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## TEMPLATE FOR INTERREG PROGRAMMES<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Without prejudice to any further alignment in relation to the outcome of inter-institutional negotiations on other legislative acts, including 2021-2027 Cohesion policy legislative acts.

NUTS regions covered by the programme LT021 - Alytaus apskritis

LT022 - Kauno apskritis

LT024 - Marijampolės apskritis

LT027 - Tauragės apskritis

LT011 - Vilniaus apskritis

PL841 - Białostocki

PL843 - Suwalski

PL623 - Ełcki

*Strand-A*

1. Joint programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses

1.1. Programme area (not required for Interreg C programmes)

*Reference: Article 17(4)(a), Article 17(9)(a)*

Programme territory of the Interreg programme Lithuania-Poland covers 5 south-eastern Lithuanian regions (counties) and 3 north-eastern Polish subregions. Programme territory covers 51,5 thous. sq. km (31,7 thous. sq. km of Lithuanian area and 19,8 thous. sq. km of Polish area). Border length between Lithuania and Poland reaches 104,3 km. Programme area population in 2019 was 2,25 mln. – 1,18 mln. citizens in Lithuania and 1,07 mln. in Poland.

The regions (on NUTS-3 level) eligible for the participation in the CP on both sides of the border are:

- Alytus county (Lithuania) (lith. *Alytaus apskritis*);
- Kaunas county (Lithuania) (lith. *Kauno apskritis*);
- Marijampolė county (Lithuania) (lith. *Marijampolės apskritis*);
- Tauragė county (Lithuania) (lith. *Tauragės apskritis*);
- Vilnius county (except for Vilnius city) (Lithuania) (lith. *Vilniaus apskritis*);
- Etcki subregion (Poland) (pol. *Podregion Etcki*);
- Suwalski subregion (Poland) (pol. *Podregion Suwalski*);
- Białostocki subregion (Poland) (pol. *Podregion Białostocki*).

1.2. Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-learnt from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies.

*Reference: Article 17(3)(b), Article 17(9)(b)*

The overall objective of the Programme: improving wellbeing of cross-border communities through cross-border cooperation and sustainable use of cultural and natural heritage of Lithuania and Poland cross-border area.

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## 1. Economic, social and territorial disparities

The Polish-Lithuanian border area consists of south-eastern Lithuanian regions and north-eastern Polish regions. Regions that are closest to the border have the lowest density of the population. A low density of population in the Programme territory is an important factor framing the social, economic and environmental character of the Programme area and potential interventions. Remote economies face challenges regarding relatively smaller population and narrow range of skills, high dependency on primary (low value added) sectors, high cost of public service delivery. The Program regions also show considerable disparities in socio-economic characteristics, with visible urban-rural divides in the economic attainment of the SMEs, innovation capacity in the regions, demographic, migration and labour market trends or mobility patterns that need be addressed by joint actions across the border. Low density is identified as an obstacle for cross-border cooperation, but at the same time the rural and green character of the area has a potential for well-being tourism and other forms of sustainable tourism based on natural and cultural resources, therefore the cooperation Lithuania-Poland programme addresses the most important cross-border challenges and taps into the potential of the Programme territory.

## 1. Economic challenges in the Programme area

The Lithuania-Poland programme area has witnessed an economic growth over the recent years, however discrepancies between regions, having a strong urban-rural character, could be seen. Despite the extensive resources allocated from the EU cohesion policy, inequalities have not been completely levelled out. Tackling economic difficulties is important in order to have more even growth and usage of opportunities.

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The economy of Programme regions mostly consists of low and medium low-technology manufacturing. Low-technology manufacturing in Lithuanian and Polish regions makes up more than twice compared to the EU average (exception is Capital Region of Lithuania, but statistics include Vilnius city). Medium-high technology manufacturing, EU average is 4,8%, which is twice more than in the Programme regions. High-technology manufacturing makes up a very small share of employment in EU, but numbers are even lower in Lithuanian regions (data not available in Polish regions).

In terms of sectoral composition of gross value added, the service sector is dominant in the Programme regions, in line with the European trend. It is closely related to the agriculture, forestry and fishery sector, remains a significant source of employment and contribute a sizeable portion of the value added produced within the Programme area (as on average in EU, this sector makes up about 1,9% of gross value added, but in the Programme regions the indicator is at least several times higher).

Programme territory includes many natural objects and is rich with natural resources and historical, cultural objects. Tourists might be attracted by lakes, rivers, various landscapes, parks and forests. However, despite the presence of varied tourist attractions, unpolluted and exciting natural landscapes and a decent accommodation base, relatively large disparities between regions are noted in the level of development of the tourist infrastructure. The environmental and climate conditions as well as the seasonal character of the cultural offer provided by cultural centres and institutions are currently used only in a limited extent for the creation of year-round tourist offers. The sustainable use of the environmental assets for building the tourism offer, breaking the seasonality in tourism, can contribute to the development of the whole Programme area. As the Programme area does not have a common approach towards building a sustainable and innovative tourist sector, could therefore benefit from cooperation in developing a common tourist product. This might bring not only economic benefits, but also elevate the Programme

area as a more attractive tourist destination and help preserve the unique environment of the region.

### 1.1. Key social challenges in the Programme area

Even though the trends for individual regions have varied, all Programme regions experiencing negative growth rates, the society of the Programme area is getting older, what may cause problems that might appear in the future – aging society will need additional services, infrastructure, personnel for the elderly. Decreasing number of young people will signal that optimization of education infrastructure might be needed in order to effectively use limited resources, etc. Also, negative trends of the population might suggest that living conditions in the area are insufficient and larger cities in the proximity attract most of the young and talented who want to fulfil their potential and develop their abilities. Rural regions tend to experience most heavy depopulation – a trend that is directly related to continuing rural-urban migration towards the urban centres, that offers better financial and development opportunities, causes the loss of well-educated young people that could potentially strengthen the local labour market. As Lithuanian population is shrinking faster, it could be expected that economic situation might worsen and additional interventions will be needed to attract citizens from other cities or countries.

As it was mentioned before, Programme area has rather low density and in the future, it might be even lower. It signals low attractiveness of regions and both national and local initiatives are needed to stop the brain drain and make living in the Programme regions attractive by ensuring access to all social, health, culture and other services (especially for elderly, having in mind aging society in the regions). However, due to lower number of citizens there will be a need of infrastructure and service optimization, thus, it might be a difficult task for the local authorities to find balance between accessibility of services and also

using resources in an efficient way. Also, the Programme may contribute for better opportunities of creating better job positions which allow to compete with other, larger cities to have sufficient talent pool.

## 1.2. Environment and infrastructure

The Programme area could be described as attractive natural landscape, having water and forest resources, proximity to international transit routes which could all be used to fulfil the potential of nature, well-being tourism, transition to green economy, further increase ecological awareness of the citizens. Also, create new brand-name ecological products and reduce the impact of the area to the climate.

In relation to the large forest areas, it is important to implement common activities concerning climate change adaptation and mitigation as significant amounts of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions pose threats. Programme area has medium risks for forest fires and other extreme natural events as draughts, storms, etc. Forest monitoring and managing activities could be implemented together. However, carrying out disaster / emergency services is challenging due to national legislation hindering cross-border cooperation.

Climate change and air pollution is closely interrelated. Combating air pollution could both help to improve health of the citizens and also create favourable conditions for sustainable, well-being tourism. Cross-border area has relatively low air pollution – level of particular matter in the ambient air does not exceed recommended limits of EU of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. However, levels of pollution are temporary higher during heating season, when coal is used to heat homes. Other significant pollution source is an excess use of fertilizers and pesticides which determines high level of nitrates in common rivers and lakes.

