

ISO3

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Info regio - Eastern Border Regions



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Home

Policy

2028-2034

Funding

What's new

In your country

Projects

Information sources

[Regional Policy](#) > [Policy](#) > [Themes](#) > Eastern Border Regions

Eastern Border Regions

The EU's eastern external border runs along regions in 9 Member States – the Eastern border regions. Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland share 3,600 km of land border with Russia and Belarus (25% of the total EU external land borders). Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania share 1,370 km of land border with Ukraine (10% of total EU external land borders).

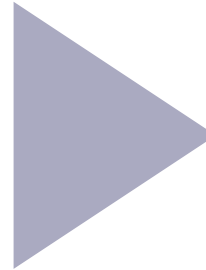
In addition, Romania and Bulgaria have a combined Black Sea coastline of over 600 km, bordering the maritime Black Sea basin also shared with Ukraine and Russia.



Interreg Specific Objective 3 introduced as part of 2028-2034 MFF proposal

Interreg Specific Objective (ISO3) for 'more resilient regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine' which shall be supported by the Interreg programmes involving EBR.

The aim of this new objective is to increase the resilience of border regions, including those bordering Ukraine, through cooperation.



This means to foster regional economies and societies, to increase safety and civil preparedness of these regions and tackle issues of concern, such as de-population or disinformation together, while coordinating and learning from each other.

Interreg Specific Objective (ISO3) for ‘more resilient regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine’ which shall be supported by the Interreg programmes involving EBR.

- Acknowledging challenges in regions bordering Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine-geopolitical, socio-economic, and security-related pressures.
- Providing flexible support mechanisms to redirect cooperation where needed (e.g., westward partnerships).
- Building on lessons from 2021-2027 to enhance adaptability, crisis response, and long-term resilience in EBR.
- Tailored scope and geographical coverage, allowing programmes to adjust to evolving needs (e.g., security, energy, migration, or economic diversification).
- ISO3 is to be applied at chapter level, ensuring targeted interventions across all cooperation programmes covering EBR.
- Encouragement for all EBR cooperation programmes to use ISO3 tool to boost regional stability and cooperation in EBR.

Available studies – source of inspiration

- TARGETED ANALYSIS // CHANEBO - Challenges at EU's North-East External Borders
CHANEBO Recommendations for the future policies addressing the challenges at the EU's north-eastern border area // May 2025
- Regio-Silience: Policy solutions for the EU regions (funded under Interreg Europe)
- The April 2026 Conference Event (Olsztyn, Poland) - "Stronger and Safer Together – From Challenges to Opportunities"
- Catching-up Regions Initiative with the World Bank



Examples of ideas suitable for ISO3

(illustrative and non-exhaustive)

Communication on EU's Eastern Regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine

5 priority areas for support



Security and
Resilience



Growth and
Regional
Prosperity



Building on
Local Strengths



Connectivity



Supporting
People

People – regions are as strong as the communities living there *(non-exhaustive examples of actions)*

- Cross-border actions addressing disinformation: networks/platforms, sensibilisation in schools and universities, sensibilisation of journalists on cross-border issues, trainings for local leaders (mayors, NGOs...) to communicate trust-worthy information
- Cross-border services on psychological resilience (providing for e.g. trauma support for conflict-affected population)
- Cross-border cultural events to ensure cohesion: joint film festivals, exhibitions and debates (also to recognise and reject falsehoods)
- Promotion of the CLLD model of cooperation engaging citizens on concrete cross-border projects
- Cross-border actions engaging with youth (for e.g. on talent retention) and with seniors (for e.g. to fight isolation and also disinformation).



Security and resilience – to protect, deter and reassure
Civil preparedness, emergency response, defence activities, border controls, cybersecurity
(non-exhaustive examples of actions)

- Establishment of joint crisis management hubs in border regions
- Funding pilot projects in high-risk areas to test interoperability between different MS' emergency services.
- Funding pilot projects in high-risk areas to test critical/strategic Infrastructure and critical infrastructure operators (governance, companies etc.) and propose remedies to their vulnerabilities (in military/cyber security, such as GPS jamming, drone incursions etc.).

