

PL-BY-UA
2014-2020



#CROSS BORDERER

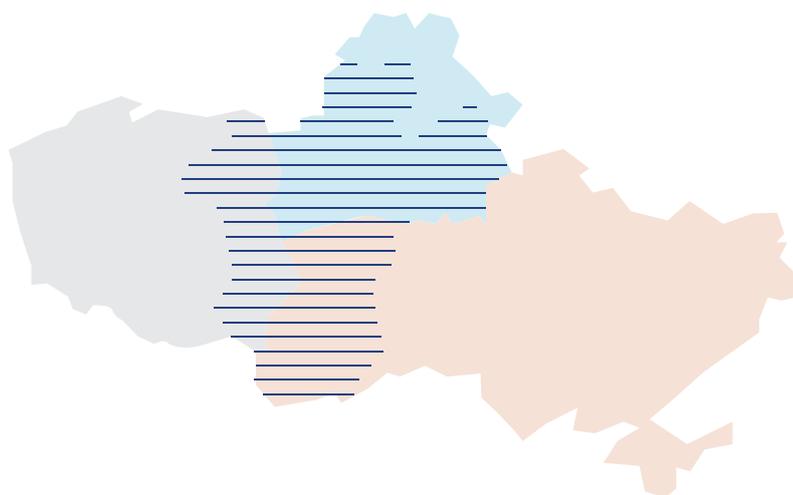
2020 edition



TOWARDS *the* **FUTURE...** TOGETHER

**CONTINUITY
WITH A TWIST**
interview with a TESIM expert

EUROPE IS YOU!
*European
Cooperation Day 2019*



THE CROSS BORDERER

Dear Friends... – *welcome speech* 3

TOWARDS THE FUTURE... TOGETHER

Continuity with a twist
– *interview with Mr. Edmunds Snikeris, TESIM Senior Expert* 4

Shaping the future
– *preparation of the PBU Programme for years 2021-2027* 6

Public survey on Programme objectives 7

Face to Face – *discussion* 9

Towards the future... Together – *feuilleton* 10

INSIDE THE PROGRAMME

Large, regular, micro – *state of play* 11

Programme insight – *timeline* 14

PROMOTION IN MOTION

Promotion in motion – *timeline* 16

Europe is you! – *2019 European Cooperation Day* 22

It is a treasure...
– *Opening Conference for micro-projects* 26

How to write about the PBU projects?
– *Forum of Journalists* 30

PORTRAITS OF REGIONS

Podlaskie – *a region of many flavours and cultures* 32

Cross-border heritage – *interview* 36

From the river's perspective – *project story* 40

BRAINTEASER

42

Continuity with a twist

The new programmes will have a sound dose of continuity, but at the same time they have to be taken to the next level...

p.4

Programme insight

The release of EU funds has allowed us to react quickly...

p.14

Europe is you!

It was one of the most exciting events I had the opportunity to participate in...

p.22

Cross-border heritage

The balance of these 15 years are three editions of the Programme and the co-financing of projects reaching tens of millions of euros transferred to our region...

p.36

Dear Friends,



I am pleased to invite you to read about the latest developments in the Cross-border Cooperation Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme.

We are still travelling through 2020 and my decade-long experience tells me that never before we had to introduce so many adjustments in such a short time to respond to the new realities and needs. Therefore, in these opening words, I would like, most of all, to express the greatest appreciation for all the project partners and Programme institutions whose efforts made it possible for the PBU to continue progressing and not giving up to the pandemic. 2020 is already a period of intensive preparations for a new accord, in which our Programme will join the INTERREG family celebrating its 30th anniversary.

We are building bridges to the European Union while its goals and priorities had to be reconsidered. The focus on combating effects of climate change and environmental pollution or on the problems of population migration remained unchanged, but more attention was focused on protecting the health and safety of

citizens in the event of a pandemic and other possible future threats. Allocation of funds in the Next PBU Programme will also reflect these new challenges.

For the same reasons, the future has become the focus of this edition of The CROSSBORDERER. We present, among others: a look from the outside through the eyes of a TESIM expert, the results of a social survey on the current and future objectives of the Programme, as well as the results of the work of the Joint Programming Committee. We also briefly recall the past year - what happened in the Programme and within the projects funded. In addition, we introduce a brand new episode: „Portraits of regions”, so you can successively discover the eligible area of our Programme, its amenities and specificities. I wish the Polish, Belarusian and Ukrainian regions successful and safe future, free from epidemics, pollution and any violence.

*Enjoy the cooperation,
enjoy reading!*

Andrzej Słodki
Head of the Joint Technical Secretariat



CONTINUITY with a twist

*Interview
with Edmunds Snikeris,
TESIM* Senior Expert*

CROSSBORDERER: – ENI CBC community will join the Interreg family in the NEXT programming perspective for years 2021-2027. How would you summarize this passing period? What are, in your opinion, the biggest advantages of projects implemented within this family of cross-border programmes?

*/ TESIM (Technical Support to the Implementation and Management of ENI CBC programmes) is a technical assistance project which provides support and guidance to the 15 ENI CBC programmes.

EDMUNDS SNIKERIS: – ENI CBC generation of the programmes have lived through a real rollercoaster of socio-economic and political developments along the EU's external border. And to me, this is where the strength of our ENI CBC family actually can be found: no matter how tumultuous the times are, the actual neighbours on the border are still able to join forces for the common good. And these are not just simply nice words; it is enough to take a look at any of your own, PBU's projects, to see the success of the cooperation.

In the new EU financial perspective 2021-2017, the CBC Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine will join the Interreg. What in practice does it mean for the Programme, how the adaptation process will look like?

It is not a secret that Poland-Belarus-Ukraine has been a frontrunner among its peers in terms of early start of the preparation for the new Interreg NEXT programme. Therefore, when it comes to the adaptation to the new rules of the Interreg, I think that step-by-step is the name of the game and actually it is already happening smoothly, with a successful start of the programming exercise in the new legal framework.

At the end of the way, what matters the most is whether the regulatory changes will have a positive impact on the management of the programmes and, most importantly, on the implementation of the projects. We believe that the approach proposed by the EC for managing the next generation of programmes – with many simplifications on board – will bring positive changes for all of us.

Programmes implemented at the EU external borders, such as the PL-BY-UA Programme, have their specificity, to mention just the differences between the EU and non-EU countries legal systems, distribution of funds, level of development, but also cultural differences. Will it be taken into consideration during the integration process with Interreg? Will CBC programmes with their specificity will bring something new to the Interreg community?

When it comes to the special features of the cooperation on the external borders, the unique character of external cooperation will be maintained also under the Interreg umbrella – actually the regulatory proposal includes special arrangements to safeguard the spirit of the external cooperation.

As to the question whether cross-border cooperation programmes on the external borders bring something new to the Interreg community – my answer is a resounding “YES!”. Having spent a big part of my professional career in the “Interreg world”, I can honestly say that putting the external cooperation programmes at the same table with the Interreg programmes will benefit everyone. Programmes on the external borders, even if sometimes perceived as being

slower than their Interreg counterparts, are used to deal with extremely complex situations, impacted by many external factors that are not always present when only EU countries are cooperating. This experience can be found both on the strategic and day-to-day implementation levels.

We do not have to look far for examples, actually; they can be found also in your programme, characterized by three very distinct participating countries and a vast programme territory. Despite all the complexities, you have managed to create a communication approach (through events, through local journalists and activists, working with children and students) that speaks with people in all regions of the programme and gives very strong presence of the programme in its territory. This is a very practical example of the strengths and experiences that external cooperation programmes have amassed.

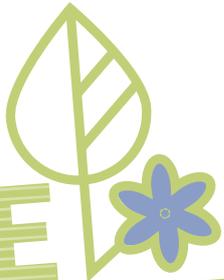
There are few ENI programmes in your Tesim portfolio, you are actively involved in the process of preparation of their NEXT 2021-2027 editions. What are their approaches in this regard, what similarities and differences do you already see in their programming and possible future shape?

When it comes to the preparation of the NEXT programmes, in Tesim we use a phrase: “Continuity with a twist”. The new programmes will have a sound dose of continuity, but at the same time they have to be taken to the next level, so to speak. It means strong focus on the thematic concentration, identification of the concrete needs in the programme territory and finding the right approach to address them. These are not easy tasks, especially when the requirements are more demanding in each programming period.

If to compare across the programmes, the main differences in the programming are in the uniqueness of conditions faced in each territory, in particular the number of (and differences between) participating countries.

With all this being said, the ultimate goal is to deliver a real change in the programme territories, and this will be possible only with a strong commitment from all the actors involved. I am sure that NEXT will be a success!

SHAPING the FUTURE



Preparation of the PBU Programme for years 2021-2027

It might be hard to imagine, but it has been already 17 years since Poland, Belarus and Ukraine joined forces to build cross-border relations under one common endeavour. The third PL-BY-UA Programme (2014-2020, PBU) is now entering its most active phase with the highest number of projects being implemented. Simultaneously, however due to its enormous popularity, also with many unsatisfied needs and expectations.

These needs of the borderland became the starting point for preparation of the new Programme edition (2021-2027), initiated in the second half of 2019. We opened that process with an analysis of the most popular topics of projects submitted so far to the Programme and, to have general look over the people's views, we followed with a thematic survey (please see p.7-8). So to ensure that wide spectrum of voices is properly heard and taken into account in programming, the representatives of various groups of interests were invited to the work of the committee set up by Poland, Belarus and Ukraine to prepare the new Programme. Third level of reaching the people's and organizations' reflections were the workshops held in several places in each of the 3 countries. They enabled more in-depth talks and formulating recommendations.

The reflection of all the works conducted so far on these levels, all feedback received and socio-economic analysis carried out is the Programme that, at the moment of that magazine publication, has already a thematic shape and overall structure. There are needs for support of numerous life aspects of the Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian borderland. With a limited budget, however (expected to be lower than in the current Programme) and a vast PBU territory, the programming committee had to depict some of them, the crucial ones in which the

Programme may have positive influence. They are:

- **Environment protection**
- **Health care**
- **Tourism and heritage promotion**
- **Cooperation improving the governance and people-to-people contacts**
- **Borders management**

As to the other main features of the future PBU – three countries want to keep the current Programme territory, however, the last word on that will have the EC, which strives to narrow down the programmes geography. The cross-border character of the supported actions shall be reinforced. More common undertakings of the true cross-border nature will be promoted. Consequently, further minimization of single-country activities is expected. Strong side of the Programme, high 90% level of co-financing to projects is to be kept. The new Programme will again have the direct award large infrastructure projects as well as, selected via calls for proposals, regular projects and micro-projects. If further preparation and approval of the Programme will go as smoothly as the process so far, the first calls are expected around the turn of 2021/22. At the end of 2020, the Programme will be the subject of environmental assessment and public consultations (please feel invited to take part in them on www.pbu2020.eu).

The programming process is not yet completed. Many aspects are still to be agreed on and confirmed. It, however, already seems that, irrespectively of the difficult times, three neighbours, together with all the involved partners will, for the fourth time, manage to address the expectations of the Programme area inhabitants and the needs of the borderland. To create the 2021-2027 Programme, which will further boost the peoples' and organizations' relations across the borders in this part of Europe.

