

Border Orientation Paper

Lithuania-Poland



1. INTRODUCTION

This document sets out key characteristics of the cross-border region between Lithuania and Poland and outlines options and orientations for the programming of the next Interreg programme along that border. It is part of a series of similar papers prepared by DG REGIO for all EU land borders (and borders with Norway and Switzerland).

The objective of this paper is to serve as a basis for a constructive dialogue both within each cross-border region and with the European Commission for the 2021-2027 Interreg cross-border cooperation programme Lithuania-Poland.

The paper is based for a large part on objective information stemming from three studies commissioned by DG REGIO:

- “Border needs study” (“Collecting solid evidence to assess the needs to be addressed by Interreg cross-border cooperation programmes”) conducted in 2016;
- “Easing legal and administrative obstacles in EU border regions” conducted in 2015-16; and
- “Comprehensive analysis of the existing cross-border transport connections and missing links on the internal EU borders” conducted in 2017-18.

In addition, many data sources available at European level were also used to describe certain aspects socio-economic and territorial development. A full list of information sources is provided in annex.

Cross-border cooperation is much broader than Interreg programmes. The objective is to facilitate cross-border cooperation by reducing remaining persisting obstacles to cross-border activities and linkages as outlined in the 2017 Communication on Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions. The instruments available are not only the funds (in particular Interreg and other European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programmes which may invest in cooperation), but also European and national legal instruments (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), regional agreements (e.g. in the Benelux and the Nordic countries), bi-lateral agreements, etc.) as well as a number of policies e.g. on labour mobility, transport, health, etc. The Interreg programmes should therefore not only aim to fund projects but should also seek to reduce cross-border obstacles. To do so, the legislative proposal on Interreg foresees that part of the budget is dedicated to cross-border governance (including capacity building and contribution to the macro-regional/sea-basin strategies).

That is why this paper goes beyond the traditional activities of Interreg programmes (funding projects) and also covers governance issues (reducing cross-border obstacles). On this, the roles of the programmes are: (a) to initiate the work on the obstacles (e.g. the members of the Monitoring Committee could contact the relevant public authorities and stakeholders); (b) to facilitate the work (by funding working groups as well as possible studies and pilot projects); and (c) to contribute to this work (providing input from the wide knowledge gained in past programming periods). Whilst the budget is limited, the impact can be important as the actions concerned will have a limited cost (meetings, studies, pilot projects, etc.) but structural effects.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE BORDER AREA

1. The analysis has been prepared according to the current programme area comprising 8 territorial units: 5 south-western Lithuanian counties and 3 north-eastern Polish subregions. The total size of the area is 49.434 km².

- The Lithuanian-Polish border stretches over 104 km from the Lithuania–Poland–Russia tripoint southeast to the Belarus–Lithuania–Poland tripoint. The border area is known as the **Suwalki gap** (named after the nearby town of Suwałki), because it represents a tough-to-defend flat narrow piece of land, a gap, that is between Belarus and Russia's Kaliningrad enclave.
- The cross-border area is predominantly rural with the biggest urban settlements being Suwałki and Augustów in Poland and Alytus and Marijampole on the Lithuanian side. The only intermediate region is Suwalski County in PL.
- In terms of national data, whilst 42% of the population of Lithuania lives within the current programme area, only 3% of the population of Poland lives there.
- There are no specific geographical/physical border barriers that would hinder the cooperation. But there appear to be several cultural barriers to cooperation, including issues linked to both social attitudes towards cross-border neighbours and to language differences. In this context, on the basis of the Eurobarometer surveys, the cultural issues appear to be a much greater amongst residents of Polish border regions than they are amongst residents of Lithuanian border regions.
- The languages spoken in the cross-border region belong to different language groups and are Lithuanian and Polish. Language differences are considered as a problem for cross-border cooperation by 67% of the population in the area.

2. The cooperation of the two countries in the framework of Interreg started during the 2000–2006 programming period with the 2004-2006 INTERREG IIIA / TACIS Lithuania, Poland, Kaliningrad region of Russian Federation Neighbourhood Programme. It continued with Interreg IV-A in 2007-2013 between Lithuania and Poland with:
 - 818 events organised with more than 97 thousands participants;
 - 154 public infrastructure objects reconstructed out of them 40 cultural, historical, tourism objects;
 - 44.9 km of roads in the borderline area reconstructed or built.
3. The objective of the ongoing 2014–2020 Lithuania-Poland CBC Programme is to foster smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the border area.



Map 1: Current border programme area

4. The regional socio-economic developments of both Member states show big disparities at national level and in particular in relation to their border regions. For example the economic growth in Poland is concentrated in central and western regions (e.g. Mazowieckie, Wielkopolskie, Dolnośląskie), while the pace of growth is much slower at the eastern border and more rural regions. While GDP per capita reached in 2016 109 % of the EU average in the capital region of Mazowieckie (the city of Warsaw reached even 196%), it stands at only 48 % in Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie. Similarly in Lithuania: the benefits of economic development and speedy convergence are felt very differently across the country. Economic growth concentrates mainly in the surroundings of Vilnius and Kaunas while the pace of growth was much slower in rural regions. While GDP per capita reached nearly 110% of the EU average in Vilnius County, it stands only at 42% in Tauragė County. Corresponding wide gaps in productivity, unemployment, income and poverty levels exist on both sides of the border.
5. There appears to be very limited engagement in cross-border travel for a range of purposes, including very low levels of cross-border travel for work/business purpose or for access to cross-border public services (4%). Cross-border travels for leisure activities (tourism, shopping, visiting family/friends) are also very sporadic in comparison with other EU border regions.
6. 67% of the population surveyed in the border region perceive that language differences are a problem for cross-border cooperation. This is a relatively high number, well above the average of 57% for all EU border regions, clearly reflecting that language differences are perceived as an important issue. Significantly more residents of the Polish border regions (82%) see language differences as a problem than do residents of the Lithuanian border regions (52%).

