



(Interreg V-A) Lithuania-Poland

Cooperation Programme document

Final version 29.10.2015

The Template of the cooperation programme document is based on the Model for Cooperation Programmes Under the European Territorial Cooperation goal set out in the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 288/2014 of 25 February 2014 as well as European Commission's 'Draft Guidelines for the Content of the Cooperation Programme' – Version 5 of 08.05.2014

**Model for cooperation programmes under the European territorial cooperation goal
to the**

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) No .../..

laying down rules pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund with regard to the model for operational programmes under the Investment for growth and jobs goal and pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal with regard to the model for cooperation programmes under the European territorial cooperation goal

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	LT007	Tauragės apskritis
	LT00A	Vilniaus apskritis (except for Vilnius city)
	PL343	Białostocki
	PL345	Suwalski
	PL623	Elcki

Table of Contents

SECTION 1. STRATEGY	4
1.1.Strategy for the cooperation programme’s contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.....	4
1.2.Justification for the financial allocation.....	14
SECTION 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIORITY AXES	19
Section 2A. Description of the priority axes other than technical assistance	19
2.A.1. Priority Axis 1: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	19
2.A.2. Priority Axis 2: Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	22
2.A.3. Priority Axis 3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	28
2.A.4. Priority Axis 4: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	31
Section 2B. Description of the priority axes for technical assistance.....	41
2.B.1. Priority Axis - Technical assistance.....	41
SECTION 3. FINANCING PLAN.....	44
3.1. Financial appropriation from the ERDF (in EUR) per year	44
3.2. Total financial appropriation from the ERDF and national co-financing (in EUR)	44
3.3. Breakdown by priority axis and thematic objective	45
SECTION 4. INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT	47
4.1. Description of the CP integrated approach to territorial development	47
4.2. Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and sea basin strategies.....	48
SECTION 5. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME	50
5.1. Relevant authorities and bodies	50
5.2. Procedure for setting up the Joint Secretariat	51
5.3. Summary description of the management and control arrangements	51
5.4. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the Managing Authority or the Commission.....	63
5.5. Use of the Euro	64
5.6. Involvement of partners.....	64
SECTION 6. COORDINATION	67
SECTION 7. REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR BENEFICIARIES	70
SECTION 8. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES	72
8.1. Sustainable development	72
8.2. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination.....	72
8.3. Equality between men and women	73
SECTION 9. SEPARATE ELEMENTS	75
9.1. Performance framework of the cooperation programme	75
9.2. Relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme.....	78

SECTION 1. STRATEGY

1.1. Strategy for the cooperation programme's contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion

Introduction

The Interreg V-A Lithuania-Poland cooperation programme (*hereinafter - CP*) is a continuation of the cooperation started with the Cross-border Cooperation programme Lithuania-Poland 2007-2013.

The CP area

The eligible area of the CP is comprised of 8 territorial units: 5 south-western Lithuanian counties and 3 north-eastern Polish subregions. The total size of the CP area¹ was 49.434 km². The regions (on NUTS-3 level) eligible for the participation in the CP on both sides of the border are:

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

The total population of the CP area amounts to 2.355.321² inhabitants. The overall population density in the eligible area of the CP is 47.6³ inhabitants per km².

Key development assets and challenges for cross-border cooperation

Cultural and natural heritage

The CP area is exceptional in terms of diverse and picturesque nature, constituting the basis for wide variety of tourist sites. Varied landscapes of the region encompass numerous outstanding nature monuments, including forests, river valleys, mounds, as well as many different water bodies: lakes, rivers, springs, etc. Forested land constitutes approximately one third of the CP territory on both Lithuanian and Polish sides of the border, in some

¹ According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

² According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

³ According to the calculations by the consultants on the basis of 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

regions reaching nearly 50 per cent⁴ of the total area. Plenty of protected areas, such as national parks and reserves with their unique landscapes, established under both national laws and NATURA 2000 sites, and included in national and European nature conservation programmes, play a significant role in the tourism industry of the region, contributing to the development of ecotourism in the CP area.

Some parts of the CP area are especially well adapted to the needs of both local and international tourism. Officially recognized resort towns, e.g. Birštonas in Kaunas county, Druskininkai in Alytus county, Gołdap in Elcki subregion or Augustów in Suwalski subregion, characterized by numerous SPAs, health centres and sanatoriums, might be distinguished. Unique natural resources, such as mineral waters, mud, essential oils, etc., provide the basis for quality health and recreational services, attracting both domestic visitors and foreign tourists residing near the border. However, taking into account rich natural resources and favourable environmental situation of the CP area, this kind of services should be further developed.

Besides being close neighbours, Poland and Lithuania have been linked together for four centuries by a personal union under the king (14th-16th centuries) and by a full political union constituting the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (16th-18th centuries). Due to common history, cultural values between Lithuania and Poland were maintained in the centuries following the dissolution of the political union. Many famous figures from Lithuanian and Polish history identified themselves as the “gente Lithuanus, natione Polonus”, emphasizing their dual Polish-Lithuanian identity. These figures include, among others, Adam Mickiewicz - 18th-19th century poet, dramatist, essayist, publicist and translator claimed by both Poland and Lithuania as a national bard, Emilia Plater - a 19th century Polish-Lithuanian heroine and revolutionary, as well as Czesław Miłosz - 20th-21st century Nobel Prize-winning poet, prose writer, and translator. These figures have contributed significantly to the creation of intangible Lithuanian-Polish heritage and are considered important for education and culture of both participating countries.

According to the data from national statistical offices for the period of 2007-2013, the number of local and international tourists visiting the CP area has been increasing. Only in 2009, following economic downturn, the number of tourists in the region shrunk. In 2013 the number of tourists in the CP area reached almost 1.4 million⁵. It shows that sustainable and creative use of natural and cultural heritage located in the CP area has a great potential for fostering further development of various forms of tourism in this region.

Due to the uniqueness of the CP area in terms of its natural endowments and shared cultural values, it is appropriate to take joint actions in effectively exploiting the heritage of the region. Cross-border cooperation of the participating countries in promoting cultural and natural heritage will be especially fruitful. Joint efforts on both Lithuanian and Polish sides of the border should be more visible and, thus, capable of attracting significant attention towards the CP area, as well as strengthening the brand of the region. Furthermore, similar activities conducted on both sides of the border (as in the case of resort towns) will become an important stimulus for cross-border experience-sharing. While engaged in the cross-border cooperation, countries will jointly offer more attractions to the tourists, who will get an opportunity to access desired tourist services in the whole CP area. It will not only increase the welfare and quality of life of the residents and tourists coming to the region, but will also boost the competitive advantage of the CP area. Creative use of cultural and natural heritage objects in the CP area will contribute to the attractiveness of the region and

⁴ According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland

⁵ According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland

stimulate the growth of different forms of tourism. Increased number of tourists and length of their stay in the CP area will have a positive impact on economic growth of the region.

Social inclusion

Social exclusion is referred to processes whereby certain individuals or entire communities are systematically prevented from exercising rights, using opportunities and accessing resources. Social inclusion is closely related to the quality of life which might encompass various factors, including, *inter alia*, material living conditions, health, social interactions and fundamental rights.

In 2013, more than a quarter of the total population⁶ in Lithuania and Poland was at risk of poverty or social exclusion, exceeding the Union average equal to 24.5 per cent⁷. In both participating countries the most extreme social exclusion is observed in the rural areas where the largest concentration of those living on benefits resides. Another indicator of social inclusion and quality of life is life expectancy in years which is much shorter in the CP area, as compared to the Union average. Depending on the type of the administrative territory in the CP area, life expectancy is 3 to 9 years shorter for men and 1 to 4 years⁸ shorter for women than the corresponding Union averages.

Crucial prerequisite for strengthening social inclusion is provision of health and social services, equally accessible for all, especially for the most vulnerable persons and groups of the society, namely children and adults with special needs arising from disability, old age, poverty, etc. Due to intermediate type of the CP area, the accessibility to health and social services and related infrastructure is poorer than in the urban areas.

Taking into account increasingly pressing issue of ageing societies, also relevant in the CP area, the demand for various health and social services are continuously increasing. Moreover, it is widely accepted that short-term (non-residential / outpatient), as opposed to long-term (residential / inpatient), social / health services are more appropriate in order to prevent exclusion of disadvantaged groups from the society. It is important to make health and social services more de-institutionalized and de-centralized, and involve new actors, such as communities, since presently independent, community-based services still lack popularity in the CP area.

Involvement of non-traditional actors in combating social exclusion and poverty is beneficial, since communities can be more effective in responding to the needs of local populations. Dominant intermediate territories in the CP are favourable for involvement of local communities. According to researches, local communities of rural areas or old traditional residential districts in towns tend to be more mature and sustainable⁹. Therefore, closer cooperation among communities and people-to-people contacts in the CP area will create more open-minded communities, capable of engaging in durable cooperation, and will positively contribute to social inclusion.

Labour market and unemployment

Relatively high unemployment (almost 14 per cent¹⁰ as of 2013) in the CP area exceeding corresponding national averages is a challenge for economic and social development of the

⁶ Statistics at NUTS 3 level is not available.

⁷ According to 2013 data from Eurostat.

⁸ According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland and Eurostat.

⁹ Research on the local communities and institutions in Lithuania (2011), BGI Consulting, Ministry of Social security and labour of the Republic of Lithuania / “*Bendruomeninių organizacijų ir bendruomenių centrų veiklos ir galimybių plėtojimo tyrimas*” (2011), <http://www.socmin.lt/tyrimai.html>

¹⁰ According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

region. Youth unemployment is especially pressing issue in this region. In 2013 it was higher than the countries' average youth unemployment rate and exceeded 20 per cent¹¹ in most territories of the CP area.

Unfavourable trends in unemployment rates are closely related to the general economic performance of the region. The main CP area is on the periphery of economic performance of the participating countries. GDP per capita in the CP area is around 35 per cent¹² lower than the countries' averages. Some other labour related indicators are also worse than national averages. E.g. in 2013, the gross average monthly wages in different regions of CP area were 10 to 15 per cent¹³ lower than the averages in both Lithuania and Poland.

The labour market situation and general competitiveness of the CP area are also negatively impacted by different demographic challenges, such as ageing societies and negative trends of migration. Since 2005 the share of post working population in the different territories of the CP area has increased by 2 to 5 percentage points, in some territories even by over 10 per cent¹⁴. Furthermore, the balance of net migration in the CP area is negative (-13 thousand per year¹⁵). However, directions of migration differ in cases of Lithuania and Poland. In the Lithuanian part of the CP area more than half of the negative balance of net migration is explained by emigration, while in Polish part of the region slightly negative net migration balance is better explained by internal migration¹⁶. These demographic trends challenge the supply of labour force in the CP area, put more pressure on productive population and, thus, aggravate the use of human resources in the region.

Important reasons of high unemployment, especially among youth, are mismatch between youth skills and needs of the labour market, and limited level of entrepreneurship. Even though the share of population attaining tertiary education in both Lithuania and Poland (29.9 per cent and 22.8 per cent¹⁷, respectively) is close to the Union average equal to 25.0 percent¹⁸, situation differs significantly inside the CP area. According to national statistics, the share of population having completed tertiary education in predominantly rural regions is almost two times lower than that in intermediate regions. On the other hand, high level of higher education attainment is one of the main strengths of the CP area. However, most of the higher education students are concentrated in only two administrative territories of the CP area, namely Kaunas county in Lithuania and Białostocki subregion in Poland (approximately 0.08 students per inhabitant, as compared to the national averages of 0.04-0.05¹⁹).

The CP area has untapped potential of educational institutions. They might act as local and regional leaders of the CP area contributing to the better match between skills and needs of the labour market. Implementation of joint study programmes in line with labour market and closer networking of educational institutions are expected.

¹¹ According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

¹² According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

¹³ According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

¹⁴ According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

¹⁵ According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

¹⁶ According to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland

¹⁷ According to 2013 data from Eurostat.

¹⁸ According to 2013 data from Eurostat.

¹⁹ Calculations by BGI Consulting according to 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

In 2013, the number of enterprises per 10 thousand inhabitants in the CP area was on average more than 10 per cent²⁰ lower than the national averages. Even though some very good examples of business support organisations can be pointed out, in general there is lack of quality business support public services. Recent studies on the region reveals that entrepreneurship projects, especially those targeted at youth, together with professional consultancy for SME development and better public services, are considered to be the most important fields for business support²¹.

There are economic sectors in the CP area, such as agriculture, food industry, transport and logistics services, wood and furniture industry, production of machinery and equipment that are very well developed in both countries and have potential for smart specialization and clusterization. Therefore, they should be effectively exploited for boosting competitiveness and creating new jobs in the region through clustering policies and internationalisation. The CP will support public services aimed at building new clusters and other forms of cooperation as well as at strengthening existing networks.

Cross-border cooperation in providing public services for business and fostering labour mobility is fruitful in a few respects. Joint efforts in developing business support organizations and their services will strengthen the level of entrepreneurship in the whole CP area, contributing to the increase in competitiveness and improvement in general employment situation of the region. Moreover, cross-border cooperation between business support organisations provides an opportunity to exchange experience between business support organisations and engage in mutual learning, adapting best practices in supporting business development. Also, joint development of apprenticeship programmes and youth entrepreneurship projects by both participating countries are significant in terms of fostering entrepreneurial interest and talent (particularly among young people) and, thus, strengthening human capital of the region. Cross-border cooperation via joint marketing, clustering and business promotion activities will stimulate labour mobility in the CP area and allow to effectively employ human capital of both countries anywhere in the region, adding to decreased unemployment and increased economic growth in the CP area.

The majority of the areas included in the CP are of the intermediate type (according to EUROSTAT urban-rural typology). The latter is favourable for the development of local communities, due to relatively stronger linkages between the residents of the area²². The CP also aims at utilizing the potential of community organizations for the development of local employment initiatives and jobs creation. Local employment initiatives are social economy operations or group of operations led by NGOs performing services for the community interest (e.g. home help services, child care, assistance to young people facing difficulties, better housing security, etc.). The support for the development of joint local employment initiatives will contribute to job creation and better community inclusion as well.

Public administration and public services

In 2013 government effectiveness, expressing a summary assessment of the quality of public administration (taking into account regulatory system, impartiality, and the quality of the services) in both Poland and Lithuania was rated over 70 points out of 100, lagging

²⁰ According to the calculations by the consultants on the basis of 2013 data from Statistics Lithuania, Central Statistical Office of Poland.

