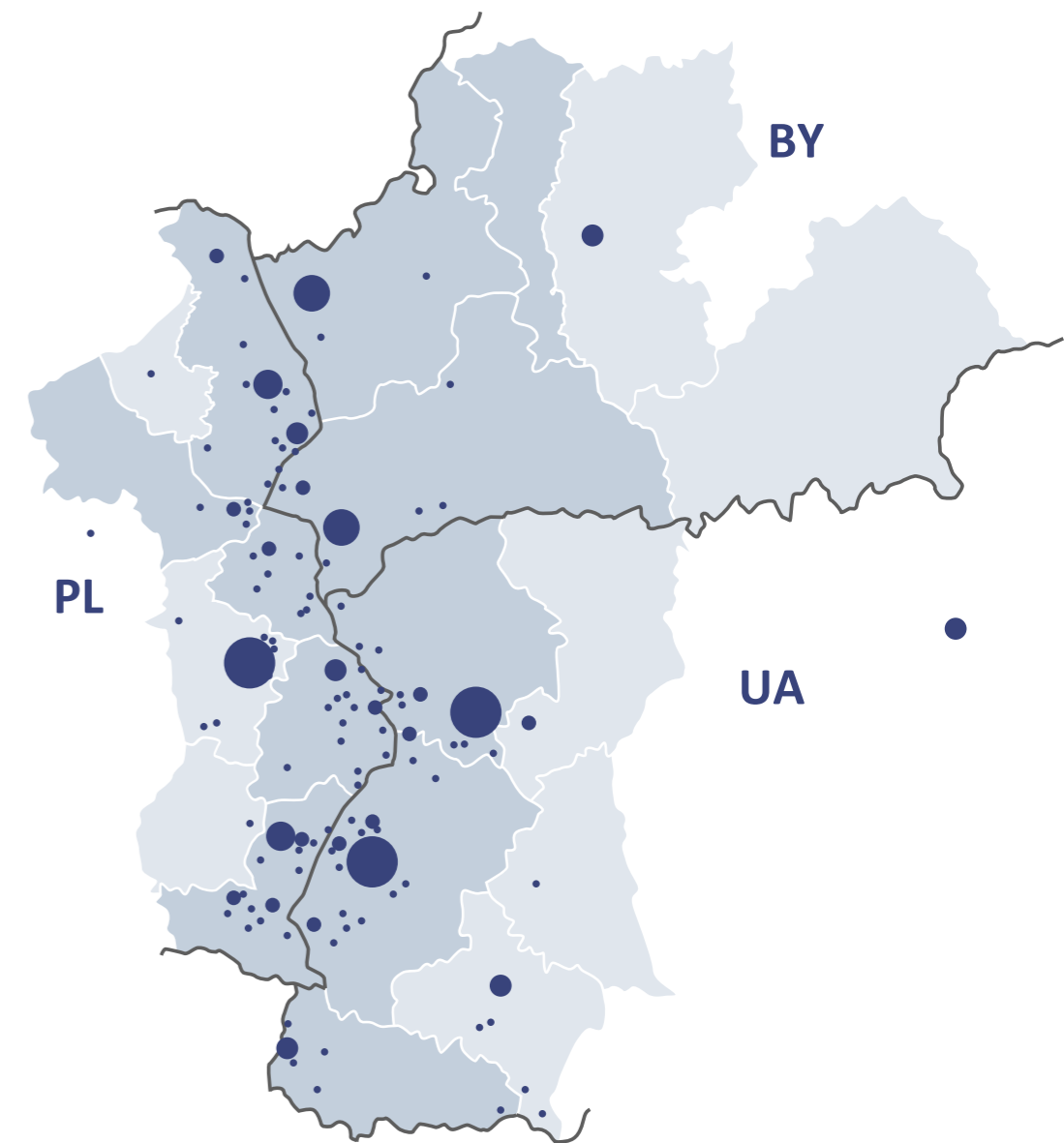
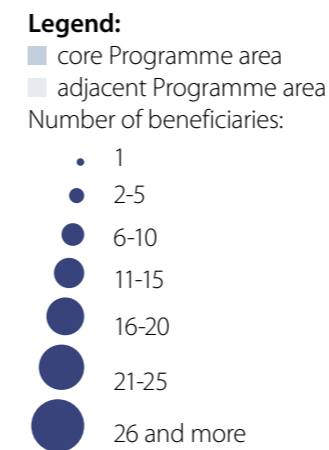
In the years 2007-2013, nearly 40% of projects were related to the development of regional and local opportunities for cross-border cooperation.



¹⁰ More information on umbrella projects can be found under section "Forms of support"



Programme 2007-2013 – location of the beneficiaries



2014-2020

Within 2014-2020 two Call for Proposals were foreseen. The result of the 1st Call is 65 projects selected for financing under all four thematic objectives. The 2nd Call – devoted to microprojects within thematic objective HERITAGE shall be organized in second half of 2018.

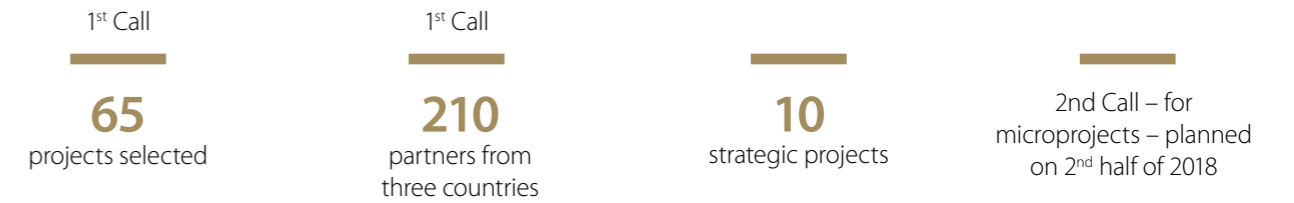
The Programme commands great popularity among institutions of the borderland, which was evidenced by a large number of partnerships established for the sake of the 1st Call for Proposals (749 projects' concepts were submitted). Just to describe it very generally – all these partnerships were aimed at the development of the cross-border cooperation in the area covered by the support. This shows what is the potential of cooperation between institutions from three participating countries. But it also proves that needs for this cooperation are extremely strong.