3. TERRITORIAL DIMENSION

- *Regional typology*

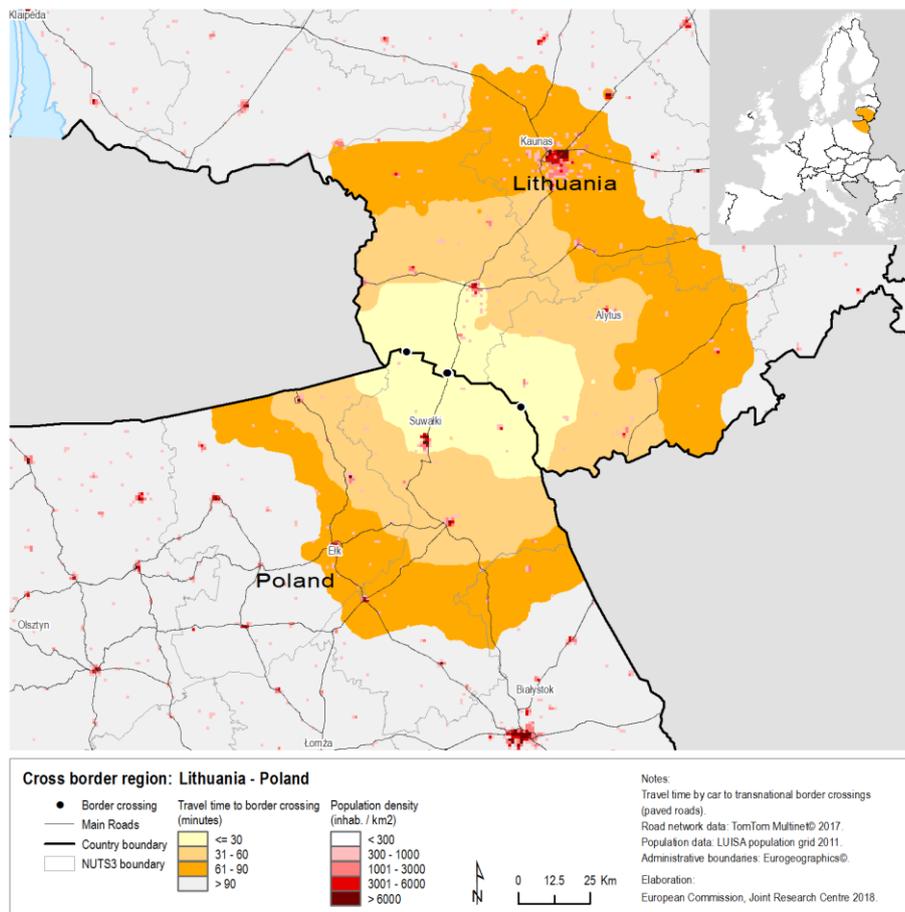
7. The border area consists of Southern Lithuania and North-Eastern Poland. It covers a territory that extends between two non-EU members: the Russian Kaliningrad Oblast area in the West and Belarus in the East.
8. The territory concerned is predominantly rural. Forests cover approximately one third of it, in some regions reaching nearly 50% of the total area. Only minor urban settlements exist within the border region with the biggest being Suwałki town with round 70.000 inhabitants.
9. An estimated 15.000-20.000 ethnic Lithuanians live in Poland, mostly in the border area. In the town of Puńsk (in Suwałskie county) they make up to 80% of the population¹. About 235.000 of Polish minority populate Lithuania (92% live in the Vilnius county)².

- *Functional areas*

10. Interreg programmes may cover several overlapping functional areas depending on the topic (e.g. for the access to health facilities it can be larger as patients would be ready to travel further away to a hospital as this is occasional whilst it can be smaller for the access to the place of work as this is daily). For example, establishing of Sejny-Lazdijai cross border functional area could have a particular value added in terms of tourism development and features linked to this sector including improvements in employment, entrepreneurship and indirectly also external security (Suwałki corridor).
11. For some topics, the solution can only be found if partners outside the programme area are involved (e.g. to reduce the risks of floods, you may need to reintroduce wetlands or dams upstream of a river but outside the programme area). For some other topics, the solution is very local, on an area much smaller than the programme (e.g. to promote daily commuting for work).
12. For example the travel time to the border is important to establish which types of cooperation are possible (e.g. as a citizen you might consider working across the border every day if the border is 30 minutes away (but not if it is 90 minutes) or going to a hospital occasionally even if it is 90 minutes away).
13. Example: For the Lithuanian-Polish border, the percentage of the population accessible within 90 minutes by road is below the EU average (46%). The levels are particularly low in the Polish border regions, with both Podlaskie (22%) and Warmińsko-Mazurskie (20%) scoring less than 50% of the EU average. Lithuania has higher accessibility by road than its neighbouring regions in Poland, but is slightly below the EU average, at 42%. This map shows that mobility is an obstacle to cross-border cooperation:

¹ <http://lietuva.pl/index-old.php?language=pl&page=178>

² [http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/4ADC475697C2334AC12578B000466AD8/\\$file/Infos_100.pdf](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/4ADC475697C2334AC12578B000466AD8/$file/Infos_100.pdf)



Map 2: Connectivity map

14. The Commission’s proposal to address cross-border issues through a functional area offers flexibility in planning and implementation of projects. Therefore, the 2021-2027 Interreg programme Lithuania-Poland should design its actions based on functional areas - which depend on the topic - rather than on the administrative scale defining the programme area. Programme stakeholders are invited to use different tools that would facilitate working together in functional areas like e.g. European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs), Euroregions, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI), Community Led Local Developments (CLLD), natural national or regional parks administrations, etc.

- **Macro-regional strategies**

15. Macro-regional strategies are supported by the highest political level of the EU, the Member States and the regions concerned and have become supporting element of EU regional policy. Governing macro-regional strategies and cross-border cooperation require trust and confidence among partners (Member States, regions, stakeholders, etc.) that share a common vision with both policies interlinking concrete actions and projects.

16. The 2021-2027 Interreg programme Lithuania-Poland located in the Baltic Sea macro-region must not only set out the actions expected to contribute to the specific needs of the cross-border region but also to any policy objective relevant for the EU Strategy for Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

17. Lithuania and Poland are both coordinators of some EUSBSR Policy Areas (PA). Lithuania is coordinator of the PA Energy that aims at improving the implementation of the Baltic Strategy's Action Plan and Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (these two action plans (<http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/action-plan>) have been merged in 2015). Besides this Lithuania is the PA Bio-Economy coordinator and together with Sweden coordinates the PA Transport whereas Poland is in charge of PA Culture, PA Innovation, PA Nutri (reducing nutrient inputs to the sea) and a horizontal area of Capacity Building (which is essential within the scope of Interreg). This requires proactive coordination with the macro-regional strategy decision makers and relevant stakeholders, following the developments within the Baltic Sea Strategy, being in contact with the National Contact Points, etc.

18. Different types of projects could be funded, for example:

- "Coordinated projects", which are part of a set of coordinated action(s) and/or project(s) located in several countries participating in a macro-regional strategy (two or more countries), and are part of a joint macro-regional action creating a cumulative effect; several programmes can contribute to the funding of these projects; or
- "Single projects", where one programme is funding one project, the impact of which is relevant on the entire macro-region and therefore creates synergies. In addition, cross-border programmes may consider one of these mechanisms: specific selection criteria (e.g. bonus points if the project contributes to a macro-regional strategy); earmarking of a budget; specific calls; or labelling (e.g. ex-post identification of projects that could be replicated).