²¹ Feasibility study for Marijampole region development plan for 2014-2020 (2013), BGI Consulting, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania.
<http://www.lietuvosregionai.lt/assets/files/Marijampole/Studija/Studija.pdf>

²² Research on the local communities and institutions in Lithuania (2011), BGI Consulting, Ministry of Social security and labour of the Republic of Lithuania / "Bendruomeninių organizacijų ir bendruomenių centrų veiklos ir galimybių plėtojimo tyrimas" (2011), <http://www.socmin.lt/lt/tyrimai.html>

behind the Union average (over 80 points²³). Responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency are among the key principles of good governance which is the ultimate objective for institutional capacity building. Institutional capacity refers to the way public authorities interact with and deliver services to businesses and citizens. It might encompass improvements in three dimensions, namely structures and processes, human resources, and service delivery. Enhancement of institutional capacity and efficient public administration are strongly emphasised in national and regional documents of Lithuania and Poland²⁴.

Even though reforms of governance are constantly being undertaken, the cross-border aspect is rarely addressed. However, there are some public policy fields whose management is highly dependent on the actions carried out over a larger area. Efforts limited to the national level may be insufficient to solve the problems of a more general nature, such as related to safety and security. Furthermore, cost-benefit analysis performed in Lithuania revealed high return on investments aimed at improving public administration²⁵. In particular, 1 EUR invested in this field provides social and economic benefits worth more than 2 EUR. In the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Lithuania-Poland 2007-2013 there were many good examples of fruitful cooperation between regional and local authorities, as well as public service providers. Under the latter capacity operations were implemented, *inter alia*, in the fields of business and tourism development, and public security. In the CP more intensive cross-border cooperation of the institutions in the CP area in the fields of public transport, education, safety and security, health and social services and others will be supported.

Cross-border cooperation in supporting cross-border infrastructure and services is advantageous in a few respects. First of all, investments into infrastructure by coordinated acquisition of the necessary equipment allow increasing the quantity and quality of services in the CP area, crucial for better quality of life in this region. Furthermore, investments, as well as joint efforts by both countries in developing services, will increase accessibility to necessary services for inhabitants of the whole CP area, irrespective of the nationality, especially those living near the border. That will enhance social inclusion.

Cross-border cooperation of neighbouring public administrations and public service providers will foster closer connections and exchange of good practices among these institutions. Mutual learning leads to the increase in capacities of public administrations across the border which is crucial for further economic development of the whole CP area. In addition, more intensive cooperation among Lithuanian and Polish public institutions provides an opportunity to develop durable cross-border cooperation networks.

The overall objective and thematic scope of the CP

The above-mentioned territorial imbalances and common challenges for the cross-border area constitute the context of the CP. The latter takes into account the principles of strategic focus and thematic concentration, is aligned with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

In the period of 2014-2020, the overall objective of the CP is to foster smart, sustainable

²³ The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) project, World Bank.

²⁴ Partnership Agreement for Lithuania, 2014-2020; Partnership Agreement for Poland, 2014-2020; Region development plans of counties in Lithuania

²⁵ Feasibility study for Marijampole region development plan for 2014-2020 (2013), BGI Consulting, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania

<http://www.lietuvosregionai.lt/assets/files/Marijampole/Studija/Studija.pdf>

and inclusive growth in the border area through cross-border cooperation. The CP seeks to contribute to regional growth and quality of life through closer cross-border cooperation between people and institutions of the CP area.

The CP will concentrate resources on four thematic objectives and corresponding investment priorities:

- **Thematic objective 6** – Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
 - Investment priority 6 (c) - Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency by conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
- **Thematic objective 8** – Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
 - Investment priority 8 (a) - Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by supporting the development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, micro-enterprises and business creation
 - Investment priority 8 (a(i) ETC) - Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training
- **Thematic objective 9** – Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination
 - Investment priority 9 (a(ii) ETC) - Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination by promoting gender equality, equal opportunities, and the integration of communities across border
- **Thematic objective 11** – Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration
 - Investment priority 11 (a(iv) ETC) - Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation between citizens and institutions.

Relevance to the Europe 2020 strategy

The CP is in line with the Europe 2020 strategy, contributing to different pillars of the latter.

First of all, the CP envisages conservation, preservation and adaptation of natural and cultural heritage for tourism purposes, encompassing such cross-border cooperation actions as joint cultural programmes and tourist routes based on natural and cultural heritage, as well as joint activities in promoting and marketing natural and cultural heritage. These interventions contribute to a couple of themes underlined in the Europe 2020 strategy. The sustainable growth pillar of the strategy emphasizes the importance of sustainable use of resources, leading to economic growth, while flagship initiative “An industrial policy for the globalisation era” foresees the need to enhance the competitiveness of the European tourism sector.

In addition, the CP foresees such cross-border cooperation elements as common actions aiming at integration of cross-border communities and strengthening social inclusion. It

also aims at implementation of action plans, events and initiatives aiming at social inclusion, combating poverty and discrimination, engaging different vulnerable groups endangered by social exclusion, poverty and discrimination in cross-border cooperation and building durable social cross-border links and networks. These actions contribute to one of three main pillars of the Europe 2020 strategy, namely inclusive growth aimed at fostering high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion. It emphasizes the need to take major efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion and reduce health inequalities, in order to ensure access and opportunities for all, including those in the outermost regions. Reduction of the number of Europeans living below the national poverty line by 25 per cent is one of the key targets of Europe 2020. This issue is also stressed by the flagship initiative “European Platform against Poverty” aimed at raising awareness and recognising the fundamental rights of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Moreover, priority axis for promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility envisages strengthening organisations supporting business development (business incubators, business advice centres, etc.), joint development and implementation of business acceleration programmes, apprenticeship programmes, and youth entrepreneurship projects, cooperation activities between business support organisations, as well as between cluster members across the border, and clusters development activities (joint marketing, joint events, etc.). Also, labour market mobility will be supported through provision of information and counselling on labour market in the CP area. The employment situation in the CP area will be positively influenced through support for local employment initiatives and closer cooperation between educational institutions and business. This priority axis contributes to the realization of the Europe 2020 strategy, including number of its flagship initiatives. Flagship initiative “An industrial policy for the globalisation era” aims at improving business environment, especially for SMEs, while flagship initiative “An agenda for new skills and jobs” foresees modernising labour markets and empowering people by developing their skills (including through labour mobility) with a view to increase labour participation and better match between labour supply and demand. Member States are held responsible for removing measures that discourage self-employment and developing partnerships between the worlds of education/training and work. The flagship initiative “Innovation Union” emphasizes, *inter alia*, reinforcing cooperation between universities, research and business, focusing school curricula on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. The 2012 Annual Growth Survey by the Commission (*hereinafter - the COM*) states that Member States should give particular priority to promoting business creation and self-employment by improving the quality of support systems, and promoting entrepreneurial skills.

Furthermore, the CP envisages coordination of planning and management of joint natural assets, infrastructure and public services of cross-border importance, cooperation and joint actions to reinforce the capacities to respond to emergency situations, natural disasters and common challenges, as well as supporting knowledge transfer, capacity building and promotion of cooperation between public authorities and public service providers. It contributes to the Europe 2020 strategy aiming at turning the Union into smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. The quality of public administration has a direct impact on the economic environment and, thus, is crucial for delivering on the objectives of the strategy. The 2013 Annual Growth Survey by the COM recognised the need for Member States to increase the efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of public services as well as transparency and quality of public administration.

Table 1: Justification for the selection of thematic objectives and investment priorities

Selected thematic objective	Selected investment priority	Justification for selection
TO 6 - Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	6 (c) Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency by conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage	A high demand for co-financing of cooperation in the field of cultural heritage and tourism was confirmed by the experience of the ETC Cross-border Cooperation Programme Lithuania-Poland 2007-2013. Sustainable use of cultural and natural heritage will contribute to the attractiveness of the region, providing the basis for further development of various forms of tourism and eliminating seasonal nature of tourism. Increased tourist flows and length of their stay in the region will stimulate economic activities and growth. Cross-border cooperation will foster experience-sharing and mutual learning in this field, leading to more efficient use of natural and cultural heritage in the region. While acting jointly the participating countries will offer more attractions and services for tourists and will attract more tourists to the region. Contribution to the Europe 2020 targets of sustainable growth.
TO 8 - Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	8 (a) Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by supporting the development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, micro-enterprises and business creation	The CP area is lagging behind in terms of the main economic indicators, including the level of entrepreneurship. Quality business support organizations are lacking. Joint efforts in developing business support organizations and services will strengthen the level of entrepreneurship in the whole CP area, contributing to the increase in competitiveness and improvement in general employment situation of the region. Cross-border cooperation between business support organisations will provide an opportunity to exchange experience and engage in mutual learning. Cross-border cooperation in strengthening specific sectors appropriate for clustering and jobs creation is important for boosting economic performance and job creation. Joint development of apprenticeship programmes and youth entrepreneurship projects contributes to fostering of entrepreneurial interest and talent, and strengthening of human capital of the region. Contribution to the Europe 2020 targets of smart and inclusive growth.

	8 (a(i) ETC) Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training	Joint actions oriented towards increasing employment opportunities are crucial taking into account high unemployment rate in the CP area and especially acute youth unemployment in the region. Support for labour mobility in the CP area will allow to effectively use human capital of both countries anywhere in the region, adding to decreased unemployment and increased economic growth in the CP area. Stronger cross-border cooperation between communities for the development of joint local employment initiatives will strengthen the communities and their capacities for jobs creation. Joint initiatives for promotion of entrepreneurial interest and skills, especially in the case of youth, will contribute to the increase in entrepreneurship and, thus, better employment opportunities. Contribution to the Europe 2020 targets of inclusive growth.
TO 9 - Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	9 (a(ii) ETC) Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination by promoting gender equality, equal opportunities, and the integration of communities across borders	Demand for investments in this field was confirmed by the experience of the ETC Cross-border Cooperation Programme Lithuania-Poland 2007-2013. The need to decrease poverty in the region is relevant taking into account that over one fourth of the total population in both Lithuania and Poland is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Combating poverty and strengthening social inclusion is one of the factors to ensure development of the region and, thus, increase its attractiveness for investors. Taking into account the dominance of intermediate areas, where rural population might constitute up to 50 per cent of the total population, increasing social inclusion is especially relevant in the deprived areas. Better access to social and health care services for cross-border inhabitants is important for combating social exclusion and poverty. Contribution to the Europe 2020 targets of inclusive growth.
TO 11 - Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	11 (a(iv) ETC) Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions	Experience of the ETC Cross-border Cooperation Programme Lithuania-Poland 2007-2013 provides good examples of fruitful cooperation among regional authorities, local authorities and public service providers. Cross-border cooperation of authorities will bring new promising ideas and projects aimed at tackling common problems in the variety of fields, such as, public transport, education, safety and security, others. Cross-border cooperation of authorities and public service providers might foster exchange of good practices and mutual learning, leading to the increase in capacities of

		public administrations across the border. Increased quality of public administration will have a positive impact on economic development of the region. More intensive cross-border cooperation between Lithuanian and Polish authorities provides an opportunity to develop durable cross-border cooperation networks. Contribution to the Europe 2020 targets of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
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1.2. Justification for the financial allocation

The ERDF support to the CP is 53,153,883.00 EUR (85 per cent of total budget), the national counterpart is 9,380,099.00 EUR (15 per cent of total budget). Both sources constitute total budget of the CP, equal to 62,533,982.00 EUR.

As noted by *ex-ante* evaluators, almost 30 per cent (from approximately 87.2 million EUR to approximately 62.5 million EUR) decrease in financing, in comparison with the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Lithuania-Poland 2007-2013, puts a challenge on choosing the most important priorities in the programming stage and selecting the most beneficial operations in the implementation stage. For the purpose of resource concentration on the most fruitful fields for cross-border cooperation, only four thematic objectives were chosen for the CP.

In order to identify the gaps in the development of the CP area and the potential to plug these gaps through cross-border cooperation, the Programming Task Force (*hereinafter- the PTF*) had initiated detailed analysis of social, economic and environmental situation in the region. It provided the PTF with an evidence necessary for taking decisions on thematic objectives, priorities and financial allocation.

Opinions of regional partners participating in the PTF meetings were another source that supported decisions of the PTF. These partners possess knowledge on regional challenges and opportunities, thus, their contribution enabled to develop the CP in line with actual needs of regional actors.

As the CP is a continuation of the cooperation that started with the Cross-border Cooperation programme Lithuania-Poland 2007-2013, lessons learned from the latter were considered. Information on actual demand for different thematic objectives, average financial volumes of operations, etc. was reviewed and taken into account while planning the financial allocations for the current programming period.

Strategic documents, including Europe 2020 strategy, EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, as well as national and regional strategies, were also considered.

In accordance with the above-mentioned and other information sources, the PTF allocated the largest share (32 per cent) of the CP budget to the *TO 6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency*. The demand for financing in this field was high and not fully satisfied in the 2007-2013 programming period. Also, financial volume of operations under this thematic objective might be relatively higher, since they might involve significant share of infrastructure investments.

As emphasized by *ex-ante* evaluators, investments in this field were the main area of interest for beneficiaries in the 2007-2013 programming period. The value of applications received amounted to more than 100 million EUR. Due to high level of competition among operation applications, only around 30 per cent of them obtained funding. It confirms a huge demand for investments in this area. Furthermore, this priority includes infrastructure investments that

are more capital-intensive. *Ex-ante* evaluators concluded that the allocation of funds in this case is well justified.

The second-third largest (share of the CP budget - 23.25 per cent) thematic objective, in terms financial volume, is *TO 11. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration*. The horizontal nature of this thematic objective might attract beneficiaries from different fields. Thus, it received significant share of the CP budget.

According to *ex-ante* evaluators, large financial scope of this thematic objective is justified by the very wide target area of support covering virtually all areas of public administration and public services (local and regional governance, health and social care, responding to emergency situations and natural disasters, joint management of natural assets, etc.) and inclusion of infrastructure elements (such as investments in healthcare and social services infrastructure for cross-border use, as well as infrastructure necessary for cooperation between public service providers in other fields).

The same amount (23.25 per cent) of the CP budget, as for TO 11, was allocated for *TO 8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility*, including two investment priorities:

- 8 (a). Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by supporting the development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, micro-enterprises and business creation.
- 8 (a(i) ETC). Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training.

These allocations will be used in order to utilise the potential of cross-border market to combat the unemployment. They shall complement interventions of the mainstream programmes. Operations targeting unemployment were not very popular in the period 2007-2013. However, since the issue is very important for development of the CP area, the PTF accepted the challenge of allocating 20 per cent of the CP budget for combating this significant obstacle for smooth economic and social development. Moreover, the employment issue, especially the importance of the employability of young people, is stressed in the Partnership agreements of the 2014-2020 programming period.