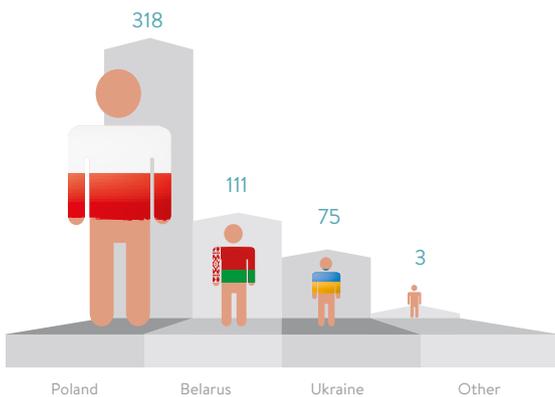
Stanisław Bielański
JTS Programme Unit – Team Leader

Public survey on Programme objectives

Works on the future Programme edition, for years 2021–2027, are at advance stage. One of the crucial decisions related to that preparation is the selection of objectives and priorities that the new Programme will address. For this purpose, we carried out a public survey on our website with questions related to the assessment of the current Programme thematic objectives, as well as suggestions for the future Programme objectives. So far, we received over 500 completed surveys. These answers were an important factor taken into account by the Joint Programming Committee which prepares new Programme edition.

Country of registration

Poland	318
Belarus	111
Ukraine	75
Other	3
total	507



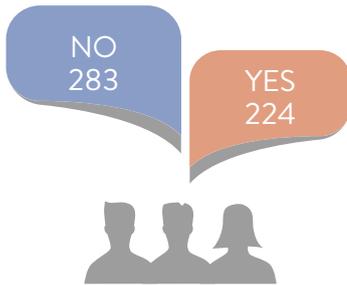
Institution/organization type

communal enterprise	23
educational institution	66
euroregion	11
fire department	11
healthcare institution	30
institution of culture	29
international organization	2
local government	175
national government	9
national park/reserve	9
NGO	60
regional government	24
regional/local development agency	6
religious institution	0
rescue service	1
research & development institution	18
security forces (police, border guard etc.)	11
sport institution	2
state legal person	6
unitary enterprise	5
other	9
total	507

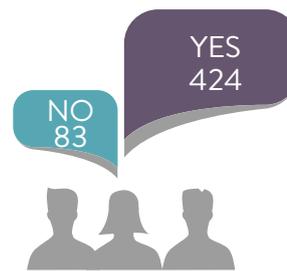
Most of the questionnaires were sent by Polish institutions/organizations

Local governments, educational institutions and NGOs were the most active in providing answers

Did you implement the project within PBU Programme?

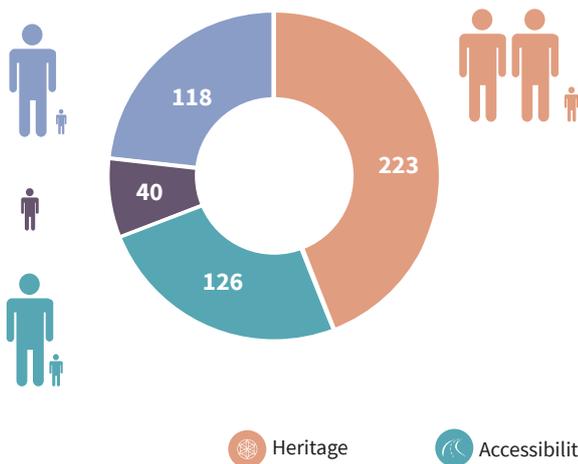


Do you plan to implement the project within PBU Programme?

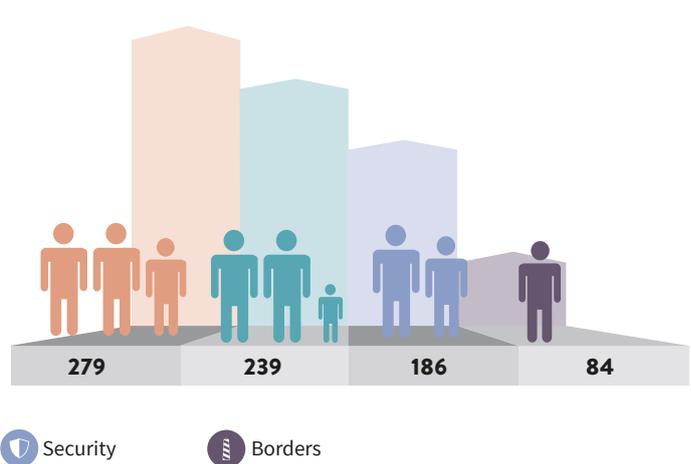


More than half of the surveyed institutions/ organizations have not yet implemented a project under the PL-BY-UA Programme, however the vast majority intend to do so

Which of the 2014-2020 Programme objectives do you think is the most important one?



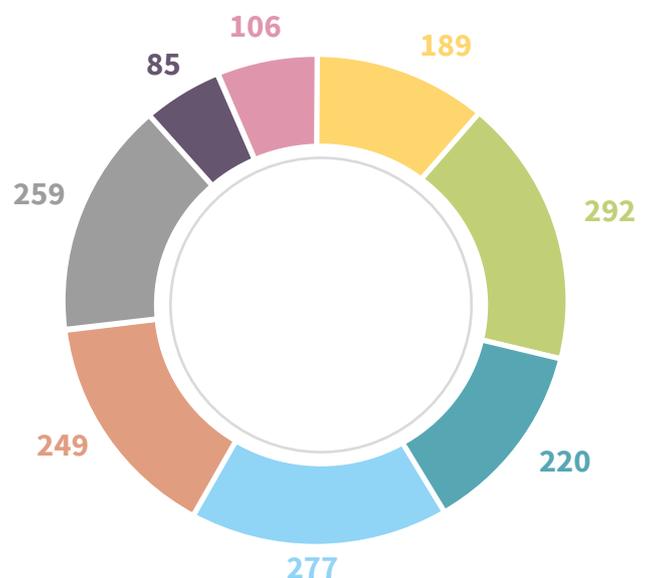
Which of the 2014-2020 Programme objectives do you think should have received more funds? (max. 2 options)



HERITAGE was the most popular thematic objective of the Programme in 2014-2020 and – according to the respondents – it should have received more funds

What priorities should the Programme support? (max. 4 options)

- Innovative economy
- Environment
- Accessibility
- Education
- Heritage
- People-to-people cooperation
- Borders
- Employment



ENVIRONMENT and EDUCATION are the most popular priorities for future support



FACE TO FACE

On the „Face to face” page, we would like to present the most interesting fragments from the discussions of expert-panelists invited to conferences and other events organized by the Programme. They are often held in a narrow group of specialists, so thanks to “The CROSSBORDERER” they have the opportunity to reach a wider audience. For starters, some extracts from the discussion panel organized as part of the 13th Europe-Ukraine Forum in Jasionka (4-5th February 2020). It was attended by, among others, [prof. Bohdan Hud from the University of Lviv](#) and [Tadeusz Grabowski, Deputy Director of the Roztoczański National Park](#).

BH: *I have somewhat critical approach to the Programme which connects Poland, Belarus and Ukraine - it reminds me a bit of the Eastern Partnership, which covers countries that differ in every aspect. Meanwhile, bilateral areas get along much faster*

In my opinion, direct cooperation between regions is more important. They have deep historical reasons and we should not only talk about these positive interpersonal influences, but also remember that there are trouble spots at these areas, which can be relieved exactly through this Programme, thanks to the interpersonal interactions and bringing these regions closer together.

I would focus on projects which are not from big cities - not from Lviv, not from Lublin. They have their own financing mechanisms, they have their money, they are able to renew relics of a common culture by themselves. I would prioritize border communes, border districts and strictly the border. There should be a border crossing every 25-30 km, and every 10-15 km - crossings for pedestrians, cyclists or green paths. Then we can talk about a civilized border.

A synergy of actions is required. These cannot be random, one-time actions. There must be a synergy, continuity and its measurable results.

TG: *We are dealing with an exceptional area not only in the bilateral system, it is also noticed by the European Union. Eastern Carpathians - biosphere reserve, Roztocze - cross-border biosphere reserve, West Polesie - biosphere reserve, Białowieża - biosphere reserve. In the field of culture, we also have nothing to be ashamed of.*

I would like to draw attention to the projects’ impact area. This is a borderland of countries, regions, and cultures, a very sensitive territory cut by the European border. We know very well that the level of socio-economic life on both sides of this border is different. The Programme affects many fields, both social and cultural.

Supporting all initiatives aimed at facilitating the crossing of the European Union border is always absolutely essential and necessary. Indeed, after 5, 6 or even 8 hours of standing at the border crossing, everyone is unwilling to do anything else.

TOWARDS *the* FUTURE... TOGETHER

Feuilleton

It seems audacious to make plans for the future. A Polish proverb says: „When you are planning, God is already laughing”. Recent events in the world, such as the coronavirus pandemic, which shattered the forecasts of the small and the great of this world: economists, demographers, entrepreneurs, powerful authorities, but also almost every family, our relatives and ourselves have, above all, taught everyone humility and proved that the future is always a great unknown.

So should we give up hope for a better tomorrow and stop planning? Give in to the flow of events, wherever they may take us? „The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams,” said Eleanor Roosevelt, so let’s take a peek into what (probably) the future holds...

The starting point is not simple. In addition to the pandemic, Europe is also struggling with many other global phenomena: climate change, natural disasters, growing immigration, ageing populations, depopulation of the provinces and an overgrowth of large urban centres, a falling GDP, growing deficits, an unstable balance between economic development, an ever-increasing demand for energy and a need to protect natural resources, as well as growing social and even military tensions. On the eastern external border of the European Union, along which Poland, Belarus and Ukraine lie, to this long list we should add the effects of many years of underinvestment which are a result of their geography and history: an insufficient network of roads, railways, ICT systems and border crossings, poor access to health, education and social services and still an insufficient tourist infrastructure.

Do these facets have any assets? Fortunately, yes: rich traditions, diverse culture, unspoiled nature, beauty of the landscape, space for healthy food production, tourist and spa potential, conditions for development

of clean and modern technologies, e.g. IT or medical, and above all - ambitious and active residents. A kind of „handicap” is added to this, because where one starts from scratch, it is easier to implement state-of-the-art and first-rate solutions at square one, drawing on the experiences of others.

Therefore, perhaps, it’s worthwhile to plan undertakings and projects that will make use of these advantages in this part of Europe? Perhaps it’s worth thinking about the production of renewable energy, modernization of energy-intensive buildings, clean water, green technologies and environmentally friendly intermodal transport? Maybe create the conditions for the education of new, specialized staff? Or maybe spread the wings of the so-called „silver economy”? Perhaps, for everyone’s benefit, it is worth taking care

of the so-called quality of life in the spirit of „slow life, slow food”, i.e. the production of healthy food using the culinary heritage of the borderland, creating conditions for rest, active recreation, sports, health rehabilitation, development of passions, and above all - sustainable tourism based on cultural, natural and landscape potential?