19. The alignment of cross-border programmes to macro-regional strategy themes is a 'win-win' approach. Undoubtedly, macro-regional strategies will benefit from the experience, the partners and the funds of cross-border programme. But at the same time, cross-border programme LT-PL will benefit from such an alignment:

- the impact will be bigger, when you participate in a structured development policy as set by a macro-regional strategy framework across a wider territory which they are part of,
- the project pipeline will be better as project ideas will have political support,
- you will increase cross-border matters visibility by political leaders, decision-makers and citizens, as well as the various Commission services and other EU institutions and of course,
- you will improve the social and economic development in the Baltic Sea macro-region, and the actions of the relevant strategy will also have a positive impact on the cross-border area. In particular, the contribution to macro-regional strategies does not mean a reduction of the budget available for the programme as it is clear that every project should also benefit to the cross-border functional area.

- ***Tourism / cultural heritage***

20. Tourism plays an important role in the economic development. In 2017 the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in Poland was 4.5% of GDP (WTTC³ PL: 2018) and in Lithuania it was 1.8% (WTTC LT: 2018). Travel and tourism's total contribution to employment in 2017 was in Poland 4.5% of GDP (WTTC PL: 2018) and 4.8% in Lithuania (WTTC LT: 2018).
21. The number of nights spent in tourist accommodation increased in nearly all EU Member States in 2018, with the second largest growth observed in Lithuania (+7.7%) and fourth in Poland (+5.8%)⁴.
22. Many investments in common touristic products and services have already been done under Interreg (e.g. cross-border festivals, exhibitions, cooperation by museums, etc.) However, improved connectivity (transport and digital) and common brands of products and services would contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the region as an outstanding green tourism/cultural heritage destination.
23. Improved networking and sustainability of the projects as source of the multiplying effects for following projects should be particularly stressed in the strategic programming and designing of projects. Particularly important is also in this context supporting of match-making events for finding of (new) partners, opening to and mentoring of new partnerships, mapping of initiatives and encouraging new ideas.
24. The natural character of the cross-border region offers exceptional opportunities for the development of targeted eco-soft-tourism. Investments in networks of good prepared bicycle tours, marked hiking routes or canoeing possibilities with linked infrastructure increase the attractiveness of the area. It is worth to consider preparing offer for concrete target groups, eg. families, older people, pupils.
25. The natural character of the cross-border region could also serve as background for drawing a common image of the area built on designing and promoting common touristic brands such as for example culinary and cultural heritage richness of the region. It is also worth to consider the potential of the religious heritage of the region in this respect or creating a region's image as a health tourism destination.
26. Investments for the enhancement and development of tourism assets and services, cultural and natural heritage, etc. should be conceived as a part of an integrated approach aimed also at the diversification of the tourist supply and extension of the tourist season. They have to be strategically framed and take into account the multi-level governance and stakeholder approach. Existing practices from other European regions can provide inspiration for developing thematic tourism routes or quality labels.⁵

³ World Travel&Tourist Council

⁴ Eurostat tourism study 2018 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism_statistics_-_nights_spent_at_tourist_accommodation_establishments

⁵ EU COM offers instruments to share expertise between bodies that manage ERDF, see: TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER

- ***Territorial tools***

27. There are different tools available to give Interreg programmes a genuine territorial dimension, e.g. European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), Euroregions, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI), Community Led Local Developments (CLLD), etc.
28. CLLD as a tool for involving citizens at local level in developing responses to the social, environmental and economic challenges they face could bring manifold benefits for the Lithuanian-Polish border region. CLLD is an approach that requires time and effort, but for relatively small financial investments, it can have a marked impact on people's lives and generate new ideas and shared commitment for putting them into practice.⁶ This instrument is focused on those smaller areas and territories with fewer resources or little attractiveness, the kind of area that it is difficult to intervene in, unless the partners know it very well and set up micro-projects and small scale interventions (such as people to people projects) to take the best out of it and making use of its specific, maybe niche assets.

ORIENTATIONS:

- *Identify functional areas and support appropriate implementation tools especially with a view to tackling specific constraints that regions face on both sides of the border.*
- *Establish integrated and sustainable cross-border strategy for tourism based on historical, natural and cultural heritage products and services, with a strong focus on tying together existing assets, involving the whole range of stakeholders from national authorities to small companies and family businesses and engage existing cross-border exchange platforms (eg. foundations, Euroregion) in supporting this strategy.*
- *Create conditions for better use of products from natural and cultural heritage projects (e.g. an interactive map of products, a tourist needs survey, establishment of a common label).*
- *Develop broader partnerships between touristic projects' beneficiaries in order to establish common information towards tourists, reach out to SMEs and NGOs and exchange good practice.*

⁶ Common Guidance of the European Commission's Directorates-General AGRI, EMPL, MARE and REGIO on community-led local development in European Structural and Investment funds, 29 April 2013.

4. GROWTH, COMPETITIVENESS AND CONNECTIVITY

- *Innovation and enterprises/entrepreneurship*

29. The ESPON Territorial Review undertook Knowledge-Economy (KE) cluster analysis at the NUTS⁷ 2 level to provide a categorisation of the type of competitive knowledge economies at the regional level. The review categorised Lithuania, Podlaskie (PL) and Warmińsko-Mazurskie (PL) at the lowest of the four levels - 'less competitive economies with low incidence of KE'.⁸ On the European 'Regional Competitiveness Index' (RCI) Lithuania has reached the range of 'moderate innovator' whereas Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie stay at the level of 'modest innovators'.⁹
30. Such a situation demands an education and training system able to provide persons with the market relevant skills. While employment growth is constrained by falling labour supply, employment opportunities vary between regions and skill levels.
31. Nevertheless, most RCI indicators used to compare European regions indicate that both sides of the border perform less well than the EU average with regard to technology readiness, business sophistication and innovation potential.
32. In terms of levels of patent applications, all of the (sub)regions on both sides of the border are substantially below the EU average (lower than 20% of the EU average rate) and below their respective (very low) national averages.
33. Expenditure on R&D relative to GDP remains well below the EU average rate of 2.04%: in Lithuania 0.9% (2017); in Podlaskie 0.76% and Warmińsko-Mazurskie of just 0.32% of GDP.
34. Moreover, innovating firms on both sides are relatively small and weakly integrated in domestic or regional and international clusters and value chains, with low potential of attracting critical mass investment and developing large-scale innovations. Most of the producers are concentrated in low-technology industries.
35. The three related Smart Specialisation Strategies in the border region depict a few coinciding priority areas (e.g. agri-food/agri-innovation, health/medical sector). Since the region's competitiveness is hampered by a lack of critical mass and negative framework conditions for innovation, only pooling of investments would bring possible tangible results.
36. Progress is required at national level to enable better conditions for cross border cooperation on innovation. To support the cross-border region's competitiveness reform oriented measures need to be taken at national level, e.g. concerning adjusting the secondary and tertiary education offers that match the markets' needs, supporting business infrastructure investments and innovation capacity building or improvement of accessibility and quality of public services.