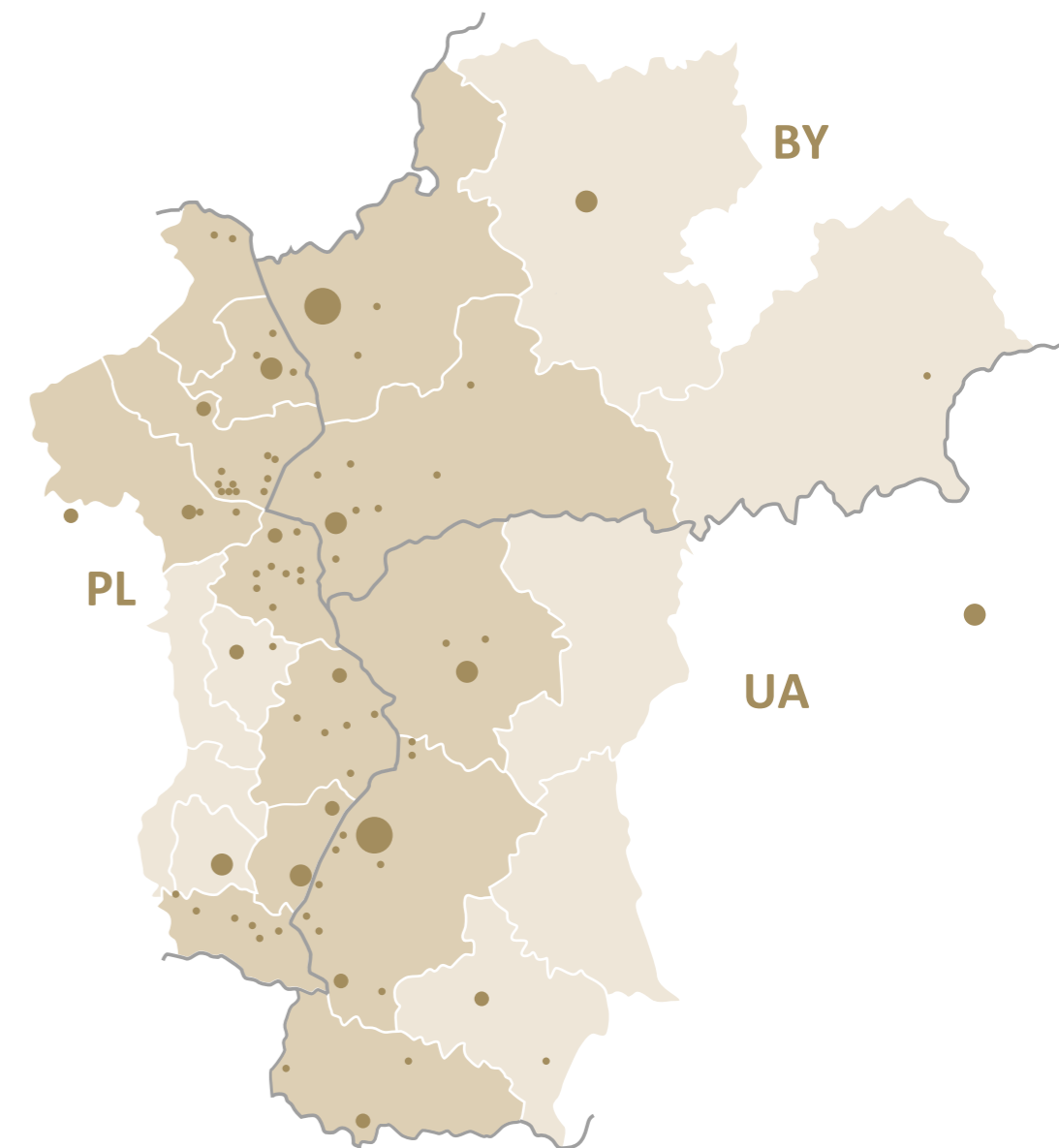
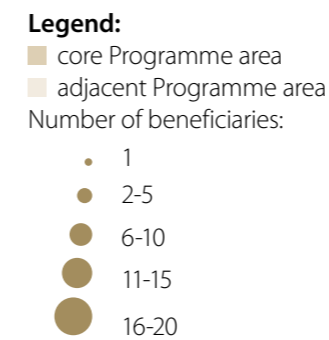
In general, until 2015 there was a progress, an improvement, but it took a long time to prepare and then implement the Programme. I left it at the implementation stage, and results were already present.

Maya Koshman

In the 1st Call for Proposals, the Polish institutions are the lead beneficiaries of 75% of selected projects, the Ukrainian – 15% and the Belarusian – 10% of projects.



Programme 2014-2020 – location of beneficiaries (selected for financing after 1st Call)



Similarly like in the previous Programme editions, after 1st Call of 2014-2020, both, in the submitted applications as well as in the selected projects, a disproportion may be observed between the number of lead beneficiaries coming from Poland and from Ukraine and Belarus. The Polish institutions more often play the role of the project leader.