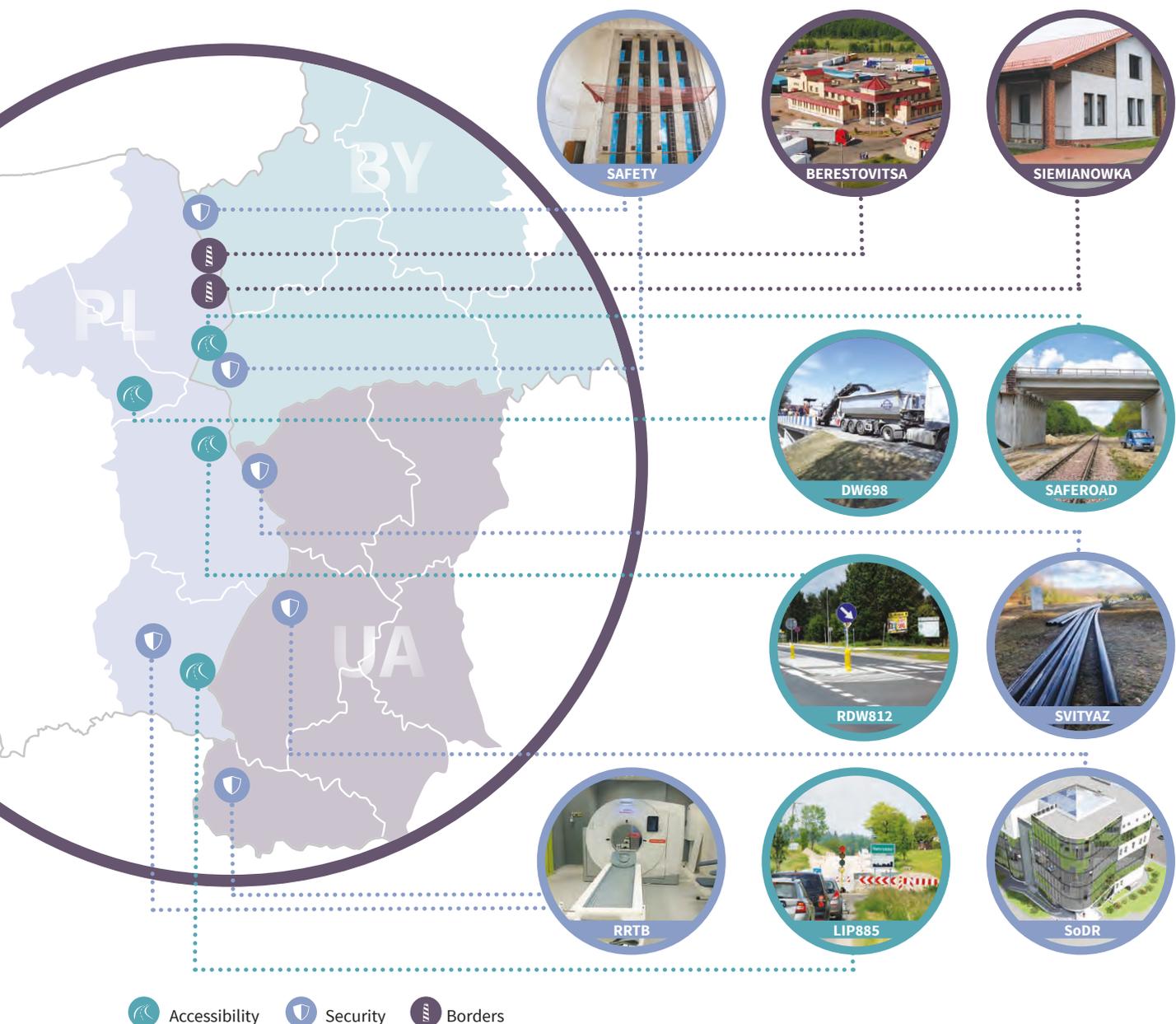
„The past is written, but the future is left for us to write, and we have powerful tools” - these words, although not spoken by any of the great thinkers and come from the mouth of one of the heroes from the once cult series Star Trek, greatly they reflect the mechanism of operation of... EU funds. It is the European community, our joint decisions, that determine where the streams of common EU means will be directed and what their effects will be. Among the key-words of the European Union for the coming years there are: „greener Europe”, „smarter Europe”, „more social Europe”, „Europe closer to citizens”. So there are many indications that we are all headed in the same direction - towards a shared, better future. And it’s better to go there TOGETHER.

*The future belongs to those
who believe in the beauty
of their dreams*

LARGE, REGULAR, *micro*

As you know, there are three basic types of projects within the Programme: Large Infrastructure Projects (LIPs), regular projects and micro-projects. Let's try to summarize what happened in these three fields of the Programme and beneficiaries' activity over the course of the past year.

The first group of projects is exceptional as the **LARGE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS** do not follow the rule of the Call for Proposals. These are projects strategic for the regions' development which were selected by the parties involved in the Programme and were subsequently approved by the European Commission. The procedure concluded in the middle of 2018 when 10 LIPs were contracted successfully with total ENI co-funding of 52.1 MEUR. All LIPs are now underway because the duration of this type of projects is up to 36 months. Below you can find the location of major infrastructure and investment activities within LIPs with the date of planned completion:



REGULAR PROJECTS were selected through an open Call for Proposals and are the most common projects implemented under all Thematic Objectives: HERITAGE, ACCESSIBILITY, SECURITY and BORDERS. They are smaller than LIPs, consist of infrastructure and investment activities but also soft measures. 64 contracted projects engage the largest part of the Programme budget – 113.23 MEUR. Some of them were already completed.

113.23 MEUR



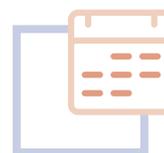
**TOTAL INDICATIVE
EU BUDGET FOR ALL
REGULAR PROJECTS**

0.1 MEUR **2.5** MEUR



**THE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM
GRANT VALUE
FOR A REGULAR PROJECT**

24



MONTHS
**MAX. DURATION
OF THE
REGULAR PROJECT**

MICRO-PROJECTS are projects with small budgets operating mainly in the area of non-investment activities promoting people-to-people initiatives. They were chosen exclusively under Thematic Objective HERITAGE, through two Calls for Proposals, so called PBU2 and PBU3. 67 micro-projects were contracted so far for the value of almost 3.75 MEUR and it is extremely interesting how creative the winners were. They focused on 8 fields of the cultural-historical and natural heritage of PL-BY-UA borderlands.

Trails, events and stars

The largest group of micro-projects is aiming at popularization of local culture and heritage through organization of bike rallies, outdoor events and festivals, active sports, creation of tourist trails, maps and mobile applications as well as movies and publications promoting heritage. One of the projects is dedicated to the development of the Wallachian Culture Trail on the Polish side and mapping out the trail on the Ukrainian side. Another one is dedicated to Carpathian Starry Sky, where among others, the popularization and preservation strategy of the natural and cultural heritage of the starry sky in the cross-border area will be developed. Project connected with development of natural wealth of the Carpathians with the Hutsul horses is also recommended for financing.

Architecture, songs, a manuscript and historical families

This group of projects include the preservation and promotion of: wooden architecture in the Podkarpackie voivodeship (PL) and the Zakarpattya Oblast (UA), sacral architecture, as well as activities promoting religious songs of both countries. Another project is dedicated to musical and philological study of the Supraskie Kantyki manuscript. There are also projects focused on the heritage of historical families such as Sapieha family or the heritage of Queen Bona.

Historical sites

Another area of cooperation is the promotion of historical sites in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine. There are projects connected with promotion of Zhovkva & Krasiczyn Castles, promotion and dissemination of historical heritage resources connected with World War I in Podkarpackie and Zakarpattya, preservation of old cemeteries, promotion of the Augustów Canal, popularization of the First Hungarian-Galician Railway, promotion of Książpól and Chervonograd as well as other towns/regions.

Inclusion

Protecting equal access for persons with disabilities and creating opportunities for them to explore the unique cultural and architectural heritage of the cities of Lviv and Przemyśl is the core idea in another recommended project. A next one is to exchange and implement good practices to provide access to culture for persons with visual impairment.

Arts & crafts

There is a group of projects connected with the preservation and promotion of local traditions related to folk dance, songs and local theatres, cross-border craft heritage, joint cultural and artistic events, arts and crafts workshops, folklore festivals or Christmas meetings referring to the tradition of celebrating the Christmas and New Year period in Polish-Belarusian border regions, traditional handicrafts and local folklore of the Polish-Belarusian borderland, cross-border wedding traditions of Poland and Belarus, promotion of craft and folklore of Kurpie and Volyn.

Forests, waters and reserves

The list of areas the projects focus on include: Białowieża Forest, the Carpathians, the Roztocze Reserve, Bug Valley Nature, Special Protection Area of the Upper Valley of Narew River as well as Polesie region. Discovering a true pearl of nature with a lace of 33 lakes located within the adjacent Shatsk National and Sobiborski Landscape Parks is planned in the PL-UA partnership while the promotion of protected natural objects of Sokółka and Hrodna districts are going to be a joint goal of the BY-PL partnership.

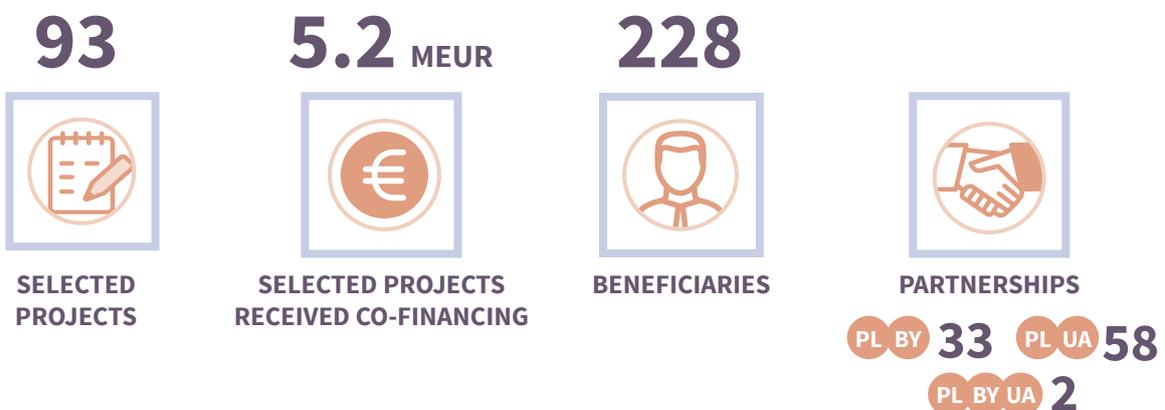
Local cuisine and culinary traditions

Some projects are dedicated to the promotion of local cuisine and culinary traditions – there are projects connected with traditions of Polish and Ukrainian mountain cross-border region, promotion of Carpathian wine heritage, preservation and promotion of regional traditional cuisine ritual in Zelva region (BY) and Knyszyn region (PL).