⁷ The NUTS classification (Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) is a hierarchical system for dividing up the economic territory of the EU

⁸ <https://www.espon.eu/european-territorial-review>

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/facts-figures/regional_en

- ***Digitisation***

37. In terms of digitisation, most information is available only at national level. Therefore, it is not possible to make any informed observations with regard to the situation at the regional level in the border region.
38. On the basis of national figures, the overall performance on digitisation and government shows a clear cross-border difference, with Lithuania generally performing well (and very well indeed in areas such as ecommerce, digital services for business and digital economy and society) whilst Poland is performing less well across several indicators.
 - The ‘Digital Economy and Society Index’ (DESI) ranks Lithuania 13th and Poland 24th in the EU (2018). However, in terms of government characteristics with regard to digitisation ‘quality’, Lithuania is rated as having ‘medium’ quality whereas Poland belongs to the low-performing cluster of countries despite having made significant progress in the last years.
 - The quality of Digital Public Services varies even more with Lithuania ranking 7th and Poland 24th in the EU. The cross-border cooperation on mutual services is very limited. It has however a big potential to facilitate the daily life of citizens in their cross-border activities (e.g. work mobility, taxation, access to healthcare, etc.). Fostering digitisation is a key challenge for boosting innovation and productivity and increasing internationalization and competitiveness of SMEs.
 - In the integration of Digital Technology dimension Lithuania ranks 9th and Poland 27th. While Lithuanian enterprises keep taking advantage of the opportunities offered by various digital technologies (e.g. companies sharing electronic information) the main challenges in the digitisation of enterprises on the Polish side are the lack of awareness of opportunities and limited access to a digitally skilled workforce. Moreover, Polish enterprises are reluctant to invest in upskilling their employees in digital skills or in new technologies.

- ***Connectivity***

39. Given the geographical location of the border region, a well-functioning and well-connected network infrastructure would be essential for reducing isolation and boosting competitiveness of the border region by stimulating trade and development. Additionally a better public transport solution would improve the quality of life of citizens (e.g. better access to public services on the both sides of the border).
40. Rail connectivity is extremely poor as well as the percentage of the population having access to cross-border rail services is extremely low (less than 10%). The “Cross-border transport connections study” identified that there is one cross-border railway connection with passenger services (Kaunas – Białystok/Suwałki route). However, taking into account the low population density in the region, no potential for rail connections projects can be identified. Rather other ways of improving the connectivity in the region should be explored, including public and non-public transport services.

41. The density of motorways in the region (measuring the length of motorways relative to the area and population size) is substantially below the EU average in Lithuania (at 50% of the EU average) and is scored as ‘zero’ in both Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie.
42. Additionally road safety is a societal issue on the both sides of the border exceeding the EU average of 50 road fatalities per million inhabitants¹⁰ with the biggest number in Warmińsko-Mazurskie of 8.2 per 100.000 inhabitants.¹¹

ORIENTATIONS:

- *Enhance the role of SME’s partners in cooperation projects.*
- *Establish appropriate networking structures and/or support SME’s with access to cross-border cooperation networks and interregional clusters, especially in common Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS3) areas.*
- *Explore areas with common innovation potential (in line with RIS3) and establish appropriate networking structures and/or support SME’s in accession to cross-border cooperation networks and interregional clusters.*
- *Focus investments related to digitisation on common strategy and on improving general conditions for joint e-services and their uptake in education, eHealth care, business support, cultural and tourism cooperation.*
- *Focus on support of digitisation measures and professional skills in order to increase SME competitiveness across the border.*
- *Improve quality of cross-border road connectivity.*
- *Consider improving local public/private transport services across the border to improve connectivity.*

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Transport_statistics_at_regional_level#Road_accidents

¹¹ http://www.polskawliczbach.pl/warmińsko_mazurskie#transport-i-komunikacja

5. GREENER, LOW CARBON ECONOMY

- *Energy transition*

43. Lithuania's and Poland's economies are still relatively energy intensive, with energy consumption levels well above the EU average, despite substantial improvements over recent years.

44. The potential for energy production from wind and biomass is relatively high in the border region, however in relation to EU averages, the weighted average cost of capital (WACC)¹² is assessed to be relatively high in both countries, at 8.7% - 10% in Poland and between 8-9% in Lithuania compared with levels of 3.5% to 7% in the more developed capital markets of the EU.

45. Therefore in terms of renewable energy potential, the following should be noted:

- Wind potential is assessed to be at a mid-to-high level in the border regions, with potential on both sides of the border.
- There is also assessed to be solar potential, at a mid-level, on both sides of the border.
- In terms of biomass, data available for Lithuania is at the national level only. However, on the basis of this national data and regional data for Poland, it seems that there is solid potential for biomass energy from straw and from wood on both sides of the border, with Lithuania having more potential from straw whilst the Polish regions have more potential from forestry resources.

46. Additionally as regards biomass installations, a thorough assessment of the planned installation would need to be done so as to ensure that all relevant environmental standards are respected, including those related to air quality.

- *Circular economy*

47. Recent data on waste is only available at the national level:

- Landfilling remains the cheapest and still important way of waste treatment in Lithuania (30% of municipal waste landfilled in 2016). The share of landfill in Poland is slightly lower (36%), but still slightly above the EU average of 25%.
- Lithuania recycles a slightly higher share of municipal waste (48%) than the EU average whilst Poland recycles slightly less (44%) - (EU average 46%).

¹² WACC is, in summary, a statement of the cost of capital for investments, and it reflects conditions in a specific national and/or sectoral market for accessing capital (availability, expected rates of return, interest rates, etc.). As such, low cost of capital is especially important for ensuring the profitability of renewable energy investments, thus a lower WACC provides a more optimal economic environment for investment in renewable energy.

- In terms of resource productivity (value generated from waste), the EU average is 2.04 Euro per kg. Lithuania achieves much less than this, at 0.77 Euro per kg, with Poland even lower at 0.64 Euro per kg.

48. The investments should prioritise actions in waste prevention, including re-use projects and awareness raising projects.