Why Polish institutions are more likely to be lead partners of projects? Chiefly due to their experience in the EU projects implementation they are more eager to take this responsibility on themselves. However, as already said – in each project's partnership there need to be at least one Polish and one Ukrainian or Belarusian institution. Moreover, the balanced projects, with activities and benefits equally divided into both sides of the border are promoted in the Programme. Therefore, irrespectively of their roles played in the projects by institutions from three participating countries, all of them do benefit on these projects' implementation.

The lower number of projects led by Belarusian and Ukrainian institutions in any case does not reflect the poorer quality of such projects – those institutions successfully implement subsequent actions, using the experience from previous editions of the Programme. And it has to be emphasized that over the years, the increase in the number of lead beneficiaries from Ukraine and Belarus may be observed, which is one of the greatest achievements of the Programme.

Lead beneficiaries divided into countries



Forms of support

Undertakings under the Programme have been and are currently supported as part of the strategic (2007-2013 and 2014-2020 Programme editions), regular, umbrella (only 2004-2006 and 2007-2013 Programme editions) and micro projects. The Programme supports beneficiaries in the form of grants¹¹ which may constitute up to 90% of the total costs of the project¹². As a general rule, applications for co-financing are submitted by potential beneficiaries as the answer to the Call for Proposals – competitions for projects the best fitting the objectives of the Programme.

Strategic projects¹³ are an exception of the rule of the Call for Proposals. Beneficiaries do not apply for co-financing in response to the announced call, but projects of crucial importance to the participating regions are selected by the parties involved in the Programme. In the 2014-2020 edition the list of such projects constitutes an annex to the Programme document.



11. The only exception was the 2004-2006 perspective, where ERDF co-financing for Polish beneficiaries was granted in the form of reimbursement of incurred costs.
12. The first edition of the Programme was an exception. In 2004-2006, co-financing was equal to 75% of the total cost of the implemented project for Poland, and 90% for Belarus and Ukraine.
13. In 2007-2013 Programme edition – they were called Large Scale Projects, in 2014-2020 – Large Infrastructure Projects.

When it comes to the **micro-projects** – in the first Programme edition they were chosen by operators – four euroregions operating in the Programme area. The 2007-2013 edition, as the only ENPI programme, enabled the implementation of **umbrella projects**. These projects constituted of one umbrella lead partner and many partners implementing micro-projects. Each of the partners was responsible for a part of the project (micro-project), and these parts in their entirety formed a coherent, fulfilling specific objectives endeavour, called the umbrella project. The lead beneficiary created a kind of “the umbrella” under which smaller projects were implemented. In the 2014-2020 edition of the Programme, it is planned to select micro-projects via open Call for Proposals (without “umbrellas”) within thematic objective HERITAGE only.

The most common type of projects implemented under the Programme are **regular projects** – the ones in the middle between large and micro projects. They are selected on the basis of applications, through regular Calls for Proposals. Calls are announced basing on the decisions of the Joint Monitoring Committee.

Within the third edition of the Programme the following types of projects were foreseen:

MICRO PROJECTS

- Projects lasting maximum 12 months;
- with a grant of min. 20 000 and max. 60 000 EUR;
- with investment costs up to 20% of the budget;
- possible only within thematic objective HERITAGE;
- selected through open Call for Proposals.

REGULAR PROJECTS

- Projects lasting maximum 24 months;
- with a grant of min. 100 000 EUR and max. 2,5 MEUR;
- with infrastructure component up to 2,5 MEUR;
- possible within all thematic objectives;
- selected through open Call for Proposals.

STRATEGIC PROJECTS

- Project lasting maximum 36 months;
- maximum 30% of the EU allocation to the Programme;
- with infrastructure component at least 2,5 MEUR;
- possible within all thematic objectives;
- selected within direct award procedure.

With addition to this division, the projects in the Programme are divided also in relation to the level of their internal integration and complexity. We have:

INTEGRATED PROJECTS where each beneficiary implements a part of the project activities on its own territory and where all these activities serve one objective /results COMMON for both/three sides of the border

SYMMETRIC PROJECTS where similar activities are implemented in parallel in the participating countries

SIMPLE PROJECTS where projects are implemented mainly or entirely in one of the participating countries but for the benefit of all or some of the participating countries and where cross-border impact and benefits are identified

The integrated projects are the most valuable from the cross-border cooperation point of view as they require the strongest relations and involvement of their partners.

The evaluation and selection of projects is based on the previously selected criteria. After the selection of projects (being the decision of the Joint Monitoring Committee – the most important body of the Programme), the beneficiaries sign grant contracts (with the Programme’s Managing Authority).

Number of applications submitted in the Calls for Proposals



There are two basic models of financing projects in the Programme. One of its characteristics widely appreciated by beneficiaries, is the possibility to receive advance payments for implementation of projects. The other financing model is a reimbursement of costs incurred after the end of the project’s implementation. Before signing the contract, the beneficiaries choose a financing option for the project that is more comfortable for them¹⁵.

14. In the 1st Call for Proposals of the Programme 2014-2020 the two-stage application process was applied. In the first stage, 749 Concept Notes were submitted, while in the second stage – 383 Full Application Forms. 2nd Call for Proposals is yet to be organized.

15. The only exception was the 2004-2006 perspective, where ERDF co-financing for Polish beneficiaries was granted in the form of reimbursement of incurred costs.



Beneficiaries

After describing all the formal and organizational issues as well as statistics related to the Programme it is a high time to present the Programme main beneficiaries – those who benefit on the Programme support.

The Programme is addressed to a large range of institutions located in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine and whose activity is not oriented to the profit.