Effective waste management is one of the tools in order to combat climate change. Lithuania and Poland are facing increasing amounts of municipal waste. EU trends reveal positive signs as less municipal waste is being discarded, however, in Lithuania and Poland amount of municipal waste is increasing (especially in Lithuania). It could bring concern because waste landfilling is one of the sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Compared to the 2009, the level of greenhouse gas emissions has increased in both countries. In 2018, GHG emissions in Poland were at 376,4 mln. tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and it was an increase of 5,4% since 2009. In Lithuania, accordingly – 16,4 mln. tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2018 and increase by 28,1% since 2009. Statistics show that situation is worsening and additional measures to tackle level of emissions are needed. Therefore, effective waste management involves the exchange of experiences and the implementation of promotional and educational activities for inhabitants on recycling and waste reduction, as recycling and lowering the amount of waste generated is one of the means to mitigate climate change.

By financing projects related to the solving problems described above, the Programme will contribute to the expenditure supported to achieve the climate objectives set for the Union budget: according to the calculations the Programme contribution to the climate coefficient will be 18 %; for environmental coefficient 37,2% and biodiversity coefficient 12,3%.

Regarding weaknesses and threats, low population density which increases costs of infrastructure investments, lower energy efficiency (especially in residential buildings with affects pollution in the cold season) was identified. Also, not satisfactory conditions of local roads and unsatisfactory public transport availability which is connected to the lack of resources, was found.

Trends reveal threats for further increasing greenhouse gas emissions, endangered biodiversity, lower soil and common waters quality due to abundant and excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides. Also, there is not enough financial support for natural protection areas which covers large

territory of the area. Effective waste management is also one of the tools in order to combat threats for biodiversity.

Moreover, it was decided that the actions implemented under the Programme would not be in contrary to the objectives of the European green deal objectives. In that context the Programme will support only activities that respect the climate and environmental standards and that would do no significant harm to environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

### 1.3. Healthcare services

Healthcare services in both Lithuania and Poland cross-border area are provided mainly through state healthcare system, funded by national health insurance schemes. However, problems are faced due to lack of financing, optimization of the medical institutions, low accessibility and quality of healthcare. Accessibility and quality problems result in overall worse health of the citizens. Strategic documents state the problem of accessibility of health services and lower awareness in the health sector. For instance, National Strategy of Regional Development 2030 of Poland, Development Strategy of the Augustów District until 2020, Vilnius regional development plan 2014-2020 refer to poor quality and limited access to medical services, and insufficient number of primary health care points.

As indicated in Needs and Potentials document, mortality rates from preventable and treatable causes are especially high in Lithuania, which in 2011 was 602,3 and 492,6 in 2017; in Poland respectively 395,4 in 2011 and 351,4 in 2017. Although the mortality rates from treatable and preventable causes have gone down, they are still above the EU average (255,6 in 2016, newer data not available) in both countries.

In Lithuania health expenditure per capita is only half of the EU average, while in Poland expenditure per capita is also one of the lowest in EU. Both countries are facing challenges regarding accessibility of services: there is lack of medical professionals, rural areas are witnessing optimization of infrastructure and consequently lack of services, for example, for primary guaranteed services waiting times can span 3 months, and for specific operations (e.g., cataract operation, hip replacements) waiting times can exceed 10 months. Also, there are significant disparities regarding accessibility to emergency services in rural areas. Lower access to health services, lower number of doctors might also contribute to lesser well-being of the citizens of the Programme territory.

The Programme is targeting to finance the solutions to bring services closer to the people such as mobile healthcare services including most of the primary care services which could be delivered on both sides of the border. Another group of healthcare services especially important for the Programme territory is related to the mental health issues. Actions related to mental health have potential to have long-term impact on the cross-border area, taking into account impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future cooperation will be also expanded in relation to knowledge and policy exchange in topics of digitalization of healthcare services. The strategic goal of the Programme is to facilitate the cooperation of different healthcare institutions and related stakeholders in the cross-border area to achieve long-term goals in this sector.

#### 1.4. Cross-border functional linkages and functional areas

Creating functional area in the Lithuania-Poland cross-border area is a difficult task due to low density of the area, language barriers, lack of common services and lack of data of commuting and trade flows. There is a lack of concrete data of citizens flows between the regions and a comprehensive

separate study is needed to evaluate the flows as this data could mainly be collected by the representative surveys among citizens. According to the ESPON, Lithuanian-Polish cross-border area has low potential for joining existing assets and functions and bringing benefits to the citizens by pooling common resources. It is described as low polycentric development potential. Potential for further polycentric development is evaluated using three criteria:

- the hierarchy of urban settlement structure that shows different size and functions of urban nodes;
- accessibility patterns which reveal the possibility for people to connect within the region, the country and within the EU;
- existing territorial cooperation structures and practices.

Programme area, which could be described as having weak urban structures, first needs to ensure better accessibility and improve territorial cooperation. It is indicated that such areas would benefit more from the urban areas in close proximity. It would mean that more functional potential is in the nearest densely populated areas inside the countries, not on the cross-border area.

In "Border orientation paper for Lithuania and Poland" it is stated that cross-border travel for work/business purposes is very low and sporadic. Level of travelling for leisure activities (tourism, shopping, visiting family or friends) in comparison with other EU regions is also very low.

One of the identified possibilities for creation functional areas is the tourism functional area which is possible within the Lithuania – Poland border area and might bring significant benefits to the Programme territory.

One functional area was identified within the Programme territory using the results of the report "Identification of key elements for creating the touristic cross-border functional area at the Lithuanian – Polish border" which was prepared under the contract by European Commission. Functional area would be formed by Lithuanian and Polish municipalities located in the cross-border

area. This area has potential to create and provide common tourism products (which will be identified in the further stages of the functional area analysis as stated in the report). Objects and areas that have significant potential are protected natural territorial complexes which make up about 38,5% of the area, due to the special nature of the area the type of desirable tourism would be sustainable tourism.

Having assessed shortcomings of the area, current tourism products and potential for future products above mentioned report states that the concept "The Mysterious Land of the Yotvingian Tribe" which is directed at the Yotvingian heritage has the largest potential for developing common cross-border tourism products as it already partially present in the local tourism offer and manages to attract attention of tourists. This concept also distinguishes area from other neighbouring areas. Co-management system of the area is foreseen which includes various stakeholders. Brand of the tourist functional zone will be created in several stages. Also, Lithuanian and Polish stakeholders have proposed activities and project ideas which could facilitate the creation of the functional area.

Additionally, it has to be noted that potential for cooperation within thematic functional relations may extend beyond the territory closest to the border and even beyond the current eligible area of the Programme. This is indicated among others by the results of previously mentioned ESPON study and was also recognised in "Needs and potential analysis for the cross-border Programme- INTERREG 2021-2027 between Lithuania and Poland".

Even though currently there are no observed functional areas in the Programme area and they have limited functional relationships, there is a room for creation of functional areas and links in the future, mainly in the tourism and environment protection fields. Solving the problems that were identified in the aforementioned report, creating common public services could further facilitate the cooperation and increase interest and movement of

citizens across the border which would provide basis for functional cooperation.

Taking into account the above observation, one of the main strategic objectives of the Programme will be to support inclusive projects within potential to form or strengthening the basis for the future functional areas and relationships in the Programme area and its closes vicinity. It is also important for the Cooperation Programme to contribute to design of the Polish-Lithuanian linkages also beyond the projects frames in the future and building potential for cooperation on various socio-economic levels.

## 2. Joint investment needs and complementarity and synergies with other funding programmes

The Programme addresses the joint challenges in the Lithuania – Poland border area and complementarity with national and mainstream programmes will be ensured. The Programme is complementary to the EU funds Operational Programmes being implemented in Lithuania and Poland, as it mainly addresses the joint challenges and the cross-border cooperation is the main goal and mean for achieving the planned outputs and results.