- ***Climate adaptation and risk management***

49. In terms of environmental climate vulnerability at the general level the Poland – Lithuania border region is assessed to have a medium level of environmental sensitivity to climate change. Joint challenges from climate change exist, e.g. increased temperatures and forest fires. Seriously investing in the prevention of forest fires is getting both important and urgent, including through land use and forest management measures which reduce wildfire risks, strengthen forest resilience, and ensure the continued availability of vital forest ecosystem services. Joint monitoring and management activities have a tangible value added in this respect.

50. Legal and administrative cross-border obstacles hinder effective disaster/emergency management and prevent the delivery of an effective European-standard emergency service.

51. There are multiple rivers and other water bodies in the border region which provide a basis for joint action in relation to river basin management and water pollution.

- ***Biodiversity***

52. The Commission adopted in 2013 an EU-wide strategy promoting investments in green infrastructure, to restore the healthy ecosystems, ensure that natural areas remain connected together, and allow species to thrive across their entire natural habitat, so that nature keeps on delivering its many benefits to us. The strategy promotes the deployment of green infrastructure across Europe as well as the development of a Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure.

53. Green infrastructures are strategically planned networks of natural and semi-natural areas with environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services. They incorporate green spaces (or blue if aquatic ecosystems are concerned) and other physical features in terrestrial (including coastal) and marine areas. In certain sectors, in particular climate change mitigation and adaptation, green infrastructure approaches can offer complementary or more sustainable alternatives than those provided through conventional civil engineering. As green infrastructures require a good planning with many stakeholders, they should be supported through Lithuania-Poland Interreg programme.

54. The Lithuanian-Polish border area shares a rich common natural heritage. It comprises several Natura 2000 protected areas. There are several sites of the Ramsar¹³ Convention

¹³ The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

on Wetlands of international importance (e.g. Zuvintas Strict Nature Reserve wetland or Cepkeliai mire Strict Nature Reserve and Natura 2000 site in Lithuanian border area or Wigry National Park or Luknajno Lake Nature Reserve which is UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Natura 2000 and BirdLife IBA site on the Polish side).

55. Since the index of natural and protected areas in the Poland – Lithuania border region is high, there is a potential to deliver ecosystem services, to provide habitat and connectivity for large mammals and thus to have potential for green infrastructure networks:
- The European Environment Agency (EEA) has identified several important habitats for the lynx and the wolf in the border region.
 - Levels of forest connectivity are very high in parts of the border areas, especially in the Alytus and Suwałki counties and parts of the border region have been classified as having high ‘Wilderness Quality’.
56. EEA reports indicate also that there is a relatively high level of invasion by invasive plant species in several parts of the border region.

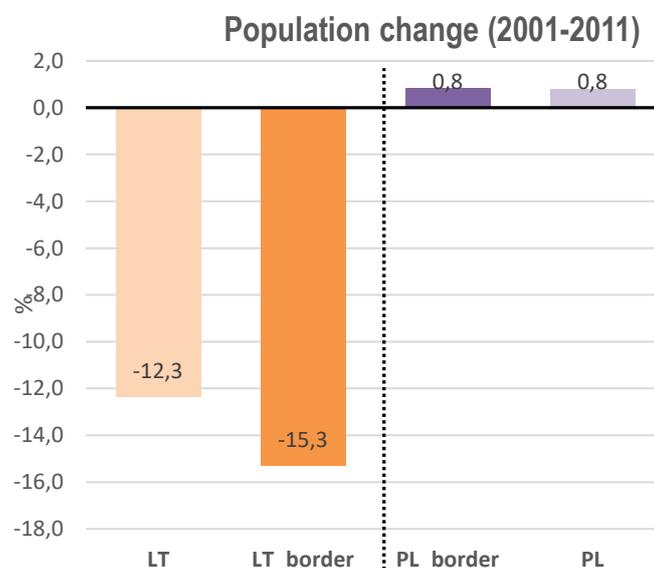
ORIENTATIONS:

- *Establish actions to improve awareness about recycling need by the cross-border inhabitants.*
- *Support transition to renewable energy sources by pooling resources focusing on biomass sources e.g. through small-scale cross-border energy production for biomass.*
- *Promote cross-border prevention measures, such as actions to improve the knowledge base, preparation and implementation of disaster risk management strategies, flood and forest fires protection and prevention infrastructure, networks, management of land, forests and rivers, etc.*
- *Promote awareness raising actions on the importance of natural protected areas and support joint management of such areas and sites (e.g. in the view to fight dispersion of invasive alien species).*
- *Identify potentials for green infrastructure and organize planning for common actions with the relevant stakeholders on each side of the border.*

6. EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND INCLUSION

- *Employment*

57. Regarding the human factor the demographic indicators point towards a region facing many deep challenges. Ageing of the society, negative demographic trends leading to depopulation, especially on the Lithuanian side and very low density of habitants on both sides have put strain on the ability to provide skilled labour and access to quality services.
58. The Lithuanian side of the border is affected by severe depopulation trends. Throughout the 2000-2016 period its population has shrunk by 17% (in Taurage county even by 24%). On the Polish side in this time population diminished by 3.1% in Podlaskie and 0.8% in Warmińsko-Mazurskie. The negative demographic trends are particularly drastic in rural regions that dominate in the region. They are characterised by low socio-economic status residents and older residents, which further reinforces the downward spiral of declining regions and the socio-spatial polarization.



Graph 1: Population change on the Lithuanian and Polish side of the border

59. In terms of 'labour market productivity' the border region scores below the EU average, with Taurage county being the lowest at 45%, whilst Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie at 54% of the EU average.
60. In terms of 'market size' all border regions are substantially below the EU average score of 35 with Lithuania at national level at 12 and Podlaskie at 8 and Warmińsko-Mazurskie at 9.