During 15 years of the Programme a total number of:



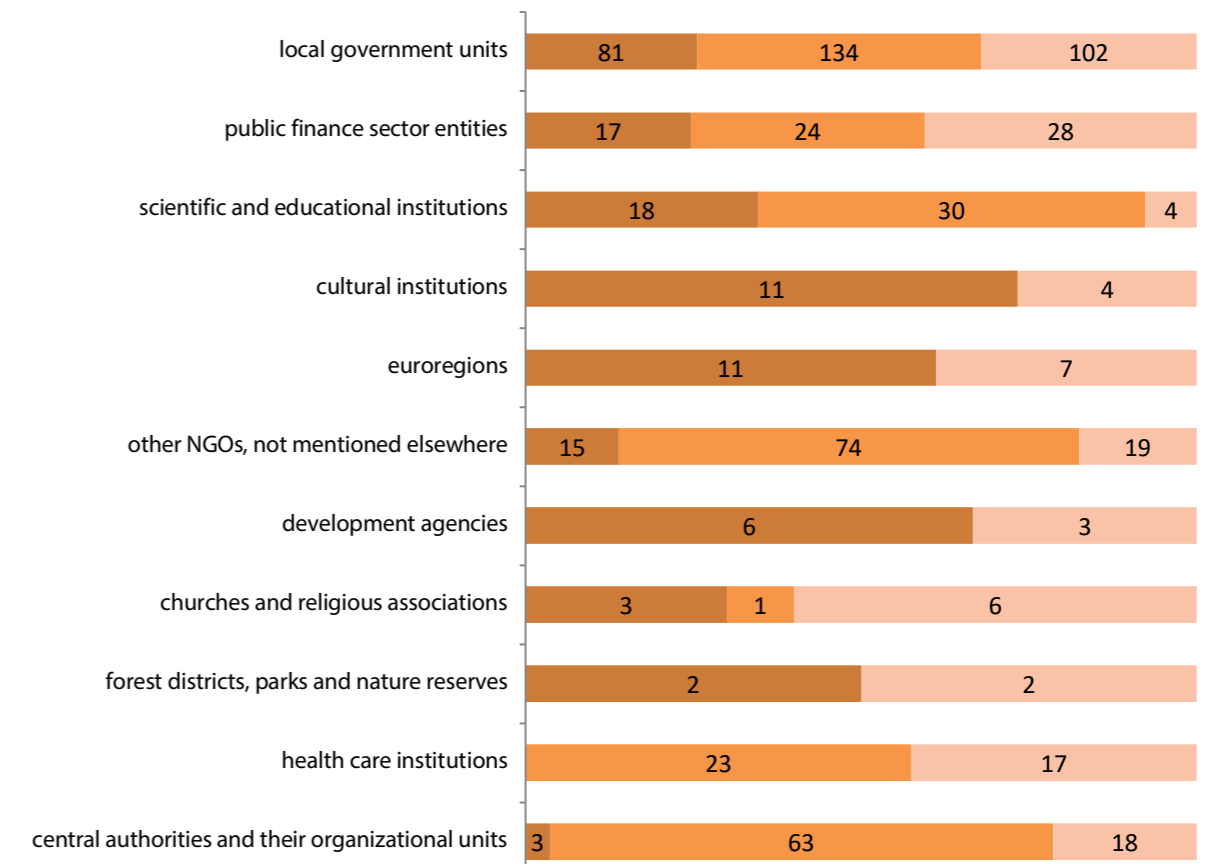
beneficiaries were involved in implementation of projects.

The results achieved in their projects have positively influenced the economic situation of the regions covered by the Programme. The institutions implementing projects include:



The catalogue of direct Programme beneficiaries has not changed much over the years. The number of particular legal forms of beneficiaries varied in particular Programme editions, which was related mainly to the changes in the thematic scope of supported projects.

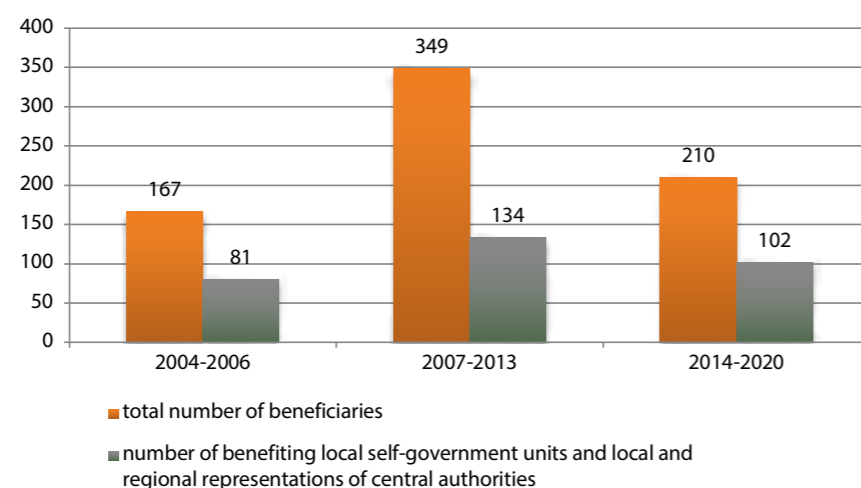
Legal forms of the Programme beneficiaries



Due to the unavailability of information for the 2004-2006 edition only lead beneficiaries were included, whereas for the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 (1st Call for Proposals) perspectives – all beneficiaries.

Governmental and self-government bodies of all three countries apply for funds and implement projects the most frequently. In each edition of the Programme they constitute also the biggest part of beneficiaries. After 2007 there was noticeable increase of the activity of health care units and central authorities with their organizational units conducting tasks for the benefit of border regions. Such large interest of entities reflects the involvement of both local communities and central authorities in the development of the border area.