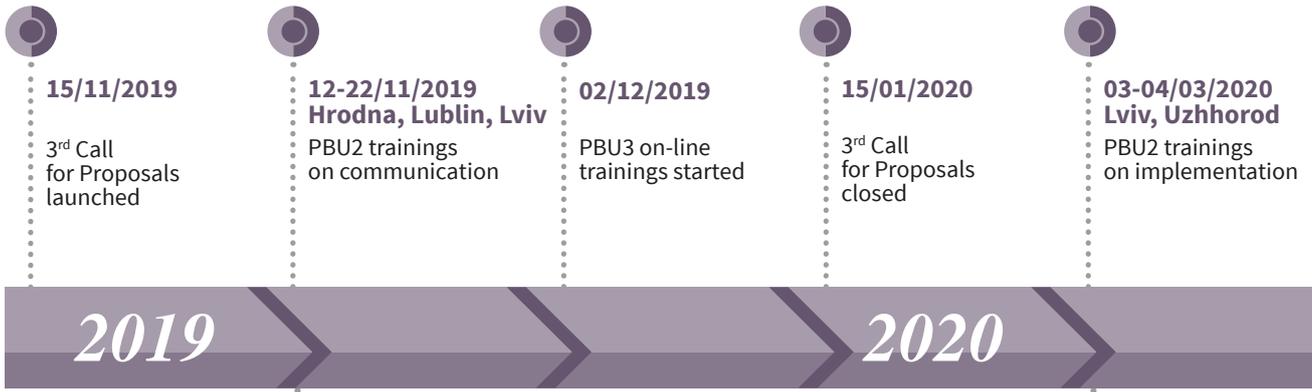
‘If you let the bee be, the bee will let you be’

And last, but not least – an exceptional project dedicated to the protection of Carpathian bees. Joint actions shall preserve this unique natural heritage in the Ukrainian-Polish borderland.

As a result of the 3rd CfPs, in the middle of 2020, 26 micro-projects were selected for financing under the Programme. Again, projects cover a wide range of heritage-related topics and their applicants represent various groups of institutions from local governments and public institutions to NGOs, educational and cultural centres and euro-regions. These micro-projects shall be contracted by the end of 2020. Current figures for all micro-projects looks like that:



Obviously, the beneficiaries of PBU projects are facing different problems related to the COVID-19 epidemic. Anyway, they are doing their best and we try to facilitate them as much as possible in various procedural requirements. In many cases the implementation periods were extended and the action plans rescheduled.



Programme insight

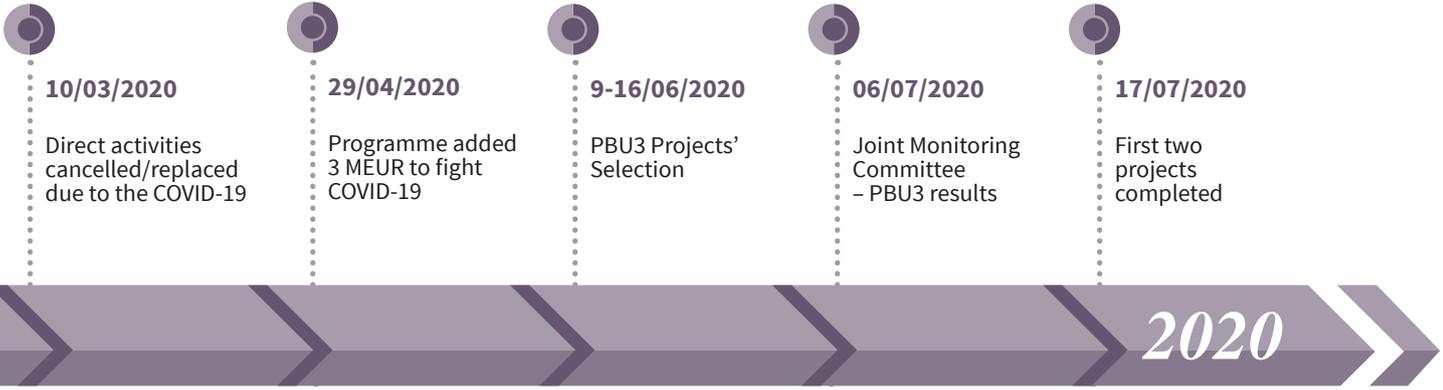
The past year has been full of challenges. Over a hundred projects in progress, a new call for micro-projects and the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic that forced all of us to change plans and methods of operation. But let's start from the beginning ...

On 15th November 2019 we launched the 3rd Call for Proposals, the last in the 2014-2020 period. It was dedicated to micro-projects within the Thematic Objective HERITAGE and lasted till 15th January 2020. This time, we prepared on-line trainings for applicants on rules of assessment and how to fill in the application forms. All trainings were prepared in respective national languages. Moreover, we invited potential applicants for consultations on the preparation of the Application Form. According to the Programme rules, the purpose of the consultations was to provide technical advice focusing on the action plan and the budget. It also covered descriptive, financial and communication issues.

In parallel, we were supporting beneficiaries of the micro-projects selected under the 2nd Call for Proposals. In November, they had an opportunity to take part

in one-day communication workshops organized in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine. Hands-on trainings were conceived for project's staff responsible for information and promotion and tried to answer the following questions: "How to use communication as a means to success?", "How to promote the project?", "How to write catchy, simple texts?", "What is the info-promo report for?" Subsequently, at the beginning of March 2020, we started a series of trainings on micro-projects' implementation. The first ones were held in Ukraine, in Lviv and Uzhhorod. Unfortunately, the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic forced us to cancel further trainings. The LIPs and regular projects faced the same problem – all trainings for their beneficiaries scheduled for spring had to be cancelled.

Despite the pandemic, we reacted very quickly – all needed materials prepared for direct trainings were shortly published on the Programme website and the employees of the Joint Technical Secretariat as well as the Programme branch offices in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine were at the disposal of the beneficiaries by



phone and e-mail. Starting March 2020, generally, we were trying to do our best to keep a balance during the crisis situation where the COVID-19 outbreak had an impact also on the implementation of the Programme and its projects. Looking for solutions that could diminish these negative effects, the Managing Authority and Joint Technical Secretariat introduced a long list of measures, solutions and simplifications. Despite these exceptional and unforeseen circumstances, progress was being made both on the projects and the Programme implementation.

Additionally, the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Programme approved an allocation of additional 3 MEUR for the healthcare cross-border cooperation projects to

support them in fighting the COVID-19 outbreak. There were 12 projects (7 PL-BY, 4 PL-UA, 1 PL-BY-UA) with 30 partners involved including hospitals and social care centres. Thanks to this decision, they were able to purchase additional equipment and/or new coronavirus tests and make cooperation over the border possible on a remote basis while still implementing regular project activities. – *The release of EU funds has allowed us to react quickly and purchase a specialized device for chest screening, which is one of the basic*

*The release of EU funds
has allowed us
to react quickly*

tools for diagnosing patients with COVID-19 – emphasized Paweł Natkowski, Director of the J. Psarski Mazovian Specialist Hospital in Ostrołęka. – *Our partner, Regional Pediatric Clinical Hospital in Lviv, decided to allow these funds for the purchase of personal protection materials for the personnel* – added Wojciech Miazga, project leader.

The pandemic did not stop the procedure of assessing micro-projects submitted within the 3rd Call for Proposals. Finally, in the middle of 2020, the Project Selection

Committee prepared and the Joint Monitoring Committee approved the results of the 3rd CfPs. The JMC decided to co-finance 26 projects and established a reserve list of 11 projects for possible future contracting. The total

amount of awarded co-financing equalled 1.47 MEUR.

The JMC's decision almost coincided with the completion of the first projects of the Programme. These were the 'roads' projects implemented under Thematic Objective Accessibility aimed at improving the transport and communication within the Programme area. The next months will surely bring more such „happy ends”...

1

9-10/08/2019
Muczne

Carpathian Days of
Neighborhood
/Meeting of the
Carpathian Regions

2

2-6/09/2019
Krynica, Rzeszów

Economic Forum,
study tour for
representatives
of Ukrainian
self-governments

3

11-14/09/2019
Hrodna

International
Business Forum
„Euroregion
Neman-2019”

4

11-14/09/2019
Rzeszów

ECDay, Final Event
of the Educational
Campaign for Schools

2019



Promotion in motion

Events, exchanges, emotions – promotional activities of the Programme are the most visible part of our work. Since the last edition of the CROSSBORDERER we have met many times with our beneficiaries, potential applicants and stakeholders as well as the general public in different places of the Programme area within conferences, forums, fairs, discussion panels and many other events. The general goal of these activities is to promote the Programme and its projects. Let us recall some of them together.

Around the Carpathians

The Carpathians are one of the richest and largest natural and cultural areas of the Programme, and even of entire Europe. As a popular tourist destination, it also struggles with a number of problems in the field of infrastructure, transport and mountain rescue. Inhabitants, visitors and authorities of the Carpathian regions constitute one of the numerous and active groups of Programme stakeholders and beneficiaries. No wonder that we are often present in this part of the Programme area. For example, in the mid-sum-

mer 2019, we co-organized the Carpathian Days of Neighbourhood – Meeting of the Carpathian Regions in Muczne (Bieszczady Mountains), where almost 150 participants from several countries met to discuss the future of the Carpathians, as well as the current activities and the future of the Programme. After crossing the border at the temporary check-in point Wołosate-Łubnia, conference participants also took part in a study visit to the Transcarpathian Region. The event was held under the patronage of the Ministry of Investment and Economic Development – our Managing Authority. For similar reasons, we had to be in Krynica, which is also situated in the Carpathian mountains and every year is the place of one of the largest and most important conferences in Central and Eastern Europe – the Economic Forum. The Programme representatives have actively participated in it for the third time. The 2019’s edition titled “The Europe of Tomorrow. “Strong” Meaning What?” gathered over 4 000 participants from 60 countries.

5

23-24/09/2019
LublinEastern Europe
Initiative
Congress

6

25-26/09/2019
BiałystokEastern
Economic
Congress

7

27/09/2019
BrestECDay, Open Day
for Young People

8

28/09/2019
LvivECDay,
football match

9

17-18/10/2019
MinskInternational
Scientific
Conference

2019



With a presentation about the Programme, we started the thematic block “How to Protect the Environment – Eco-investments in the Regions”, which was accompanied by the ceremony of signing a grant contract closely related to environmental issues. During the panel “Environmental Protection in Cross-Border Areas” organized by the Center of European Projects (CEP) and moderated by Andrzej Słodki, head of the JTS, there was a discussion on the need to finance renewable energy sources and the construction of infrastructure ensuring equal opportunities in terms of environmental protection on both sides of the border. Representatives of the Programme also participated in numerous discussions about cooperation with Ukraine. During the panel “The role of regions in the building of mutual relations”, CEP Director Leszek Buller stressed that: – CBC Programme PL-BY-UA supports development initiatives in terms of both: infrastructure and interpersonal cooperation, the role of which we particularly appreciate from the perspective of over 15 years of the Programme’s existence. That is why we often give an example of an educational campaign addressed to children and the youth from three countries, whose friendly relations today will result in good cooperation between our countries tomorrow. The way the Programme focuses on interpersonal cooperation is also shown by annually organized study

visit of Ukrainian local government officials to Poland, during which we are pleased to share the Polish experiences of regional development with the help of EU funds.