61. The employment rates were 2017 in the range between 66%-72% in the two Polish voivodships and in the range 75-80% in Lithuania.
62. Unemployment rate in Lithuania in December 2018 was 6.3%; in Podlaskie it was 8% and in Warmińsko-Mazurskie 11% in 2019. At the county level it ranged on the Lithuanian side of the border between 4.6% in Vilnius county and 7.7% in Alytus county¹⁴ whilst on the Polish side it ranged from 7-10% in Gizycki county to 15-19% in Wegorzewski county in Warmińsko-Mazurskie¹⁵ subregion and from 4.3-6% in Suwalski county to 12-15% in Sejnienski county in Podlaskie subregion¹⁶ (in geographical terms the Suwalski and Sejnienski counties are neighbouring areas The direct neighbourhood of competitive Suwałki city is a big challenge for the Sejnienski county).
63. The long-term unemployment rates are low (at 1.6% in Podlaskie, 2.1% in Warmińsko-Mazurskie and 2% in Lithuania in 2016 (only national level data available).
64. Employment in agriculture sector predominates in the border region (e.g. in Marijampole being at 28% and in Podlaskie at 24%), followed by trade and transport and industry sector.
65. Regarding labour market indicators included in the assessment of the RCI, the following can be noted:
- Wages are low on both sides of the border within the EU context, which corresponds with low productivity. Activities to raise the productivity of labour (e.g. education and training, digitisation) can have merit, although these should be pursued primarily through national programmes, but cross-border cooperation can also have added value.
 - There are no particular asymmetries in terms of wages, (quality) job vacancies or unemployment levels that would drive labour flows across the border.
66. Some parts of the Lithuanian-Polish cross-border area could benefit from cross-border labour mobility. Such a mobility has many benefits (reduce unemployment, increase activity in enterprises, keep people in the region, contribute to mutual understanding, etc.). It also touches upon many dimensions like recognition of skills/ qualifications/ diplomas, social security issues like pensions/ health insurance /fiscal questions like different taxation systems, or transport, schools/ kindergarten, etc.; "BorderInfoPoints" could help workers seeking jobs at the other side to tackle the arising obstacles serving with information, and providing individual counselling.
67. In increasingly tight labour markets (existing on both sides of the border), availability of qualified staff and managers is often one of the main obstacles for businesses

¹⁴ Lithuanian Statistical Office https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?hash=4525652a-e3e2-487f-b3f3-cde144e36a80#/

¹⁵ <https://olsztyn.stat.gov.pl/opracowania-biezace/komunikaty-i-biuletyny/inne-opracowania/komunikat-o-sytuacji-spoeczno-gospodarczej-województwa-warmińsko-mazurskiego-w-styczniu-2019-r-,3,75.html>

¹⁶ <https://bialystok.stat.gov.pl/opracowania-biezace/komunikaty-i-biuletyny/inne-opracowania/komunikat-o-sytuacji-spoeczno-gospodarczej-województwa-podlaskiego-w-styczniu-2019-r-,6,76.html?contrast=default>

development¹⁷. Governments in both countries announced or have already partially undertaken reforms in vocational education and training (VET) to adapt it to the new challenges and to increase their market relevance. Improved VET is particularly relevant to mobilize the potential of unemployed people.

68. Additionally different domestic taxation provisions in Lithuania and Poland hinder cross-border labour mobility between Lithuania and Poland. The difference between domestic provisions on taxation in Lithuania and Poland generate a number of practical obstacles for cross-border workers. Concrete examples are differences in income tax rates or in the tax-related possibility of deducting travel expenses (i.e. important issue at this border due to considerable commuting distances). Beyond this, legal differences also exist in the field of social security. These obstacles are assessed to have a high negative impact on cross-border labour market integration. They often create unfair (monetary) disadvantages for individuals who earn most of their income in the neighbouring country or who work only occasionally across the border.

- ***Education***

69. On ‘basic education’ the ratings are at national level on both sides of the border, and there is a clear cross-border difference. In the RCI, Poland has a score of 80, which is well above the EU average score of 63. Lithuania scores 48, well below both Poland and the EU average.

70. On ‘higher education and lifelong learning’, there is also a cross-border difference. Lithuania has a score of 69, which is above the EU average score of 63, whilst both Polish regions score 52-53, below the EU average. However, especially on the Lithuanian side a large network of institutions competes over the rapidly declining number of students and scarce public funding, including through lowering quality standards for admission of students and proliferation of programmes, so that tertiary education quality remains low.

71. Even if bilingual minority of Lithuanians and Poles live on the both sides of the border the language differences are considered as a problem for cross-border cooperation: 58% of the surveyed by the Eurobarometer see it as ‘a problem’.

- ***Health***

72. On the ‘health’ indicator of the RCI the whole border region performs significantly poorer than the EU average score of 75, with Lithuania scoring particularly badly with a score of 27. Podlaskie at 51 and Warmińsko-Mazurskie at 47 score higher, but are still both more than 30% below the EU average.

73. The healthcare system remains underfunded in both countries (about 6% of GDP), Affordability and unmet medical care needs are key concerns in both countries. Moreover, lack of medical personnel in rural areas is thinning out health services. Retaining doctors and nurses in the cross-border region will remain particularly challenging on both sides of the border.

¹⁷ Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS), EBRD, 2015

74. Mobile health units could be used to improve access to primary healthcare in the rural cross-border area, where the population has difficulty accessing healthcare services, with mobile health units staffed by a range of health specialists.

- ***Social inclusion***

75. Comparisons are problematic at regional level in respect of social factors such as poverty, social exclusion, severe material deprivation, low work intensity in households, as data is only available at national level in Lithuania and at the NUTS 1 'macro-region' level in Poland (and only for 2016).

76. On the basis of the available data it can be noted that 'people at risk of poverty or social exclusion' the average levels in the Polish regions are broadly in line with the EU average of 24%, whilst the level in Lithuania is higher, at 28 %.

77. Legal and administrative obstacles are a particular challenge for cooperation in relation to social and demographic issues. Besides, many of the obstacles and barriers cannot be removed or overcome by actions taken by the programme. Therefore, cross border cooperation in this field seems secondary.

ORIENTATIONS:

- *Explore possibilities to support information services for cross-border employment and recruitment.*
- *Increase and deepen the exchanges of information between competent authorities on matters relevant to cross-border integration and mobility.*
- *Organize vocational trainings with labour market relevance across the border.*
- *Promote bilingualism by developing structured offer to learn each other's languages (early education, adult courses, guidance in both languages, etc.).*
- *Establish common services / introduce shared services in the healthcare sector to improve access to primary healthcare on both sides of the border, eg. invest in establishing mobile health units.*

7. GOVERNANCE

Section 1: Cross-Border Governance in a wider context (and use of the new "Interreg Governance" specific objective)

78. Cross-border cooperation is not limited to Interreg programmes. It also builds on policies (e.g. cross-border mobility), on legal instruments (e.g. bi-lateral agreements, treaties, European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation) and on funding (including but not limited to Interreg).
79. Actions and orientations set out in this section may be supported by using the part of the programme's budget as proposed in the European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) Regulation for improving governance issues.
- *Working on border obstacles and potentials*
80. The Commission Communication "Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions" lists many obstacles to cross-border cooperation suggesting scope for sharing of services and resources in cross-border regions. Among the obstacles, legal, administrative and institutional differences are major bottlenecks. Other constraints include the use of different languages or lack of sufficient transport possibilities and mobility conditions (very limited crossing border roads). Shared use of health care or educational facilities could contribute greatly to improving the quality of life in border regions.
81. As the Interreg programme is instrumental to effective cross-border cooperation, Lithuanian-Polish cooperation programme should seek to identify and address the particular obstacles for its own border region and tap the common potential to facilitate cooperation in the wider context.