The complementarity between mainstream operational programmes in Poland and Interreg ones is ensured through participation of the NA and regional representatives in Joint Monitoring Committee. The important role is played by representatives of Podlaskie and Warminsko-Mazurskie Voivodships as they are also involved in the implementation of Regional Operational Programmes in both voivodships. The scope of intervention of the programme will not duplicate with mainstream programmes – national or regional ones. The lack of overlap with intervention will be verified at the project appraisal stage. Additionally, the coordination is provided within the NA itself by cooperation and exchanging information with departments responsible for particular

programmes or the one involved in strategic and complementarity issues e.g. Department for Coordination of EU Funds Implementation or Department of Strategy.

The Programme will create synergies with other Interreg programmes implemented in the area, ensuring wider scale of cross-border and transnational cooperation initiatives and solutions. The biggest possibilities for the complementarities and synergies were detected in the implementation of the ISO, however the implementation of PO2 and PO4 also has huge potential.

Both, Interreg Central Europe and Interreg Lithuania–Poland programmes will provide support under PO2 and ISO1 which will provide complementarity of undertaken interventions. Common fields of both programmes' intervention include: protection and preservation of nature and biodiversity, reduction of all forms of pollution, circular economy and support of better cooperation governance. The Interreg Central Europe Programme area covers in Poland the whole country, overlapping with the Polish part of the Interreg Lithuania–Poland cooperation area. Lithuania is not included to the Interreg Central Europe Programme area.

There will be an interaction between cross-border Programme Interreg Lithuania – Poland 2021 – 2027 with Interreg Europe Programme in the field of Priority 3, ISO (vi) Other actions to support better cooperation governance. Common fields of intervention include: development and implementation of joint programmes, cooperation with employers, programmes for Investment in jobs & growth, promoting exchange of experience, share of best practises, cooperation between regional public and private providers. The Programme area covers territories of both countries, overlapping with the Interreg Lithuania–Poland cooperation area.

The majority of actions planned in the framework of Interreg 2021–2027 Lithuania – Poland cross-border cooperation Programme are complementary and cohesive with the intervention logic proposed under Interreg Poland–

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Belarus-Ukraine Programme 2021-2027. Both Programmes emphasise the role of intervention in this area, which may contribute to the integration of local communities and thus to the establishment of long-term cooperation. The Interreg Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme area covers the whole of Podlaskie Voivodeship, i.e. the Białystok and Suwałki subregions are overlapping.

Significant part of actions planned in the framework of the Interreg Lithuania-Poland Programme are complementary with the intervention logic proposed under Interreg Poland-Russia Programme 2021-2027. Approach taken under IS01 complements each other within issues regarding SO Build-up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions. Programme area covers in Poland the whole territory of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship, and subregions of Pomorskie and Podlaskie Voivodships. It is overlapping with the Interreg Lithuania-Poland Programme in case of Ełcki, Suwalski and Białostocki subregions.

Basing on the draft intervention logic of the Interreg Lithuania-Russia Programme, there shall be complementarities in the scope of P0 2, P04 and IS01 which are selected under both Programmes. The Programmes shall be overlapping in Tauragė, Marijampolė and Alytus regions in Lithuania.

The scope of interactions of Interreg Baltic Sea Region with the Interreg Lithuania-Poland can be observed in case of P02, and IS01, included in both programmes. However, different areas of intervention have been prioritised in case of transnational approach under Interreg Baltic Sea Region, which within P02 is focused on issues related to: sustainable use of water, circular economy, energy efficiency and sustainable urban mobility. Under IS01 complementarity can be observed in case of action other actions to support better cooperation governance. The Programme area covers territories of both countries, overlapping with the Interreg Lithuania-Poland cooperation area.

### 3. Lessons learnt from past experience

The programming period 2021-2027 will be the fourth one for the Lithuania-Poland Cooperation Programme. The evaluation confirmed that the Interreg V-A Lithuania-Poland Cooperation Programme achieved a balanced partnership between the two neighbouring countries, both in the number of beneficiaries and their budgets. On the Lithuanian side of the border the largest number of partnerships was formed by organisations from Varėna and Alytus city municipalities. On the Polish side, the most partnerships were made by beneficiaries from the two districts closest to the border – Suwalski and Sejneński subregions. However, in general there was a relatively extensive territorial coverage of the Programme, a factor taken into account for the upcoming programming period.

Because of the large share of rural areas at the Lithuanian-Polish border, often reasons of cooperation were based on facing the same problem in the area, but not a common one where the cross-border cooperation is essential – especially in regards to equipment purchase and infrastructure. Cooperation was not always seen as a value-added aspect and in some cases, collaboration with the neighbouring partner was even seen as a burden. For this reason, in the New Programming period the focus will be on people to people actions and providing support to build connected cross-border community through mutual efforts of all stakeholders.

Nonetheless, even when a problem could be solved separately, the partnerships brought additional benefits, such as broadened mindset of the target groups, more integrated heritage objects promoted within one route, and more trust and cooperation across communities and professionals. Small projects involved more person-to-person contact and partnership compared to large infrastructure projects.

During the programming period 2014-2020, the results of the evaluation demonstrated that almost half of the beneficiaries were newly attracted public

institutions, which was treated as a success factor. Consequently, attracting new institutions is a goal for the 2021–2027 programming period, and participation of small organisations in the projects financed by the Programme is planned.

The largest interventions during the programming period 2014–2020 were attained in three policy themes: social inclusion, firefighting and rescue, and tourism, while more projects related to the cross-border employment initiatives were needed. The insufficient interest in implementing projects under the Priority 2 “*Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility*” was determined by several factors.

Those include stronger design orientation towards soft activities than infrastructure, which restricted interest from some organisations, the limitations of state aid rules to the actions which could be implemented and exclusion of private entities as eligible beneficiaries. An external circumstance came into play – the improving situation in the labour market was a factor for lower demand and lower political interest. Taking this into account, the priorities and activities planned to be financed for the 2021–2027 period were consulted with the potential Programme stakeholders in the events in both Lithuania and Poland already in the beginning of 2020 to better formulate the programme.

The main findings of the 2014–2020 Programme proved that the value for society delivered by the projects is higher than the costs. The projects had a slightly positive impact on horizontal principles (sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women); however, there were not many projects directly directed towards these issues. Simplified cost options were the most effective measures in reducing administrative burden introduced during the 2014–2020 Programming period, and accordingly they are planned to be continued and expanded in the 2021–2027 period.

#### 4. Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and sea basin strategies, horizontal principles and EU initiatives

Both Lithuania and Poland, along with Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany and Latvia, participate in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). It is aimed at reinforcing cooperation among the countries of the region in order to fulfil three objectives - save the sea, connect the region and increase prosperity. The jointly-agreed Action Plan for the EUSBSR includes a number of priority areas for macro-regional cooperation addressing key challenges and opportunities in the region.

During the programming period 2014-2020, the contribution to the EUSBSR was assessed during the project application assessment procedure. During the evaluation of the 2014-2020 Programme it was identified that most of the projects contributed to the Policy Area (PA) of Health, PA Secure and PA Tourism.

Similar approach is chosen for the current 2021-2027 programming period. The Programme is not directly financing actions of the EUSBSR, however the projects planned to be supported will contribute to the different policy areas (PA) of the EUSBSR, mainly to "PA Tourism", "PA Secure", "PA Culture ", "PA Health", "PA Education", "PA Bio-economy". Contribution to the EUSBSR of every application will be assessed during the selection of application procedure.

Programme will ensure in all Programme cycle stages the respect to the horizontal principles (sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, gender equality, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights) during the selection procedures of the project and further monitoring procedures of the financed projects. Any of Programme actions are not being planned in the context of the EU initiative "A New European Bauhaus".

During the implementation of the programme the Managing Authority and National Authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support policy objectives (including professionalization efforts to address capacity gaps). Beneficiaries will be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives should be incorporated into public procurement procedures.