Representatives of Ukrainian regional self-governments from 5 oblasts, apart from visiting the Economic Forum, became acquainted with selected projects implemented in the Subcarpathian Region and met with potential partners. They visited, among others, the Clinical Provincial Hospital No. 1 in Rzeszów to learn about the effects of a Large Infrastructure Project. The study visit ended with a meeting with the authorities of the region and a visit to the Rzeszów Regional Development Agency, which is a beneficiary of the PBU projects.

Inspired by science

It is not uncommon for scientists and their research to inspire our activities. Their analyses help us identify problems in the Programme area and find solutions for them. That is why we often listen to the voices of this community and engage in scientific discussions ourselves. Scientists had two opportunities to share their knowledge in selected Programme fields during the month of October 2019. At the invitation of the Scientific and Research Economic Institute of the Ministry of

10

23-25/10/2019
Uzhhorod

International
Scientific
Conference

11

23-25/10/2019
Suwałki

Business
Borderline
Forum

12

29-30/10/2019
Białowieża

PBU2 Opening
Conference

13

31/10-1/11/2019
Lviv

International
Economic
Forum

14

7-8/11/2019
Warsaw

“Europe
of the Families”
Conference

2019



Economy of the Republic of Belarus, the Programme became a co-organizer of the International Scientific Conference “Problems of Forecasting and State Regulation of Socio-Economic Development” in Minsk. In the plenary session, we talked about perspectives and possibilities on cross-border cooperation as a factor for regions’ development and presented a state of play of the Programme. The project beneficiaries from Brest and Hrodna oblasts shared their successful experiences from projects’ realization. Additionally, the Polish-Belarusian round table was organized to discuss the priorities of socio-economic development of the Belarusian regions in the context of cross-border cooperation within the future Programme.

A few days later, scientists met in Uzhhorod (UA) within the International Scientific Conference “Security in the area covered by the CBC Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine” which we organized in cooperation with the Uzhhorod National University. The aim was to involve the scientists from the three countries in the discussion on safety and security issues and help to generate the solutions able to improve the existing situation. These problems cannot be solved at national level as infectious diseases, natural disasters, pollution and crime know no borders. During the 2-day Confer-

ence, over 100 participants analysed security issues in various aspects: physical and technical, social, health, economic and ecological one. Our current Programme has been addressing these challenges through the implementation of joint projects within Thematic Objective Security.

Activate the youth and families

Soon, with the new EU perspective, a new generation will enter adult life and young people will be the authors of the Program’s future projects, which is why we invest in the youth. On the occasion of 2019 European Cooperation Day, after several months of international competition, students and teachers from Poland, Belarus and Ukraine met in Rzeszów for the Final Event of the Educational Campaign for Schools. In Brest, teenagers took part in the Open Day for Young People while in Lviv the young and a little bit older generations played a football match. You can find more about all these three events on pages 22-25.

As social issues are inscribed in one of the Programme’s priorities, we could not miss the “Europe of Families” Conference in Warsaw. This international event was co-organized by the CEP and the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University as a part of a series of events devoted to the 15th anniversary of Poland’s

15

8/11/2019
Uzhhorod

“Historical and cultural heritage of the Carpathians” Conference

16

5-6/12/2020
Plavie

Local Self-Government Day

17

16-18/12/2020
Lutsk

Cross-border Forum of Journalists

18

4-5/02/2020
Jasionka

Europe-Ukraine Forum, Eastern Fair

19

14-15/02/2020
Jasionka

Polish Forum of Local Governments

2020



accession to the European Union. It was the meeting of representatives of the countries implementing the cross-border cooperation programmes jointly with Poland as well as beneficiaries of these programmes and the scientists. As a part of the event, there were discussion panels focused on problems of the family and its contemporary changes within cultural, social and economic aspects. We presented the achievements of projects related to various issues of social policy, which have been implemented under the Programme. We also conducted the discussion panel “Socio-economic and health situation of families in Europe” with the participation of the beneficiaries of our two projects.

Open to beneficiaries...

As we always try to be open to the needs of our beneficiaries and reward their efforts, we invited the beneficiaries of the 2nd Call for Proposals to the Opening Conference in Białowieża. There, in the heart of the Białowieża Forest – one of the most valuable natural areas in Europe – they had the opportunity to get acquainted with the results, rules and future challenges of this CfPs focused on the natural, cultural and historical heritage of the PL-BY-UA borderland. This event is described on pages 26-29.

... and journalists

We are also keen on cooperation with media representatives. That is why the Cross-border Forum of Journalists in Lutsk (Ukraine) appears one of the most important of last year’s events. In December 2019, journalists from three Programme countries had an opportunity to get acquainted with the results of PBU projects and discuss how to write about them. A special article on this event is published on pages 30-31.

Cross-border impact

Every year the Europe-Ukraine Forum is one of the crucial international events devoted to Ukrainian relations with the European Union. The forum has been held since 2007 in Poland and visited by thousands of guests from many countries. In 2020, for the first time, the PL-BY-UA Programme became a partner of this important event. We organized the discussion panel titled “The role of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine in the development of Central and Eastern Europe”. – The Programme is a very significant and important tool to develop relations between the European Union and Ukraine in the regional dimension by supporting various projects. It is the largest cross-border programme at the European Union’s land borders – said Andrzej Słodki, head of the JTS, who had opened and moderated the panel.

20

22-23/02/2020
Kraszczyn

“Europe of the Carpathians” Conference

21

20-23/08/2020
Białystok

“Rise of Eastern Culture – Another Dimension” Festival

22

28-30/08/2020
Rzeszów

“Rise of Eastern Culture – European Stadium of Culture” Festival

23

3-6/09/2020
Lublin

“Rise of Eastern Culture – Different Sounds” Festival

2020



The discussion was focused on the future of the Programme. How can the border between Poland and its two neighbours: Ukraine and Belarus not become a new “iron curtain” but a source of “wealth in diversity”, a place of intensive economic and interpersonal exchange? What challenges does the Programme face in the context of global climate and environmental threats? These were the main questions which the panellists tried to answer.

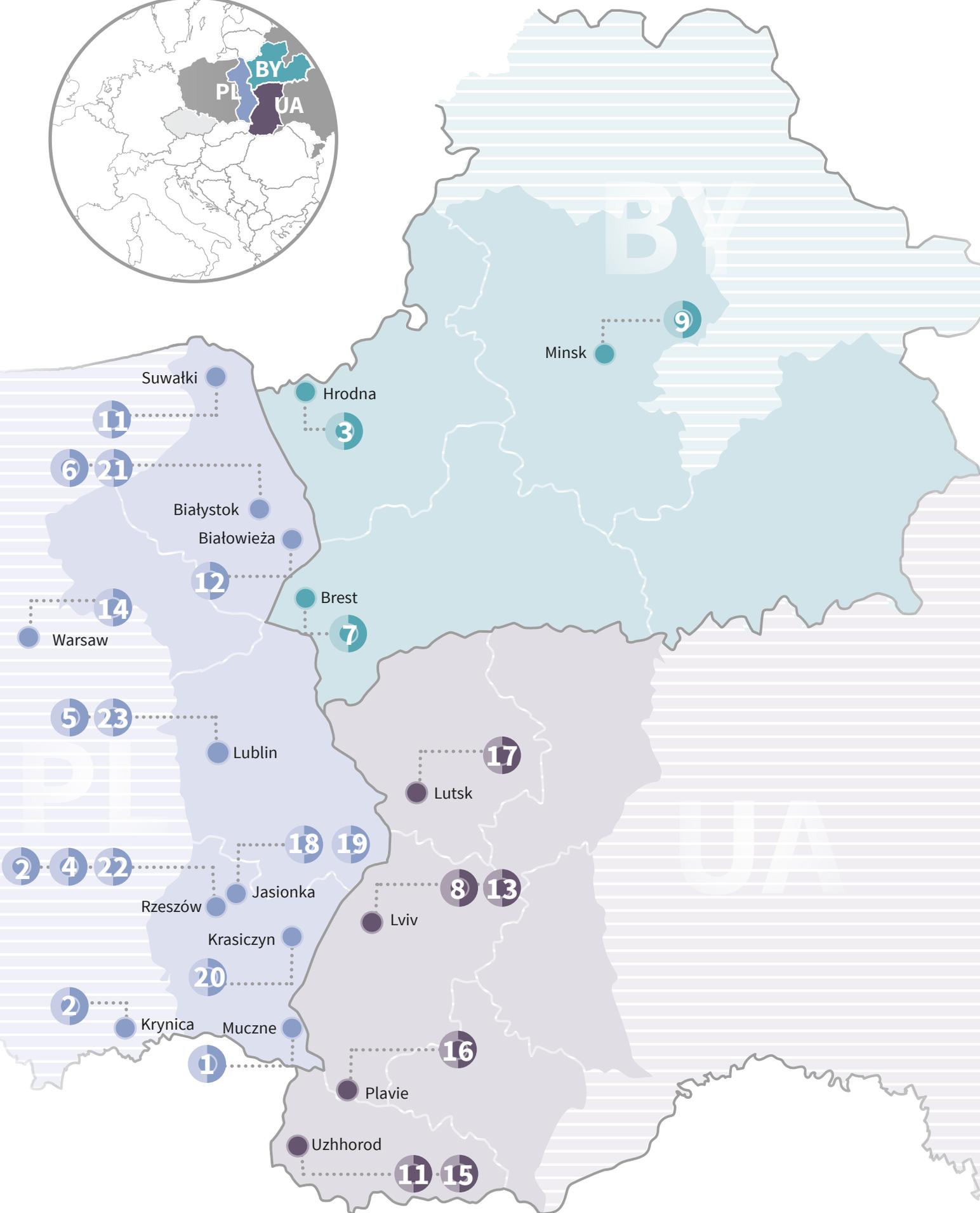
The participants of the 13th Forum Europe-Ukraine, as well as the 4th Eastern Fair had the opportunity to visit the Programme promotional stand which offered a good portion of information about the PBU principles and projects, the 2020 Programme calendars and, as every year, a tasty coffee. It is estimated that this year’s edition of the event attracted about 1000 guests and panellists from 31 countries.

The effects of PBU projects have an impact on tourism business and generally on economy of the borderlands. That is why we are present at the events focused on these fields. In 2019, representatives of our Programme took part, among others, in the International Business Forum “Euroregion Neman” in Hrodna (BY), Eastern Europe Initiative Congress in Lublin, Eastern Economic Congress in Białystok and Border-

line Business Forum “Tourism, Industry, Hotels” in Suwałki (PL) as well as in the International Economic Forum “Invest in Lviv Region” (UA).

Facing the unknown...