ORIENTATIONS:

- *Identify key obstacles and potential for cross-border labour market, health care, transport connections, bilingualism, technical solutions for emergency operations, etc. (the Cross-Border Review may be used as a starting point).*
- *Develop the evidence base regarding legal/administrative obstacles to inform decision-making bodies and follow actions by authorities at national, regional and/or local level engaging stakeholders in developing workable, detailed legal/administrative solutions.*
- *Bring the relevant actors together (e.g. authorities at national/ regional/ local levels, enterprises, etc.) and establish working groups with all the parties concerned*

to facilitate the process of finding ways to reduce identified obstacles and exploit the potential (e.g. by organizing experts' meetings, pilot projects, etc.).

- *Develop awareness-raising activities, training programmes and other forms of communication and information exchange that are specifically designed to assist citizens, businesses, organisations and authorities in the border region to navigate ways through, or around, those legal/administrative obstacles that are in place. Whilst this will not remove such obstacles, it could lessen the negative impact of ongoing barriers and may be the only option available for regional-level authorities.*

- ***Links with existing strategies***

82. Cross-border cooperation cannot be done in isolation. It has to be framed in the existing strategies (e.g. national, regional or sectoral). Ideally, there should be a dedicated cross-border strategy which is based on reliable cross-border data, which is politically supported and which has undergone a wide consultation with relevant stakeholders. It is a useful exchange forum and a necessary step for sustainable and structural cooperation (i.e. a Monitoring Committee is not sufficient as its focus is on provide funding and not on designing a development strategy with strong political support). Whilst many borders have such strategies, it is not the case for the Lithuanian-Polish border. They can be implemented with support of the Lithuania-Poland Interreg programme.

83. In addition, the LT-PL programme should be coordinated with existing national, regional or sectoral strategies of various types (e.g. with an analysis on how to translate these in a cross-border context). This requires a coherent overview of all existing strategies (i.e. have a mapping of the strategies affecting the border area).

- ***Role of cross-border organisations***

84. Several regions have cross-border entities which can be established under EU law (e.g. European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation – EGTC), national law (e.g. private law associations or public law bodies) or international law (e.g. under bilateral agreements). One example of this are the Euroregions under national law. Many of these entities have a legitimacy (established by public authorities), an experience (many exist for years) and expertise (through their past work and staff) - e.g. Euroregion ‘Niemen’ including border cooperation with third countries Belarus and Russia.

85. The 2021-2027 Interreg programme Lithuania-Poland may build on the legitimacy, experience and expertise of these cross-border organisations but at the same time should enable local societies, in particular living closely along the border to actively participate in and decide on projects in a bottom-up process. Where the organisations are a legal body, they could play a role e.g. by managing a Small Projects Funds / people-to-people projects or by managing strategic projects (as sole beneficiary, in particular EGTCs). Where appropriate, the Lithuania-Poland cross-border programme should build on the legitimacy, experience, and expertise of international, inter-regional and transnational initiatives.

- ***Links with other Cohesion Policy programmes***

86. The proposed Common Provisions Regulation stipulates that “each programme shall set out, for each specific objective the interregional and transnational actions with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State”. Whilst a similar provision was already present in the past, it is now compulsory for the mainstream programmes to describe the possibilities for cooperation for each specific objective. They could also explore opportunities to contribute together with other programmes to a larger macro-regional project, where appropriate.
87. It means that if mainstream programmes do not plan such cooperation actions, they will have to justify why. This may have many benefits for cross-border areas: more ambitious projects (e.g. joint infrastructures), involvement of new players (e.g. the national authorities such as ministries) and overall more ambitious policies (e.g. spatial planning with associated funds).
88. The 2021-2027 Interreg programme Lithuania-Poland and the regional and national programmes should complement each other and look for synergies between projects. This does not mean that project applications rejected by regional or national programmes should be directed to the Interreg programme, which has been a common practice in the past.
89. Therefore, the 2021-2027 Interreg programme Lithuania-Poland should establish (or participate to) a strong coordination mechanism with the authorities responsible for mainstream programmes. This coordination implies exchange of information and cooperation and should happen at all stages: planning (e.g. designing complementarities), implementation (e.g. building on synergies) and communication (showing the benefits for the citizens and the region).

- ***Cross-border data***

90. Good public policies (e.g. spatial planning) must be based on evidence (i.e. data, studies, mapping). Whilst this is generally available at national level, it is not always the case at regional/ local level and even less at cross-border local level. Some of this evidence is particularly important: economic flows, transport flows and trends, labour mobility and mapping of competences, health of the citizens, mapping of important infrastructures and services (such as energy, waste treatment, hospitals, emergency services, universities), mapping of risky areas (to floods, fires, etc.), mapping of natural areas (e.g. Natura 2000, sites under the Ramsar convention of wetlands, etc.) and mapping of the main inclusion difficulties (poverty, marginalised communities, etc.).

ORIENTATIONS:

Identify the areas where important cross-border data is missing and support projects that would fill the gap at the latest by 2027 (e.g. in cooperation with national statistical offices, by supporting regional data portals etc.).

- ***Partnership principle***

91. The principle of partnership is a key feature covering the whole programme cycle (including preparation, implementation and participation in Monitoring Committees), building on the multi-level governance approach and ensuring the involvement of economic, social and environmental partners. They should participate in the whole programming and implementation process (involving them in programme evaluation or other strategic long-term tasks for instance by setting up temporary working groups; consulting all members on key documents also between meetings. Technical Assistance can be made available to facilitate their full involvement in the process.
92. Cross-border cooperation under Interreg has been largely dominated by local and regional government units, mainly municipalities. Projects with enterprises, academic institutions and non-governmental organisations have been rare exceptions to the rule. Opening up the 2021-2027 Interreg programme Lithuania-Poland to a wider variety of actors would bring new project ideas and widen the cross-border partnership. The local and regional government units would also benefit from the networks and from the financial and intellectual capacity of new partners.