1.3. Justification for the selection of policy objectives and the Interreg specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure

*Reference: Article 17(4)(c)*

*Table 1*

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective

2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility ('PO 2')

Selected specific objective

(vii) Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

Priority

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## 1. Promoting environmental wellbeing

### Justification for selection

Environmental interest is a crucial topic for EU, national and regional agendas of sustainable development, also important part of the strategies relevant to the Programme area.

Lithuanian and Polish focus group participants pointed out the needs to combat water pollution, restore wetlands and support environmental education.

In terms of enhancement of biodiversity, the Programme area is unique in its wetlands. There are 3 Ramsar Convention areas of international importance on the Lithuanian side of the border (out of 7 in Lithuania overall) and 5 areas on the Polish side (out of 18 in Poland).

Programme area could outshine at using its nature for the common good, using its relatively clean air, high level of forest cover, protected areas, and increasing environmental awareness of citizens to create cooperation to protect the environment. The investments should increase the environmental quality of water resources, bring more and better maintained green spaces, more biodiversity.

### Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective

4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights ('PO 4')

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## Selected specific objective

(v) Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- based and community-based care

## Priority

### 2. Promoting physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing

#### Justification for selection

Healthcare quality and accessibility have obvious impact on overall health and wellbeing of the citizens. Higher than EU average mortality rates from preventable and treatable causes in the cross-border area pose a challenge for closer collaboration in this scope. COVID-19 pandemic put additional pressure on the mental health of the citizens, additionally interfering in maintaining cross-border connections and separating communities.

Intermediate type of the Programme area (according to EUROSTAT urban-rural typology) and further development of medical institutions creates demand for development of mobile health care services. Demographic changes, ageing society in particular for the Programme area, put increasing pressure on local authorities and service providers to provide accessible and quality healthcare for various social groups in the cross-border area.

## Selected specific objective

(vi) Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

Priority

2. Promoting physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing

Justification for selection

There are a lot of common cultural and historical heritage, shared traditions for culinary and other activities, well-developed resorts and SPAs in the Programme area. More tourists will be attracted by lakes, rivers, various landscapes, parks, forests which cover about 30% of the Programme territory. The resources can be better used for cultural and sustainable tourism purposes and contribute to the Programme area's social and economic development.

EC study regarding functional areas pointed out that area for tourists is relatively unknown, there is little information in opinion formation platforms, lack of cooperation between public tourism institutions of Poland and Lithuania and tour organizers, lack of management and marketing skills of tourism specialists. However, the development of the tourism in the Programme area should be implemented with respect for natural heritage and resources, social dimension and without focus on massive tourism.

Until the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of tourists in the Programme area was constantly increasing. From 2012 to 2019 the number of tourists has grown by 66,7%, amounting to more than 2 million tourists annually, however dropped down temporarily as the number of foreign travellers has dropped significantly due to pandemic situation and restrictions applied. The tourism industry was

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severely hit by the pandemic and requires public interventions to recover the growth. This poses a threat to already established connections in the cross-border area and already established seasonal activities.

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective

Interreg specific objective "A better cooperation governance"

Selected specific objective

ISO (c) Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions

Priority

3. Strengthening cooperation of local stakeholders

Justification for selection

The Programme aims to support various grassroots activities and encourage people-to-people cooperation.

Lithuania - Poland CBC programme for 2014-2020 successfully supported various small scale cooperation projects, and there is a need to continue the promotion of cooperation of local actors.

EC border orientation paper for Lithuania-Poland (2019) points out that although there are no specific geographical/physical border barriers that

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would hinder cooperation, there are several cultural barriers linked to social attitudes towards neighbours and to language differences.

This is a chance for smaller partners to implement people-to-people actions, also contributing to capacity building of local administration in raising awareness and connecting people.

Local government organisation will have opportunity to reach out to different partners to promote cross-border cooperation and establishing contacts between institutions.

Potential to attract NGOs is not fully utilised, yet there are numerous organisations within thematic interest of the Programme to join the activities. Within this priority, Programme will encourage participation and promote citizens' engagement, as well as awareness, of the cross-border cooperation.

Political participation is low in the cross-border area, and activities planned within this priority will bring interest in the local affairs and activities of local and regional governments of the cross-border area.

Selected specific objective

ISO (f) Other actions to support better cooperation governance

Priority

3. Strengthening cooperation of local stakeholders

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## Justification for selection

The Programme aims to support sharing of good practices and exchange of experience of public institutions in different policy areas.

Focus group participants indicated many needs for capacity building of public institutions in the social area: reduction of social exclusion, development of social services, social needs of people with disabilities.

In terms of education, focus groups participants pointed out the needs to invest in joint activities related to policy regarding all forms of education, provision of training and requalification necessary for the labour market, digitalisation of education, etc.

Digital capacities of the citizens are lower than the EU average: in 2019, only 44% of Polish adult citizens had basic or better digital skills (Lithuanian average – 56%, EU average – 58%). Furthermore, within this priority partners will be encouraged to implement activities within digitalisation topic, which is unevenly approached within the Programme area. This is a chance for local authorities to implement policies that would have a big impact on cross-border communities and would build a base for future cooperation in the area.

## 2. Priorities [300]

*Reference: Article 17(4)(d) and (e)*

### 2.1. Title of the priority (repeated for each priority)

*Reference: Article 17(4)(d)*

Priority 1. Promoting environmental wellbeing

The document meets accessibility rules

2.1.1. Specific objective (repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

SO (vii) Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

*Reference: Article 17(4)(e)*

2.1.2. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

*Reference: Article 17(4)(e)(i), Article 17(9)(c)(ii)*

Expected contribution to the specific objective

Firstly, the Programme will improve the capacities of stakeholders in the fields of nature protection, preservation of biodiversity, reduction of pollution and development of green infrastructure by supporting the exchange of experience. Secondly, Programme will contribute to increase in environmental awareness by different communication and education activities, including use of protected areas for sustainable tourism and education. Thirdly, the Programme aims to support green infrastructure development and improvement initiatives in the Programme territory. This will also complement activities implemented under SO for tourism and culture. Fourthly, the Programme foresees joint actions to reduce different forms of water pollution relevant in the Programme area.

The projects of this Programme specific objective potentially shall contribute to the actions of several EUSBSR Policy Areas (PA), which might be “PA Bio-economy”, “PA Tourism” and possibly others.

## Related types of action

- Exchange of experience of policies applied in the fields of nature protection, preservation of biodiversity, reduction of pollution, development of green infrastructure;
- Joint actions and cooperation in environmental education and awareness raising;
- Protected areas adaptation for sustainable tourism and education;
- Maintenance and improvement of green public spaces in rural and urban areas;
- Joint actions to reduce water pollution (pesticides, heavy metals, other pollutants), including water pollution in river catchment areas;
- Joint development of pilot water and waste water solutions;
- Cooperation and joint actions identifying and strengthening functional links and/or areas in the scope of environment protection and nature preservation in the Programme area and its nearest vicinity, enhancing scope of positive environmental impact on the cross-border area.

### 2.1.3. Indicators

*Reference: Article 17(4)(e)(ii), Article 17(9)(c)(iii)*

#### Table 2: Output indicators

Priority 1

Specific objective 1.1

ID [5] 116

Indicator Jointly developed solutions

Measurement unit [255] Solution

The document meets accessibility rules

Milestone (2024) [200] 2

Final target (2029) [200] 10

Priority 1

Specific objective 1.1

ID [5] 87

Indicator Organisations cooperating across borders

Measurement unit [255] Organisation

Milestone (2024) [200] 14

Final target (2029) [200] 42

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority 1

Specific objective 1.1

ID 104

Indicator Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations

Measurement unit Solution

Baseline 0

The document meets accessibility rules

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 8

Source of data *Progress reports of projects / survey*

Comments

Priority 1

Specific objective 1.1

ID 84

Indicator Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion

Measurement unit Organisation

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 40

Source of data Progress reports of projects / survey

Comments

2.1.4. The main target groups

*Reference: Article 17(3)(e)(iii), Article 17(9)(c)(iv)*

*Text field [7000]*

The document meets accessibility rules

The main types of beneficiaries foreseen to be financed under this specific objective are:

- Local, regional and national authorities;
- Public bodies and bodies governed by the public law;
- Associations
- NGOs.
- EGTCs

The main target groups of the specific objective are local communities, visitors and tourists, also SMEs, etc.