Unfortunately, starting of March 2020, due to the spread of coronavirus, all external and direct Programme events were cancelled, postponed and/or replaced with on-line activities. However, we were always available to our beneficiaries and stakeholders. We were promoting the Programme and its projects thanks to numerous on-line contests, such as: “EC Day for Teens”, “Traveling through projects”, “Reveal the uniqueness of the PBU borderlands” and “Following the PBU projects”. To promote the Programme among the general public, the Branch Offices launched a series of radio interviews with representatives of projects implemented in our Programme. During these short reports, listeners could learn about a project from their region and ‘meet’ inspiring people working for the common good. We have intensified our presence and activity on social media, websites, as well as throughout hundreds of emails and phone calls. We hope to see you soon directly!





Europe *is you!*

*European
Cooperation
Day 2019*



European Cooperation Day is celebrated all over Europe and beyond on 21st September every year, promoting achievements of cooperation among the regions. In this period, many events are organized in different regions of Europe in order to commemorate the benefits of cooperation: film festivals, concerts, running races, local markets, gastronomic fairs and more. Among the over 100 events held in 2019 under the slogan “Europe is you!” across the continent, there were three organized by the Programme...

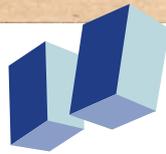
... in Poland,

Nearly one hundred students from Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine participated in the Final Event of the Education Campaign for Schools “TOWARDS THE FUTURE!” organized by the Rzeszów Branch Office from 11th to 14th September in the capital of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. We invited 24 teams, selected from over 70 applications sent in by students from the Programme area. Welcoming the finalists, the Director of the Center of European Projects, Leszek Buller, said: *– I wish everyone to make new cross-border friendships. The future of the projects is in the hands of such talented young people.*

During the Final Event, students from 3 countries in mixed, cross-border international teams participated

in a field game on the campus of the Rzeszów University of Technology. Robotics, electromagnetism, climbing the wall - these were just some of the points of the field game awaiting for students. The teenagers also had the opportunity to demonstrate their creativity, skills and knowledge, as well as make new friends and gain experience working during workshops focused on 4 fields: technics, arts, singing and dance. An unquestionable attraction for the participants was the international volleyball match with the stars of Asseco Resovia. Famous volleyball players not only joined the youth teams during the match, but also eagerly posed for common photos.

The crowning achievement of the students’ work put into thematic workshops were the final shows and performances organized at the Multimedia Fountain



It was one of the most fascinating events that I had the opportunity to participate in



and University of Technology in Rzeszów. Joint performance of a song, a flash mob, presentations of vehicles constructed by the students, and hand-painted billboards that hung in the streets of Rzeszów, will be remembered by all participants for a long time.

During those days, there was also time to explore the city, take common photos and have some fun. The whole event ended with the gala ceremony during which we awarded students and handed commemorative diplomas. The gala was graced by the performance of the Student Song and Dance Ensemble “POŁONINY”, and after the gala, the teenagers had fun at the disco.

Participants emphasized that it was an unforgettable time, which resulted in many cross-border friendships. Larisa Tarasyuk, one of the participants, wrote: – *The PBU Programme gave us the opportunity to get involved in the atmosphere of creativity, cross-border cooperation, communication and joy! It was a very inspiring experience! For me, it was a great chance to see my colleagues from Belarus, Poland, and Ukraine. For my students Mary, Liz, Lisa and Agatha, it was an unforgettable experience of co-creation! We are happy that our slogan “We are different, but we are together!” really works!*

Belarus...

The “Open Day for Young People” organized within the 2019 EC Day in Belarus began with lectures, during which young people learned about the traditions of EC Day, the goals of cross-border cooperation, the Programme and its projects aimed at young generations. Natallia Zdanevich, the coordinator of the VeloFort micro-project, presented the idea of creating a mobile application for the bicycle route running through the Brest Fortress. Ella Morozova talked about the YouthFestival project, its activities, such as Cross-border Festival, which can be interesting and engaging for young people. Natallia Yanchuk, on the other hand, presented the results of the trilateral PBU project 2007-2013, Help Centre improving work with difficult teenagers.

Next, the young people visited the Interactive Museum of Historical Development of the Fire Service of the Brest Region, where the history of the Fire Service and the rules of safe behaviour in case of a fire were presented. During the trip, a dangerous situation was arranged in which young people had to choose the right way out of the room. It was a valuable lesson. Being inspired by the stories of PBU projects, the participants created works related to the theme ‘Europe is You’. Everyone was given easels, paints, brushes, pencils and paper. Drawing lasted 1.5 hours and the participants used various painting techniques. As a result, the young people created magnificent drawings, the main idea of which was to cooperate throughout Europe. Those participants who chose communication activities instead of drawing, discussed inter alia on the role of Europe, EU programs, opportunities offered by the cross-border cooperation, volunteering in PBU

projects. At the end, firefighters provided rescue vehicles for demonstration purposes, presented special fire-fighting equipment and the method of providing first aid to the injured. Young people learned how to put out a fire with a fire hose, and in case of a fire, properly jump on a rescue chute.

The most active participants received special ECDay and Programme awards. - *It was one of the most exciting events I had the opportunity to participate in* - said Vera Shkliarik, a participant of the event.

The event took place on 28th September and was organized by the Brest Branch Office. It was held at the International Volunteer Centre in Brest, built within a PBU 2004-2006 project.

... and Ukraine

In Lviv, we celebrated the European Cooperation Day on 27th September. We started the event with a meeting at the "SKIF" stadium of the Lviv State University of Physical Culture, where Marek Horbań, president of the Lviv Sports Club "Pogoń", one of the first Polish football clubs, talked about the club's history, its greatest achievements and plans for the future. Sports journalists Ivan Jaremko and Bogdan Lupa presented the football traditions of Lviv, its most outstanding players and the common Polish-Ukrainian sports heritage.

The guests also had the opportunity to learn about the progress of the Programme implementation – *We are very happy that we are visiting Lviv, this time directly engaging in the promotion of common culture and heritage. I am sure that our friendly match will be a continuation of Lviv's sporting traditions* – emphasized Rafał Baliński, Director of the Territorial Cooperation Department at the Ministry of Investment and Development.

After the meeting at the University, a friendly match between the junior teams took place on the field of the oldest stadium in Lviv. It aroused enormous emotions among players and fans of both teams. The game ended in a draw 2:2. Then, the second match was played between the players and fans of "Pogoń" Lviv and the representatives of the Programme. The first minutes of the meeting showed a slight advantage of the PBU team, which was leading 0:1 after several minutes. Professionals, the "Pogoń" team, quickly equalized the result and after a few minutes took over the lead. However, loud cheering for our team encouraged them to play bravely. Exciting attacks, persistence of the whole team and the final header of Rafał Baliński led to a 2:2 draw, literally in the last seconds of the match.

This part of the EC Day celebration was organized by the Lviv Branch Office. For the first time the European Cooperation Day was celebrated in the entire EU and neighbouring countries in 2012. The main organizers emphasize: - *With the ECDay campaign, we would like to remind citizens that many good things come out when we join forces...*





*Opening Conference
for PBU2 micro-projects*

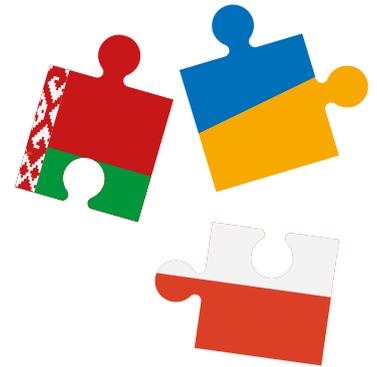
It is a treasure...



From 28th to 30th October we organized an Opening Conference for PBU2 micro-projects which was held in the scenic Białowieża (Podlaskie Voivodeship, PL).

More than 120 beneficiaries from all three PBU countries could learn some theory on the projects' implementation within the Programme.

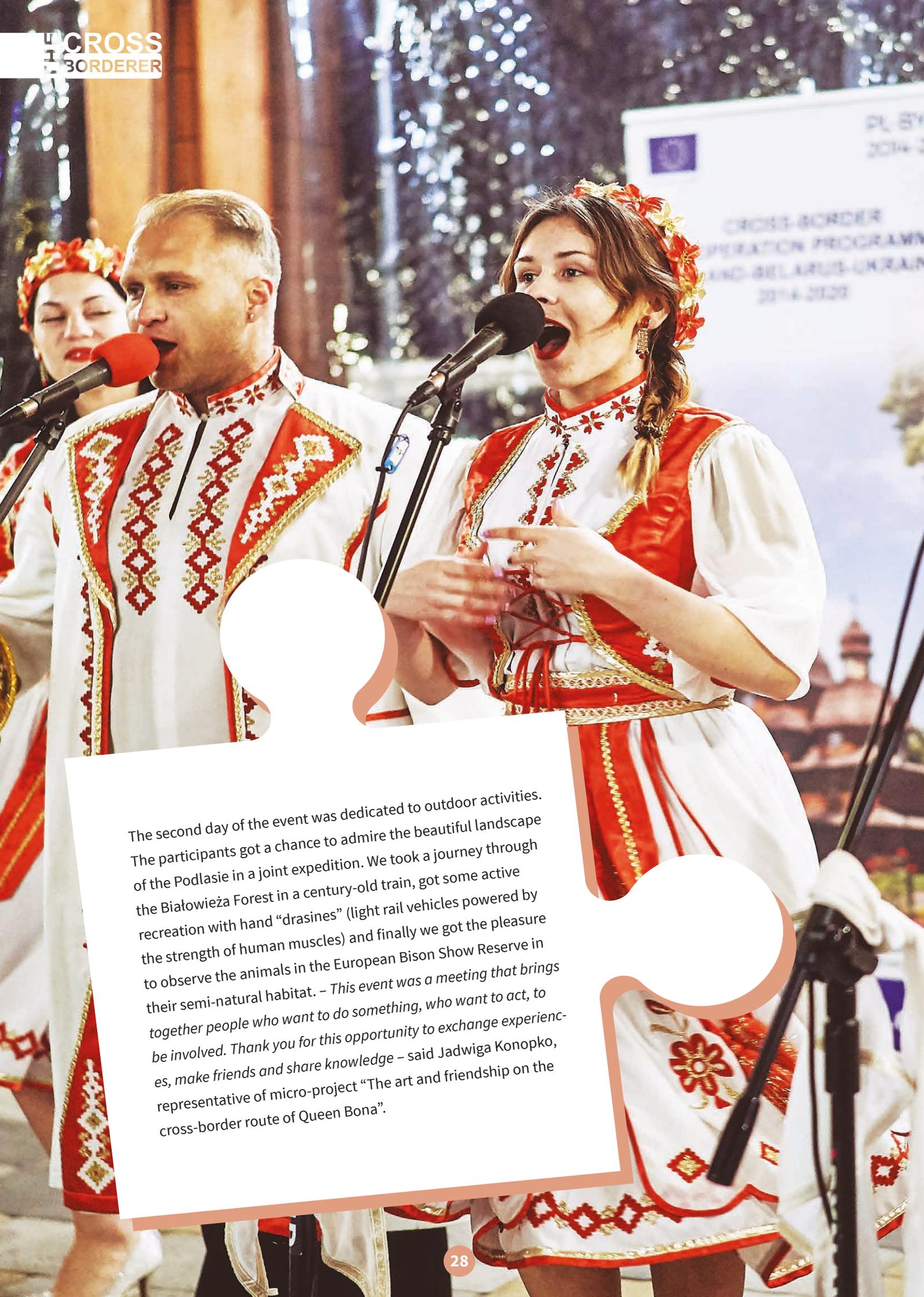
However, our main goal was to enable PBU2 beneficiaries to get to know each other, exchange ideas of their projects and experiences during indoor and outdoor activities.