- ***Role of the Monitoring Committee***

93. The Monitoring Committee is the strategic decision-making body of the programme. In 2021-2027 the Monitoring Committee (MC) will be given a more prominent role in supervising programme performance.
94. Monitoring Committees currently concentrating on project selection are invited to widen their scope of action and take on a more strategic role. Good practices include having strategic discussions as a standing agenda point, inviting contact points of macro-regional strategies or institutions playing a key role in the border area, organising project visits. Some examples of strategic discussion themes: border obstacles, cross-border data needs, regional long-distance impact of projects; where appropriate, the contribution of the programme to the development of a macro-regional strategy should also be a regular point of discussion.
95. **The composition of the MC** must be representative of the cross-border area. It must include partners relevant to programme objectives, e.i. institutions or organisations representing environment protection, socio-economic partners, local self-governments, civil society or education sector. When the programme is relevant for the development of a macro-regional strategy, macro-regional key stakeholders should also be regular members of the Monitoring Committee of the programme.
96. **Project selection** shall take place in the MC (or in steering committee established under the MC in full respect of the partnership principle). It is crucial that all members are involved in the process. Selection criteria and its application must be non-discriminatory and transparent. They should also be clear and they must enable the assessment of whether projects correspond to the objectives and the strategy of the programme. They are to be consulted with the Commission and communicated to applicants in a clear and systematic way. The cross-border dimension should be compulsory in every selected project. The programme might consider the use of independent expert panels for preparation of project selection. Larger strategic projects / flagship projects (i.e. designed

and implemented by public authorities without a call) may be pre-defined in the programme document or selected via a transparent and agreed procedure.

97. It is up to each programme partnership to decide on the optimal balance between different types of projects required to achieve the overall programme objectives, such as flagship projects, projects embedded in the relevant macro-regional strategy, regular projects, projects selected through bottom-up or top-down procedures, small projects, people-to-people projects, etc.

98. **Decision-making** must be non-discriminatory and transparent under an inclusive procedure. Each Monitoring (or steering) Committee member shall have a vote. Voting by delegation should not be encouraged unless it is transparent and puts weaker partners at equal footing with "institutional" partners.

- ***Role of the Managing Authority***

99. The Managing Authority shall ensure effective implementation of the programme. The managing authority is also at the service of the programme and its Monitoring Committee. It acts as the programme authority representing all countries participating in the programme.

100. The 2021-2027 Interreg programme Lithuania-Poland should watch that the Member State hosting the programme authorities is represented in the Monitoring Committee separately from the managing authority (i.e. a different person). The managing authority shall ensure the effectiveness and transparency of the project selection, reporting and monitoring systems.

- ***Role of the Joint Secretariat***

101. The Joint Secretariat (JS) should ideally be the cross-border executive body of the programme at the service of the Managing Authority. It should consist of professional and independent staff from the participating countries. The JS should possess representative linguistic competence and relevant border country knowledge. Its procedures should be efficient and transparent. Communication with beneficiaries, potential applicants and the general public should be ensured mainly by the JS.

102. The use of Interact's Harmonised Implementation Tools and electronic monitoring system (eMs) is recommended.

- ***Trust-building measures***

103. Effective cross-border cooperation requires a decent level of trust between partners. Trust needs to be built and maintained. This is a long-term investment which aims at fostering cooperation-minded future generations. The Lithuania-Poland Interreg programme 2021-2027 can make a substantial contribution by providing financial support for trust-building activities such as linking up schools, touristic sites, sports clubs, cultural organisations, etc. The beneficiaries of such activities are often not equipped to manage full-blown Interreg projects.

104.2021-2027 Interreg programme Lithuania-Poland should put in place mechanisms to finance smaller projects or people-to-people projects that make a strong contribution to the social and civil cohesion of the cross-border region. This can be done using the new tool proposed by the Commission (the Small Projects Fund) or via specific calls managed by the MA.

- ***Conflict of interest***

105. Conflict of interest between decision-making bodies and applicants and beneficiaries is to be avoided at any moment, including project generation, project preparation, project selection and project implementation. To avoid this the Managing Authority must ensure a proper segregation of duties between institutions and persons.

- ***Communication and publicity***

106. Appropriate actions and measures in line with the Communication Guidelines need to be taken by all involved authorities and beneficiaries, e.g. use of the term ‘Interreg’ next to the emblem of the EU. In case the programme is financing the implementation of a macro-regional project, the logo of the respective macro-region should be added. Thereby, opportunities will be created for further promotion of the project through the macro-regional platforms and networks, where relevant.

- ***Cooperation with the ‘cooperation world’***

107. There are many initiatives to support cooperation: the Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) is an action to offer the possibility to young EU citizens aged 18-30 to serve as volunteers in Interreg programmes and related projects); the B-solutions (pilot projects to collect concrete & replicable actions which aim at identifying & testing solutions to cross-border obstacles of a legal and administrative nature in 5 fields: employment; health; public transport of passengers; multi-lingualism; institutional cooperation); ESPON (which carries out studies on territorial development), etc.

ORIENTATIONS:

- *Design more strategic approach of the Monitoring Committee to handle the programme in the view of the best possible benefit for the complete border region / prevent “mirror projects”.*
- *Establish / participate to a cooperation mechanism with authorities responsible for implementation of the Lithuanian and Polish regional mainstream ESIF programmes. This coordination implies exchange of information and cooperation and should happen at all stages: planning (e.g. designing complementarities), implementation (e.g. building on synergies) and communication (showing the benefits for the citizens and the region).*
- *Support capacity building measures for beneficiaries to realise projects effectively through consultations and mentoring throughout the whole duration of the project / reinforce project assistants / introduce training for mentors - “coaching a coach”.*

- *Establish mechanisms to finance smaller projects or people-to-people projects that make a strong contribution to the social and civil cohesion of the cross-border region.*

Existing sources of information

- Border needs study (Commission, 2016) – [Collecting solid evidence to assess the needs to be addressed by Interreg cross-border cooperation programmes - Regional Policy - European Commission](#)
- EC ex-post evaluation of ETC 2007-2013
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/ec/2007-2013/#11
- Eurobarometer No 422 conducted in border regions in 2015
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/eurobarometer/422/cbc_coop_summary_en.pdf
- Quantification of the effects of legal and administrative border obstacles in land border regions (Commission, 2016) – [quantification of the effects of legal and administrative obstacles in land border regions](#)
- Easing legal and administrative obstacles (Commission, 2017) – [Easing legal and administrative obstacles in EU border regions - Regional Policy - European Commission](#)
- Comprehensive analysis of the existing cross-border transport connections and missing links on the internal EU borders (Commission, 2017-2018) – https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/cb_rail_connections_en.pdf
- DG SANTE's study on cross-border health care [Building Cooperation in Cross-border Healthcare: new study published! | FUTURIUM | European Commission](#)
- ESPON's Targeted Analysis on Cross-Border Public Services [CPS - Cross-border Public Services | ESPON](#)
- Smart Specialisation Strategies of Podlaskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Lithuania – <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/map>
- Strategy of the 2014-2020 programmes (ex-ante evaluation, SWOT, priorities, evaluations)
- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) – https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/baltic-sea/
- ESI Funds for Health “Investing for a healthy and inclusive EU”, Final Report 2019 - <http://esifundsforhealth.eu/>