2.1.5. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

*Reference: Article 17(4)(e)(iv)*

The Programme does not plan to use any territorial tools mentioned above.

2.1.6. Planned use of financial instruments

*Reference: Article 17(4)(e)(v)*

Due to the planned scope of intervention (mainly soft activities focused on strengthening cooperation and sharing new joint solutions), potential beneficiaries (i.a. lack of SMEs), target groups and rather small budget, furthermore the projects will not generate the net revenue, i.e. the additional revenue of a project will not exceed the costs, the Programme does not foresee the use of financial instruments.

2.1.7. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

*Reference: Article 17(4)(e)(vi), Article 17(9)(c)(v)*

The document meets accessibility rules

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no 1

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 1.1

Code 46 Support to entities that provide services contributing to the low carbon economy and to resilience to climate change, including awareness-raising measures

Amount (EUR) 1 266 500

Priority no 1

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 1.1

Code 59 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: fires (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)

Amount (EUR) 2 533 000

Priority no 1

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 1.1

The document meets accessibility rules

Code 60 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)

Amount (EUR) 2 533 000

Priority no 1

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 1.1

Code 61 Risk prevention and management of non-climate related natural risks (for example earthquakes) and risks linked to human activities (for example technological accidents), including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches

Amount (EUR) 2 533 000

Priority no 1

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 1.1

Code 71 Promoting the use of recycled materials as raw materials

Amount (EUR) 633 250

Priority no 1

The document meets accessibility rules

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 1.1

Code 78 Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites

Amount (EUR) 1 266 500

Priority no 1

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 1.1

Code 79 Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources,  
green and blue infrastructure

Amount (EUR) 1 899 750

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no 1

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 1.1

Code 01

Amount (EUR) 12 665 000

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

The document meets accessibility rules

Priority No 1

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 1.1

Code 18

Amount (EUR) 12 665 000

2.2. Title of the priority (repeated for each priority)

Priority 2. Promoting physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing

2.2.1. Specific objective (repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

SO (v) Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care

2.2.2. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Expected contribution to the specific objective

Firstly, the Programme will contribute to equal access to health care by supporting joint development or upgrade of health care services, mainly focusing on smaller health care institutions in the cross-border rural areas who should also benefit from the Programme. The development includes strengthening the medical and supporting staff, volunteers and filling the gaps with the necessary equipment. Secondly, the development of mobile health care services will also result in improvement of access to healthcare. Thirdly,

The document meets accessibility rules

the Programme will have a particular interest in mental health and will support cooperation in this area. Fourthly, active and healthy ageing is another key interest of the Programme.

The projects of this Programme specific objective potentially shall contribute to the actions of the EUSBSR "PA Health".

#### Related types of action

- Joint development or upgrade of health care services, long term care services, help lines, on-line services related to health, emergency services, joint trainings for medical, supporting staff and volunteers;
- Joint actions and cooperation encouraging active and healthy ageing;
- Development of mobile health care services;
- Joint actions and cooperation in the area of mental health.

#### 2.2.3. Indicators

##### Table 2: Output indicators

##### Priority 2

##### Specific objective 2.1

ID [5] 69

Indicator Capacity of new or modernised health care facilities

Measurement unit [255] persons/year

The document meets accessibility rules

Milestone (2024) [200] 0

Final target (2029) [200] 12 186

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.1

ID [5] 87

Indicator Organisations cooperating across borders

Measurement unit [255] Organisation

Milestone (2024) [200] 9

Final target (2029) [200] 28

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.1

ID [5] 116

Indicator Jointly developed solutions

Measurement unit [255] Solution

Milestone (2024) [200] 1

The document meets accessibility rules

Final target (2029) [200] 7

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.1

ID 73

Indicator Annual users of new or modernised health care facilities

Measurement unit users/year

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 1827

Source of data Progress reports of projects / survey

Comments

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.1

ID 84

The document meets accessibility rules

Indicator Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion

Measurement unit Organisation

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 27

Source of data Progress reports of projects / survey

Comments

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.1

ID 104

Indicator Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations

Measurement unit Solution

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 5

Source of data Progress reports of projects / survey

The document meets accessibility rules

## Comments

### 2.2.4. The main target groups

The main types of beneficiaries foreseen to be financed under this specific objective are:

- Local, regional and national authorities;
- Public bodies and bodies governed by the public law;
- Associations
- NGOs.
- EGTCs

The main target groups of the specific objective are local communities, visitors and tourists, also SMEs, etc.

### 2.2.5. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

The Programme does not plan to use any territorial tools mentioned above.

### 2.2.6. Planned use of financial instruments

Due to the planned scope of intervention (mainly soft activities focused on strengthening cooperation and sharing new joint solutions), potential beneficiaries (i.a. lack of SMEs), target groups and rather small budget, furthermore the projects will not generate the net revenue, i.e. the additional revenue of a project will not exceed the costs, the Programme does not foresee the use of financial instruments.

### 2.2.7. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

The document meets accessibility rules

Priority no 2

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 2.1

Code 129 Health equipment

Amount (EUR) 2 533 000

Priority no 2

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 2.1

Code 130 Health mobile assets

Amount (EUR) 1 688 667

Priority no 2

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 2.1

Code 160 Measures to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems (excluding infrastructure)

Amount (EUR) 1 688 668

Priority no 2

The document meets accessibility rules

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 2.1

Code 173 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context

Amount (EUR) 2 533 000

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no 2

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 2.1

Code 01

Amount (EUR) 8 443 335

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No 2

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 2.1

Code 18

Amount (EUR) 8 443 335

The document meets accessibility rules

2.3.1. Specific objective (repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

SO (vi) Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

2.3.2. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Expected contribution to the specific objective

The role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation will be enhanced in a few ways. Firstly, the Programme will support better visibility and increased visibility of the cross-border area as a tourism destination. Secondly, the Programme will facilitate the use of cultural and natural heritage to develop joint culture and tourism products and services, especially ones related to the sustainable tourism, including the development of common routes. Thirdly, the Programme will utilize the heritage not only for tourism purposes, but for other community purposes as well, such as social, educational, etc. Fourthly, infrastructure and other investments facilitating sustainable tourism will be supported. Finally, the Programme plans to support activities which will contribute to the development of tourism cross-border functional area, as envisaged in the EC study.

The projects of this Programme specific objective potentially shall contribute to the actions of several EUSBSR Policy Areas (PA), which might be “PA Tourism”, “PA Culture” and possibly others.