- *Micro-projects stand for common heritage, which needs to be discovered, preserved and treated with gentleness as it is a treasure we share and are responsible for* - said Andrzej Słodki, Head of the JTS, when opening the conference together with the representatives of the Managing Authority as well as the Mazowieckie and the Podlaskie Marshal Offices. After an informative session, which provided information on the micro-projects specificities, lessons learned on the heritage projects implementation as well as general assumptions of the planned 3rd Call for Proposals, the Conference participants proceeded on to team-building tasks. The idea of the first

workshops was getting to know each other as well as releasing the spirit of cooperation. The group was divided into 5 thematic teams-families – basing on their project ideas. The task was to create a “family name” and an emblem. The results of these attempts could be seen on the common “family photo”. The culinary challenge was another task for the Conference participants during which families could strengthen cooperation. Energy, passion and involvement accompanied all teams. A celebration involving the tasting of local dishes and drinks, dancing and singing together while enjoying the performance of the Kalinka band ended this fantastic and joyful day.





The second day of the event was dedicated to outdoor activities. The participants got a chance to admire the beautiful landscape of the Podlasie in a joint expedition. We took a journey through the Białowieża Forest in a century-old train, got some active recreation with hand “drasines” (light rail vehicles powered by the strength of human muscles) and finally we got the pleasure to observe the animals in the European Bison Show Reserve in their semi-natural habitat. – *This event was a meeting that brings together people who want to do something, who want to act, to be involved. Thank you for this opportunity to exchange experiences, make friends and share knowledge – said Jadwiga Konopko, representative of micro-project “The art and friendship on the cross-border route of Queen Bona”.*





How to write about the PBU projects



Cross-border Forum of Journalists in Lutsk

About 60 journalists and other media professionals from the three countries gathered in Lutsk, Ukraine to participate in the Forum of Journalists, on 16-18th December 2019. We are aware that relevant representation of the Programme activities in the media can enhance the impacts of our projects, provide the visibility of the EU support and contribute into development of good neighborhood relations.

The event was organized with the purpose of bringing journalists and beneficiaries together and to present different aspects of the Programme implementation. – *The Forum of Journalists Poland-Belarus-Ukraine was held regularly before. Last time two years ago* – says Andrzej Stodki, Head of the Joint Technical Secretariat. It is an opportunity for the local media representatives to get a full picture of the Programme activities and to get first-hand information from individual projects.

The presentations about the past and today of PBU were followed by the visits to the projects located in Lutsk, including TwoTowers project (conservation works at the Chartoryski Tower) and Coordination project (on-site demonstration of fire and rescue vehicles and equipment). The visit to another PBU project, which is perhaps the most popular among the people of Lutsk – the city zoo, modernized during the 2007-2013 Programme period took place on the next day. The beneficiaries of PBU projects from other regions and countries also shared their stories and presented the achievements.



– *What is important that during the implementation of projects, the lasting friendships at the international level are made, and the project originators and implementers are constantly enriching them with new ideas. That is why we try to make these enthusiastic and creative people be able to share their experience with others. I am convinced that it is worth talking and writing about good things* – underlines Dr. Leszek Buller, Director of the Center for European Projects. A part of the agenda was devoted to the discussion in small groups. The topics included mass media environments in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, the subjects that attract media attention, reaching the media with the information to get press coverage, aspects of cross-border cooperation to be promoted in the media and promotion tools to be used.

*I am convinced that it is worth talking
and writing about good things*

The ideas generated during the discussion will be integrated in PBU promotional activities and taken into account by the projects. Another important output of the event was the network of contacts built between journalist and beneficiaries, as well as knowledge and best practices exchanged. – *It is surprising that so many good events are not shown in the media. That is why journalists from Poland, Belarus and Ukraine were wondering how to break this barrier. Everyone agreed that journalists are willing to create positive materials, but the main obstacle are publishers who are not interested in - in their opinion - less commercial topics. The emerging platform of agreement between journalists from three countries is a chance to create an effective system to overcome such stereotype* – summarizes Andrzej Klimczak, journalist, participant of the Forum.

Both visits to projects and presentations raised the interest among the journalists - they took interviews and used the materials for their future publications and reportages. The event was followed by articles in the mass media, TV and radio broadcasts.



Podlaskie

*a region of many
flavours and cultures*

A unique place on the map. On the one hand, a green, ecological region, immersed in tradition, on the other – a modern, focusing on development of industry and innovation.

Multicultural and multi-flavour.

It is worth living and working in it.



First, some data. The Podlaskie Voivodeship is located in north-eastern Poland. It borders with Belarus and Lithuania. It covers over 20 thousand square kilometres, and has a population of nearly 1.2 million people. Its capital is Białystok.

The region has many advantages, many strengths. A big plus is the border location, which translates into the possibility of cooperation with foreign partners in the field of business, culture, education and administration. It is worth finding a business partner here due to the availability of resources and/or convenient rail connections for the transport of goods.

Green potential

Another plus: a clean, diverse natural environment, little changed by human. Four national parks (Białowiecki, Biebrzański, Narwiański and Wigierski), three landscape parks, numerous nature reserves, Natura 2000 areas. One of the parks - Białowiecki (Białowieża National Forest) - has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, because it protects Europe's only surviving deciduous primeval forest – an ecosystem untouched by human hand. Tourists are left in awe over the sheer number of the shades of green, the vibrant micro cosmos of a moss-covered tree and the monumental majesty of ancient oaks. This Park is also the unquestionable symbol of the region as a home to the European bison, Europe's largest land mammal, which has been reintroduced here after over 30 years since extinction.

The landscape parks in Podlaskie are the pearls of its nature, as well. The picturesque hills in the Suwałki District, the enthralling Knyszyn Primeval Forest or the stunning "Polish Amazon" – the Narew River Valley are definite must-see points on the holiday map of this part of Europe.

The Podlaskie Voivodeship is a green, ecological region. Its potential is built on this brand and not only in such obvious areas as the production of high-quality food. The wood industry, renewable energy, ecological construction, production of agricultural machinery are other dynamically developing sectors.

Ethnic and religious mosaic

Compared to other Polish regions, it is distinguished by its special cultural wealth, which results from the diversity of this place. Complicated political history contributed to the creation of ethnic and religious mosaic in these areas. The centuries-old presence of

Jews, Tatars and the coexistence of the Belarusian, Ukrainian and Lithuanian minorities had an enormous impact on every aspect of life.

Today, believers of the Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches, Old Believers, as well as non-Christian communities such as Jews and Tatars live here side by side. The meeting point of different cultures and religions.

This diversity is reflected in the culture and architecture. In the centre of Białystok the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary stands along with the 17th-century parish church, the oldest historic brick building in the city, and a few hundred meters away there is the Orthodox Cathedral of St. Nicholas. This is how the whole voivodeship looks. In the nearby town of Supraśl we can visit the Monastery of the Annunciation, synagogue in Tykocin, "molennas" (temples of the Old Believers) in Suwałki, and Tatar mosques in Bohoniki and Kruszyniany.

A cultural and religious melting pot, which also translates into a great cuisine. Due to the multitude of flavours and originality, the "Podlaskie dishes" have gained many supporters. "Potato babka" (depending on recipe and cooking method it may be either a flaky potato pie, or a heavy potato pudding), "kartacze" (the kind of dumplings made from grated and riced potatoes and stuffed with ground meat or dry curd cheese or mushrooms), "sękacze" (cake made of butter, egg whites and yolks, flour, sugar, and cream, cooked on a rotating spit in an oven or over an open fire) or "Koryciński cheeses" (the kind of hard yellow cheese made from cow's milk, named after the village of Korycin in Poland) - these are the specialities of the local gastronomy.



Direction: economy

However, one who would consider the Podlaskie Voivodeship as a region concentrated on cuisine and folklore, focused only on tourists, a place where life is slow, would be wrong. The Podlaskie Voivodeship is focused on the development of the economy, as well.

The voivodeship places great emphasis on research and development projects, transfer of science and business, especially in the areas of smart specializations (i.e. sectors that it particularly wants to develop), such as the agri-food industry, metal and machinery industry, eco-innovations and the medical sector.

In the 2030 Podlaskie Voivodeship Development Strategy, adopted in April 2020, the Voivodeship specifies its main goals. The first is a dynamic economy, in which the industries of the future, innovation and renewable sources are developed. Wealthy residents are another goal: active, competent, living in an area of high standards. And the third goal: a partner region, well managed, cooperating with other regions and countries.

First on Mars

The Podlaskie Voivodeship is also the region of specialists, any employer will easily find the necessary qualified staff here. Thanks to universities that educate at a high level. An example is the Medical University with great achievements and scientific potential or the Białystok University of Technology, the largest technical university in north-eastern Poland, whose students have proved many times that they are unbeatable, e.g. by constructing the best Mars rovers in the world.

Supporters of both mass and high culture will certainly not complain of boredom. The Podlaskie

Voivodeship is a place of many popular music events, such as Suwałki Blues Festival and Up To Date Festival in Białystok. Music lovers from all over Poland come to the premieres at the Podlasie Opera and Philharmonic – European Art Centre and tickets are sold out for many months. The local Aleksander Węgierko Drama Theatre is constantly introducing world hits to its repertoire, while Arsenal Gallery in Białystok, is one of the most recognizable contemporary art galleries in Poland. The Podlasie Festival of Science and Art prepared by regional universities will fascinate even the most demanding. In turn, the International Festival of Music “The Podlasie Octave of Cultures” will allow you to feel with all your senses what cultural diversity means.

The Podlaskie Voivodeship is a place where nature, culture, history as well as innovative and “green” technologies harmoniously intertwine. This is a region worth visiting, worth cooperating with and worth living in.



Biebrza backwaters (photo: Wiktor Wolkow)



CROSS-BORDER HERITAGE

The location of the Podlaskie Voivodeship directly predisposes us to cooperate with our neighbours. The benefits of such cooperation are enormous - says Artur Kosicki, Marshal of the Podlaskie Voivodeship.

CROSSBORDERER: – What is the balance of 15 years of the PL-BY-UA Programme for the Podlaskie Voivodeship as a region? What did the Programme and its projects bring to its life, what did they change?

ARTUR KOSICKI: – The Cross-Border Cooperation Programme has enabled the implementation of numerous projects in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, which wouldn't be possible if relying only on the Voivodeship's own resources. The balance of these 15 years are three editions of the Programme and the co-financing of projects reaching tens of millions of euros transferred to our region. Please note, that the construction of the Polish-Belarusian rail crossing infrastructure in Siemianówka which started in

2018, received 5.3 MEUR of co-financing. Numerous investments, especially in such areas as tourism, cultural heritage, healthcare, infrastructure, have shown the huge potential of our region. Its geographical location, natural conditions and cultural heritage are being rediscovered. Investments in healthcare (extensions, equipping hospitals, improving the quality of medical services) resulted significantly in improving medical care and availability to specialized services. Certainly, another example is the investment in tourism, contributing to an increase in the standards of living for the inhabitants of less urbanized areas. Investments in infrastructure in its broadest sense create new opportunities for business development, including the cross-border



one, establishing new relationships and developing prosperity in general, which is our common goal.