Number of local self-government/central authorities units in the total number of beneficiaries¹⁶



Irrespective of the legal type of institutions implementing the projects, their final beneficiaries and final recipients of the Programme' support are the residents of its area. One of the main objectives of the Programme is to improve the quality of people's lives by positively changing the region's socio-economic situation.

Well defined rules of grants enabled the implementation of a large number of projects. 349 projects and 378 micro-projects were already supported or selected for support during the implementation of the Programme¹⁷. The most active as the lead beneficiaries in all three editions have been beneficiaries from Lubelskie Voivodeship in Poland, Brest Oblast in Belarus and Volyn and Lviv Oblasts in Ukraine.

The most active regions – the number of lead beneficiaries



16. Due to the unavailability of information for the 2004-2006 edition only lead beneficiaries were included, whereas for the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 perspectives – all beneficiaries.

17. In the 2014-2020 edition, the 2nd Call for Proposals is yet to be organized.

The most active regions – the number of all beneficiaries



The lead beneficiaries of implemented projects divided into regions

	2004-2006	2007-2013	2014-2020	TOTAL
Number of lead beneficiaries				
	167	117	65	349
POLAND				
Podlaskie voivodeship	33	22	17	
Podkarpackie voivodeship	39	25	12	
Mazowieckie voivodeship	13	5	6	
Lubelskie voivodeship	64	37	14	
Total	149	89	49	287
BELARUS				
Hrodna Oblast		2	1	
Brest Oblast	6	4	4	
Minsk Oblast		2	1	
Homiel Oblast				
Total	6	8	6	20
UKRAINE				
Lviv Oblast	4	7	1	
Volyn Oblast	6	5	1	
Zakarpattia Oblast	2	1	4	
Rivne Oblast		2		
Ternopil Oblast				
Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast		2		
Kiev Oblast		3	4	
Total	12	20	10	42



Programme influence – selected areas

Last 15 years brought many changes in the socio-economic development of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine and the Programme has inscribed into positive trends occurring in each of them. The support provided with the means of the Programme was always correlated with the development strategies at the national, regional and local levels of all three involved countries. The implemented projects and achieved objectives of the Programme add to the improvement of the economic situation of the support areas and the quality of people's lives.

The support under the Programme has always been closely related to the national, regional and local strategies of development of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine.

The achieved projects results affect a number of aspects related to the protection of natural environment, promotion of cultural heritage, border management, infrastructure and people's safety. This chapter describes selected areas in which the impact of the Programme is noticeable.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The area covered by the Programme is particularly valuable in terms of nature. This applies, inter alia, to the Białowieża Forest inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the Carpathian region, as well as Polesie and the Bug valley.

The implementation of the first and second editions of the Programme greatly contributed to the improvement of the natural environment.

All three editions of the Programme included the protection of natural environment into their main objectives. In the years 2004-2006, a total of 31 projects in the field of environmental protection were implemented.

Natural environment projects – selected results of the Programme 2004-2006

- Projects supported nearly 25 500 inhabitants
- Information campaigns reached nearly 30 000 people
- Protection of valuable plant and animal species
- Over 2 thousand households connected to municipal sewage systems
- Neutralization of the negative impact of anthropogenic activities on ecosystems
- Establishing scientific and interinstitutional cooperation
- Improving the fire protection system for counteracting threats to the natural environment

In the 2007-2013 edition of the Programme 16 projects devoted to the natural protection were conducted. Support in this scope is continued also after 2014 – projects selected so far concern the protection of water in rivers and lakes of the borderland.

Natural heritage projects – examples of the Programme 2014-2020

Clean River is Major Priority

- Municipal Unitary Multiple Productive Enterprise of Communal-Housing Economy “Zhabinkovskoe ZhKCh”
- Communal Company Eko-Bug Limited Liability Company
- State Scientific Institution “The Polesie Agrarian Ecological Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus”

Protecting the Solina Lake and Schidnica’s sources of healing waters – a common challenge and opportunity to maintain and exploit the potential of the natural heritage

- Solina Commune
- City Council Schidnica

Improving cross-border environmental protection system in Ksiezpol Commune in Poland and in the city of Chervonograd in Ukraine – through the development of sewerage infrastructure

- Commune Ksiezpol
- Chervonograd City Council

Improving the capacity for natural heritage protection and promotion in Kuznica Commune and Beryoza District through joint initiatives in the cross-border area

- Kuznica Commune
- Beryoza District Executive Committee
- the State Unitary Manufacturing Enterprise “Housing and communal services of Beryoza”



Natural environment and natural heritage projects under the Programme

2004-2006

- 13 projects concerning development, extension or modernization of a water and sewage system
- 5 projects in the field of counteracting threats to the natural environment (including fires)
- 2 projects on ecological education
- 1 project concerning waste management

2007-2013

- 10 projects involving cooperation to counteract cross-border environmental threats
- 2 projects aiming at the use of environmentally friendly energy
- 2 projects for protection of river ecosystems
- 1 project concerning thermo-modernization
- 1 project concerning the protection of green areas

2014-2020

- 6 projects regarding the water protection
- 1 project related to promotion of natural heritage

Threats to the environment are observed in all participating countries. For this reason the implementation of joint projects and undertakings is so important for the protection of natural environment.

Environmental projects are very popular among beneficiaries. Due to the various needs of the area, among implemented projects are projects related to the protection of ecosystems, water, sewage and waste management.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Cultural heritage is a special aspect of all three editions of the Programme as its area is characterized by a great cultural diversity – with many objects included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.