Related types of action

- Development of joint marketing strategies and their implementation;
- Development of joint tourism and culture routes;

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- Joint cultural events and activities, including search of partners on the other side of the border with matching activities;
- Development of joint tourism and culture products;
- Sustainable development of natural and cultural heritage, including intangible assets, for tourism and community needs (social, educational, cultural);
- Joint initiatives in the field of maintenance and revitalisation of sites of cultural and natural heritage;
- Cooperation and joint actions implementing the concepts of tourism cross-border functional area proposed in the EC study "Identification of key elements for creating the touristic cross-border functional area at the Lithuanian –Polish border"

### 2.3.3. Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.2

ID [5] 77

Indicator Number of cultural and tourism sites supported

Measurement unit [255] cultural and tourism sites

Milestone (2024) [200] 0

Final target (2029) [200] 19

The document meets accessibility rules

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.2

ID [5] 87

Indicator Organisations cooperating across borders

Measurement unit [255] Organisation

Milestone (2024) [200] 14

Final target (2029) [200] 42

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.2

ID [5] 116

Indicator Jointly developed solutions

Measurement unit [255] Solution

Milestone (2024) [200] 2

Final target (2029) [200] 10

The document meets accessibility rules

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.2

ID 77

Indicator Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported

Measurement unit visitors/ year

Baseline *215 479*

Reference year 2019

Final target (2029) 247 800

Source of data *Progress reports of projects / survey*

Comments

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.2

ID 84

Indicator Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion

Measurement unit Organisation

The document meets accessibility rules

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 40

Source of data *Progress reports of projects / survey*

Comments

Priority 2

Specific objective 2.2

ID 104

Indicator Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations

Measurement unit Solution

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 8

Source of data *Progress reports of projects / survey*

Comments

The document meets accessibility rules

#### 2.3.4. The main target groups

The main types of beneficiaries foreseen to be financed under this specific objective are:

- Local, regional and national authorities;
- Public bodies and bodies governed by the public law;
- Associations
- NGOs.
- EGTCs

The main target groups of the specific objective are local communities, visitors and tourists, also SMEs, etc.

#### 2.3.5. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

The Programme does not plan to use any territorial tools mentioned above.

#### 2.3.6. Planned use of financial instruments

Due to the planned scope of intervention (mainly soft activities focused on strengthening cooperation and sharing new joint solutions), potential beneficiaries (i.a. lack of SMEs), target groups and rather small budget, furthermore the projects will not generate the net revenue, i.e. the additional revenue of a project will not exceed the costs, the Programme does not foresee the use of financial instruments.

#### 2.3.7. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no 2

Fund ERDF

The document meets accessibility rules

Specific objective 2.2

Code 165 Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services

Amount (EUR) 4 432 750

Priority no 2

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 2.2

Code 166 Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services

Amount (EUR) 4 432 750

Priority no 2

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 2.2

Code 167 Protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism other than Natura 2000 sites

Amount (EUR) 3 799 500

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no 2

The document meets accessibility rules

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 2.2

Code 01

Amount (EUR) 12 665 000

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No 2

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 2.2

Code 18

Amount (EUR) 12 665 000

2.4. Title of the priority (repeated for each priority)

Priority 3. Strengthening cooperation of local stakeholders

2.4.1. Specific objective (repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

ISO (c) Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions

2.4.2. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

The document meets accessibility rules

## Expected contribution to the specific objective

The Programme will contribute to building up mutual trust by encouraging various people-to-people actions. Firstly, different initiatives such as conferences, workshops, etc. strengthening the networking and cooperation of local stakeholders will be promoted. Secondly, the Programme will support relevant joint capacity building, joint events and cultural activities. Thirdly, a special interest is in strengthening citizens involvement in decision making and enforcement of local communities' organisations. Fourthly, the Programme will contribute to people-to-people activities by promoting sport and healthy lifestyle of cross-border communities.

The projects of this Programme specific objective potentially shall contribute to the actions of several EUSBSR Policy Areas (PA), which might be "PA Secure", "PA Culture" and possibly others.

## Related types of action

- Delivery of initiatives (conferences, workshops etc.), aimed at strengthening the networking and cooperation capacity of local actors;
- Joint trainings and other types of capacity building;
- Joint events and cultural activities;
- Activities supporting citizen's involvement in decision making, political participation, enforcement of local communities' organisations, strengthening civic power of citizens and their civic engagement;
- Purchase of small-scale equipment and small scope investments necessary for cooperation project and sustainability activities;
- Promotion of sport and healthy lifestyle of cross-border communities.

## 2.4.3. Indicators

The document meets accessibility rules

**Table 2: Output indicators**

**Priority 3**

**Specific objective 3.1**

**ID [5] 81**

**Indicator Participations in joint actions across borders**

**Measurement unit [255] Participation**

**Milestone (2024) [200] 47**

**Final target (2029) [200] 210**

**Priority 3**

**Specific objective 3.1**

**ID [5] 115**

**Indicator Public events across borders jointly organised**

**Measurement unit [255] Event**

**Milestone (2024) [200] 6**

**Final target (2029) [200] 31**

**The document meets accessibility rules**

Priority 3

Specific objective 3.1

ID [5] 87

Indicator Organisations cooperating across borders

Measurement unit [255] Organisation

Milestone (2024) [200] 11

Final target (2029) [200] 33

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority 3

Specific objective 3.1

ID 85

Indicator Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion

Measurement unit

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029)

The document meets accessibility rules

Source of data *Survey*

Comments

Participation

52

Priority 3

Specific objective 3.1

ID 84

Indicator Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion

Measurement unit Organisation

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 31

Source of data *Progress reports of projects / survey*

Comments

2.4.4.The main target groups

The document meets accessibility rules

53

The main types of beneficiaries foreseen to be financed under this specific objective are:

- Local, regional and national authorities;
- Public bodies and bodies governed by the public law;
- Associations
- NGOs.
- EGTCs

The main target groups of the specific objective are local communities, visitors and tourists, also SMEs, etc.

2.4.5. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

The Programme does not plan to use any territorial tools mentioned above.

2.4.6. Planned use of financial instruments

Due to the planned scope of intervention (mainly soft activities focused on strengthening cooperation and sharing new joint solutions), potential beneficiaries (i.a. lack of SMEs), target groups and rather small budget, furthermore the projects will not generate the net revenue, i.e. the additional revenue of a project will not exceed the costs, the Programme does not foresee the use of financial instruments.

2.4.7. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no 3

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 3.1

The document meets accessibility rules

Code 173 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context

Amount (EUR) 4 221 667

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no 3

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 3.1

Code 01

Amount (EUR) 4 221 667

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No 3

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 3.1

Code 18

Amount (EUR) 4 221 667

2.5.1. Specific objective (repeated for each selected specific objective, for priorities other than technical assistance)

ISO (f) Other actions to support better cooperation governance

The document meets accessibility rules

2.5.2. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Expected contribution to the specific objective

Firstly, the Programme will support the transfer of good practices among Lithuanian and Polish stakeholders in various policy areas, including circular economy and energy efficiency. Secondly, the Programme will in particular support cooperation in the areas of education, including vocational education, life-long education, etc., training and social inclusion. Thirdly, the Programme will promote cooperation in various fields of governance: among firefighting and rescue service providers, police, social or educational institutions, exchange of experience between local authorities, sharing knowledge and best practices in different fields including activities involving NGOs to get synergies and bring added value while jointly solving problems relevant for the cross-border communities.

The projects of this Programme specific objective potentially shall contribute to the actions of several EUSBSR Policy Areas (PA), which might be “PA Secure”, “PA Education” and possibly others.

Related types of action

- Transfer of good practices and cooperation activities between local, regional and national authorities and public service providers;
- Development and implementation of joint training programmes, online training and study programmes, cooperation and joint actions in the area of vocational training;
- Cooperation with employers and organisation of practical learning in private companies located on programme territory;

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- Joint actions and cooperation in the area of firefighting and rescue services;
- Exchange of experience of policies applied in the fields of circular economy and energy efficiency;
- Share of best practices in the field of social integration and working with disadvantaged groups, joint development or upgrade of social services, including piloting and social innovation; joint trainings for social service providers and other specialists working with the target groups;
- Joint activities (events, workshops, etc.) for target groups;
- Purchase of small-scale equipment and investments necessary for cooperation project and sustainability of its results;
- Joint actions identifying and strengthening functional thematic relationships in the Programme area and its nearest vicinity, enhancing impact on the cross-border area.