According to *ex-ante* evaluators, relatively high unemployment in the CP territory, combined with the emphasis on employment put in the strategic documents of 2014-2020, justify the amount of funds allocated in this area.

15.5 per cent of the CP budget is allocated for *TO 9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination*. Social inclusion and social cohesion are among top priorities in the region and in the Member States. Relatively smaller share of the CP budget allocated to this thematic objective might be explained by rather small financial volume of foreseen operations involving communities and NGOs.

As noted by *ex-ante* evaluators, the volumes of investments in the sphere of social inclusion and social cohesion have suffered the largest (nearly 50 per cent) relative decrease - from approximately 19.1 million EUR in the 2007-2013 programming period to approximately 9.7 million EUR in the 2014-2020 programming period. However, it is expected that large share of operations under this thematic objective will consist of small initiatives by local communities and NGOs, comprising mainly “soft” components. Thus, the decrease in financing does not reflect less attention for this topic. *Ex-ante* evaluators concluded, taking into account general decrease in funding visible in the CP and the number of operations in this

area in the period 2007-2013, that allocated amount of funding for this thematic objective could be regarded as duly justified.

Table 2: Overview of the investment strategy of the CP

Priority axis	ERDF support (in EUR)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the CP – ERDF	Thematic objective	Investment priorities	Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective
Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	17,009,242.00	32.00	TO 6 - Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	6 (c) Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency by conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage	To increase the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage for tourism in the cross-border area	Number of tourists accommodated
Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	12,358,278.00	23.25	TO 8 - Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	8 (a) Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by supporting the development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, micro-enterprises and business creation	To promote business creation, development and cooperation through improved business support services	Share of newly established business entities in relation to the total number of registered business entities
				8 (a(i) ETC) Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint	To decrease unemployment through coordinated cross-border employment initiatives	Registered unemployment rate

				training		
Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	8,238,852.00	15.50	TO 9 - Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	9 (a(ii) ETC) Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination by promoting gender equality, equal opportunities, and the integration of communities across borders	To enhance the access to social and health care services for cross-border inhabitants thus combating social exclusion and poverty	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion; Population perceiving an unmet need for health care
Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	12,358,278.00	23.25	TO 11 – Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	11 (a(iv) ETC) Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions	To increase cross-border cooperation of the institutions in order to develop more integrated and better quality public governance and public services in the CP area	Share of institutions benefiting from cross-border cooperation
TA	3,189,233.00	6.00	NA	NA	To ensure fluent and effective CP implementation	

SECTION 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIORITY AXES

Section 2A. Description of the priority axes other than technical assistance

2.A.1. Priority Axis 1: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

Thematic objective	TO 6 – Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
Investment priority	6 (c) Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency by conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
Specific objective	To increase the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage for tourism in the cross-border area

Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible public expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

Expected results

Activities financed under this priority will result in numerous positive short-, medium- and long-term changes in the CP area. The main purpose of the interventions is preservation, protection and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage of the CP area. Thus, firstly, natural and cultural heritage of the region will be properly preserved, protected and developed. Secondly, in order to promote heritage as a highly valuable asset of the region, it will be adapted to sustainable tourism. As a result, joint tourism routes based on natural and cultural heritage will be developed. The CP area will be promoted as a single cultural and eco-tourism destination. In addition, sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage sites will be promoted through joint activities for tourists in the CP area. In the short- and medium-term this will condition better protection and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage, increased attractiveness of the region reflected in higher numbers of tourists and longer length of their stay in the CP area, and resulting higher demand for goods and services of different economic sectors (accommodation and restaurant services, transport, handmade crafts, etc.). In the long-term decreased seasonal nature of tourism, increased economic growth and higher quality of life of local residents in the CP area are expected.

Operations to be funded under this specific objective will contribute to the following priority areas foreseen in the Action Plan of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (hereinafter – the EUSBSR), namely *Priority Area (hereinafter – PA) Culture (Developing*

and promoting the common culture and cultural identity) and PA Tourism (Reinforcing cohesiveness of the macro-region through tourism). The former emphasizes cultural heritage as a source of common identity and shared values stressing the role of culture in developing the attractiveness of the region, while the latter underlines the importance of tourism in both receiving economic benefit and developing shared identity of the inhabitants of the region.

CP specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measure ment unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
1.1.R.1.	Number of tourists accommodated	Number	1,387,289	2013	1,691,098	http://osp.stat.gov.lt http://www.stat.gov.pl	Annual

Actions to be supported under the investment priority

In implementing specific objective “To increase the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage for tourism in the cross-border area” the following actions are planned to be supported:

- Development of joint tourism routes based on natural and cultural heritage. This activity would include mostly soft measures (e.g. preparation and publication of information and promotion material about tourism objects and tourism routes) and small scale public tourism infrastructure (e.g. production and installation of information boards and signs, installation of rest and recreation areas);
- Joint activities targeted at promotion of a region as a single tourism destination;
- Implementation of joint cultural, art, educational activities for tourists in natural and cultural heritage sites;
- Conservation, preservation, adaptation and sustainable development of natural and cultural heritage for tourism purposes (including ecotourism) or social, cultural, educational and other community purposes;
- Transfer of good practices between beneficiaries, joint training of staff and exchange of staff aiming to increase capacities of natural and cultural heritage management, development of joint tourism products and services, marketing of the heritage resources of CP area and other related capacities.

The types of beneficiaries are:

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

The main target groups of the specific objective are local people, visitors and tourists. Planned actions to be supported cover the most appropriate activities leading to better protection of natural and cultural heritage and sustainable utilization for tourism.

The whole CP area is targeted, but different strengths and actions are relevant to different types of areas. In general, rural territories have more capacities for development of natural heritage attractions. Urban areas are more in favour of developing cultural heritage. But this is just a general trend, not the rule for selecting the operations. Also the CP stresses the support for development of joint routes, that would include natural and cultural heritage sites from both sides of the border.

Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Selection of operations will be organized according to the procedures described in Section 5. „Implementing provisions for the CP”. Selection criteria will be defined in the Programme Manual. The following operations will be prioritized:

- operations that demonstrate potential to increase the number of tourists in the CP area through maintaining natural and cultural heritage or joint activities for tourists;
- operations that demonstrate good integration and synergy with other development investments made or planned in the area or close area of operations.

Common and CP specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
1.1.O.1.	Number of heritage sites developed or adapted	Sites	7	Operations reports	Annual
1.1.O.2.	Number of joint tourism routes developed	Routes ²⁶	4	Operations reports	Annual
1.1.O.3	Number of natural and cultural heritage objects and related products promoted	Objects and related products promoted	40	Operations reports	Annual

²⁶ Tourism route is a group of thematically related and jointly promoted tourist objects on both sides of the border.

2.A.2. Priority Axis 2: Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility

Thematic objective	TO 8 – Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
Investment priority 1	8 (a) Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by supporting the development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, micro-enterprises and business creation
Specific objective	To promote business creation, development and cooperation through improved business support services

Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

Expected results

Activities financed under this priority will result in numerous positive short-, medium- and long-term changes in the CP area. Firstly, operations related to business acceleration, entrepreneurship and apprenticeship will be jointly developed and implemented. Secondly, joint activities aimed at business facilitation will be carried out. In the short- and medium-term this will condition increased cross-border cooperation among different actors supporting business (business incubators, science and technology parks, business advice centres, chambers of commerce and other public or non-governmental organisations), as well as increased and more evenly spread across the CP area capacities of business support organisations. In the long-term higher quality and effectiveness of business support services, more active business creation, higher clusterization, as well as increased regional economic growth and decreased unemployment in the CP area, are expected.

Operations to be funded under this specific objective will contribute to the priority area *PA SME (Promote entrepreneurship and strengthen the growth of SMEs)* foreseen in the Action Plan of the EUSBSR. It calls for more effective support for entrepreneurship and SMEs development, as well as stronger cooperation between enterprises, knowledge institutions and public authorities at different levels.

CP specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
2.1.R.1.	Share of newly established business entities in relation to the total number of registered business entities	Percent	11.3	2014	11.6	http://osp.stat.gov.lt http://www.stat.gov.pl	Annual

Actions to be supported under the investment priority

In implementing specific objective “To promote business creation, development and cooperation through improved business support services” the following actions are planned to be supported:

- Cooperation activities between business support organisations (e.g. business incubators, science and technology parks, business advice centres, chambers of commerce,) across the border;
- Joint development and implementation of business acceleration, entrepreneurship and apprenticeship programmes;
- Joint development and implementation of youth entrepreneurship projects aimed at introducing business world, entrepreneurs and enterprises to youth, youth encouragement for self-employment and business creation etc.;
- Activities supporting business cooperation (e.g. networking, clusters development, etc.)
- Transfer of good practices, joint trainings and exchange of staff between beneficiaries in order to increase capacities of business support organisations management and services provision, also for the purpose to develop or upgrade joint (or promoting cooperation) services for business;
- Joint trainings, seminars and other events for youth, entrepreneurs, small and medium business and its personnel for business development and related issues;

The types of beneficiaries are:

- Local, regional and national authorities;
- Public bodies and bodies governed by the public law;
- NGOs;
- Business support organisations (e.g. business incubators, science and technology parks, business advice centres, chambers of commerce) (financing will be provided for public organisations and NGOs).

The main target groups of the specific objective are youth, entrepreneurs, small and medium business and its personnel. These groups will be targeted with newly developed or upgraded joint (or promoting cooperation) services for business, also they will be the main participants of joint events.

The whole CP area is targeted. No specific territories are prioritised.

Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Selection of operations is described in Section 5. “Implementing provisions for the CP”. Selection criteria will be defined in the Programme Manual. The following operations will be prioritized:

- Operations that contribute to the development of new or upgraded joint (or promoting cooperation) services for business and these services promotes creation of green jobs (as defined in the "Green Employment Initiative", COM(2014)446);
- Operations that clearly identify the market needs and demonstrate how the developed or upgraded services meet the market needs.

Common and CP specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
2.1.O.1.	Number of new or upgraded joint (or promoting cooperation) services for business	Services	7	Operations reports	Annual
2.1.O.2.	Number of persons having participated in joint trainings and events	Persons	700	Operations reports	Annual

Investment priority 2	8 (a(i) ETC) Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training
Specific objective	To decrease unemployment through coordinated cross-border employment initiatives

Expected results

Activities financed under this priority will result in numerous positive short-, medium- and long-term changes in the CP area. Firstly, local employment initiatives, youth employment initiatives and youth exchange programmes will be jointly developed and implemented. Local employment initiatives are social economy operations or group of operations led by NGOs performing services for the community interest (e.g. home help services, child care, assistance to young people facing difficulties, better housing security, etc.). Only those local employment initiatives that foresee joint cross-border implementation (sharing the experience between partners, jointly developing the models for service provision, etc.) will be supported. Secondly, joint study and training programmes aimed at promoting employment will be implemented. In the short- and medium-term this will condition increased networking of educational and labour market institutions of the CP area, more active involvement of new actors in promoting employment, as well as increased awareness of employment possibilities in the neighbouring country among residents of the CP area. In the long-term increased labour market integration and labour mobility, better match between skills and needs of labour market and decreased unemployment in the CP area are expected.

Operations to be funded under this specific objective will contribute to the priority area *PA Education (Developing innovative education and youth)* foreseen in the Action Plan of the EUSBSR. The latter distinguishes access to good education and training for all, as well as a well-functioning labour market supporting geographical, professional and socio-economic mobility as the crucial preconditions for prosperity in the region.

CP specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
2.2.R.1	Registered unemployment rate	Percent	13.0%	2014	11.5%	http://osp.stat.gov.lt http://www.stat.gov.pl	Annual

Actions to be supported under the investment priority

In fulfilling specific objective “To decrease unemployment through coordinated cross-border employment initiatives” the following actions are planned to be supported:

- Provision of information and counselling on the labour market in CP area in order to increase cross-border mobility;

- Joint development and implementation of local employment initiatives and joint trainings;
- Joint development and implementation of joint employment initiatives for youth and older people and implementation of exchange programmes;
- Networking of educational and labour market institutions for contribution to better match between skills and the needs of labour market of the region;
- Implementation of joint study and trainings programmes in line with labour market needs;
- Transfer of the good practices for beneficiaries aiming to increase capacities to implement cross-border mobility, local employment and other employment initiatives;
- Exchange of experience and joint trainings for beneficiaries, unemployed people, also people seeking changes in career, youth and communities, aimed at strengthening capacities.

The types of beneficiaries are:

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

The main target groups of the specific objective are unemployed people, also people seeking changes in career, youth, and communities. These groups will be targeted with cross-border mobility initiatives, local employment initiatives, trainings, exchange programmes, etc.

The whole CP area is targeted. No specific territories are prioritised.

Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Selection of operations is described in Section 5. “Implementing provisions for the CP”. Selection criteria will be defined in the Programme Manual. The following operations will be prioritized:

- Operations that contribute to better employment opportunities for unemployed and persons seeking changes in career. A particular attention should be paid on operations targeted at youth or older people.
- Operations that foresee strong involvement of local communities.

Common and CP specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
2.2.O.1.	Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training (common)	Persons	700	Operations reports	Annual
2.2.O.2.	Number of participants in cross-border mobility initiatives (common)	Persons	100	Operations reports	Annual

2.A.3. Priority Axis 3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination

Thematic objective	TO 9 – Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination
Investment priority 2	9 (a(ii) ETC) Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination by promoting gender equality, equal opportunities, and the integration of communities across borders
Specific objective	To enhance the access to social and health care services for cross-border inhabitants thus combating social exclusion and poverty

Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

Expected results

Activities financed under this priority will result in numerous positive short-, medium- and long-term changes in the CP area. Firstly, social and health care services for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, as well the networks for service provision, will be developed. Secondly, social and health care programmes will be jointly implemented, if necessary encompassing investments into infrastructure for cross-border use. Thirdly, joint trainings for vulnerable groups will be organized. The latter are expected to strengthen motivation and capacities of these groups to actively engage in social and economic activities. In addition, people at risk of poverty and social exclusion will be encouraged to engage in cross-border cooperation of different kind (cultural, social, educational, etc.). Moreover, joint sports activities aimed at social integration and health promotion will be implemented. In carrying out the latter, the focus will be placed on children and youth. Furthermore, beneficiaries working with vulnerable groups will engage in joint training and exchange of staff. This will contribute to strengthening of their capacities to promote social integration, develop networking initiatives, and provide social and health care services. Finally, activities aimed at building durable cross-border links and networks of NGOs and volunteers serving the needs of vulnerable people will be implemented. With the view to strengthening non-governmental sector of the CP area, the engagement of NGOs operating in the region in the field of social and healthcare services are especially encouraged.