In the Programme 2004-2006, the support of the socio-cultural sphere was reflected in the implementation of 25 initiatives promoting and protecting cultural heritage and 127 micro-projects in this scope. Support for the socio-cultural sphere in the years 2007-2013 was manifested in the 26 projects and 56 micro-projects. This support is continued in the third edition of the Programme, within thematic objective HERITAGE; so far, 10 projects in this scope have been selected for co-financing and 2nd Call for Proposals is dedicated also to this type of micro-projects.

The implementation of all these projects improved the regions opportunities for promotion, preservation of traditions of border areas and cultural diversity as well as the cooperation between local communities.



In this perspective, we are trying to rebuild the manor in Brest Oblast in cooperation with the Lubelskie Voivodeship. We know that for several hundred years it was one state and the number of common roots is enormous. (...) Belarusians also understand that our common history is important for them and many cultural heritage initiatives are implemented in cooperation with Belarus.

Mariusz Kasprzyk



The projects related to the cultural diversity have impact not only due to the infrastructural and investment works carried out but also through organization of the cross-border events. They enable the establishment of the cooperation with people from abroad, which in turn enable mutual learning of cultural and linguistic codes, as well as sharing the knowledge about cultures, traditions and customs. Beneficiaries implementing projects observed a high degree of the socio-cultural activation. At the same time, it should be noted that support in the first edition of the Programme related mainly to greater integration at the institutional level. Subsequent editions of the Programme aimed at the integration at the level of members of local communities.

ed that support in the first edition of the Programme related mainly to greater integration at the institutional level. Subsequent editions of the Programme aimed at the integration at the level of members of local communities.



Certainly, the Programme (2004-2006) had a significant impact on the development of territories, although this effect was mostly focused on human capital and the development of the awareness of communities.

Lev Zakharchyshyn

When it comes to the current Programme edition, 10 projects selected for financing under thematic objective HERITAGE allow for protecting cultural diversity, overcoming stereotypes and cultivating traditions and cultural values of communities living by the border. This is a very significant element of the Programme, emphasized by people engaged in its implementation.

The common history and rich cultural heritage of all countries involved in the Programme determine the popularity of this subject. Such type of projects bring neighbours from three countries closer and helps to overcome stereotypes.

An example of a project important to the development of the cultural sphere on the borderland is the 2007-2013 project "Shtetl Routes. Vestiges of Jewish cultural heritage in cross-border tourism"¹⁸ implemented by the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre" Centre in a trilateral partnership. Its aim was to analyse existing sources, results of research and publications on the Jewish heritage of material and non-material culture and to build an Internet platform "Shtetl Routes. Jewish towns of Eastern Europe"¹⁹, organization of research expeditions, development of virtual tourist routes in tracing the Jewish culture and 15 three-dimensional mockups of historical Jewish cities in Central and Eastern Europe, creation of a tourist guide and organization of trainings for tourist guides.

The project greatly contributed to the protection of the Jewish culture, common to all three countries and the development of didactic and tourist materials in this scope.



18. Shtetl is a name reserved for small towns with a large Jewish population that existed in Central and Eastern Europe before the Holocaust. See in: J. Kuna, Cartographic visualization of Jewish heritage in cross-border tourist project. Shtetl Routes (Poland, Belarus, Ukraine), "Polish Cartographical Review" 2016, Vol. 48, no. 4, pp. 173-183.
 19. Shtetl Routes Webportal, <http://shtetlroutes.eu/> (access: 13.04.2018).

TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY



Transport infrastructure is very important for the regional development, the roads are said to be the veins of the economy. And on the Programme area, due to the necessity to conduct the border traffic service, they are even more important. In the 2004-2006 edition of the Programme 28 projects on construction, reconstruction, modernization of roads or preparation of technical documentation were implemented.



A number of infrastructure projects was implemented, supporting cross-border traffic between Poland and Belarus, technical assistance was also provided, equipment was purchased. Therefore, I believe that the Programme has significantly influenced the development of infrastructure.