### 2.5.3. Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority 3

Specific objective 3.2

ID[5] 85

Indicator Participations in joint training schemes

Measurement unit [255] Participation

Milestone (2024) [200] 70

The document meets accessibility rules

Final target (2029) [200] 315

Priority 3

Specific objective 3.2

ID[5] 116

Indicator Jointly developed solutions

Measurement unit [255] Solution

Milestone (2024) [200] 1

Final target (2029) [200] 7

Priority 3

Specific objective 3.2

ID[5] 87

Indicator Organisations cooperating across borders

Measurement unit [255] Organisation

Milestone (2024) [200] 11

Final target (2029) [200] 33

The document meets accessibility rules

**Table 3: Result indicators**

Priority 3

Specific objective 3.2

ID 81

Indicator Completions of joint training schemes

Measurement unit Participants

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 283

Source of data *Progress reports of projects*

Comments

Priority 3

Specific objective 3.2

ID 104

Indicator Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations

The document meets accessibility rules

Measurement unit Solution

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 5

Source of data *Progress reports of projects / survey*

Comments

Priority 3

Specific objective 3.2

ID 84

Indicator Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion

Measurement unit Organisation

Baseline 0

Reference year 2020

Final target (2029) 31

Source of data *Progress reports of projects / survey*

Comments

The document meets accessibility rules

#### 2.5.4. The main target groups

The main types of beneficiaries foreseen to be financed under this specific objective are:

- Local, regional and national authorities;
- Public bodies and bodies governed by the public law;
- Associations
- NGOs.
- EGTCs

The main target groups of the specific objective are local communities, visitors and tourists, also SMEs, etc.

#### 2.5.5. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

The Programme does not plan to use any territorial tools mentioned above.

#### 2.5.6. Planned use of financial instruments

Due to the planned scope of intervention (mainly soft activities focused on strengthening cooperation and sharing new joint solutions), potential beneficiaries (i.a. lack of SMEs), target groups and rather small budget, furthermore the projects will not generate the net revenue, i.e. the additional revenue of a project will not exceed the costs, the Programme does not foresee the use of financial instruments.

#### 2.5.7. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no 3

The document meets accessibility rules

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 3.2

Code 173 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context

Amount (EUR) 4 221 667

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no 3

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 3.2

Code 01

Amount (EUR) 4 221 667

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No 3

Fund ERDF

Specific objective 3.2

Code 18

Amount (EUR) 4 221 667

The document meets accessibility rules

### 3. Financing plan

*Reference: Article 17(4)(g)*

#### 3.1. Financial appropriations by year

*Reference: Article 17(4)(g)(i), Article 17(5)(a)-(d)*

Table 7

<i>Fund</i>	<i>ERDF (territorial cooperation goal)</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>2021</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>2022</i>	<i>7 808 107</i>	<i>7 808 107</i>
<i>2023</i>	<i>7 933 529</i>	<i>7 933 529</i>
<i>2024</i>	<i>8 061 458</i>	<i>8 061 458</i>
<i>2025</i>	<i>8 191 947</i>	<i>8 191 947</i>
<i>2026</i>	<i>6 788 017</i>	<i>6 788 017</i>
<i>2027</i>	<i>6 923 777</i>	<i>6 923 777</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>45 706 835</i>	<i>45 706 835</i>

#### 3.2. Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

*Reference: Article 17(4)(g)(ii), Article 17(5)(a)-(d)*

Table 8

Policy objective	2	4	6		
Priority	1	2	3	Total	Grand total
Fund	ERDF	ERDF	ERDF	ERDF	
Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution )	Total	Total	Total		
EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	13,712,050.00	22,853,418.00	9,141,367.00	45,706,835.00	45,706,835.00
Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	12,665,000.00	21,108,335.00	8,443,334.00	42,216,669.00	42,216,669.00
Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)	1,047,050.00	1,745,083.00	698,033.00	3,490,166.00	3,490,166.00
National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	3,428,013.00	5,713,355.00	2,285,342.00	11,426,710.00	11,426,710.00
Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart National public (c)	3,428,013.00	5,713,355.00	2,285,342.00	11,426,710.00	11,426,710.00
Indicative breakdown of the national	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

The document meets accessibility rules

counterpart National private (d)					
Total (e)=(a)+(b)	17,140,063.0 0	28,566,773.0 0	11,426,709.0 0	57,133,545.0 0	57,133,545.0 0
Co- financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00
Contributions from the third countries	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

4. Action taken to involve the relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme and the role of those programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation

*Reference: Article 17(4)(h)*

The preparation of the Programme was in line with the provisions set out in the Article 17(3)(g) of the Interreg Regulation. The Programming Task Force (PTF) was formed from the representatives of national, regional and local levels: the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy of the Republic of Poland, regional institutions and social and economic partners. The PTF has started its activities in 2019.

There was a questionnaire to the potential programme stakeholders (local and regional authorities, service providers, NGO's, business support institutions, universities, environmental organizations, etc.) prepared and distributed which helped to get the overview of the needs of the different institutions followed by two workshops to discuss the new programme perspectives basing on the Policy Objectives for 2021-2027 period which took place on 16 January 2020 in Ryn (Poland) and on 23 January 2020 in Vilnius (Lithuania).

During the process of preparation of the needs and potential analysis for the programme various stakeholders were interviewed and consulted through the surveys and focus group meetings. The aim of this research was to understand best the most important aspects and needs of the cooperation within the programme by Programme stakeholders, existing/ and potential partners and other institutions. The outcome of this analytical work was transferred into SWOT analysis and Problems and Objectives' Tree which directed thematic scope of the programme.

The documents agreed by PTF were provided for access of the general public on the programme website dedicated to 2021-2027 programme. The documents were also published on the website of the programme authorities.

The public consultations of the draft programme were held from 20 December 2021 till 19 January 2022 and included i.a. the possibility of providing comments via email to the JS and a series of conferences on the programme area. The reports from public consultations are available upon the request of Commission.

Monitoring of the Programme implementation shall be the responsibility of the Programme Monitoring Committee (MC) which is planned to be established after the Programme adoption and constituted from representatives of national, regional and local levels, including social and economic partners. The involvement of socio-economic and environmental Programme partners in the work of the MC will be ensured by the Member States in line with the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct and the CPR. Appropriate measures to avoid potential conflict of interest will be taken where involving relevant partners to preparation of calls for proposals and decision-making process.

The evaluation of the Programme shall be carried out involving relevant partners and the outcomes from the evaluation will be also subject of MC approval and consultations with partners. All the principles and rules of involvement will be in details specified in the Rules of Procedures for the Monitoring Committee.

5. Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation)

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*Reference: Article 17(4)(i)*

### The Main Objective

To ensure the visibility of Interreg Lithuania–Poland programme activities contributing to the achievement of the objectives throughout the Programme cycle of the period 2021–2027, using communication and visibility actions as a tool.

### Detailed objectives:

- Informing potential applicants relevant for reaching the Programme objectives about the funding opportunities and support for preparing the appropriate applications;
- Supporting Programme beneficiaries in the implementation of projects process, for reaching the indicators and objectives set in the project;
- Informing Programme stakeholders and decision-makers about the Programme timely and efficiently;
- Raising general public awareness of the results and benefits achieved by the Programme and showing positive impact and added value of cross-border cooperation and the EU intervention on people's lives.

### Target audience

The core target groups for the Programme communication are potential applicants and project partners. The communication activities will be targeted to both new and past applicants and project partners operating in the Programme area. Other target audience: general public living in the Programme area, programme bodies, social and economic partners, entrepreneurs, EU institutions.