Operations to be funded under this specific objective will contribute to the horizontal action *HA Involve (Strengthening multi-level governance including involving civil society, business)* foreseen in the Action Plan of the EUSBSR. It underlines social capital and social trust as an important foundation for a sustainable and inclusive society. Operations funded under this specific objective will also contribute to *PA Health (Improving and promoting people's*

health, including its social aspects). The latter one stresses the need to improve health and its social aspects of people in the Baltic Sea region.

CP specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
3.1.R.1	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	% of total population	29,98	2013	29,81	Statistics gathered from Statistics Offices in Lithuania and Poland	2018, 2023
3.1.R.2	Population perceiving an unmet need for health care	% of total population	8,29	2013	8,12	Statistics gathered from Statistics Offices in Lithuania and Poland	2018, 2023

Actions to be supported under the investment priority

In fulfilling specific objective “To enhance the access to social and health care services for cross-border inhabitants thus combating social exclusion and poverty” the following actions are planned to be supported:

- Joint development of social and health care services, as well as networks, in order to provide support for different groups of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion;
- Activities aimed at building durable cross-border links and networks of NGOs and volunteers serving the needs of vulnerable persons and groups;
- Engagement of different groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion in cross-border cooperation (e.g. cultural, social, educational, etc.);
- Joint sports activities aimed at social integration and healthy lifestyle promotion, with particular focus on children and youth;
- Joint implementation of social and health care programmes;
- Investments in social services and health care infrastructure for cross-border use;
- Joint training and exchange of staff between beneficiaries (including volunteers) working with vulnerable groups, in order to strengthen their capacities to promote social integration, develop networking initiatives, and provide social and health care services, etc.;
- Joint training for vulnerable groups, in order to strengthen their motivation and capacities to actively engage in social and economic activities.

The types of beneficiaries are:

- Local, regional and national authorities;

- Public bodies and bodies governed by the public law;
- NGOs.

The main target groups of this specific objective are different groups of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. They will benefit from jointly developed social and health care services, networks of NGOs and volunteers serving the needs of vulnerable people, social inclusion activities, etc. The whole CP area is targeted. No specific territories are prioritized.

Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Selection of operations is described in Section 5. “Implementing provisions for the CP”. Selection criteria will be defined in the Programme Manual. Operations implemented by NGOs will be prioritized.

Common and CP specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
3.1.O.1.	Number of participants in projects promoting gender equality, equal opportunities and social inclusion across borders (common)	Persons	2000	Operations reports	Annual
3.1.O.2	Number of NGOs involved in cross-border cooperation for combating poverty and social exclusion	NGOs	20	Operations reports	Annual
3.1.O.3	Number of new or upgraded health care services and prevention programmes	Services and programmes	4	Operations reports	Annual

2.A.4. Priority Axis 4: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration

Thematic objective	TO 11 - Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration
Investment priority 1	11 (a(iv) ETC) Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions
Specific objective	To increase cross-border cooperation of the institutions in order to develop more integrated and better quality public governance and public services in the CP area

Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

Expected results

Activities financed under this priority will result in numerous positive short-, medium- and long-term changes in the CP area. Firstly, initiatives aimed at improving provision of cross-border public services (including provision of healthcare, safety and security, as well as responding to natural and man-made disasters) will be jointly implemented. Secondly, infrastructure necessary for cross-border public service provision will be developed and equipment for cross-border use will be purchased. In the short- and medium-term this will condition more coordinated management of joint natural assets, infrastructure and equipment, as well as higher level of cooperation and developed durable partnerships between local and regional authorities and public service providers of neighbouring countries. In the long-term increased capacities of authorities and public service providers and, thus, more effective provision of cross-border public services are expected.

Operations to be funded under this specific objective will contribute to the following priority areas foreseen in the Action Plan of the EUSBSR, namely *PA Crime (Fighting cross-border crime)* and *PA Secure (Protection from emergencies and accidents on land)*. The first one emphasizes the importance of cross-border cooperation for addressing security deficits, the second one focuses on cross-border cooperation for combating common hazards and emergencies..

CP specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
4.1.R.1	Share of institutions benefiting from cross-border cooperation	Percent	57	2016	89	Survey	2018, 2023

Actions to be supported under the investment priority

In fulfilling specific objective “To increase cross-border cooperation of the institutions in order to develop more integrated and better quality public governance and public services in the CP area” the following actions are planned to be supported:

- Legal and administrative cooperation between authorities and public services providers across the border for the purpose of cross-border public services provision in the CP area;
- Joint administrative operations and actions on climate change adaptation;
- Transfer of good practices and cooperation activities (e.g. joint trainings and exchange of staff of beneficiaries; infrastructure necessary for cooperation) between local and regional authorities and public service providers;

The following types of beneficiaries are planned:

- Local and regional authorities;
- Public service providers.

The main target group of the specific objective is the population of the CP area that will be benefiting from better local and regional governance and increased public services.

The whole CP area is targeted. No specific territories are prioritised.

Guiding principles for the selection of operations

Selection of operations is described in Section 5. “Implementing provisions for the CP”. Selection criteria will be defined in the Programme Manual. Operations that contribute to better local and regional governance and increased public services, and also demonstrate very strong potential to continue cross-border cooperation between authorities or service providers after operation completion will be prioritized. The selection of operations will involve an assessment of the degree to which the operations solve the main cooperation problems in the CP area.

Common and CP specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
4.1.O.1.	Number of institutions involved in the cross-border cooperation	Institutions	20	Operations reports	Annual
4.1.O.2.	Number of persons having participated in joint trainings or exchange of staff	Persons	500	Operations reports	Annual

Performance framework

Table 3: Performance framework of the priority axis

Priority axis	Indicator type (Key implementation step, financial, output or, where appropriate, result indicator)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Financial indicator		Expenditure (ERDF + national counterpart)	EUR	4,002,175.00	20,010,873.00	Operations reports	
Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Output indicator	1.1.O.1.	Number of heritage sites developed or adapted	Sites	2	7	Operations reports	
Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Output indicator	1.1.O.2.	Number of joint tourism routes developed	Routes	1	4	Operations reports	
Preserving and	Output indicator	1.1.O.3	Number of	Objects and	8	40	Operations reports	

protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency			natural and cultural heritage objects and related products promoted	related products promoted				
Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	Financial indicator		Expenditure (ERDF + national counterpart)	EUR	2,907,831.00	14,539,151.00	Operations reports	
Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	Output indicator	2.1.O.1.	Number of new or upgraded joint (or promoting cooperation) services for business	Services	2	7	Operations reports	
Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	Output indicator	2.1.O.2.	Number of persons having participated in joint trainings and events	Persons	140	700	Operations reports	
Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	Output indicator	2.2.O.1.	Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training (common)	Persons	140	700	Operations reports	
Promoting sustainable and	Output indicator	2.2.O.2.	Number of participants in	Persons	20	100	Operations reports	

quality employment and supporting labour mobility			cross-border mobility initiatives (common)					
Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	Financial indicator		Expenditure (ERDF + national counterpart)	EUR	1,938,554.00	9,692,768.00	Operations reports	
Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	Output indicator	3.1.O.1	Number of participants in projects promoting gender equality, equal opportunities and social inclusion across borders (common)	Persons	400	2000	Operations reports	
Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	Output indicator	3.1.O.2	Number of NGOs involved in cross-border cooperation for combating poverty and social exclusion	NGOs	4	20	Operations reports	
Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any	Output indicator	3.1.O.3	Number of new or upgraded health care services and prevention programmes	Services and programmes	1	4	Operations reports	

discrimination								
Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	Financial indicator		Expenditure (ERDF + national counterpart)	EUR	2,907,831.00	14,539,151.00	Operations reports	
Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	Output indicator	4.1.O.1.	Number of institutions involved in the cross-border cooperation	Institutions	4	20	Operations reports	
Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	Output indicator	4.1.O.2.	Number of persons having participated in joint trainings or exchange of staff	Persons	100	500	Operations reports	

Categories of intervention

Categories of intervention corresponding to the content of the priority axis, based on a nomenclature adopted by the COM, and indicative breakdown of Union support

Tables 4-7. Categories of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1-Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	91	4,252,311.00
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	92	2,126,155.00
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	93	4,252,311.00
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	94	2,126,154.00
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	95	4,252,311.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	72	1,730,159.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	102	3,583,901.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	103	1,730,159.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	104	3,583,901.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	118	1,730,158.00
3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	109	2,636,433.00
3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	111	1,482,993.00
3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	112	4,119,426.00
4. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	119	8,280,046.00

4. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	120	4,078,232.00
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Table 5: Dimension 2-Form of finance

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	01	17,009,242.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	01	12,358,278.00
3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	01	8,238,852.00
4. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	01	12,358,278.00

Table 6: Dimension 3-Territory type

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	01	7,654,158.00
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	02	7,654,158.00
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	03	1,700,926.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	01	4,943,311.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	02	4,943,311.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	03	2,471,656.00
3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	01	2,471,656.00
3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	02	3,295,540.00
3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty	03	2,471,656.00

and any discrimination		
4. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	01	4,943,311.00
4. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	02	6,179,139.00
4. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	03	1,235,828.00

Table 7: Dimension 6-Territorial delivery mechanisms		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	07	17,009,242.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	07	12,358,278.00
3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	07	8,238,852.00
4. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	07	12,358,278.00

Section 2B. Description of the priority axes for technical assistance

2.B.1 Priority Axis - Technical assistance

<i>Specific objective</i>	To ensure fluent and effective CP implementation
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The Member States seek to achieve fluent and effective preparation, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and communication, networking, complaint resolution, control and audit of the CP.

The Technical Assistance may be used to support staffing and equipping of the CP management institutions, also for actions aimed at reduction of administrative burden on beneficiaries, including electronic data exchange systems, and actions aimed at reinforcing of capacities of Member States' authorities and beneficiaries to administer the CP. Capacities of authorities will be developed according to the training plan.

The Technical Assistance may also be used to support actions aimed at reinforcing capacities of relevant partners in line with point (e) of Article 5(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR] and supporting exchange of good practices between such partners. The actions referred to in this paragraph may concern previous and subsequent programming periods.

Indicative activities:

- Assistance for generation, preparation and assessment of operations (meetings and activities of institutions responsible for the CP administration and management, the JMC, external expertise and studies, seminars/training of potential applicants, equipment, documentation, etc.);
- Administration and management of the CP (meetings and activities of institutions responsible for the CP administration and management, external expertise and studies, seminars/training to beneficiaries, equipment, documentation, etc.);
- Evaluation and control (evaluations, external expertise and studies, audits and on-the-spot checks, seminars and trainings, documentation, etc.);
- Information, publicity and awareness raising measures (publications, events, networking, websites, media, visual identity, equipment, documentation, exchange of experience, etc.);
- Elaboration of relevant studies and databases;
- Monitoring of the operations, including elements of anti-fraud risk assessment (annual risk assessment plan, desk and on-site checks, management of irregularities, procedures for corrective measures, etc.).

Output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)(optional)	Source of data
TA.O.1.	Number of operations implemented	Operations	150	Decisions on approval of final consolidated operation report
TA.O.2.	Number of Joint Monitoring Committee meetings	Meetings	9	Minutes of JMC meetings
TA.O.3.	Number of organised events for publicity, information and capacity building about the CP	Events	20	Publicity reports
TA.O.4.	Number of publications and appearances in the media	Publications and appearances in the media	15	Publicity reports
TA.O.5	Checks-on-spot of the operations	Checks-on-spot	100	Checks-on-spot reports
TA.O.6	Number of employees whose salaries are co-financed by technical assistance	Full-time equivalents	12	Employment contracts

Categories of intervention

Corresponding categories of intervention based on a nomenclature adopted by the COM, and an indicative breakdown of Union support.

Tables 8-10: Categories of intervention

Table 8: Dimension 1-Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Technical Assistance	121	2,710,848.00
Technical Assistance	122	159,461.00
Technical Assistance	123	318,924.00

Table 9: Dimension 2-Form of finance		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Technical Assistance	01	3,189,233.00

Table 10: Dimension 3-Territory type		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
Technical Assistance	01	3,189,233.00

SECTION 3. FINANCING PLAN

3.1. Financial appropriation from the ERDF (in EUR) per year

Table 11: Financing plan by year

Fund	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
ERDF	0,00	7,948,568.00	5,325,204.00	9,675,862.00	9,869,379.00	10,066,767.00	10,268,103.00	53,153,883.00
Total	0,00	7,948,568.00	5,325,204.00	9,675,862.00	9,869,379.00	10,066,767.00	10,268,103.00	53,153,883.00

3.2. Total financial appropriation from the ERDF and national co-financing (in EUR)

Table 12: Financing plan by priority axis

Priority Axis	Fund	Basis for the calculation of the Union support (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b) = (c) + (d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a) + (b)	Co-financing rate (f) = (a)/(e) (2)
					National Public funding (c)	National private funding (d) (1)		
Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	ERDF	Total eligible cost	17,009,242.00	3,001,631.00	2,601,514.00	400,117.00	20,010,873.00	85%
Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	ERDF	Total eligible cost	12,358,278.00	2,180,873.00	1,890,163.00	290,710.00	14,539,151.00	85%
Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	ERDF	Total eligible cost	8,238,852.00	1,453,916.00	1,260,109.00	193,807.00	9,692,768.00	85%

Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	ERDF	Total eligible cost	12,358,278.00	2,180,873.00	1,890,163.00	290,710.00	14,539,151.00	85%
Technical assistance	ERDF	Total eligible cost	3,189,233.00	562,806.00	562,805.00	0,00	3,752,039.00	85%
Total	ERDF		53,153,883.00	9,380,099.00	8,204,755.00	1,175,344.00	62,533,982.00	85%
Total	Total all Funds		53,153,883.00	9,380,099.00	8,204,755.00	1,175,344.00	62,533,982.00	85%

(1) To be completed only when priority axes are expressed in total costs.

(2) This rate may be rounded to the nearest whole number in the table. The precise rate used to reimburse payments is the ratio (f).

3.3. Breakdown by priority axis and thematic objective

Table 13: Distribution of funds by priority axis and thematic objective

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Union support	National counterpart	Total funding
1. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	TO 6 - Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	17,009,242.00	3,001,631.00	20,010,873.00
2. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	TO 8 - Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	12,358,278.00	2,180,873.00	14,539,151.00
3. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	TO 9 - Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	8,238,852.00	1,453,916.00	9,692,768.00
4. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and	TO 11 - Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and	12,358,278.00	2,180,873.00	14,539,151.00

efficient public administration	efficient public administration			
5.Technical assistance		3,189,233.00	562,806.00	3,752,039.00
TOTAL		53,153,883.00	9,380,099.00	62,533,982.00

SECTION 4. INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Description of the CPs integrated approach to territorial development

Integrated approach of the CP to territorial development will be applied in a number of areas, including content of interventions, types of beneficiaries and actions to be supported.