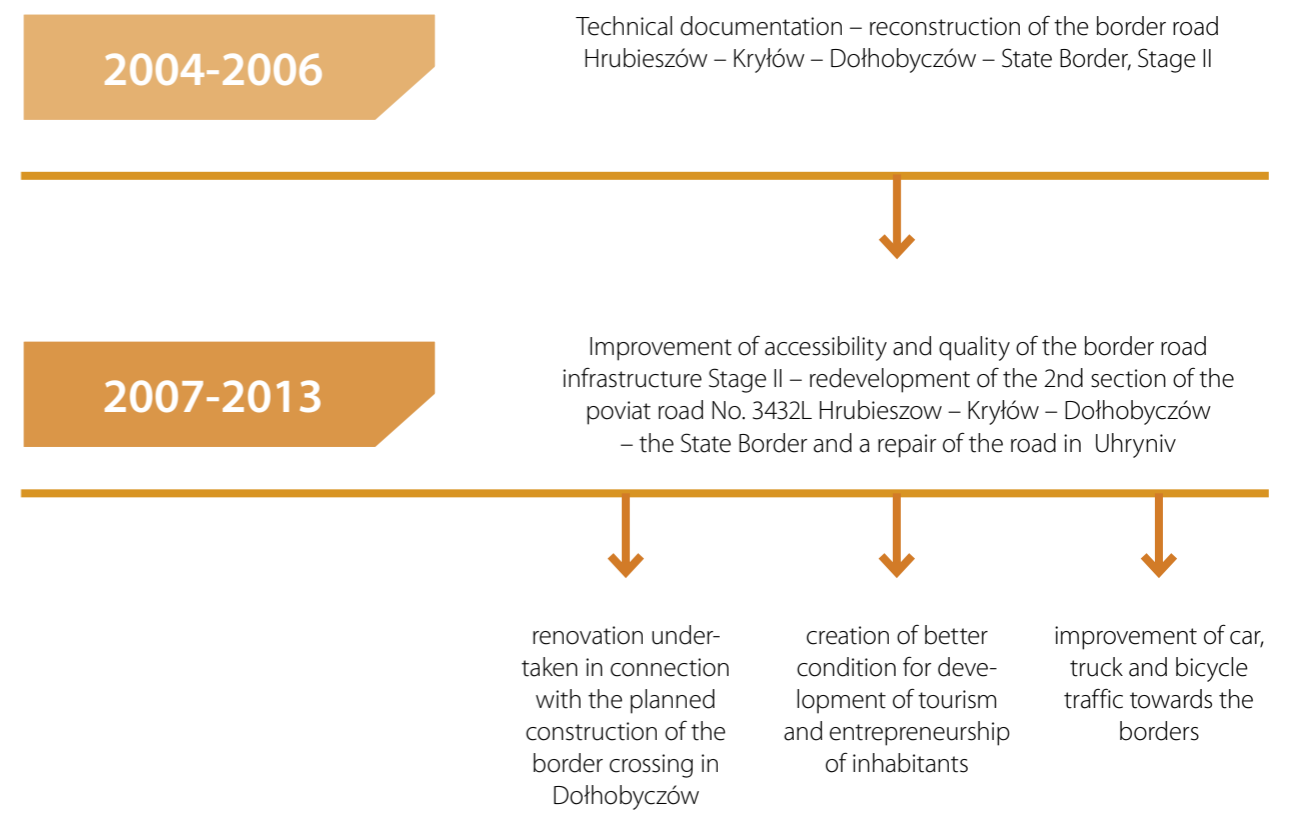
Leonid Orlov

The project concerning reconstruction of the border road Hrubieszów – Kryłów – Dołhobyczów – State Border, stage II, implemented by the Hrubieszów powiat under both previous Programme editions is the good example of the projects of a great importance to the region.



Why is this project important?

Most importantly, the project was comprehensive – a complete technical documentation and redevelopment of the section with a length of 680 m in the area of Hrubieszów was funded from the funds of the first edition of the Programme. At the same time, the reconstruction of the road was part of a larger undertaking in this part of the borderland, that is the construction of the Dołhobyczów-Uhryniv border crossing and road infrastructure in the surrounding of this border crossing. The reconstruction of the whole road was financed from many sources. Funds from the second edition of the Programme contributed to the development of the cross-border section of the road. Implementation of the project resulted in the improvement of both traffic in the direction to and from the border as well as cycling – popular in small border towns.



Among the three Programme countries, the highest density of roads characterizes Poland. The whole area of support has road density at the average level for each of the participating countries. Only in Ukraine the indicator is lower than the country's average.

Over 116 km of roads were built, rebuilt or modernized in the Programme area during its second edition.

In the current edition of the Programme, projects related to the road infrastructure constitute as many as 9 out of 18 Large Infrastructure Projects²⁰, reflecting the importance of this type of projects for the areas covered by the support. At the same time, projects directly related to the construction, reconstruction or modernization of road infrastructure have already been selected for implementation within the first Call for Proposals, resulting in 17 projects under thematic objective ACCESSIBILITY (2.1 Improvement and development of transport services and infrastructure).

TOURISM

Described above – the communication accessibility of the area as well as its attractiveness related to the cultural and natural heritage are strictly connected with the development of tourism. From the other side, the negative stereotypes concerning people from neighbouring countries still have an adverse effect on it. The Programme contributes to the modernization of roads and improves the accessibility of areas, but it has a great potential in overcoming cultural barriers and establishing neighbourly relations on both sides of this part of the EU external border.



The second edition of the Programme had the greatest impact on the development of tourism in the area covered by the support. With its help, support was directed at the reconstruction of the Augustów Canal and we began to modernize the tourist infrastructure in its area.

Dina Goncharova

The tourist attractiveness of the regions was influenced by, among others, projects on improving cultural and historical sites, creating of tourist information centres, constructing of touristic trails or bicycle paths. Many activities carried out on the Programme area promoted various branches of tourism – health, cultural, military, religious and historical one.

A good example of a project on the environmental protection and support of tourism on a local scale is the establishment of the Ecological Education Centre in Siemianówka, implemented in 2004-2006. The Centre undertakes educational activities for inhabitants of Poland and other countries bringing people together.

²⁰. Main and reserve projects were taken into account



The Programme has very big influence. In particular, in the area of support for the development of tourism in the Grodno Oblast and the development of the infrastructure of the Augustów Canal.

Leonid Orlov

In the years 2007-2013 measures included the improvement of the tourist infrastructure, the use of innovative solutions in tourism, promotional and informational activities regarding health, cultural, military, religious and historical tourism.

Thanks to implementation of projects within the Programme 2007-2013:

52 cultural and historical sites were improved

31 tourism information centres / points were created

1875 km of touristic bicycle/ water routes were constructed or labelled/ marked

SOCIAL AND HEALTH POLICY

The implementation of the Programme contributes to minimizing social and health problems in the area of support.

Since the first edition of the Programme (2004-2006) our focus has been on the development of infrastructure and purchase of equipment, which was aimed at contributing to the improvement of the quality of life of the Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian border region inhabitants. Due to the allocations of the budget, the second edition of the Programme (2007-2013) was able to implement projects related to health care to a greater extent. 13 projects concerning investments in equipment, infrastructure and in human capital was conducted. We equipped hospitals and health centers with modern medical equipment, and financed preventive care.



Rafał Baliński

One of the projects implemented in 2007-2013 in the scope of health protection was the project Development of Co-operation in order to improve health safety of the population of the Polish-Belarusian borderland, implemented by the Autonomous Public Health Maintenance Organisation J. Śniadecki Voivodship Polyclinical Hospital in Białystok, in cooperation with the Grodno Regional Clinical Hospital. Its main objective was to set a new standard of cooperation between Polish and Belarusian doctors and the development of telemedicine as an effective tool for diagnosing patients in the border area.



Social and health policy – selected actions and achievements

Increasing the accessibility to sports and recreation infrastructure.

Adjusting the infrastructure to the needs of people with disabilities.

Creation and improvement of access to the rehabilitation services.

Implementation of 13 projects related to health protection (2007-2013).

Promoting prevention, health protection and examinations.

8 hospital/ambulatory wards modernized/built.

Three diagnostic laboratories and 2 hospices were modernized/built.

Purchase of 7 ambulances and 1048 sets of medical equipment.

The medical examinations covered over 15 000 people.

24 events organized for people with disabilities.

All three editions of the Programme contributed to the development of social capital and to strengthening the integration of the local community (in particular through the development of social networks), to the use of social and health protection- aimed at helping people with disabilities, support the work with the youths, development of Polish-Belarusian cooperation in the scope of the diagnosis of breast cancer, pulmonary tuberculosis immunotherapy, treatment of acute mental disorders.



Dina Goncharova

Under the third edition of the Programme, the support for health care has been continued with 17 projects selected for financing. It reflects the comprehensive nature of the support offered by the Programme in the scope of this significant sphere of inhabitants lives.

BORDER PROTECTION AND THE INCREASE OF THE CAPACITY OF BORDER CROSSINGS



There was a problem related to the border infrastructure. To some extent it was improved due to these measures. Projects such as construction of border crossings on the Polish-Ukrainian border had a significant impact on contacts with neighbours.

Mariusz Kasprzyk

Another important objective of the Programme is the increase in the capacity of the border crossings between Poland and Belarus and Ukraine. This situation has greatly improved thanks to the achievements of the Programme, influencing the development of good neighbourly relations between local communities in the participating countries. There are only 26 border crossings on the Polish border with Belarus and Ukraine²¹ – for this reason undertakings aimed at increasing the capacity of borders, modernization and development of new crossing points are of high importance. They strengthen ties between local communities of neighbouring countries, improve transport, tourism and support promotion of cultural diversity, just to name few benefits. Activities aimed at acceleration and facilitation of crossing the border are therefore strictly correlated with other spheres of the Programme's foreseen influence.

During the second edition of the Programme, contracts for 10 projects in the scope of borders security have been concluded. These projects concerned mainly the development of new and extension and modernization of already existing border crossings.

21. The Polish-Belarusian border is 418 km long, whereas the Polish-Ukrainian border – 535 km long; for comparison, on the Polish-German border (489 km) before Poland's accession to the Schengen area, there were 34 border crossings [from:] M. Krystianiak, Współpraca polsko-białoruska w kwestiach wspólnej granicy, [in:] M. Krzysztofowicz (ed.), Polska i Białoruś o rozszerzeniu Unii Europejskiej, edition of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warszawa 2005, p. 83.

Thanks to implementation of projects within the second edition of the Programme:

10 border crossings
were constructed
/reconstructed
/equipped

29,865
vehicles per day
increased border
crossings' capacity

48,800 persons
per day
increased border crossings'
capacity

The third edition of the Programme introduced a focus on the cross-border cooperation of the border services aimed at the improvement of the situation related to the waiting time when crossing the border. The cooperation in the scope of border protection combines three elements: infrastructure development, procedures improvement as well as training and the exchange of experience. 13 such projects were selected as a result of the 1st Call in this Programme edition and 2 large infrastructure projects devoted to the border crossings infrastructure are also foreseen.



Conclusions

Strengthening a partnership between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine and counteracting negative stereotypes between neighbours may lay the foundations for further cooperation and for expanding the scope of support in future editions of the Programme.

As much as EUR 415.1 million have been allocated from the EU funds for the support in three editions of the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme.

The main objective of the Programme is to support cross-border development processes on the border of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, and to equalize the scope of development in this area.

The objectives and priorities of the Programme in its individual editions were always adapted to the needs of the participating regions. They were also a reflection of challenges faced by Europe.

The positive effects of the Programme, noticeable in Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian relations, are evidenced by the fact that current political situations do not have a negative impact on the implementation of projects and relation within the Programme.



Quoted persons – involvement in the Programme bodies



Rafał Baliński – (Joint) Managing Authority of the Programmes 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 – Ministry of Investment and Economic Development of Poland.



Dina Goncharova – Infopoint of the Programme 2004-2006; Branch Office of the Programme 2007-2013 in Lviv; Joint Monitoring Committee of the Programme 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 – National Coordinating Unit (NCU) for the EU TACIS Programme in the Republic of Belarus; Belarusian Control Contact Point in the Programme 2014-2020.



Mariusz Kasprzyk – Joint Technical Secretariat for the Programme 2004-2006; Joint Monitoring Committee in the Programme 2014-2020 – Center of European Projects Service, Ministry of the Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland.



Maya Koshman – Joint Monitoring Committee in the Programme 2007-2013 – Ministry of Economy of Ukraine – National Authority.



Leonid Orlov – Joint Monitoring Committee in the Programme 2004-2006 and 2007-2013 – Coordinating Unit of Belarus for the European Union's TACIS Programme.



Lev Zakharchyshyn – Joint Monitoring Committee in the Programme 2007-2013 – Lvivska Oblast State Administration.





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