

## SFC2021 INTERREG Programme

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

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

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(3), point (a) of Article 17(9)

The Programme territory of the Interreg programme Lithuania–Poland covers 5 south-eastern Lithuanian regions (counties) and 3 north-eastern Polish subregions. Programme territory covers 51.5 thousand square kilometres (31.7 thousand square kilometres of Lithuanian area and 19.8 thousand square kilometres of Polish area). Border length between Lithuania and Poland reaches 104.3 kilometres. In 2019, the Programme area population was 2.25 m. – 1.18 m. citizens in Lithuania and 1.07 m. in Poland.

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

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

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

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(3), point (b) of Article 17(9)

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

### **1.Economic, social and territorial disparities**

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

#### **1.1. Economic challenges in the Programme area**

The Lithuania-Poland programme area has witnessed an economic growth over the recent years, however, there are discrepancies between regions, which have a strong urban-rural character. Despite the extensive resources allocated from the EU Cohesion Policy, inequalities have not been completely levelled out. Tackling economic difficulties is important in order to have more even growth and capitalise on opportunities.

The economy of the Programme regions mostly consists of low- and medium-low-technology manufacturing. Low-technology manufacturing in the Lithuanian and Polish regions is more than double the EU average (the exception being the Capital Region of Lithuania, but statistics include Vilnius city). For medium-high-technology manufacturing, the EU average is 4.8%, which is twice more than in the Programme regions. High-technology manufacturing makes up a very small share of employment in EU, but numbers are even lower in Lithuanian regions (data not available in the Polish regions).

In terms of sectoral composition of gross value added, the service sector is dominant in the Programme regions, in line with the European trend. It is closely related to the agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors, and it remains a significant source of employment and contributes a sizeable portion of the value added produced within the Programme area (as on average in EU, this sector makes up about 1.9% of gross value added but in the Programme regions, the indicator is at least several times higher).

The Programme territory includes many natural objects and is rich in natural resources and historical, cultural objects. Tourists might be attracted by lakes, rivers, diverse landscapes, parks and forests. However, despite the presence of varied tourist attractions, unpolluted and exciting natural landscapes and a decent accommodation base, relatively large disparities between regions are noted in the level of

development of the tourist infrastructure. The environmental and climate conditions as well as the seasonal character of the cultural offer provided by cultural centres and institutions are currently used only in a limited extent for the creation of year-round tourist offers. Sustainable use of environmental assets for building the tourism offer and breaking the seasonality in tourism can contribute to the development of the whole Programme area. As the Programme area does not have a common approach towards building a sustainable and innovative tourist sector, it could benefit from cooperation in developing a common tourist product. This might bring not only economic benefits, but also elevate the Programme area as a more attractive tourist destination and help preserve the unique environment of the region.

## **1.2. Key social challenges in the Programme area**

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

As it was mentioned before, the Programme area has a rather low density and, in the future, it might be even lower. It signals low attractiveness of regions and both national and local initiatives are needed to stop the brain drain and make living in the Programme regions attractive by ensuring access to all social, health, culture and other services (especially for the elderly, having in mind aging society in the regions). However, due to a lower number of citizens, there will be a need of infrastructure and service optimization, thus, it might be a difficult task for the local authorities to find a balance between accessibility of services and also using resources in an efficient way. Also, the Programme may contribute to improved opportunities of creating better job positions which allow to compete with other, larger cities to have a sufficient talent pool.

## **1.3. Environment and infrastructure**

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

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

Climate change and air pollution are closely interrelated. Combating air pollution could both help to improve health of citizens and also create favourable conditions for sustainable well-being tourism. Cross-border area has relatively low air pollution – level of particular matter in the ambient air does not

exceed the recommended EU limits of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. However, levels of pollution are temporarily higher during heating season, when coal is used to heat homes. Other significant pollution source is an excess use of fertilisers and pesticides which determines high level of nitrates in common rivers and lakes.

Effective waste management is one of the tools in order to combat climate change. Lithuania and Poland are facing increasing amounts of municipal waste. EU trends reveal positive signs as less municipal waste is being discarded (less waste is generated and being thrown away), however, in Lithuania and Poland, the amount of municipal waste is increasing (especially in Lithuania). It could bring concern because waste landfilling is one of the sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Compared to 2009, the level of greenhouse gas emissions has increased in both countries. In 2018, GHG emissions in Poland were at 376.4 m. tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and it was an increase of 5.4% since 2009. In Lithuania, accordingly – 16.4 m. tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2018 and increase by 28.1% since 2009. Statistics show that the situation is worsening and additional measures to tackle the level of emissions are needed. Therefore, effective waste management involves the exchange of experiences and the implementation of promotional and educational activities for inhabitants on recycling and waste reduction, as recycling and lowering the amount of waste generated is one of the means to mitigate climate change.

In terms of enhancement of biodiversity, the Programme area is unique in its wetlands. The diversity of habitats supports numerous species of rare and threatened plants and animals and exhibit a high species diversity of both flora and fauna. In total, there are 3 Ramsar Convention areas on the Lithuanian side of the border (out of 7 in Lithuania overall) and 5 areas on the Polish side (out of 18 in Poland overall).

By financing projects related to the solving problems described above, the Programme will contribute to the expenditure supported to achieve the climate objectives set for the Union budget: according to the calculations the Programme contribution to the climate coefficient will be 19.83%; for environmental coefficient 32.26% and biodiversity coefficient 10.63%.

Regarding weaknesses and threats, low population density which increases costs of infrastructure investments, lower energy efficiency (especially in residential buildings which affects pollution in the cold season) was identified. Also, unsatisfactory conditions of local roads and unsatisfactory public transport availability, which is connected to the lack of resources, was found.

Trends reveal threats, such as a further increase of greenhouse gas emissions, endangered biodiversity, lower soil and common waters quality due to abundant and excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides. Also, there is not enough financial support for natural protection areas which covers a large territory of the area. Effective waste management is also one of the tools for combatting threats for biodiversity.

Moreover, it was decided that the actions implemented under the Programme would not be contrary to the objectives of the European Green Deal objectives. In that context, the Programme will support only activities that respect the climate and environmental standards and, due to their nature, will do no significant harm to environmental objectives (DNSH) within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council. The Programme's compatibility with DNSH principles and assessment for each specific objective was described in Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Document.

#### **1.4. Healthcare services**

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



As indicated in the Needs and Potentials document, mortality rates (per 100 thousand) from preventable and treatable causes are especially high in Lithuania. In 2011, it was 602.3 and 492.6 in 2017; in Poland respectively 395.4 in 2011 and 351.4 in 2017. Although the mortality rates from treatable and preventable causes have gone down, they are still above the EU average (255.6 in 2016, newer data not available) in both countries.

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

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

### **1.5. Cross-border functional linkages and functional areas**

Creating a functional area in the Lithuania-Poland cross-border area is a difficult task due to low density of the area, language barriers, lack of common services and a lack of data of commuting and trade flows. There is a lack of concrete data of citizens flows between the regions and a comprehensive separate study is needed to evaluate the flows as this data could mainly be collected by representative surveys among citizens. According to ESPON, the Lithuanian–Polish cross-border area has a low potential for joining existing assets and functions and bringing benefits to the citizens by pooling common resources. It is described as low polycentric development potential. Potential for further polycentric development is evaluated using three criteria:

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

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

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

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

One functional area was identified within the Programme territory using the results of the report “Identification of key elements for creating the touristic cross-border functional area at the Lithuanian–

Polish border” which was prepared under the contract by European Commission. Functional area would be formed by Lithuanian and Polish municipalities located in the cross-border area. This area has potential to create and provide common tourism products (which will be identified in the further stages of the functional area analysis as stated in the report). Objects and areas that have significant potential are protected natural territorial complexes which make up about 38,5% of the area, due to the special nature of the area the type of desirable tourism would be sustainable tourism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The effects of projects may be up-scaled or constitute a basis for decisions on the future larger investments to implement the solutions delivered by the LT-PL Programme, with the use of other sources of EU funding. Coordinating with other EU-funded interventions may create opportunities to capitalise on project outputs or results. The scope of planned interventions of the Programme should not duplicate with mainstream programmes – national, regional or EU-wide ones. This will be ensured by cooperation between institutions and other bodies responsible for mainstream programmes on national and regional level.

The Programme will be taking into account the possible complementarities and synergies with i.a:

- other Interreg programmes,
- relevant national and regional Cohesion Policy programmes,
- Recovery and Resilience Plans of the involved Member States, where relevant.

During Programme implementation the following principles will be applied:

- coordination during preparation of project proposals by consulting them with Regional Contact Points and the JS;
- when submitting projects proposals, applicants will be asked to describe the coherence and complementarity with: EU, Interreg, national and regional programmes. This information will be subject to assessment;
- coordination through appropriate national and regional committees (or bodies) on implementation of other Cohesion Policy programmes by consulting their representatives e. g. within Monitoring Committees.

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

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

The majority of actions planned in the framework of Interreg 2021–2027 Lithuania–Poland cross-border cooperation Programme are complementary and cohesive with the intervention logic proposed under **Interreg Poland–Ukraine Programme 2021–2027**. Both Programmes emphasise the role of intervention in this area, which may contribute to the integration of local communities and thus to the establishment of long-term cooperation. The Interreg Poland–Ukraine Programme area covers the whole of Podlaskie Voivodeship.

The scope of interactions of **Interreg Baltic Sea Region** with the Interreg Lithuania–Poland can be observed in case of PO2, and ISO1, included in both programmes. However, different areas of intervention have been prioritised in case of transnational approach under Interreg Baltic Sea Region, which within PO2 is focused on issues related to: sustainable use of water, circular economy, energy efficiency and sustainable urban mobility. ISO1 complementarity can be observed in case of the action

“other actions to support better cooperation governance”. The Programme area covers territories of both countries, overlapping with the Interreg Lithuania-Poland cooperation area.

### **3.Lessons learnt from past experience**

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

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

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

During the programming period 2014-2020, the results of the evaluation demonstrated that almost half of the beneficiaries were newly attracted public institutions, which was treated as a success factor. Consequently, attracting new institutions is a goal for the 2021-2027 programming period, and participation of small organisations in the projects financed by the Programme is planned.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Programme will ensure in all Programme cycle stages the respect to the horizontal principles (sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, gender equality, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights) during the selection procedures (*via* appropriate selection criteria) of projects and further monitoring procedures of the financed projects. No Programme actions are planned in the context of the EU initiative “A New European Bauhaus”.

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

The Programme contributes to several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The most significant contribution is expected for two of them. The investments into healthcare services and promotion of healthy lifestyle make their role in supporting the goal “Good health and well-being”. The interventions under environmental objective and investment into RES under other objectives will contribute to the UN goal “Climate action”.

During the implementation of the Programme planned investments for measures supporting the digitalization in healthcare and digital governance solutions, green development, social inclusion, will be in line with the measures foreseen in the Lithuanian and Polish Recovery and Resilience Plans.

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

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(3)

Table 1

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>RSO2.7. Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</p>	<p>1. Promoting environmental wellbeing</p>	<p>Environmental interest is a crucial topic for EU, national and regional agendas of sustainable development, also important part of the strategies relevant to the Programme area. The demand for this priority was also highlighted by the analysis of needs and potentials and European priorities. The Programme area could outshine at using its nature for the common good, using its relatively clean air, high level of forest cover, protected areas, and increasing environmental awareness of citizens to create cooperation to protect the environment. The investments should increase the environmental quality of water resources, bring more and better maintained green spaces, more biodiversity. There is also a potential to share experiences and best practices among the local and regional stakeholders from Lithuania and Poland operating in the area of nature protection, reduction of pollution and enhancing the use of Renewable Energy Sources. It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.</p>
<p>4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights</p>	<p>RSO4.5. Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and</p>	<p>2. Promoting physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing</p>	<p>Healthcare quality and accessibility have obvious impact on overall health and wellbeing of the citizens. Higher than EU average mortality rates from preventable and treatable causes in the cross-border</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
	promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care		area pose a challenge for closer collaboration in this scope. The accessibility to health care services, in particular in rural areas, is restricted by the lack of medical professionals and insufficient or out-of-date of infrastructure. COVID-19 pandemic put additional pressure on the mental health of the citizens, additionally interfering with maintaining cross-border connections and separating communities. Intermediate type of the Programme area (according to EUROSTAT urban-rural typology) and further optimisation of medical institutions create a demand for development of mobile health care services. Demographic changes, ageing society in particular for the Programme area, put increasing pressure on local authorities and service providers to provide accessible and quality healthcare for various social groups and elderly in particular. It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	RSO4.6. Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	2. Promoting physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing	There are a lot of common cultural and historical heritage, shared traditions for culinary and other activities, well-developed resorts and SPAs in the Programme area. More tourists will be attracted by lakes, rivers, various landscapes, parks, forests which cover about 30% of the Programme territory. EC study regarding functional areas pointed out that area for tourists is relatively unknown, there is little information in opinion formation platforms, lack of cooperation between public tourism institutions of Poland and Lithuania and tour organisers, lack of management and marketing skills of tourism specialists. However, the development of the tourism

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
			<p>in the Programme area should be implemented with respect for natural heritage and resources, social dimension and without focus on massive tourism. Until the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of tourists in the Programme area was constantly increasing. From 2012 to 2019 the number of tourists has grown by 66,7%, amounting to more than 2 million tourists annually, however, it dropped down temporarily as the number of foreign travellers has decreased significantly due to the pandemic situation and applied restrictions. The tourism industry was severely hit by the pandemic and requires public interventions to recover the growth. This poses a threat to the already-established connections and seasonal activities in the cross-border area. Programme commits to develop cultural and tourism services that could be served year-round aiming to reduce seasonal dependence. Also, the investments into culture and tourism will facilitate inclusive growth and social innovations, environmental and economic sustainability of the local communities and regions Programme area. At the same time, the aim will be to strengthen the general understanding on these interactions and ability to ensure the viable and long-term effects of the envisaged sustainable transformation of these sectors. This will be achieved by developing the sites not only as tourism objects, but as sites local communities and by considering the needs of different people. It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.</p>



Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
6. Interreg: A better Cooperation Governance	ISO6.3. Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions (strands A, D and, where appropriate, strand B)	3. Strengthening cooperation of local stakeholders	<p>The Programme aims to support various grassroots activities and encourage people-to-people cooperation. Lithuania–Poland CBC programme for 2014–2020 successfully supported various small scale cooperation projects, and there is a need to continue the promotion of cooperation of local actors. EC border orientation paper for Lithuania-Poland (2019) points out that although there are no specific geographical/physical border barriers that would hinder cooperation, there are several cultural barriers linked to social attitudes towards neighbours and to language differences. This is a chance for smaller partners to implement people-to-people actions, also contributing to capacity building of local administration in raising awareness and connecting people. Local government organisations will have opportunity to reach out to different partners to promote cross-border cooperation and establish contacts between institutions. Potential to attract NGOs is not fully utilised, yet there are numerous organisations within the thematic interest of the Programme to join the activities. Within this priority, the Programme will encourage participation and promote citizens’ engagement, as well as awareness, of cross-border cooperation. Political participation is low in the cross-border area, and activities planned within this priority will bring interest in the local affairs and activities of local and regional governments of the cross-border area. It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.</p>

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
6. Interreg: A better Cooperation Governance	ISO6.6. Other actions to support better cooperation governance (all strands)	3. Strengthening cooperation of local stakeholders	<p>The Programme aims to support sharing of good practices and exchange of experience of public institutions in different policy areas. Focus group participants indicated many needs for capacity-building of public institutions in the social area: reduction of social exclusion, development of social services, social needs of people with disabilities. In terms of education, focus groups participants pointed out the need to invest in joint activities related to policy regarding all forms of education, provision of training and requalification necessary for the labour market, digitalisation of education, etc. Digital capacities of the citizens are lower than the EU average: in 2019, only 44% of Polish adult citizens had basic or better digital skills (Lithuanian average – 56%, EU average – 58%). Furthermore, within this priority, partners will be encouraged to implement activities related to digitalisation, which is unevenly approached within the Programme area. This is a chance for local authorities to implement policies that would have a big impact on cross-border communities and would build a base for future cooperation in the area. It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.</p>

## 2. Priorities

Reference: points (d) and (e) of Article 17(3)

### 2.1. Priority: 1 - Promoting environmental wellbeing

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.7. Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

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

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

#### **Expected contribution to the specific objective**

Firstly, the Programme will improve the capacities of stakeholders in the fields of nature protection, preservation of biodiversity, reduction of pollution and development of green infrastructure by supporting the exchange of experience and sharing best practices. As this is a new topic for the CBC programme between Lithuania and Poland, this opens up the possibility to establish professional links for local and regional stakeholders of the two countries. Secondly, Programme will contribute to an increase in environmental awareness among society regarding climate change and pro-environmental behaviour. The cooperation element and involvement of neighbours brings an additional attractiveness to the environmental awareness activities and sends the message to the citizens about the global nature of the environmental problems. Thirdly, the Programme aims to support green infrastructure development and improvement initiatives in the Programme territory. This will also complement activities implemented under SO for tourism and culture. Fourthly, the Programme foresees joint actions to reduce different forms of water and other pollution relevant in the Programme area.

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

#### **Related types of action**

- Exchange of experience of policies applied in the fields of nature protection, preservation of biodiversity, reduction of pollution, development of green infrastructure, environmental impacts on natural capital, ecosystem services;
- Joint actions and cooperation in environmental education and awareness raising;
- Maintenance and improvement of green public spaces;
- Joint actions to reduce water pollution (pesticides, heavy metals, other pollutants), including water pollution in river catchment areas;
- Joint development of pilot water and waste water solutions, use of rainwater;
- Cooperation and joint actions identifying and strengthening functional links and/or areas in the scope of environment protection and nature preservation in the Programme area and its nearest vicinity, enhancing scope of positive environmental impact on the cross-border area.
- Exchange of practices on the use of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) by households, municipalities and institutions, i.e. hospitals, schools, kindergartens, nursing homes, etc.

- The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH (Do no significant harm) principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

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### 2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
1	RSO2.7	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	42
1	RSO2.7	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	10

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	RSO2.7	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2020-2029	40.00	Progress reports of projects / survey	
1	RSO2.7	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2020-2029	8.00	Progress reports of projects / survey	

### 2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

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

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

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



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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

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

#### 2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The Programme does not foresee the use of financial instruments.

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO2.7	ERDF	071. Promoting the use of recycled materials as raw materials	633,250.00
1	RSO2.7	ERDF	046. Support to entities that provide services contributing to the low carbon economy and to resilience to climate change, including awareness-raising measures	1,266,500.00
1	RSO2.7	ERDF	079. Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure	1,566,500.00
1	RSO2.7	ERDF	061. Risk prevention and management of non-climate related natural risks (for example earthquakes) and risks linked to human activities (for example technological accidents), including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches	1,266,500.00
1	RSO2.7	ERDF	059. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: fires (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	2,533,000.00
1	RSO2.7	ERDF	060. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)	2,533,000.00
1	RSO2.7	ERDF	078. Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites	1,266,500.00
1	RSO2.7	ERDF	052. Other renewable energy (including geothermal energy)	1,599,750.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO2.7	ERDF	01. Grant	12,665,000.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	RSO2.7	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	12,665,000.00

## 2.1. Priority: 2 - Promoting physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO4.5. Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

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

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

### **Expected contribution to the specific objective**

Firstly, the Programme will contribute to equal access to health care by supporting joint development or upgrade of health care services, mainly focusing on smaller health care institutions in the cross-border rural areas, which should also benefit from the Programme. The development includes strengthening medical and supporting staff, volunteers and filling the gaps with the necessary equipment. Secondly, the development of mobile health care services will also result in an improvement of access to healthcare, as well as possibilities of establishing helpline (related to Covid issues, mental problems and etc.) to cross-border communities in order to provide additional information and support. Thirdly, the Programme will have a particular interest in mental health and will support cooperation in this area. Fourthly, active and healthy ageing is another key interest of the Programme. Joint trainings and sharing of experiences in prevention and treatment methods bring an additional value added to the activities. All actions including implementation and monitoring during the whole Programme lifecycle will be in line with UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The investments will need to demonstrate compliance with the de-institutionalisation strategy and relevant EU policy and legal frameworks for upholding human rights obligations namely Charter of Fundamental Rights, European Pillar of Social Rights and Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.

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

### **Related types of action**

- Joint development or upgrade of health care services, long term care services, help lines, on-line services related to health, emergency services, joint trainings for medical, supporting staff and volunteers;
- Joint actions and cooperation encouraging active and healthy ageing (like promoting physical activity, regular health check-ups, medical outreach, etc.);

- Development of mobile health care services (e.g., cross-border mammogram bus, cross-border blood donation bus, etc.);
- Joint actions and cooperation in the area of mental health;
- Pilot actions on innovative technological solutions; cross-border information services; pilot actions in online registration services for medical institutions; pilot studies on gathering data of patient mobility and flows; improving information access for patients with disabilities as well their caretakers.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH (Do no significant harm) principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

[1] [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/studies/2021/identification-of-key-elements-for-creating-the-touristic-cross-border-functional-area-at-the-lithuanian-polish-border](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/studies/2021/identification-of-key-elements-for-creating-the-touristic-cross-border-functional-area-at-the-lithuanian-polish-border)

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

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### 2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
2	RSO4.5	RCO69	Capacity of new or modernised health care facilities	persons/year	0	12186
2	RSO4.5	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	28
2	RSO4.5	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	7

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	RSO4.5	RCR73	Annual users of new or modernised health care facilities	users/year	0.00	2020-2029	1,827.00	Progress reports of projects/survey	
2	RSO4.5	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2020-2029	5.00	Progress reports of projects/survey	
2	RSO4.5	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2020-2029	27.00	Progress reports of projects/survey	

### 2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

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

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

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

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

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

#### 2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The Programme does not foresee the use of financial instruments.

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO4.5	ERDF	130. Health mobile assets	1,688,668.00
2	RSO4.5	ERDF	173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context	2,533,000.00
2	RSO4.5	ERDF	160. Measures to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems (excluding infrastructure)	1,688,668.00
2	RSO4.5	ERDF	129. Health equipment	2,533,000.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO4.5	ERDF	01. Grant	8,443,336.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO4.5	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	8,443,336.00



2.1.1. Specific objective: RSO4.6. Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

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

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

### **Expected contribution to the specific objective**

The role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation will be enhanced in several ways. Firstly, the Programme will support better and increased visibility of the cross-border area as a tourism destination. It is believed that joint communication efforts can bring better results than operations implemented in one country. Secondly, the Programme will facilitate the use of cultural and natural heritage to develop joint culture and tourism products and services, especially those related to sustainable tourism, including the development of common routes. As a result, the joint Lithuanian and Polish heritage (tangible and intangible) should be better presented to local and foreign visitors. Thirdly, the Programme will utilise the heritage not only for tourism purposes, but for other community purposes as well, such as social, educational, etc. It is aimed that the sites supported merge the tourism and cultural needs with the social and educational needs of the local communities. Fourthly, infrastructure and other investments facilitating sustainable tourism will be supported. A particular attention in developing infrastructure should be paid to the needs of people with disabilities. Finally, the Programme plans to support activities which will contribute to the development of tourism cross-border functional area, as envisaged in the EC study. Overall, the development of culture and tourism should reduce seasonal volatility of the industry, facilitate social inclusion and aim for social innovations.

The projects of this Programme specific objective potentially will contribute to the actions of several EUSBSR Policy Areas (PA), which might be “PA Tourism”, “PA Culture” and possibly others. Any activities within this specific objective will be implemented according to best practices and based on quality principles set by international cultural heritage charters and guidelines, including standards set by International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Beneficiaries will be encouraged to explore and follow New European Bauhaus initiative throughout all stages of project implementation and development, in order to facilitate sustainable and inclusive development. Any infrastructure investments planned within this specific objective will be closely monitored based on their environmental impact. Beneficiaries, as well as Programme bodies, ensure proper monitoring and environmental impact assessment according to the national rules. However, more specific requirements will be set at later stage while preparing calls for proposals.

In case of support to cultural and natural sites, as well as for all other projects, their potential to sustain durability requirements will be checked during the project assessment process. It will be ensured in the project selection process that the sites which would remain unused or abandoned, are not supported. The detailed information will be provided in the project selection criteria. Also, the procedures of the Programme will ensure the appropriate monitoring of the fulfilment of durability requirements.

Holistic approach to tourism development will ensure coordination of economic, social and environmental spheres of cooperation. While promoting the region as single destination, beneficiaries will be encouraged to explore other funding opportunities. Activities geared towards promoting of joint tourism

products and destination will enhance visibility of the region, which will be especially beneficial for attracting external funding that will ensure preservation of cultural and historic heritage sites after the project completion. Additionally, for financial self-sustainability beneficiaries will develop stronger ties to neighbour regions, which in turn will result in building capacities of local actors for any future cooperation and search for sustainable financial resources. As for project durability, beneficiaries will ensure continuation of use of project results after project completion according to Programme rules.

### **Related types of action**

- Development of joint marketing strategies and their implementation;
- Development of joint tourism and culture routes, products and services;
- Joint cultural events and activities, including search of partners on the other side of the border with matching activities; promotion of eco-tourism and solutions for behavioural change in regards to nature and cultural heritage preservation;
- Sustainable development of natural and cultural heritage, including intangible assets, for sustainable tourism, culture and community needs (social, educational);
- Joint initiatives in the field of maintenance and restoring of sites of cultural and natural heritage;
- Introducing of new technologies, digital solutions for preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage;
- Cooperation and joint actions implementing the concepts of tourism cross-border functional area proposed in the EC study “Identification of key elements for creating the touristic cross-border functional area at the Lithuanian–Polish border“[1]
- Joint solutions to improve resilience of the cultural sector, improve equal access for the vulnerable groups, focusing on inclusiveness and accessibility.

Tourism-related investments will respond to the Tourism Transition Pathway principles e.g. regarding digital and green transformation, resilience, sustainability and strategic approach.

In the view of ensuring financial sustainability for tourism-related investments, it will be ensured that supported projects are in coordination with projects in neighbouring areas to avoid overlapping and competition, have an impact beyond the project itself on stimulating tourism activity in the area and will be properly maintained for years after their completion.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH (Do no significant harm) principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

[1] [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/studies/2021/identification-of-key-elements-for-creating-the-touristic-cross-border-functional-area-at-the-lithuanian-polish-border](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/studies/2021/identification-of-key-elements-for-creating-the-touristic-cross-border-functional-area-at-the-lithuanian-polish-border)

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

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### 2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
2	RSO4.6	RCO77	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported	cultural and tourism sites	0	19
2	RSO4.6	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	42
2	RSO4.6	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	10

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	RSO4.6	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2020-2029	8.00	Progress reports of projects/survey	
2	RSO4.6	RCR77	Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported	visitors/year	215,479.00	2019-2029	247,800.00	Progress reports of projects/survey	The reference year of the baseline was taken from 2019 as due to COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 tourism industry was severely hit and did not reflect the usual situation.
2	RSO4.6	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2020-2029	40.00	Progress reports of projects/survey	

### 2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

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

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

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

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

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

#### 2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The Programme does not foresee the use of financial instruments.

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.



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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO4.6	ERDF	166. Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services	4,432,750.00
2	RSO4.6	ERDF	165. Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services	4,432,750.00
2	RSO4.6	ERDF	167. Protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism other than Natura 2000 sites	3,799,500.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO4.6	ERDF	01. Grant	12,665,000.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	RSO4.6	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	12,665,000.00

## 2.1. Priority: 3 - Strengthening cooperation of local stakeholders

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1. Specific objective: ISO6.3. Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions (strands A, D and, where appropriate, strand B)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

### **Expected contribution to the specific objective**

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

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

### **Related types of action**

- Delivery of initiatives (conferences, workshops etc.), aimed at strengthening the networking and cooperation capacity of local actors;
- Joint trainings and other types of capacity building related to enhancing administrative capabilities of local stakeholders;
- Identification and reduction of barriers to cooperation between stakeholders from different administrative units and sectors in order to implement common solutions;
- Activities supporting citizen's involvement in decision making, political participation, enforcement of local communities' organisations, strengthening civic power of citizens and their civic engagement;

- Exchange of knowledge and good practices on the participatory approaches governance, including testing of digital solutions for further distribution at territorial level;
- Purchase of small-scale equipment and small scope investments, accessible for people with disabilities, necessary for cooperation project and sustainability activities;
- Developing strategies and testing possible solutions for promotions of sport and healthy lifestyle of cross border communities;
- Joint planning and joint preparation of activities for the mitigation of climate risk.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH (Do no significant harm) principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

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### 2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
3	ISO6.3	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	participations	0	210
3	ISO6.3	RCO115	Public events across borders jointly organised	events	0	31
3	ISO6.3	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	33

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	ISO6.3	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	participations	0.00	2020-2029	52.00	Survey	
3	ISO6.3	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2020-2029	31.00	Progress reports of projects/survey	



### 2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

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

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

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

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

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

#### 2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The Programme does not foresee the use of financial instruments.

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ISO6.3	ERDF	173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context	4,221,667.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ISO6.3	ERDF	01. Grant	4,221,667.00

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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ISO6.3	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	4,221,667.00

2.1.1. Specific objective: ISO6.6. Other actions to support better cooperation governance (all strands)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Other actions to support better cooperation governance

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

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

**Expected contribution to the specific objective**

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

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

**Related types of action**

- Exchange of experiences and cooperation activities between local, regional and national authorities and public service providers;
- Development and implementation of joint strategies and implementation plans to improve quality of public services relating to education digital solutions;
- Joint actions and cooperation in the area of firefighting and rescue services;
- Exchange of experience of policies and then implementation and testing of possible solutions in the fields of circular economy and energy efficiency;
- Share of best practices in the field of social integration and working with disadvantaged groups (e.g., persons with disabilities, elderly), joint development or upgrade of social services, including pilot projects and social innovation related to these pilot projects; joint trainings for social service providers and other specialists working with the target groups;
- Purchase of small-scale equipment and investments necessary for cooperation project and sustainability of its results;

- Joint actions identifying and strengthening functional thematic relationships in the Programme area and its nearest vicinity, enhancing impact on the cross-border area;
- Developing digital governance solutions to provide better public services in the Programme area;
- Supporting information exchange and knowledge transfer at a cross-border/regional/local level on possible actions to mitigate climate-related risks and to raise awareness among policy makers and citizens.

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH (Do no significant harm) principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.



2.1.1.1b. Definition of a single beneficiary or a limited list of beneficiaries and the granting procedure

Reference: point (c)(i) of Article 17(9)

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### 2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
3	ISO6.6	RCO85	Participations in joint training schemes	participations	0	315
3	ISO6.6	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	33
3	ISO6.6	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	7

Table 3 - Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	ISO6.6	RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0.00	2020-2029	31.00	Progress reports of projects/survey	
3	ISO6.6	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0.00	2020-2029	5.00	Progress reports/survey	
3	ISO6.6	RCR81	Completion of joint training schemes	participants	0.00	2020-2029	283.00	Progress reports of projects/survey	

### 2.1.1.3. Main target groups

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

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

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

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

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

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

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

#### 2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

The Programme does not foresee the use of financial instruments.

It is expected that the projects will not generate revenue; also due to the type of expected beneficiaries and types of projects the selected form of support are grants.

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

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ISO6.6	ERDF	173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context	4,221,667.00

Table 5 - Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ISO6.6	ERDF	01. Grant	4,221,667.00



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

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ISO6.6	ERDF	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	4,221,667.00

### 3. Financing plan

Reference: point (f) of Article 17(3)

#### 3.1. Financial appropriations by year

Table 7

Reference: point (g)(i) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
ERDF	0.00	17,708,144.00	2,983,511.00	3,111,441.00	8,191,948.00	6,788,017.00	6,923,775.00	45,706,836.00
Total	0.00	17,708,144.00	2,983,511.00	3,111,441.00	8,191,948.00	6,788,017.00	6,923,775.00	45,706,836.00

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

Reference: point (f)(ii) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 8

Policy objective	Priority	Fund	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)			
2	1	ERDF	Total	13,712,050.00	12,665,000.00	1,047,050.00	3,428,013.00	3,428,013.00	0.00	17,140,063.00	79.9999976663%	0.00
4	2	ERDF	Total	22,853,419.00	21,108,336.00	1,745,083.00	5,713,355.00	5,713,355.00	0.00	28,566,774.00	79.999992999%	0.00
6	3	ERDF	Total	9,141,367.00	8,443,334.00	698,033.00	2,285,342.00	2,285,342.00	0.00	11,426,709.00	79.999982497%	0.00
	Total	ERDF		45,706,836.00	42,216,670.00	3,490,166.00	11,426,710.00	11,426,710.00	0.00	57,133,546.00	79.999985998%	0.00
	Grand total			45,706,836.00	42,216,670.00	3,490,166.00	11,426,710.00	11,426,710.00	0.00	57,133,546.00	79.999985998%	0.00

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

Reference: point (g) of Article 17(3)

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

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

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

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

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

As for the partnership principle, since the beginning of the programming period representatives of external socio-economic organisation have been participating in all stages of programming and it will continue during the implementation and monitoring of operations. Also, inclusion of independent bodies is encouraged by actions within the priorities of the Programme to ensure the respect of the principles of independent living, non-segregation and non-discrimination in line with the UNCRPD and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Taking into account the provisions set in the national regulations and the conclusions of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) entities in Lithuania and Poland, a decision not to carry out SEA of the Programme was taken.

The National Authority received official statements of the General Directorate for Environmental Protection (GDOŚ) and Chief Sanitary Inspectorate (GIS). According to the presented statements, the necessity of conducting the SEA depends on the decision of relevant institution, which is responsible for preparation of the Programme document and decision whether the Programme in question has a significant impact on the environment, including Natura 2000 sites. Official information from both institutions was provided respectively on 4 January 2022 and 3 December 2021.

Taking into account the provisions of the Resolution No. 967 of 18 August 2004 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania "On the Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Strategic Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes" and the conclusions of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) entities (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, State Service for Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment) a decision not to carry out SEA of the Programme was taken.

The SEA screening process concluded that the Programme does not cover large-scale infrastructure or other projects that are provided for in Annexes 1 and 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Law and may have an impact on the environment, therefore, there will be no negative impact.

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

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

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

Reference: point (h) of Article 17(3)

### **The Main Objective**

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

Detailed objectives:

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

### **Target audience**

The core target groups are potential applicants (to provide the information about the Programme, application process, Programme's provided opportunities, rules and documents, to advise beneficiaries on complementary actions with other EU support Programmes as part of consultation on project concepts) and project partners (to disseminate information about the Calls for Proposals and highlight their key issues, to provide information and support in the process of projects implementation, to disseminate news about the projects and their results). The communication activities will be targeted to both new and past applicants and project partners. Other target audience: general public (to share information about the state of play of the Programme and its main news, to raise the visibility of the EU in the region), and other stakeholders (e.g. social and economic partners, SMEs, EU institutions, etc.) in the Programme area.

### **Communication channels**

- Website of the Programme will be audience-oriented with information about the Programme objectives, activities, available funding opportunities, achievements, supporting materials, projects' information available. It will be available for general audience, including people with disabilities and special needs. Reference to the Programme will be included in the web portals of the participating Member States.
- Social media channels. Facebook will be used to reach the main target audiences by publishing information about the Programme, application process, Programme's provided opportunities and

deadlines, promoting project results, promotional campaign for EC Day. The posts shall be promotional and informative.

- Events and meetings (online/ hybrid/ face-to-face): seminars, webinars, workshops, public events, etc.
- Digital and printed materials, including newsletters, annual summaries, etc.
- Direct communication: individual consultations, consultations on-spot/online consultations/etc.
- RCPs, Information Points on European funds, Europe Direct network etc.

The communication potential and abilities of the beneficiaries will be used in the information and promotion activities of the Programme through building and maintaining relationships with beneficiaries and involving beneficiaries in roles of ambassadors of the Programme and the Interreg brand, as well as in various initiatives organised and supported by the institutions implementing the Programme.

### **Planned budget**

Budget foreseen for communication and visibility is not less than 0,3 % of the Programme budget. The budget will be used for publications, events, networking, website, media, gadgets, documentation, exchange of experience, etc. Annual communication budgets will reflect the Programme's developments (calls, results, implementation) and will be approved annually by the MC.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

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

- Number of subscribers/followers on the social media per year,
- Number of events delivered to Programme bodies per year,
- Number of trainings for potential beneficiaries per year,
- Number of trainings for approved projects beneficiaries per year,
- Number of project partners attending seminars per year,
- Number of public events delivered to general public per year,
- Number of posted information on the Programme's website per year,
- Number of project applicants and partners receiving consultations on the project application and implementation process per year,
- Engagement rate on social media (Facebook).

General Programme Communication Strategy and later Annual Communication plans will be prepared by the JS in cooperation with the RCP's and approved by the MC. The MC will examine implementation of communication and visibility actions. Evaluation of the communication strategy will be part of the overall Programme's evaluation measures.

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

A communication officer will be assigned to the Programme, whose tasks will include drafting annual activity plan, its daily implementation and evaluation of communication measures.

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

Reference: point (i) of Article 17(3), Article 24

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

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



## 7. Implementing provisions

### 7.1. Programme authorities

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(6)

Table 9

Programme authorities	Name of the institution	Contact name	Position	E-mail
Managing authority	The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, EU Investments and International Programmes Department	-	Director of the EU Investments and International Programmes Department	investicijos@vrm.lt
Audit authority	Centralised Internal Audit Division of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania	-	Head of the Centralised Internal Audit Division	bendrasisd@vrm.lt
National authority (for programmes with participating third or partner countries)	The Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy of the Republic of Poland, Territorial Cooperation Department	-	Director of Territorial Cooperation Department	SekretariatDWT@mfigr.gov.pl
Group of auditors representatives	Centralised Internal Audit Division of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania	-	Head of the Centralised Internal Audit Division	bendrasisd@vrm.lt
Group of auditors representatives	Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Poland	-	Head of the National Revenue Administration	Sekretariat.das@mf.gov.pl
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, Economics and Finance Department	-	Director of the Economics and Finance Department	vilnius.efd.rastine@vrm.lt
Body other than the managing authority entrusted with the accounting function	The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, Economics and Finance Department	-	Director of the Economics and Finance Department	vilnius.efd.rastine@vrm.lt

## 7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(6)

In accordance with Article 17(6) (b) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059, the Managing Authority (the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania), after consultation with the participating countries, set up the public establishment '*Joint Technical Secretariat*' as the Joint Secretariat of the CP. It was founded for the purpose of providing technical assistance to INTERREG IIIA and TACIS (2004-2006), European Territorial Cooperation, as well as European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument programmes for the programming periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. Arrangements are already in place at the time of the CP submission as the same structures of the 2014-2020 programming period are kept.

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

The tasks of the JS during the implementation cycle of the Programme will include: providing information to potential applicants about funding opportunities and assisting them in the preparation of projects applications and implementation of projects, project monitoring, assessment of project applications, providing information concerning the Programme and projects, and communicating Programme results in the Programme regions and wider society.

The JS will be supported in its main tasks, especially in carrying out communication activities, by the Regional Contact Points in Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region and in Podlaskie Region (hereinafter - the RCPs). 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.

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With regard to E-cohesion, the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS) developed by Interact will be set up for the use of Programme. Thus, it will be ensured that all exchanges are carried out between beneficiaries and all the Programme authorities by means of electronic data exchange in accordance with Annex XIV of the CPR.

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

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(6)

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

Recovery procedures will be performed in accordance with the provisions set in the Article 52 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments.

#### **Reduction and recovery of payments from beneficiaries**

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

#### **Liabilities and irregularities**

- In case of financial corrections resulted by irregularities caused by actions and decisions of the individual MS, financial liability shall be taken by the MS whose actions resulted in the correction.
- In the particular case of imposing an additional financial correction by the COM, due to exceeding the admissible error threshold by the CP, only the MS whose errors exceed the admissible error threshold shall take financial liability for the increased correction. In case of exceeding the acceptable level of error by two MSs, the financial liability will be appointed taking into account the impact of particular factors on the amount of the correction.
- In case of difficulties in specifying the impact of each factor on the amount of the financial correction, and thereby the impossibility of a precise division of liabilities between the Member States, the Member States shall take a joint decision to share the liability between the Member States in proportion to the ERDF payments to the beneficiaries from each Member State in the period covered by the audit/control.
- In case of financial corrections resulting from the jointly taken decisions on the CP made by both MS, or when the irregularities (including significant errors in the systems of both MS) resulting in financial corrections cannot be linked to individual MSs, financial liability shall cause the decrease of the CP's budget. However, in cases where the reduction of the CP's budget

is not feasible, both MS shall take financial liability according to the proportion of the ERDF paid to the beneficiaries in each MS as of the date of the final COM decision on the correction.

- When irregularities are caused by actions of the MA and/or the JS, financial liability shall be taken by the MS hosting the MA and/or the JS.
- In case the financial correction is imposed due to the irregularities not described above, the methodology of sharing the liabilities shall be established in cooperation between the Managing Authority and the National Authority.
- For the technical assistance expenditure (calculated as a flat rate in accordance with Article 27 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059, the liability principles described above shall be used and systematic irregularities/financial corrections may also be applied.

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

Reference: Articles 94 and 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)

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

Intended use of Articles 94 and 95 CPR	Yes	No
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under the priority according to Article 94 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs according to Article 95 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Appendix 1

### A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the simplified cost option will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of simplified cost option (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the simplified cost option
				Code(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex 1 CPR

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable

Appendix 1

B. Details by type of operation

C. Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates

1. Source of data used to calculate the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (who produced, collected and recorded the data, where the data is stored, cut-off dates, validation, etc):

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2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation based on Article 94(2) is relevant to the type of operation:

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3. Please specify how the calculations were made, in particular including any assumptions made in terms of quality or quantities. Where relevant, statistical evidence and benchmarks should be used and, if requested, provided in a format that is usable by the Commission:

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4. Please explain how you have ensured that only eligible expenditure was included in the calculation of the standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate:

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5. Assessment of the audit authority or authorities of the calculation methodology and amounts and the arrangements to ensure the verification, quality, collection and storage of data:

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## Appendix 2

### A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	The amount covered by the financing not linked to costs	Type(s) of operation covered		Conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	Indicator		Unit of measurement for the conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	Envisaged type of reimbursement method used to reimburse the beneficiary or beneficiaries
				Code(1)	Description		Code(2)	Description		

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex 1 to the CPR and Annex IV to the EMFAF Regulation.

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable.

B. Details by type of operation

In the first half of 2023, an advisory committee to JMC made up of programme bodies, regional and local authorities and relevant NGOs will be established to define the scope of OSIs. OSIs will be based on the reports “Identification of key elements for creating the touristic cross-border functional area at the LT-PL border” and “Needs and potentials analysis for the cross-border cooperation programme”.

Additional analyses on future OSIs may be provided at the decision of the advisory committee.

OSIs will be developed on the basis of functional relationships between Lithuania and Poland covering tourism, environment and cultural heritage. Planned actions will contribute to the development of common tourism products, as well as environmental issues i.e. in NATURA2000 areas, towards strengthening of identity of the cross-border population, developing ties and connections.

The goal of OSI is to create a joint brand of cross-border area as an attractive destination for sustainable tourism while paying attention to the EU environmental policy. Therefore, the main important project that will contribute to creating a joint touristic brand in the cross-border area will be considered an OSI.

It is expected to have at least one OSI under SO 4.6. defined by the end of 2023. Therefore, the identified project could be submitted within the call for proposal announced at the beginning of 2024.

Additional strategic projects may be identified at a later stage. The criteria for OSI:

1. it is implemented with partners from Programme regions in Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeships on Polish side and at least two Lithuanian NUTS 3 Programme regions, with an impact on the Programme area,
2. it makes a significant contribution to the Programme’s result and output indicators and has a significant size (at least EUR 1 000 000),
3. it has a visible societal impact involving various social groups.

In practice, the selected project will serve as a flagship for visibility, promotion and lobbying purposes. It is expected that OSIs will implement joint capitalisation, communication and dissemination actions. The programme bodies will provide support in these actions and will coordinate communication activities in line with the approach described in Section 5 (e.g., through communication events, media campaigns, press conferences).

## DOCUMENTS

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent by
Map of Programme Area	Map of Programme Area	31-Aug-2022		Ares(2022)6067270	Map of Programme Area	01-Sep-2022	Jankauskiene, Ausra
Programme snapshot 2021TC16RFCB030 1.2	Snapshot of data before send	01-Sep-2022		Ares(2022)6067270	Programme_snapshot_2021TC16RFCB030_1.2_en.pdf	01-Sep-2022	Jankauskiene, Ausra