First of all, some specific features of the region, both positive and negative, were taken into account while programming the interventions. Areas involved in the CP are below national averages of Lithuania and Poland in many social and economic aspects (e.g. GDP per capita in the CP area is around 35 per cent lower; gross average monthly wages in different regions of the CP area – 10 to 15 per cent lower). Also more than a quarter of the total population in the CP area was at risk of poverty or social exclusion, exceeding the Union average equal to 24.8 per cent.

Thus, a large share of interventions is targeted at solving various regional issues, including unemployment and social exclusion (around 40 per cent of the CP budget). Employment will be supported through strengthening cross-border cooperation in provision of business support services as well as coordinated employment initiatives of authorities, public entities and communities. In addition, social inclusion will be strengthened by improving accessibility to social and healthcare services.

On the other hand, specific strengths of the region (e.g. natural and cultural heritage) were also considered while developing the CP. Decision to support tourism potential was made taking into account that environment of the region is favourable for sustainable tourism, which will trigger regional growth, especially important in case of less developed rural areas.

Moreover, integrated approach to territorial development is visible in the types of beneficiaries. Involvement of various actors, ranging from regional and local authorities to NGOs and community organisations, will facilitate comprehensive regional and local development. According to researches, local communities of rural areas or old traditional residential districts in towns tend to be more mature and sustainable. Therefore, closer cooperation among communities and people-to-people contacts in the CP area will positively contribute to social inclusion and create more open-minded communities, capable of engaging in durable cooperation.

Integrated approach to territorial development also manifests in the types of actions to be supported. The CP envisages both soft and hard elements necessary for integrated cross-border cooperation and regional growth.

The CP will contribute to the regional development in synergy with other programmes financed from ESI funds. The Partnership Agreement of Lithuania foresees to use community-led local development instruments and Integrated Territorial Investments, including actions for sustainable urban development. The Partnership Agreement identifies three types of territories for implementing community-led local development, namely towns and cities, rural areas and fisheries areas. Investments in Kaunas, the second largest city of Lithuania and part of the CP area, might spill over to other territories of the region. The Operational Programme for Eastern Poland covers territories involved in the CP. This should further strengthen the region lagging behind in terms of social and economic development. Finally, thematic concentration of the CP will condition better coordination of interventions of this CP with those financed from ESI funds, and better results in tackling regional gaps in growth and quality of life.

4.2. Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and sea basin strategies

Both participating countries of the CP, along with Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany and Latvia, participate in the EUSBSR. The latter is aimed at reinforcing cooperation among the countries of the region in order to fulfil three objectives - save the sea, connect the region and increase prosperity. The jointly-agreed Action Plan for the EUSBSR includes a number of priority areas for macro-regional cooperation addressing key challenges and opportunities in the region. Actions in these priority areas are being implemented by regional stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region through detailed actions and flagship projects, accompanied by clearly identified targets and indicators.

Interventions to be carried out under each priority axis of the CP will contribute to different priority areas (PA) of the EUSBSR.

Actions to be supported under Priority Axis 1 “Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency” will contribute to two priority areas of the EUSBSR, namely *PA Culture (Developing and promoting the common culture and cultural identity)* and *PA Tourism (Reinforcing cohesiveness of the macro-region through tourism)*. Conservation, preservation and development of cultural heritage and its sustainable adaptation to tourist activities will provide a source of common identity and shared values, contributing to promoting the Baltic Sea region as a common cultural region and increasing territorial cohesion in the region. Development of joint tourism routes and implementation of joint activities for tourists will contribute to profiling the Baltic Sea region as a tourism destination in key source markets and developing shared identity of the inhabitants of the region.

Actions to be supported under Priority Axis 2 “Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility” will contribute to two priority areas of the EUSBSR, namely *PA SME (Promote entrepreneurship and strengthen the growth of SMEs)* and *PA Education (Developing innovative education and youth)*. Actions aimed at promoting cooperation between business support organisations of the participating countries, as well as joint development and implementation of programmes and projects related to entrepreneurship, will facilitate collaboration between key players in the Baltic Sea region within business areas with a high potential for growth and innovation. Joint development and implementation of various employment initiatives and similar actions will boost labour mobility and stimulate cross-border business development in the Baltic Sea region.

Actions to be supported under Priority Axis 3 “Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination” will contribute to the horizontal action of the EUSBSR, namely *HA Involve (Strengthening multi-level governance including involving civil society, business) as well as to priority area PA Health (Improving and promoting people’s health, including its social aspects)*. Activities aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion and building durable social links and networks between communities of the participating countries will provide favourable conditions for developing sustainable, inclusive, creative, innovative and mobile society in the Baltic Sea region.

Actions to be supported under Priority Axis 4 “Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration” will contribute to three priority areas of the EUSBSR, namely *PA Crime – Fighting cross-border crime* and *PA Secure – Protection from emergencies and accidents on land*. Legal and administrative cooperation between authorities and public services providers of the participating

countries will facilitate combating organised crime, addressing cross-border hazards or emergencies, and improving safety of people in the Baltic Sea region.

The coordination of the CP and the EUSBSR will be performed by the Working Group for Coordination of the EUSBSR Implementation in Poland, whose members are representatives of the relevant ministries, National Contact Point, managing authorities of national and regional operational programmes, Polish Coordinators of Priority Areas and, if relevant, representatives of Polish lead partners of flagship projects, marshal authorities, regional organisations and other people involved in project implementation in the Baltic Sea region.

In Lithuania, the implementation of the EUSBSR is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (national coordinator of the EUSBSR). The implementation process is supervised by the National Commission for Supervision of the EUSBSR Implementation (the Commission), consisting of representatives from responsible public authorities, including Ministry of Interior (MA of the CP).

Contribution to the EUSBSR of every application will be assessed during the selection of application procedure.

SECTION 5. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

5.1. Relevant authorities and bodies

Table 14: CP authorities

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of the authority/body
Managing Authority	The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, Regional Policy Department	Head of the Department
Certifying Authority	The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, Economics and Finance Department	Head of the Department
Audit Authority	The Internal Audit Division of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania	Head of the Division

The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is:

☒ the managing authority	The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania
☐ the certifying authority	

Table 15: Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of the authority/body
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks	Lithuania: The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. Poland: Voivodeship Office of the Podlaskie Voivodeship, Office of European Territorial Cooperation Voivodeship Office of the Warminsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, Department of Certification and European Funds	Lithuania: Head of the Division. Poland: Voivodes from Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeships.
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks	Lithuania: The Internal Audit Division of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of	Lithuania: Head of the Division Poland: General Inspector of

	Lithuania Poland: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Poland Department for Protection of EU Financial Interests	Treasury Control at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Poland
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5.2. Procedure for setting up the Joint Secretariat

In accordance with Article 23(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], the Managing Authority (the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania), after consultation with the participating countries, set up the public establishment ‘*Joint Technical Secretariat*’ as the Joint Secretariat of the CP. It was founded for the purpose of providing technical assistance to INTERREG IIIA and TACIS (2004-2006), European Territorial Cooperation, as well as European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (2007-2013) programmes.

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

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5.3. Summary description of the management and control arrangements

The joint implementation structure of the CP consists of the following bodies:

- Joint Monitoring Committee (*hereinafter - the JMC*);
- Managing Authority (*hereinafter - the MA*);
- Audit Authority (*hereinafter - the AA*);
- Joint Secretariat (*hereinafter - the JS*) supported by the Regional Contact Points (*hereinafter - the RCPs*).

Role and tasks of the Joint Monitoring Committee

The JMC is a decision-making body of the CP responsible for ensuring the quality and effectiveness of implementation and accountability of the CP’s operations. In compliance with Article 47(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], the JMC shall be set up by the Member States participating in the CP, in agreement with the MA, within three months of the date of notification of the decision adopting the CP. National, regional and

local authorities will be represented in the JMC; also social and economic partners (such as NGOs, environmental authorities) of the participating Member States will be involved. More details regarding composition and operational principles of the JMC will be provided in the Rules of Procedure of the JMC which will be adopted by the JMC at its first meeting.

The JMC, in particular, shall:

- Examine and approve:
 - Budget of the CP;
 - Communication strategy of the CP and any amendment to this strategy;
 - Evaluation plan of the CP and any amendment to this plan;
 - The work plan of the CP;
 - Methodology and criteria for selection of operations;
 - Application package and other CP documents necessary for applicants, beneficiaries and CP bodies (application forms, guidelines, manuals for applicants, etc.);
- Establish eligibility rules of expenditure for the CP as a whole;
- Select operations to be funded under the CP;
- Take final decision on approval or rejection of complaints regarding selection of operations;
- Examine and approve any proposal for an amendment to the content of the COM decision on the contribution from the Funds;
- Examine:
 - Implementation of the CP and progress made towards achieving its objectives;
 - All issues that affect the performance of the CP, including the conclusions of the performance reviews;
 - Actions to promote horizontal principles, described in detail Article 110 (f) and (g) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR];
 - Implementation of the communication strategy;
 - Implementation of the evaluation plan;
 - Annual and final implementation reports;
 - Any proposal by the MA for any amendment of the CP;
- Make observations to the MA, if necessary, regarding implementation and evaluation of the CP, and monitor actions taken as a result of its observations.

Role and tasks of the Managing Authority

In accordance with Article 21 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], the Member States participating in the CP have agreed to designate the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania to act as Managing Authority of the CP, also responsible for carrying out the certifying tasks. Separation of managing and certifying functions within the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania will be guaranteed within the

organisational framework. In accordance with Article 125(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], the MA is an executive body responsible, with assistance from the JS, for managing the CP in accordance with the principle of sound financial management. The National Authority (*hereinafter - the NA*) represented by the Minister of Infrastructure and Development of the Republic of Poland will be a co-operating institution acting as the main partner for the Managing Authority on the Polish side of the border.

The MA. In particular, shall

- Ensure that a communication strategy is drawn up and submitted to the JMC for approval no later than six months after the adoption of the CP (with assistance from the JS);
- Draw up an evaluation plan and submit it to the JMC no later than one year after the adoption of the CP (with assistance from the JS);
- Ensure that the categories of intervention are determined (with assistance from the JS);
- Ensure that appropriate selection procedures and criteria (described in detail in Article 125 (3) (a) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]) are drawn up and, once approved by the JMC, applied (with assistance from the JS);
- Ensure that application package is prepared and made available to the applicants (with assistance from the JS);
- Satisfy itself that beneficiaries have the administrative, financial and operational capacity to fulfil conditions for support laid out in the CP's documents (with assistance from the JS);
- Sign subsidy contracts and annexes to contracts with beneficiaries;
- Ensure that a selected operation does not include activities which were part of an operation which has been or should have been a subject to a procedure of recovery in accordance with Article 71 (1) (a) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR] (with assistance from the JS);
- Assess complaints of operations selection (with assistance from the JS) and provide the JMC with findings of this assessment;
- Ensure that beneficiaries are provided with information necessary for implementing operations (with assistance from the JS);
- Ensure that beneficiaries involved in the implementation of operations maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to an operation (with assistance from the JS);
- Satisfy itself that the expenditure of each beneficiary participating in an operation has been verified by the controllers (with assistance from the JS);
- Ensure that a system to record and store, in computerised form, data on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit is established, and that relevant data is collected, entered and stored in this system (with assistance from the JS);
- Ensure that a system to record and store, in computerised form, accounting records on each operation (referred to in Article 126 (d) of Regulation (EU) No

1303/2013 [CPR]) necessary for drawing up payment applications and accounts is established;

- Examine and approve or reject requests on operations' amendments (with assistance from the JS);
- Ensure that evaluations of the CP are carried out on the basis of the evaluation plan (with assistance from the JS);
- Ensure (with assistance from the JS) that the JMC is provided with:
 - Information on the progress in the implementation of the communication strategy (at least once a year);
 - Data relating to indicators and milestones, as well as financial data, necessary for tracking the progress of the CP in achieving its objectives;
 - Support in performing its tasks;
- Ensure that procedures are set up for managing the documents on expenditure and audits necessary for ensuring an adequate audit trail;
- Ensure that effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures are put in place;
- Draw up the accounts of the CP and certify the completeness, accuracy and veracity of these accounts (described in detail in Article 59(5) (a) of the Financial Regulation);
- Certify that the expenditure entered in the accounts of the CP complies with applicable law and has been incurred in implementing operations selected for funding under the CP;
- Draw up and submit payment applications to the COM (in accordance with the requirements of Article 131(1) and Article 135 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]), certifying that:
 - Payment applications result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documents and have been subject to verifications;
 - Results of all audits carried out by or under the responsibility of the AA are taken into account;
- Receive payments made by the COM and make payments to the lead beneficiary;
- Ensure that each beneficiary receives the total amount of eligible public expenditure due in full and no later than 90 days from the date of submission of the payment application to the JS;
- Maintain, in a computerised form, accounting records of expenditure declared to the COM and of the corresponding public contribution paid to beneficiaries;
- Ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead beneficiary;
- Keep an account of amounts recoverable and of amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation;
- Ensure that the management declaration and annual summary is drawn up (in accordance with requirements of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation) and, after approval by the JMC, submitted to the COM (with assistance from the JS);

- Ensure that annual and final implementation reports are drawn up and, after approval by the JMC, submitted to the COM (with assistance from the JS);
- Contribute to the evaluations of the CP carried out by the COM.

Role and tasks of the Member States

The Member States in particular, shall:

- Establish the national requirements and conditions for the CP implementation and ensure that they function effectively and in accordance with the provisions and principles of the CP;
- Appoint the members of the JMC;
- Designate the controllers and ensure that national control system functions effectively and in conformity with the relevant provisions of the CP;
- Provide opinion on eligibility of beneficiaries in case assessors shall have doubts;
- Ensure that expenditure of each beneficiary is verified within three months from the submission of the documents proving expenditure by the beneficiary;
- Following the request of the JS or the MA, check the possibility of double-financing of expenditure financed from other EU-funded initiatives and programmes submitted by the same beneficiaries;
- Prevent, detect and correct irregularities and notify these irregularities without delay to the MA;
- Notify the COM of irregularities exceeding EUR 10,000 of the Union contribution, as well as preventive and corrective measures taken regarding such irregularities;
- Take financial liability in case of failure to recover from the beneficiary amounts unduly paid by the CP;
- Bear responsibility for the payments of the national contribution to the CP's TA budget.

Role and tasks of the Audit Authority and Group of Auditors

In accordance with Article 21 of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], the Member States participating in the CP have designated the Internal Audit Division of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania to act as Audit Authority of the CP. The separation of functions between the MA and the AA will be guaranteed within the organisational framework of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. The tasks of the MA and the AA will be performed by separate and mutually independent departments of the Ministry. In accordance with Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], the AA is assisted by the Group of Auditors composed of representatives from each Member State. The Group of Auditors will be set up at the latest within three months of the decision approving the CP.

The AA, with assistance of the Group of Auditors, shall:

- prepare an audit strategy, described in detail in Article 127 (4) of Regulation [EU] No 1303/2013 [CPR], for performance of audits within eight months after adoption of the CP;
- Ensure that audits are carried out on the proper functioning of the management and control system of the CP;
- Ensure that audits are carried out on an appropriate sample of operations;
- Ensure that audits are carried out on the accounts of the CP;
- Draw up an audit opinion in accordance with Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation;
- Draw up a control report described in detail in Article 127 (5) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR];
- Submit to the COM a closure declaration assessing the validity of the application for payment of the final balance and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions covered by the final statement of expenditure, which shall be supported by a final control report.

Role and tasks of the Joint Secretariat and the RCPs

The JS in particular, shall:

- Draw up and implement a communication strategy, i.e.:
 - Distribute information on the CP and its operations, including running of the CP's website;
 - Organize activities to promote the CP, and support generation and development of operations;
 - Organize partner search events concerning the whole territory of the CP;
- Manage the operation application process, i.e.:
 - Draw up and apply appropriate selection procedures and criteria;
 - Draw up and apply appropriate documents required for calls for proposals;
 - Prepare an application package and make it available to the applicants;
 - Launch calls for proposals;
 - Provide information and advice to applicants (via phone, fax, e-mail or consultation meetings);
 - Register submitted operation applications;
 - Assess the administrative compliance of operation applications;
 - Assess the eligibility of operation applications and applicants;
 - Perform, where necessary with support by external experts, quality assessment of eligible operation applications;
 - Assess complaints regarding selection of operations and provide opinion to MA;
 - Inform the lead beneficiary about the final decision regarding their application;
 - Draft the Subsidy Contracts;

- Assist in implementation of the operations, i.e.:
 - Make sure that a selected operation falls within the scope of the ERDF and can be attributed to a category of intervention;
 - Make sure that a selected operation does not include activities which were part of an operation which has been or should have been subject to a procedure of recovery;
 - Provide (via phone, fax, e-mail, consultation meetings, training seminars, relevant manuals and guidelines) to the beneficiaries information necessary for implementing operations;
 - Carry out operational follow-up of the operations;
 - Take measures to avoid double-financing of the operations/expenditures;
 - Make sure that beneficiaries involved in the implementation of operations maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to an operation;
 - Make sure that the expenditure of each beneficiary participating in an operation has been verified by the controllers;
 - Make the desk-check of Operation Progress Reports and payment applications, and present the conclusion to the MA;
- Examine requests on operations' amendments and present to MA opinion of the JS;
- Assist in monitoring activities, i.e.:
 - Administer the computerized data recording and storing system;
 - Monitor progress made by operations through collecting and checking reports, monitoring outputs, etc.;
 - Monitor commitments and payments of ERDF funds at CP level by categories of intervention;
 - Carry out on-the-spot monitoring visits of operations;
 - Provide to the JMC information on the progress in implementing communication strategy and on the progress of the CP;
- Carry out the usual work of the secretariat of the JMC by organizing meetings, preparing documents, drafting minutes, etc.;
- Manage documents regarding expenditure and audits;
- Manage TA budget (accounting, procurement, payments, reporting, etc.);
- Draw up and submit to the MA:
 - Draft Management declaration and draft annual summary;
 - Draft Annual and final implementation reports;
- Co-operate with organisations, institutions and networks relevant for objectives of the CP.

The JS will be supported in its main tasks, especially in carrying out communication activities, by the RCPs. The latter shall be established in Olsztyn and Białystok. The RCP

of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship shall be located in the Marshall Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, while the RCP of Podlaskie Voivodeship shall be located in the Marshall Office of the Podlaskie Voivodeship. Each RCP shall have 2 part-time employees. Each RCP shall sign a contract with the MA/JS agreeing on the operational plans and indicators to be achieved. The RCPs shall coordinate all communication activities with the MA/JS and shall be accountable to the MA/JS within the set deadlines for the tasks to be performed and expenditures borne. The operation of the RCPs shall be financed from the TA budget.

The RCPs in particular, shall:

- Provide information on funding possibilities to potential applicants on the Polish side of the border;
- Provide support during the application process to applicants on the Polish side of the border;
- Provide support and general consultations to beneficiaries and partners during the implementation of operations;
- Provide support for the Information Manager of the JS in consulting beneficiaries and partners from the Polish side of the border on the Union visibility requirements;
- Participate in the events organized by the JS;
- Assist the JS in:
 - organizing information activities on the Polish side of the border;
 - preparing publications;
 - updating information in the CP's website;
 - providing translation of the relevant information;
 - etc.
- Assist the MA / JS in monitoring activities (on-site visits, participation in the events organized under the operations);
- Prepare inputs to reports of the CP, especially regarding communications issues;

Beneficiaries

The operations selected for funding within the CP shall include beneficiaries from both countries (i.e. each application shall involve at least two beneficiaries – one from Lithuania and one from Poland). Each operation must be implemented according to the so called lead beneficiary principle.

The partners to be eligible for the operations to be financed by the CP shall be the following bodies:

- Public authorities (national institutions, regional and local authorities);
- Public equivalent bodies (legal bodies governed by public or private law);
- NGOs.

Detailed information regarding eligible beneficiaries shall be provided in the Programme Manual.

Operation assessment and selection procedures

The CP will ensure that the operations selected for funding will efficiently contribute to the objectives of the CP.

The main procedure for selecting operations to be financed under the CP is calls for proposals, launched by the JS according to the decision of the JMC. The number of calls per year shall be flexible depending on the progress of the CP.

Within six months after the approval of the CP, the criteria for selecting operations to be financed under the CP shall be approved by the JMC and laid down in the application package, elaborated by the JS and approved by the JMC before the first call of proposals. These documents shall consequently be made available for downloading at the CP website.

In the call for proposal the JMC may decide to give a priority for operations fulfilling the following criteria:

- Affecting the entire CP area or its significant part;
- Being of strategic importance for cross-border cooperation and proposing systematic solutions in order to achieve CP objectives.

Details concerning submitting of applications, assessment, selection and eligibility requirements of operations will be approved by the JMC and described in the Programme Manual which will be legally binding document for the applicants, operation implementers and the CP implementing bodies.

The lead beneficiary shall submit application to the JS using a single application form for each operation. Applications for funding shall include at least one beneficiary from each participating country – Lithuania and Poland. These beneficiaries shall cooperate in:

- Development of operations;
- Implementation of operations.

In addition, they shall cooperate in one of the following, or in both ways:

- Staffing;
- Financing of operations.

Selected operations fulfilling these conditions may be implemented in a single participating country provided that they have been presented by entities belonging to both MS and have a significant cross-border impact. Operations conducted under the CP may on occasion encompass infrastructure investment components where this contributes to the thematic objective. Such an investment should be duly justified, bring clear added value, and cannot constitute the main objective of the operation. Infrastructure investments can only be part of cooperation operations with soft cooperation activities.

Upon receipt, the JS shall encode the applications into the CP administration system and notify the applicant. The JS shall consequently carry out the assessment of administrative compliance (on the basis of administrative criteria) and eligibility (on the basis of eligibility criteria) of applicants, expenditure and activities. In case assessors shall have doubts regarding eligibility of beneficiaries they shall address MA or NA and ask for

opinion on their eligibility. Following the quality assessment, the JS shall submit for the JMC's approval a ranked list of applications with summary assessment reports for each application, including comments from the assessors, and a list of non-eligible applications with justifications of their non-eligibility. The JMC shall approve the list of non-eligible operations, select operations for funding and decide on the funding amount for each operation. The JMC can either approve or reject an application, or approve it conditionally. Conditions should cover technical aspects only and not change the content or objectives, main outputs or activities of the proposed operation.

Contracting procedures

Following funding decisions by the JMC, the JS shall immediately inform the lead beneficiary about the results concerning their proposal.

Within one month following the final approval of the operation by the JMC, the MA shall sign the Subsidy Contract with the lead beneficiary.

Complaint procedures

The scope, rules and procedures concerning the examination of complaints will be described in the Programme Manual.

In case of complaints on selection of operation, the lead beneficiary of the operation which application was not approved for the CP co-financing by the JMC, has the right to complain against the decision regarding the operation selection results. The MA, assisted by the JS, examines the complaint and prepares its technical examination regarding the nature of the complaint. The complaint will be examined on the basis of the information provided by the lead beneficiary in the complaint. Detailed procedures will be prescribed in the Programme Manual.

Complaints regarding the results of verifications under Article 23 of the Regulation 1299/2013 on Polish territory are examined pursuant to the Act on the rules for the implementation of the operational programmes of the Cohesion Policy financed under the financial perspective 2014-2020.

Upon request by the Commission, Member States will examine complaints submitted to the Commission falling within the scope of their arrangements. Member States will inform the Commission, upon request, of the results of those examinations.

The complaint procedure set out above is without prejudice to any mechanism or process for legal redress at national level, in particular with regard to unsuccessful applicants.

Small projects

In addition to regular operations, small projects might also be implemented within the CP. These small scale people to people actions across the border might be implemented in all the priorities of the CP.

8 to 10 per cent of the CP funds shall be allocated to the small projects. Main actions of the small projects should be of a "soft" nature and only limited investment components (i.e. small investments absolutely necessary for the implementation of these projects) may be involved. The maximum funding by the CP for one small project is 50,000 EUR.

The small projects shall be selected during special calls, held separately from the open calls for operation proposals. The management of the small projects shall be entrusted to the JS, supported in its activities by the RCPs.

Control and audit procedures

In compliance with Article 23(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], the controllers, designated by both participating countries, shall be responsible for carrying out control tasks on the operation level in relation to beneficiaries on their respective territory. They shall ensure that the expenditure of a beneficiary can be verified within a period of three months of the submission of the documents by the beneficiary concerned. In accordance with Article 125(5) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], the controllers shall verify that the co-financed products and services have been delivered and that expenditure declared by the beneficiaries has been paid and that it complies with applicable law, the CP and the conditions for support of the operation. Following verifications, the controllers shall issue statements of expenditure (Declaration of validation of beneficiary expenditure).

The above mentioned verifications include the following procedures:

- Administrative verifications in respect of each application for reimbursement by beneficiaries;
- On-the-spot verifications of operations, carried out on a sample basis. The frequency and coverage of the on-the-spot verifications shall be proportionate to the amount of public support to an operation and to the level of risk identified by such verifications and audits by the AA for the management and control system as a whole.

The MA shall satisfy itself that the expenditure of each beneficiary participating in an operation has been verified by the designated controllers. In accordance with Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], each participating country shall be responsible for audits carried out on its territory. Each representative from each EU-MS participating in the CP, forming the Group of Auditors, shall be responsible for providing the factual elements relating to the expenditure on its territory that are required by the AA in order to perform its assessment. The Group of Auditors shall be set up within three months of the decision approving the CP. It shall draw up its own rules of procedure and be chaired by the AA. The auditors shall be functionally independent from controllers who carry out verifications under Article 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC].

According to Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], the AA shall ensure that audit work takes account of internationally accepted audit standards. Where audits are carried out by a body other than the AA, the AA shall ensure that any such body has the necessary functional independence. In ensuring that audits are carried out on operations, the declared expenditure shall be audited based on a representative sample and, as a general rule, on statistical sampling methods. A non-statistical sampling method may be used on the professional judgement of the AA, in duly justified cases, in accordance with internationally accepted audit standards and in any case where the number of operations for an accounting year is insufficient to allow the use of a statistical method. In such cases, the size of the sample shall be sufficient to enable the AA to draw up a valid audit opinion in accordance with Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation. The non-statistical sample method shall cover a minimum of 5% of operations for which

expenditure has been declared to the COM during an accounting year and 10% of the expenditure which has been declared to the COM during an accounting year.

Financial procedures

Each operation shall be financed by the ERDF contribution and contribution by the beneficiaries following the co-financing rates set up for the CP. Each beneficiary shall prepare its own Progress Report that includes a list of expenditure. The controllers shall examine the Progress Report and documents proving expenditure to verify the legality and regularity of the expenditure declared by each beneficiary. Following the verification of expenditure, the controllers shall issue Declaration of validation of beneficiary expenditure. To be eligible for reimbursement, the expenditure paid by beneficiaries shall be supported by receipted invoices or accounting documents of equivalent probative value in accordance with Union and national laws and regulations.

In conformity with Article 13(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], the lead beneficiary shall ensure that the expenditure presented by other beneficiaries has been verified by the controllers. The lead beneficiary shall combine Progress Reports and Declarations of validation of beneficiary expenditure of all beneficiaries into the Consolidated Progress Report. The latter shall be submitted to the JS along with all the Progress Reports and Declarations of validation of beneficiary expenditure of project beneficiaries. The JS shall make the assessment of Consolidated Progress Report and payment application of the lead beneficiary, and present the conclusion to the MA. In conformity with Article 131 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], payment applications shall include the total amount of eligible expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations, as well as the total amount of public expenditure incurred in implementing operations.

The MA shall verify and approve the Consolidated Progress Report and payment applications. It shall afterwards submit payment applications to the COM and certify that they result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documents and have been subject to verifications. The MA shall consequently receive the ERDF funds from the COM. The payments from the COM shall be received in a separate single bank account with no national sub-accounts. The account shall be held by the MA at the Bank of Lithuania. The payment currency shall be euro.

The MA shall then issue payments to the lead beneficiary according to the co-financing rate laid down in the Subsidy Contract with the lead beneficiary. The latter shall allocate the funds received from the MA to other beneficiaries in accordance with terms of the agreement signed between them. The MA shall ensure that a beneficiary receives the total amount of eligible public expenditure due in full and no later than 90 days from the date of submission of the payment application to the JS.

The CP will not submit payment applications for *Priority Axis 3 “Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination” as well as Priority Axis 4 “Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration”* before the modification of the CP to include baseline and target values for the result indicators of the mentioned Priorities.

Monitoring of the operations will include elements of anti-fraud risk assessment. The risk assessment of the CP will be updated annually (or upon need) and will, among other things, consider the risk of fraud.