Growth and regional prosperity

- **fostering access to financing, innovation, technology and SME development**
- **adapt to the new situation (borders closed, threats for investors), maintain and develop economic activity**

(non-exhaustive examples of actions)

- Development of cross-border "Innovation Resilience Hubs".
- Pilot cross-border circular economy living labs to localise supply chains (e.g., waste-to-resource schemes) and reduce external dependencies.
- Form cross-border SME clusters (e.g., agri-food, cleantech) for joint marketing, bulk purchasing, and export consortia to cut costs and access new markets. Roll out short-term upskilling programmes in digital/green skills, targeting workers from declining sectors.
- Creation of cross-border Digital Innovation Hubs with focus on reshoring critical supply chains. Pools resources across neighbouring regions to offer shared R&D infrastructure, AI/automation training, and matchmaking for SMEs, reducing dependency on external suppliers.

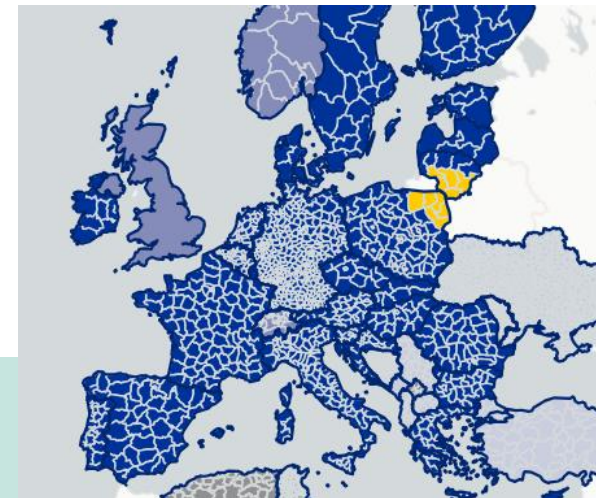
Building on local strengths – bioeconomy, energy, environment, agriculture and skills *(non-exhaustive examples of actions)*

- Develop cross-border Community-Owned Renewable Energy Projects
- Establish cross-border energy cooperatives (solar, wind, biomass) to reduce dependency on external suppliers and lower costs.
- Establish cross-border Agri-Tech & Short Food Supply Chains Support: precision farming, vertical agriculture, and direct-to-consumer platforms to strengthen local food security
- Turning local waste (agricultural, forestry, food) into high-value products (e.g., bioplastics, biofuels) via shared biorefineries. [Example: Finnish-Swedish forest-based bioeconomy clusters]

Case study – Lithuania-Poland Programme

Total Programme:
EUR 124.602.461

ERDF:
EUR 99.681.967



Input to be taken from:

- Border profiles
- Review of the project results from previous and current period => OSI and regular projects* => capitalisation and upscaling potential
- Work done for 21-27 on tourism sector;
- ISO2 project (OSI) –
- EGTC and LAGs => future cross- border CLLD (application approved under IMPACT)
- Ongoing b-solution case (circulation of ambulances) and outcomes of revision of completed cases

**RSO2.7 – firefighting services cooperation (Lead partner: Regional headquarter of state fire service in Kaunas of Fire and rescue department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania);*

RSO3.2 – road modernisation (Lead partner: Sejny County Office);

ISO7.4 – border guard services cooperation (Lead partner: Lithuanian Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior).

Possible common themes for ISO3 // for discussion

- critical infrastructure protection (resilience strategy preparation that includes physical security, cybersecurity measures, mapping of needs, identification of missing protocols, equipment etc.)
- Preparedness for crisis management – crisis management hub project

Baltic states to bolster healthcare crisis readiness

📅 2026-05-06 📁 LETA/BNS/TBT Staff

TALLINN - The health ministers of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania signed a joint declaration in Vilnius on Tuesday, aimed at bolstering the resilience of the Baltic states' healthcare systems during crises.

Cooperation will be strengthened in the areas of healthcare system planning, organizing regional medical training and exercises, and developing medical supplies and reserves.

According to Minister of Social Affairs Karmen Joller, the healthcare systems of the Baltic states are robust in everyday situations, but a large-scale crisis would quickly highlight the need for closer regional cooperation.

- Disinformation
- Communication with citizens

Thank you



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