- Which PBU projects implemented by the Podlaskie Voivodeship are you most satisfied with and why?

- All projects are valuable because they contribute to the development of our Voivodeship. If I were to indicate the most important, this would be the construction of the infrastructure of the rail border crossing in Siemianówka – a project implemented by the Podlaski Voivode and a beneficiary from Belarus [CROSSBORDERER: State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus]. These works include, among others, the construction of the administrative

building for the needs of passage service, a helicopter landing pad and an observation footbridge. Another project that is worth highlighting is the project regarding the purchase of medical equipment used in cardiovascular diseases and intensive care. It is implemented by the Autonomous Public Health Maintenance Organization Jędrzej Śniadecki Voivodeship Polyclinical Hospital in Białystok and the Minsk Regional Clinical Hospital. From the point of view of protecting our cultural heritage, very important is the creation of the Cross-Border Centres for Dialogue of Cultures – promoting art, folklore, science, literature, painting, theatre and craft – carried out by the Szczuczyn Commune with the cooperation of partners from Ukraine and Belarus.



The balance of these 15 years are three editions of the Programme and the co-financing of projects reaching tens of millions of euros transferred to our region.

Another important project concerns the wealth of the Białowieża Forest.

It is implemented by the Hajnowski Powiat with a beneficiary from Belarus [CROSSBORDERER: Department for Education of Kamianiec District Executive Committee]. The Białowieża Forest, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, is the only forest complex in central and western Europe preserved in the form of primary forest. Its exceptional richness requires our special care. As you can see, the scope of investment is broad. And it shows how important for our Voivodeship sustainable development is.

– Now we are facing the new financial perspective of the Programme.

In your opinion, which directions (objectives, priorities) should be targeted over the next 7 years, so that the Programme can respond to the needs of both: your region and the entire eligible area – especially in the context of recent epidemic and climate challenges, but also considering other developmental needs?

– Yes, the works on the new Programme for the years 2021-2027 are already in progress. The representatives from Poland, Belarus and Ukraine met already in October 2019 as the Joint Programming

Committee and discussed the main aspects of the new Programme and selected objectives and priorities. Now their cooperation is held online. In the current 2014-2020 perspective, priority 1.2 (Promotion and preservation of natural heritage) enjoyed a high interest among beneficiaries. Public awareness in this area is very high. Climate change which we are currently experiencing requires rethinking the problem of energy production. Therefore, it seems obvious that investments in the natural environment and renewable energy sources should be included in the next Programme perspective. Another objective is “A more social Europe and its neighbourhood”. It will focus on social integration, reducing youth unemployment, education as well as launching initiatives to remove legal and language barriers preventing labour force movement. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic made us realise how important this problem is. It turned out that our most important task is ensuring the health and safety of our citizens, and it is much easier to act with regional and international cooperation.

It should be emphasised, that at this difficult time the Programme has significantly contributed to the

fight against this dangerous disease by providing and allocating additional financial resources to fight COVID-19. Two hospitals from our region were the beneficiaries of that support: the Autonomous Public Health Maintenance Organization Jędrzej Śniadecki Voivodeship Polyclinical Hospital in Białystok and the Dr. Ludwik Rydygier Voivodeship Hospital in Suwałki, while in Belarus these were: the Hrodna University Hospital and the Regional Clinical Hospital in Minsk. Medical equipment, personal protective equipment and respirators have been purchased. These joint actions and initiatives clearly show the need for further cooperation and integration in Europe.

Therefore, as the Podlaskie Voivodeship Board, we see the need to continue these directions in the next 2021-2027 perspective. The cooperation between the Managing Authority, the Joint Technical Secretariat and other regions runs properly and efficiently for everyone, and also brings benefits for inhabitants. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our partners for their work on developing the borderland potential.

The Branicki Palace and the Podlasie Opera and Philharmonic are the most characteristic buildings in Białystok, capital of the Podlaskie Voivodeship (photos: Mateusz Duchnowski)



The projects implemented under the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020 are not just indicators, budgets, reports and payments. Although these are inseparable elements, above all each project hides the specific ideas, values and dreams of people implementing it, as well as the stories of those who benefited from their implementation.



From the river's perspective

We want to bring some of them closer to you by the “Project stories” - the cycle which presents their more human (but also animal - as in the 1st episode) dimension of our selected projects. We invite you to read.

Like nothing - a modest hull and paddles. With this - blisters on the hands, sore arms, soaked clothes, uncomfortable life vests. But how many unique and exceptional experiences in return! Kayaking enthusiasts could talk about it endlessly ... - *Kayaking is very close to nature - animals peak out of the bushes, birds take off. We can observe our villages, towns and cities from a completely different perspective, from the river's perspective. Traveling down the river, we never know what we will see just around the bend. The landscape is constantly changing, it's never the same and that is amazing* - with every sentence, Rafał Siwek, a keen kayaker, becomes more and more enthusiastic...

On the tri-border of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine there are plenty of places to go kayaking... The flowing waters of the Bug of almost 800 kilometres, together with its tributaries form hundreds of meanders, sandy slopes and beaches, opening views of vast, untouched spaces. This network of rivers, like an intricate necklace, combines pearls of architecture, virgin nature and a common rich history.

- *Kayaking teaches us how to commune with nature without any interference. We are dependent on the direction of the river and this is exciting. Secondly, it teaches how to interact with other people - kayaking*

connects people! - says Aleksandra, a participant of the Bug river trip “500 kayaks”, which was born to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Podlaskie Voivodeship. - *It gives a great satisfaction from overcoming your own weaknesses. It's a great form of relaxation on the water, it's also a good integration and lesson of cooperation* - adds her friend Katarzyna.

Following the interest of tourists, kayaking enthusiasts from the Polish Drohiczyn decided to do something more. When they were visiting the nearby Sokal, also on the Bug river, it turned out that the Ukrainian partners had a similar idea for development of tourism in the area. Without thinking too long, they decided to join forces. They also invited Belarusians from the nearby village of Bielin, from where - throughout the Dniepr-Bug Canal and the Muchavec River connecting the Black Sea with the Baltic Sea - the Bug river can be reached. In this way, one of a few, three-sided, Polish-Ukrainian-Belarusian project was created to mark and promote over 800 kilometres of the water trail called “Bug unites us”. About 400 shipping signs will appear on the banks, rest areas will be created with informational boards and maps, rubbish bins and huge wooden tubes, inside of which people will be able to sit and listen to the sounds of nature, will be installed. Eight observation towers will also be built,



photo: Michał Zabokrzecki

*The project
“Bug Unites Us
- creation of two cross-border
touristic kayak trails”
is being implemented
thanks to the financial support
of the European Union.*

from the height of which tourists will be able to explore the beauty of the surrounding area.

Kayak tourism centers are being created in Sokal, Bielin and Drohiczyn. The ones in Ukraine and Belarus, they will act primarily as informational points and equipment rentals, while on the Polish side the center will house exhibits of the Kayaking Museum previously operating in Drohiczyn, a kayak simulator and a tent with a pool for testing kayaks. - *We have also purchased 10 kayaks, each one different: from a free-style kayak for exercising sport “swings”, through a children’s kayak, sea, expeditionary kayak, etc. All so that visitors can see and test different types of equipment - emphasizes Rafał Siwek, who exercises the project manager role. - Warsaw didn’t do it, Poznań didn’t do it, no big city did it, only Drohiczyn managed - sums up proudly.*

The promotion of the trail will be enhanced by international kayaking expeditions, publications, participation in tourism fairs, a website, a special e-application and a computer game.

The authors of the project hope that along with the creation of the trail, agritourism farms and equipment rentals on the riverside as well as companies organizing professional kayaking and other events will develop.

Interestingly, there are already two places on the external EU border between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, where during the tourist season you can get a border check and cross the border through the waterway, as part of kayaking or canoeing trip: on the Augustów Canal and in Brest on the Bug river. The creators of the “Bug Unites Us” trail dream that another such place will be created in Gołębie, a small village on the Polish-Ukrainian border. But this is a topic for a new story and maybe for another project ...

Quiz

Which birthday is Interreg celebrating this year?

- a/ 10th
- b/ 20th
- c/ 30th

1

How many questionnaires did we receive within the public survey on Programme objectives?

- a/ 57
- b/ 507
- c/ 1507

2

Which priorities are the most popular for future support among the participants of the above mentioned survey?

- a/ Accessibility and Borders
- b/ Heritage and Employment
- c/ Environment and Education

3

Regular projects engage the largest part of the Programme budget. It equals to:

- a/ 1.13 MEUR
- b/ 11.3 MEUR
- c/ 113 MEUR

4

How many projects were selected for financing under the Programme as a result of the 3rd Call for Proposals?

- a/ 16
- b/ 26
- c/ 36

5

Finally, we invite you for a moment of entertainment. On these pages, with a pinch of salt, we present a few questions about the content of this edition of "The CROSSBORDERER".

If you want to test your perceptiveness and memory, try to answer them. You can find the correct answers inside the magazine and... at the bottom of page 43 ;).



Final Event of the Educational Campaign for Schools within the 2019 European Cooperation Day was organized in:

- a/ Rzeszów (PL)
- b/ Brest (BY)
- c/ Lviv (UA)

6



C



B



Opening Conference for PBU2 micro-projects was held in:

- a/ Hrodna (BY)
- b/ Uzhhorod (UA)
- c/ Białowieża (PL)

7



C



B



2019 Cross-border Forum of Journalists was organized in:

- a/ Lublin (PL)
- b/ Lutsk (UA)
- c/ Minsk (BY)

8



A



B



C



Cross-border Cooperation Programme
Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020
Joint Technical Secretariat
39a Domaniewska St., 02-672 Warsaw, Poland
tel.: +48 22 378 31 00
e-mail: pbu@pbu2020.eu

Branch Office in Rzeszów
Marshal Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship
6 Poniatowskiego St., 35-026 Rzeszów, Poland
tel.: +48 17 85 34 188
e-mail: branch@pbu.rzeszow.pl

Branch Office in Brest
Brest Transboundary Infocentre
46 Sovetskaya St., 224005 Brest, Belarus
tel.: +375 162 53 15 83
e-mail: branch@pbu-brest.by

Branch Office in Lviv
Information and Cross-border Cooperation
Support Centre DOBROSUSIDSTVO
5 Tyktora St., 79007 Lviv, Ukraine
tel.: +380 322 61 02 59
e-mail: branch@pbu.lviv.ua

www.pbu2020.eu

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this magazine, the Programme cannot be held responsible for any information from external sources, technical inaccuracies, typographical errors or similar. Information and links may have changed without notice. Reproduction is authorized provided the source is acknowledged.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Rzeszów Branch Office and the Joint Technical Secretariat of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020 and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.