In case the MA receives information that the lead beneficiary or beneficiary may have violated the Subsidy Contract in a way which fulfils the characteristics of fraud in a judicial criminal sense, the case will be handed over to the relevant national law enforcement agency by the relevant national authority after all the available means for the MA have been applied. In such cases the recovery process will be conducted and the Subsidy Contract might be terminated.

Detected irregularities over 10,000 EUR threshold will be reported to the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

Language

The official language of the CP shall be English. Thus, all the main documents (e.g. applications, reports, etc.) shall be drawn up in English. However, additional documents required while submitting the main documents (e.g. procurement documents, acts of acceptance, invoices, etc.) might be prepared in Lithuanian or Polish.

5.4. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the Managing Authority or the Commission

Reduction and recovery of payments from beneficiaries

- The MA shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead beneficiary and reimbursed to the general budget of the Union. The lead beneficiary shall secure repayment of amounts unduly paid from other beneficiaries. The MA shall also recover funds from the lead beneficiary (and the lead beneficiary from the project beneficiaries) following a termination of the subsidy contract in full or in part based on the conditions defined in the subsidy contract.
- If the lead beneficiary does not succeed in securing repayment from other beneficiaries, or if the MA does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead beneficiary, the MS on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located shall take financial responsibility for reimbursing the MA any amounts unduly paid to that beneficiary.
- If the Member State, on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located, takes the responsibility for reimbursing the MA any amounts unduly paid to the Beneficiary (via LB), the Member State is entitled to claim the repayment from the Beneficiary.

Liabilities and irregularities

1. In case of financial corrections resulted by irregularities caused by actions and decisions of the individual MS, financial liability shall be taken by the MS whose actions resulted in the correction. In the particular case of imposing an additional financial correction by the COM, due to exceeding the admissible error threshold by the CP, only the MS whose errors exceed the admissible error threshold shall take financial liability for the increased correction. In case of exceeding the acceptable level of error by two MSs, the financial liability will be appointed taking into account the impact of particular factors on the amount of the correction. In case of difficulties in specifying the impact of each factor on the

amount of the financial correction and thereby the impossibility of a precise division of liabilities between the Member States, the Member States take a joint decision to reduce the CP budget by the amount of the correction imposed. If the budget reduction is not possible, then the financial correction is shared between the Member States in proportion to the ERDF payments to the beneficiaries from each Member State in the period covered by the audit/control.

2. In case of financial corrections resulting from the effect of Art. 144 (4) CPR, jointly taken decisions on the CP made by both MS or when the irregularities (including significant errors in the systems of both MS) resulting in financial corrections cannot be linked to individual MSs, financial liability causes the decreasing of the CP's budget. However, in cases where the reduction of the CP's budget is not feasible, both MS shall take financial liability according to the proportion of the ERDF paid to the beneficiaries in each MS by the time the final COM decision on a correction is issued.
3. When irregularities are caused by actions of the MA and/or the JS, financial liability shall be taken by the MS hosting the MA and/or the JS.
4. In the case of the financial correction imposed due to the irregularities not described above, the methodology of sharing the liabilities shall be established in cooperation between Managing Authority and National Authority.

5.5. Use of the Euro

All expenditure reported in the project reports must be denominated in euro. Project expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro shall be converted into euro by the beneficiaries using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the COM in the month during which that expenditure was submitted for verification to the Controller (article 28 (b) of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013).

Any exchange risk and loss has to be borne by the project beneficiaries.

5.6. Involvement of partners

The drafting of the CP was organised in compliance with the partnership principle as referred to in Article 5 of the Regulation 1303/2013 [CPR] and the European Code of Conduct on Partnership adopted by the COM in December 2013. The Programming Task Force (*hereinafter – the PTF*) acted as the main body responsible for the programming of the CP, including making a proposal regarding the CP to the national governments of Lithuania and Poland.

The Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (*hereinafter - MoI*) has been appointed by the Government decree No 506 as of 9 May 2012 as a responsible institution in charge for preparation, submission to the COM of the CP, as well as for negotiation with the COM on continuing activities of the cross-border cooperation programmes for 2007-2013 in which Lithuania participates.

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Development of the Republic of Poland, in accordance with the Regulation of the Prime Minister (DZ.U. 2011 Nr 248, poz. 1487) as of 18 November 2011 and the Statute (Dz.U. 1997 Nr 141 poz. 943) as of 4 September 1997, is responsible for overseeing structural funds and cohesion policy in Poland. It is also responsible for management and control of Cross-border Cooperation Programmes

for 2007-2013, as well as for preparation of the cross-border cooperation programmes for 2014-2020 in which Poland participates.

In addition, partners representing authorities of the CP area were involved in the PTF meetings and preparation of the CP document. The latter encompassed, first of all, Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania representing common interests of local authorities, furthermore, representatives from the counties included in the CP area. In particular, Alytus County Division of Regional Development Department under the Ministry of Interior and Marijampolė Regional Development Council participated in the PTF meetings.

Furthermore, representatives from both voivodeships on the Polish side of the border took part in the PTF meetings and contributed to the preparation of the CP document. More precisely, representatives of Marshall Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship and Marshall Office of the Podlaskie Voivodeship were involved. The “Euroregion Niemen” association also participated. Its members are the local self-governments of Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeships that belong to the Niemen Euroregion.

The PTF were assisted by the Joint Technical Secretariat and the team of consultants from JSC “BGI Consulting”. *Ex-ante* evaluation and Strategic environmental assessment of the CP were performed by JSC “Finovus” and JSC “AF-Consult”, respectively.

In total 12 PTF meetings were held for the preparation of the CP. The decisions in the PTF regarding the CP were made by consensus between the national delegations. The intervention logic of the CP was determined on a consensual basis by achieving compromise between priorities of both Member States, as well as taking into account the results of analysis of the regional needs and outcomes of thematic seminars. Each Member State organised the involvement of relevant stakeholders in accordance with its institutional and legal framework. Regular consultations with the PTF members allowed national partners to successfully transfer their proposals and inputs to the programme level, in line with interests of different stakeholders, during all stages of the programming process.

Public consultations (in the forms of public meeting and written consultations) were carried out in August and September of 2014, in order to communicate the proposals for the content of the CP and clarify the needs that the CP addresses. The main aim of public consultations was to continue the dialogue with relevant stakeholders, increasing their awareness of the CP and gathering their feedback. The latter, as well as general public, were given an opportunity to share their opinion on the CP document before its submission to the COM. Ministries, regional and local authorities, public service providers, as well as private entities, provided comments. They were made regarding both technical and content aspects of the CP document.

According to Article 5 of the Regulation 1303/2013 [CPR] and the European Code of Conduct on Partnership, the participation of relevant economic and social partners and civil society representatives in the work of the JMC shall be ensured by the Member States. The same representatives that participated in the work of the PTF are foreseen to be involved in the JMC. The continuity between the preparation and the implementation of the CP will provide the basis for successful implementation of the CP and its objectives.

During the implementation of the CP the following social partners will be consulted:

- Chamber of Commerce in Białystok;

- Science and Technology Park in Suwałki;
- Council of non-governmental organisations of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship;
- Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania.

In case of Lithuania, social partners will be involved in the implementation of the CP through the Advisory Committee for ETC programmes (more details regarding the Committee are provided in section 6 “Coordination”).

In order to ensure sustainable implementation and monitoring of the CP, the MA and the NA will consult, when necessary, the authorities competent in the fields of environmental protection and climate change prevention (e.g. Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, the Environmental Protection Agency, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Poland, etc.).

Social and economic partners and NGOs as well as environmental authorities shall also be involved on other levels than the JMC.

SECTION 6. COORDINATION

The number of thematic objectives of the CP has been restricted to a maximum of 4 thematic objectives. Limited thematic scope of the CP contributes to the stronger concentration on the most important issues, as well as to the synergy between actions foreseen by this CP and interventions financed from other European Structural and Investment (ESI) funds. At the same time, it allows for better coordination and complementarity with other funds and programmes.

In Lithuania, in order to coordinate actions funded under ETC programmes and those financed under ESI funds (particularly Operational Programme for the European Union Funds' Investments in 2014-2020) and other programmes, Advisory Committee for ETC programmes will be established in Lithuania. The Committee will consist of (1) representatives of institutions responsible for the use of financial instruments of the programme and other relevant instruments; (2) social and economic partners with expertise in relevant spheres and financial instruments. The Committee will provide findings and proposals on the eligibility of national partners to carry out the operations and on the expediency of actions and results to be achieved laid out in the applications, as well as provide information on ETC programmes and perform other functions.

The coordination with Rural Development Programme for Lithuania will be ensured through Ministry of Agriculture (acting as MA for Rural Development Programme) representative participating in the Advisory Committee for ETC programmes.

In addition, national structural funds monitoring information system (*abbr. in Lithuanian - SFMIS*) will be used by all the institutions in Lithuania administering EU Structural Assistance (including the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania and relevant intermediate institutions). The system allows accumulating, exchanging and analysing information on different EU-funded programmes and projects implemented in Lithuania and, thus, helps to ensure the complementarity of the latter and decrease the risk of double financing.

Moreover, the Partnership Agreement of Lithuania envisages monitoring of complementarity of programmes financed from ESI funds and strategic programmes financed from national budget. In 2012, Lithuanian Government approved the National Reform Programme (NRP), aimed at the implementation of the Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030". This programme encompasses the most important national strategic policy provisions and the principal Union policy provisions laid out in the strategy "Europe 2020", and lists the interventions financed from the different funding sources, including both national budget and ESI funds. The coordination is ensured through monitoring of the implementation of the priorities set in the NRP, in which all institutions responsible for implementation of various programmes and plans participate.

In Poland, the minister competent for regional development ensures coordination at the level of the Partnership Agreement (PA) which is a reference for all documents related to the EU financial perspective 2014-2020. Cross-border areas are included in the Polish Partnership Agreement as one of the five areas of strategic intervention.

The main entity supporting the PA strategic coordination process is the Partnership Agreement Coordination Committee which makes key decisions related to the PA implementation as regards the coordination of the PA and thematic objectives; interventions under Cohesion Policy, Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy, coordination with other EU instruments, national instruments and EIB. The

chairman of the Committee is the minister competent for regional development, and deputy chairmen are the minister competent for agriculture, rural development and fisheries and the minister competent for the economy as the coordinator of the Europe 2020 strategy. The Committee is composed of representatives of all institutions managing the programmes implementing the PA, ministers competent for the issues covered by the PA, the minister competent for public finance, the minister competent for the economy, the President of the Central Statistical Office, as well as social and economic partners, and representatives of local governments designated by the Joint Central and Local Government Committee.

In Poland, this CP shall be coordinated with Smart Development Operational Programme, Knowledge, Education and Development Operational Programme, OP Development of Eastern Poland and Regional Operation Programmes for Podlaskie and Warminsko-Mazurskie Voivodeships. In order to avoid overlapping and double financing of activities, the coordination among these programmes will be ensured, *inter alia*, through ongoing consultation and monitoring of selection of operations. Distinctive feature of operations financed under the CP will be their cross-border nature and impact. The complementarity of the CP with other programmes financed by ESI funds and national instruments (including programmes financed under the European Neighbourhood Instrument, as some regions of the CP also take part in the latter) shall be ensured by representatives of the ministry responsible for regional development.

Furthermore, the coordination and complementarity of activities of this CP and those financed under other CBC programmes in Poland will be ensured by participation of representatives of the national coordinator of Territorial Cooperation programmes, namely Territorial Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development of Poland, in the work of the JMC of the CP. The inclusion of this body will directly contribute to the coordination of operations of this CP and those of other national and regional operational programmes.

Another tool of strategic coordination at the level of the Partnership Agreement is the territorial contract defining the amount, method and conditions of regional programmes financing, including the control and monitoring of their implementation by the minister competent for regional development. Thematic objectives and priority axes of the CP are designed to complement regional operational programmes of the participating voivodeships.

In addition, the minister in charge of regional development in Poland will play the leading role in ensuring coordination among activities of the CP and other operational programmes related to cohesion, common fisheries and common agricultural policies. As an additional tool to avoid double financing, the assessment of operations by independent experts with the knowledge of national legislation and social-economic situation of the CP area will be used. This will mainly apply to the assessment of infrastructural projects with technical documentation. Remarks of these assessors will be taken into account by the JMC while taking decisions on selection of operations.

The synergies between priorities of this CP and those foreseen by the EUSBSR will be ensured as described in the sub-section 4.2.

Interventions to be carried out under Priority Axis 4 of the CP, targeted at increasing capacities of public authorities to respond to emergency situations and natural disasters, seem similar to the activities of the Internal Security Fund (ISF). However, the latter provides financing for actions related to EU external border management, which is not covered by the CP. Furthermore, the cooperation of police forces foreseen by the ISF

mainly focuses on strengthening capacities of police in preventing risks (terrorism, organized crime, etc.) in the whole Union. Interventions of the CP, on the other hand, emphasizes cooperation of authorities for the purpose of improving cross-border public services. In Lithuania, coordination of interventions under this CP and actions implemented under the ISF will be ensured by the MA (MoI), also acting as responsible authority for the ISF.

Coordination between the CP and ISF in Poland will be ensured by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development through cooperation with the Ministry of Interior of Poland which is responsible for the ISF implementation.

Interventions to be carried out under Priority Axis 2 of the CP, targeted at promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility, seem similar to the nature of actions to be implemented under Youth Guarantee Implementation Action Plans (YGIAPs) of the participating countries. Youth Guarantee is an approach targeted at tackling youth unemployment in Member States with an aim to ensure that young people receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

Each Member State has its own YGIAP adjusted to the peculiarities of its labour market. For example, in Lithuania Youth Guarantee approach is applicable to youth up to 29 years old, while in Poland - to 15-25 years old people. Particular actions to be carried out under YGIAPs of different countries are chosen according to the individual young person's needs and skills. Thus, the main distinctive feature of Youth Guarantee is its individualised nature. In contrast, interventions of the CP are of a cross-border character and encompass joint actions by Lithuanian and Polish beneficiaries. Furthermore, youth is only one of possible target groups of actions to be supported under the CP.

The bodies responsible for the implementation of Youth Guarantee in the CP area are Lithuanian Labour Exchange and its territorial divisions in Lithuania, and labour offices of counties in Poland. In those cases when labour offices of the participating Member States act as beneficiaries of the operations carried out under the CP, the latter will be responsible for coordinating actions implemented under the YGIAP and those carried out under the CP. The contribution of the CP operations to the YGIAP shall be described in operations reports.

SECTION 7. REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR BENEFICIARIES

The administrative burden for beneficiaries, in terms of time consumed for administrative procedures, was not evaluated. However, relying on the assumption that time consumed for administrative procedures is reflected in the actual administrative costs of beneficiaries, the administrative burden for beneficiaries in quantitative expression can be described by external evaluation results. The evaluation assessed the administration costs incurred by beneficiaries in the period of 2007-2013. This evaluation has shown that average percentage of the administration costs actually incurred, as compared with the direct operation costs (i.e. with the total operation budget without administration costs), is 13.6 per cent. The average percentage of the administration costs actually incurred (other than staff costs), as compared with the incurred staff costs, is 20.8 per cent.

Some actions are planned in order to reduce administrative burden in the period of 2014-2020. One of the key elements to achieve a reduction of the administrative burden is the application of harmonised (and simplified) rules and procedures, which were consulted between various territorial cooperation programmes during different events organised by INTERACT. Moreover, following the recommendations of external evaluators, it is envisaged to use more broadly the options of simplified costs. The latter provide possibilities to reduce the burdens associated with financial management, control and audit, for both beneficiaries and authorities involved in the management of the CP.

Following measures are considered by the CP for implementation:

- 1) The introduction of a flat rate calculation of Office and administration costs, as regulated in Articles 67 and 68 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.
- 2) The introduction of simplified cost options in the field of preparation of operations (e.g. preparation costs reimbursed on a lump sum basis).
- 3) The implementation of the Delegated Regulation (EU) No 481/2014 on specific rules on eligibility of expenditure for cooperation programmes when preparing the programme's eligibility rules and financial structures (e.g. budget lines). Unified eligibility requirements on the whole ETC level will reduce to a minimum the need for beneficiaries to study numerous interpretations of eligibility rules and therefore the risk of mistakes in reporting would be significantly decreased. Moreover, common set of eligibility rules will simplify the work of controllers.
- 4) To continue using electronic forms and electronic data exchange (new platform shall be available before the first call for proposals will be launched) what also constitutes an area of great potential for the reduction of administrative burden. Electronic operation application and reporting forms were used in the implementation of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Lithuania-Poland 2007-2013. However, the use of these forms shall be further expanded in the period of 2014-2020. An attention shall be paid to better integration of various electronic forms and ensuring that data once entered into electronic forms and imported into the system would be used in all stages of the CP and operations management.

All above mentioned measures will be established from the first call for proposals and shall be used during whole CP implementation period. The key principles and instructions for building up the project budget and afterwards proving eligibility of expenditure shall be presented in the Programme Manual.

The managing authorities seek more proportional management and control arrangements. These will be particularly important for small operations (maximum funding by the CP equal to 50,000 EUR, main actions - soft) that are foreseen in addition to regular operations. More proportional management and control arrangements involve the use of significantly simplified application and reporting forms, quicker procedures for contracting and reimbursement of operation expenditure, wide use of simplified costs, etc.

SECTION 8. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

8.1. Sustainable development

The overall objective of the CP is to foster smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the border area through cross-border cooperation. It rests on the main documents of the Union policy for sustainable development, namely Europe 2020 and Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS), emphasizing commitment to the development of economic, social and environmental policies in a mutually reinforcing way. In particular, according to Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management should be taken into account in the preparation and implementation of the CP.

The Communication from the COM to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on mainstreaming sustainable development into EU policies (COM (2009) 400) reviews the Union Strategy for Sustainable Development and highlights successful mainstreaming of sustainability dimension into many policy fields. The latter encompasses climate change and clean energy, sustainable transport, sustainable consumption and production, conservation and management of natural resources, public health, social inclusion, demography and migration, global poverty and sustainable development challenges, research and development, financing and economic instruments. The investment priorities of this CP cover a number of these policy fields. The threefold principle of sustainable development (encompassing environmental, social and economic aspects) is relevant to all the specific objectives foreseen in the CP.

The CP will contribute to the sustainable development of the Union and climate change objectives taking these principles into consideration while selecting operations to be financed under the CP. Authorities responsible for the selection of applications for funding shall use common sense and select only those operations which do not cause environmentally harmful effects of interventions and results in net social, environmental and climate benefits. The Common Strategic Framework of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR] suggests noting three principles when selecting the operations. First of all, investments should be directed towards the most resource-efficient and sustainable options. Secondly, investments that may have a significant negative environmental impact should be avoided. In addition, actions mitigating any remaining negative environmental impact should be supported. Furthermore, a long-term perspective when ‘life-cycle’ costs of alternative options for investment are compared should be taken.

During the management and implementation of operations, the CP authorities will encourage beneficiaries to use transportation wisely and prefer environmentally friendly transportation forms where possible.

8.2. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

The principle of equal opportunities implies that it is important that all groups in the society have equal access to the opportunities and benefits of the CP. Safeguarding equal opportunities is especially important with regard to the most vulnerable groups, namely children, youth, elderly, minorities, disabled and other disadvantaged groups. Therefore, appropriate steps must be taken to prevent any discrimination on the basis of sex, race, ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation. Principle of equal

opportunities and non-discrimination is especially relevant to the thematic objectives of this CP: TO 8 - Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility, TO 9 - Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination, TO 11 - Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration.

In accordance with Common Strategic Framework of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], the MA shall ensure that all products, goods, services and infrastructures that are open or provided to the public and are co-financed by the CP are accessible to all citizens, including those with disabilities. This horizontal principle shall also be implemented by following relevant provisions of national and Union law. Two Union directives especially relevant to the protection of equality and non-discrimination are the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) and the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC). The former prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin, covering the fields of employment and occupation, vocational training, membership of employer and employee organisations, social protection, including social security and health care, education and access to goods and services which are available to the public, including housing. The latter, in turn, prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion and belief, age, disability and sexual orientation, encompassing the fields of employment and occupation, vocational training and membership of employer and employee organisations. These directives set out minimum requirements, ensuring effective legal protection against discrimination in the whole Union. Since both participating countries of the CP are Member States, the provisions of these directives were transposed into national law systems of both Lithuania and Poland, rendering national law provisions in compliance with Union law. Therefore, with the aim of implementing the horizontal principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, first and foremost, interventions funded under the CP shall conform to national law of the participating countries.

In order to properly implement this horizontal principle, an additional measure will be taken by the beneficiaries of this CP, namely signature of declaration stating their commitment to comply with national and Union law provisions, protecting equal opportunities and prohibiting discrimination.

8.3. Equality between men and women

Equality between women and men is one of the fundamental principles of Community law under Article 2 and Article 3 (2) of the Treaty of Union. These provisions proclaim equality between men and women as a ‘task’ and an ‘aim’ of the Community and impose a positive obligation to promote it in all its activities. The Union objectives on gender equality are to ensure equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women and to combat any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender. The horizontal principle of equality between men and women is relevant to all the thematic objectives of this CP, especially to the TO8 - Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility and TO 9 - Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and any discrimination.

This horizontal principle shall be implemented by following relevant provisions of national and Union law. There are numerous Union directives with regard to pursuing equality between men and women (namely, 2006/54/EC, 79/7/EEC, 2010/41/EU, 92/85/EEC, 2010/18/EU, 2004/113/EC). As one of the fundamental directives, the Equal Treatment Directive (2006/54/EC) on the implementation of the principle of equal

opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation might be distinguished. It consolidates number of previous directives in this area, notably, the Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, which was amended by the Directive 2002/73/EC. Some other Union directives, such as the Directive 75/117/EEC on the approximation of the laws of Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women, and the Directive 97/80/EC on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex, also encompass provisions which have as their purpose the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women. Since both participating countries of the CP are Member States, the provisions of these directives were transposed into national law systems of both Lithuania and Poland, rendering national law provisions in compliance with Union law. Therefore, with the aim of implementing the horizontal principle of equality between men and women, first and foremost, interventions funded under the CP shall conform to national law of the participating countries.

In order to properly implement this horizontal principle, some particular measures shall be taken by the beneficiaries of this CP. Firstly, a declaration stating the commitment to comply with national and Union law provisions guaranteeing gender equality shall be signed by all beneficiaries. Furthermore, administrators of the operations are required to keep count of men and women taking part in the activities organized under every operation. This sort of data collected by each beneficiary would allow monitoring situation regarding gender equality and make the relevant *ex post* evaluations.

SECTION 9. SEPARATE ELEMENTS

9.1. Performance framework of the cooperation programme

Table 16: Performance framework (summary table)

Priority axis	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)
Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Expenditure (ERDF + national counterpart)	EUR	4,002,175.00	20,010,873.00
Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Number of heritage sites developed or adapted	Sites	2	7
Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Number of joint tourism routes developed	Routes	1	4
Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Number of natural and cultural heritage objects and related products promoted	Objects and related products promoted	8	40
Promoting sustainable and quality	Expenditure (ERDF + national counterpart)	EUR	2,907,831.00	14,539,151.00

employment and supporting labour mobility	counterpart)			
Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	Number of new or upgraded joint (or promoting cooperation) services for business	Services	2	7
Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	Number of persons having participated in joint trainings and events	Persons	140	700
Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training (common)	Persons	140	700
Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	Number of participants in cross-border mobility initiatives (common)	Persons	20	100
Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	Expenditure (ERDF + national counterpart)	EUR	1,938,554.00	9,692,768.00
Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	Number of participants in projects promoting gender equality, equal opportunities and social	Persons	400	2000

	inclusion across borders (common)			
Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	Number of NGOs involved in cross-border cooperation for combating poverty and social exclusion	NGOs	4	20
Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	Number of new or upgraded health care services and prevention programmes	Services and programmes	1	4
Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	Expenditure (ERDF + national counterpart)	EUR	2,907,831.00	14,539,151.00
Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	Number of institutions involved in the cross-border cooperation	Institutions	4	20
Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	Number of persons having participated in joint trainings or exchange of staff	Persons	100	500

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9.2. Relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme

The Programming Task Force acted as the main body in charge of the programming of the CP. The PTF consisted of balanced number of members from each country representing national, regional and local levels. The regular composition of the PTF was 5 regular members and 2 observers from each country. Representatives of the following institutions participated in the PTF meetings on a regular basis:

1. Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania;
2. Ministry of Infrastructure and Development of the Republic of Poland;
3. Marshal Office of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship (Poland);
4. Marshal Office of Podlaskie Voivodeship (Poland);
5. Association “Euroregion Niemen” (Poland);
6. Alytus Regional Development Council (Lithuania);
7. Marijampolė Regional Development Council (Lithuania);
8. Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania.

Representatives from COM participated in the work of the PTF as observers.

MoI was nominated by the PTF as the MA for the CP. Jointly with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development of the Republic of Poland, which is nominated as the National Authority, it was responsible for the preparation of the CP.

ANNEXES (uploaded to electronic data exchange systems as separate files):

- Report of the *ex-ante* evaluation, with an executive summary (mandatory)
(Reference: Article 55(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013);
- Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the CP (mandatory)
(Reference: Article 8(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013);
- A map of the area covered by the CP (as appropriate) – Figure 1;
- A citizens' summary of the CP (as appropriate).
- Justification for selection of the indicators and setting of their values.

A map of the area covered by the CP

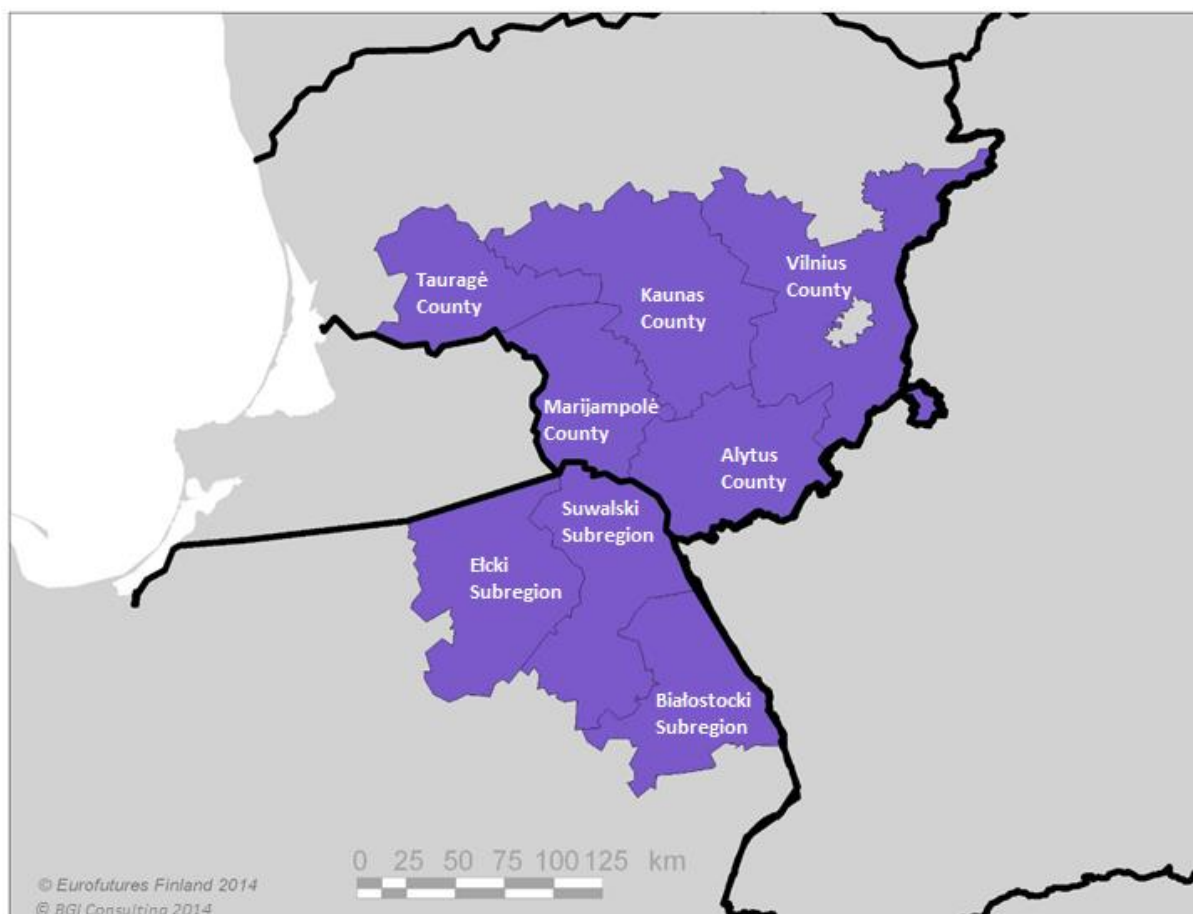


Figure 1. Map of the CP area