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## Communication channels

The following communication channels will be used:

- Website of the Programme and relevant institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme and EU funds in each Member State participating in the Programme. Website of the Programme will be audience-oriented with information about the Programme objectives, activities, available funding opportunities, achievements, supporting materials, project's information available. The website will be available for general audience, including people with disabilities and special needs.
- Social media channels. The most popular social media platforms will be used to contribute to the visibility of activities related to the Programme and projects' achievements.
- Events and meetings (online/ hybrid/ face-to-face): seminars, webinars, workshops, public events, etc.
- Digital and printed materials in support of the Programme's communication and visibility actions, including newsletters/annual summaries, etc.
- Direct communication: individual consultations, consultations on-spot/online consultations/etc.
- Regional contact points, Information Points on European funds, EuropeDirect network etc.

The communication potential and abilities of the beneficiaries will be used in the information and promotion activities of the Programme through:

- building and maintaining relationships with beneficiaries,

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- involving beneficiaries in roles of ambassadors of the Programme and the Interreg brand, as well as in various initiatives organised and supported by the institutions implementing the Programme.

#### Planned budget

Budget foreseen for communication and visibility is not less than 0,2 % of the Programme budget. Annual communication budgets will reflect the Programme's developments (calls, results, implementation) and will be approved annually by the Monitoring Committee (MC).

#### Monitoring and Evaluation

The following indicators will be used for monitoring and evaluation of communication measures:

- Number of subscribers/followers on the social media per year,
- Number of events delivered to Programme bodies per year,
- Number of trainings for potential beneficiaries per year,
- Number of trainings for approved projects beneficiaries per year,
- Number of project partners attending seminars per year,
- Number of public events delivered to general public per year,
- Number of posted information on the Programme's website per year.

General Programme Communication Strategy and later Annual Communication plans will be prepared by the Joint Secretariat in cooperation with the RCP's

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and approved by the MC. The MC will examine implementation of communication and visibility actions. Evaluation of the communication strategy will be part of the overall programme's evaluation measures.

Programme communication shall be in accordance with Article 46(b) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060.

6. Indication of support to small-scale projects, including small projects within small project funds

*Reference: Article 17(4)(new j), Article 24*

In addition to regular operations, small-scale projects shall be supported. These small-scale projects are foreseen to be implemented under all programme's priorities and specific objectives. The Programme plans to allocate up to 10 per cent of Programme funds to the implementation of the small-scale projects, value of a small-scale project of 20.000-100.000 EUR. To facilitate the implementation of small-scale projects, simplification measures will be offered by the Programme (smaller partnerships, less work packages, shorter duration, advance payments, etc.). The detailed Programme requirements will be outlined in the Programme Manual.

Currently the Programme does not plan to use the small project fund as defined in Art. [25] of ETC Regulation due to not existing structures which would be able to implement it.

7. Implementing provisions

7.1. Programme authorities

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*Reference: Article 17(7)(a)*

*Table 9*

Programme authorities	Name of the institution [255]	Contact name	Position [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority	The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, EU Investments and International Programmes Department		Director of the EU Investments and International Programmes Department	investicijos@vrm.lt
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries, if appropriate)	The Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy of the Republic of Poland, Territorial Cooperation Department		Director of Territorial Cooperation Department	SekretariatDWT@mfigipr.gov.pl
Audit authority	Centralized Internal Audit Division of		Head of the Centralized Internal Audit	bendrasisd@vrm.lt

	the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania		Division	
Group of auditors representatives	Centralized Internal Audit Division of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania  Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Poland		Head of the Centralized Internal Audit Division  Director of the Audit of Public Funds Department of the Ministry of Finance Head of the National Revenue Administration	bendrasisd@vrm.lt  Sekretariat.dasDO@mf.gov.pl
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, Economics and Finance Department		Director of the Economics and Finance Department	vilnius.efd.rastine@vrm.lt

## 7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

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*Reference: Article 17(7)(b)*

In accordance with Article 17(7) (b) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059, the Managing Authority (the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania), after consultation with the participating countries, set up the public establishment '*Joint Technical Secretariat*' as the Joint Secretariat of the CP. It was founded for the purpose of providing technical assistance to INTERREG IIIA and TACIS (2004-2006), European Territorial Cooperation, as well as European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument programmes for the programming periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. Arrangements are already in place at the time of the CP submission as the same structures of the 2014-2020 programming period are kept.

The Joint Secretariat shall be funded from the technical assistance budget and have international staff, representing nationals of both participating countries. The staff of the Joint Secretariat shall cover all the relevant languages of the CP, namely Lithuanian, Polish and English. The number and qualification of staff shall correspond to the functions carried out by this body.

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Telephone: +370 5 261 04 77

Fax: + 370 5 261 04 98

E-mail: [info@lietuva-polska.eu](mailto:info@lietuva-polska.eu)

Website: [www.lietuva-polska.eu](http://www.lietuva-polska.eu)

7.3. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third or partners\_countries and OCTs, in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

*Reference: Article 17(7)(c)*

The arrangements related to financial corrections, irregularities and cost recovery will essentially continue from the 2014-2020 programming period.

#### Reduction and recovery of payments from beneficiaries

- The MA shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead beneficiary and reimbursed to the general budget of the European Union. The lead beneficiary shall secure repayment of amounts unduly paid from other beneficiaries. The MA shall also recover funds from the lead beneficiary (and the lead beneficiary from the project beneficiaries) following a termination of the subsidy contract in full or in part based on the conditions defined in the subsidy contract.

- If the lead beneficiary does not succeed in securing repayment from other beneficiaries, or if the MA does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead beneficiary, the MS on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located shall take financial responsibility for reimbursing the MA any amounts unduly paid to that beneficiary.

- If the Member State, on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located, takes the responsibility for reimbursing the MA any amounts unduly paid to the Beneficiary (via LB), the Member State is entitled to claim the repayment from the Beneficiary.

#### Liabilities and irregularities

- In case of financial corrections resulted by irregularities caused by actions and decisions of the individual MS, financial liability shall be taken by the MS whose actions resulted in the correction.

- In the particular case of imposing an additional financial correction by the COM, due to exceeding the admissible error threshold by the CP, only the MS

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whose errors exceed the admissible error threshold shall take financial liability for the increased correction. In case of exceeding the acceptable level of error by two MSs, the financial liability will be appointed taking into account the impact of particular factors on the amount of the correction.

- In case of difficulties in specifying the impact of each factor on the amount of the financial correction, and thereby the impossibility of a precise division of liabilities between the Member States, the Member States shall take a joint decision to share the liability between the Member States in proportion to the ERDF payments to the beneficiaries from each Member State in the period covered by the audit/control.

- In case of financial corrections resulting from the jointly taken decisions on the CP made by both MS, or when the irregularities (including significant errors in the systems of both MS) resulting in financial corrections cannot be linked to individual MSs, financial liability shall cause the decrease of the CP's budget. However, in cases where the reduction of the CP's budget is not feasible, both MS shall take financial liability according to the proportion of the ERDF paid to the beneficiaries in each MS as of the date of the final COM decision on the correction.

- When irregularities are caused by actions of the MA and/or the JS, financial liability shall be taken by the MS hosting the MA and/or the JS.

- In case the financial correction is imposed due to the irregularities not described above, the methodology of sharing the liabilities shall be established in cooperation between the Managing Authority and the National Authority.

- For the technical assistance expenditure (calculated as a flat rate in accordance with Article 27 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059, the liability principles described above shall be used and systematic irregularities/financial corrections may also be applied.

8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

*Reference: Articles 88 and 89 CPR*

Table 10: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Intended use of Articles 88 and 89

From the adoption programme will make use of reimbursement of eligible expenditure based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under priority according to Article 88 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 1): YES / NO

From the adoption programme will make use of financing not linked to costs according to Article 89 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 2): YES / NO

## APPENDICES

- Map of the programme area



**Appendix 1: Map of the programme area**

**Appendix 1 Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates**

**Appendix 2 Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs**

**Appendix 3 List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable**