



**POLAND - RUSSIA**  
CROSS-BORDER  
COOPERATION PROGRAMME  
2014-2020

INTERREG NEXT  
CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME POLAND-RUSSIA  
2021-2027

Ufila sp. z o.o. & EU-Consult sp. z o.o.

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## 1. PROGRAMME STRATEGY: MAIN DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES AND POLICY RESPONSES

### 1.1. PROGRAMME AREA

The boundaries of the supported area were designated on the Polish side on the basis of NUTS3 units<sup>1</sup> (subregions: Gdański, Trójmiejski, Starogardzki, Słupski, Chojnicki, Elbląski, Olsztyński, Ełcki, Suwalski, Białostocki). On the Russian side, the Programme's support area covers the Kaliningrad Oblast.

The administrative units covered by the support area have been selected in relation to the specific objective of the programme - supporting and promoting integrated regional development in the areas of neighbouring border regions of the Russian Federation and Poland. In total, the support area covers approximately 69 000 km<sup>2</sup>. Its largest part is located in Poland (78%), and the rest in the Russian Federation (22%).

The borderland of the two countries is characterized by a growing population over the years, both on the Polish (with the exception of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship subregions) and Russian side. The Programme area is also characterized by a relatively favourable situation on the labour market (in the period before the COVID-19 pandemic). The distinguishing feature is also the great diversity and landscape richness of the supported area. In the area covered by the Programme, there are differences in fields such as education and public administration. The discrepancy in the supported area can also be seen in the sphere of law, local administrative systems or management of public tasks. Despite that concerted actions are taken and compatible solutions are developed.

Cooperation between the Polish and Russian support area bases mainly on twinning relations between municipalities and has a long history, including the cross-border cooperation as well as interaction within Euroregions – mainly within the Baltic Euroregion, but also within the Niemen Euroregion. The Polish-Russian Council on cooperation of the Kaliningrad region with regions of Poland, functioning in accordance with the Agreement between Government of the Russian Federation and Government of the Republic of Poland (1992), is a significant basis for Polish-Russian cooperation. These initiatives contribute to raising the standard of living of local

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Commission Regulation (EU) 2016/2066 of 21 November 2016 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) C/2016/7380.

communities in the borderland by taking advantage of the opportunities caused by their geographical position as well as economic and cross-border changes.

1.2. SUMMARY OF MAIN JOINT CHALLENGES, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL DISPARITIES AND INEQUALITIES, JOINT INVESTMENT NEEDS AND COMPLIMENTARITY AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT, LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST EXPERIENCES AND MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND SEA-BASIN STRATEGIES WHERE THE PROGRAMME AREA AS A WHOLE OR PARTIALLY IS COVERED BY ONE OR MORE STRATEGIES.

On the basis of the socio-economic analysis, as well as the results of diagnostic workshops with representatives of entities from the area covered by the support under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, key conclusions regarding the situation in the supported area were identified. Information on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on the lives of the inhabitants of the supported area was based on publicly available knowledge about the related problems in the Central and Eastern European countries during the pandemic.

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## 1.2.1 SOCIO – ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

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### 1.2.1.1. DEMOGRAPHY

The Programme area is largely characterized by a growing population. In 2019, the population of the support area was 5 553 739 people, of which 85.4% were residents of Poland, and the remaining 14.6% were residents of the Russian Federation. In recent years, respective parts of Poland and Russia, a systematic increase in the number of people has been observed in the analysed area. In terms of individual subregions, the opposite tendency is often observed. A decrease in the number of inhabitants in the years 2014-2019 was observed in the following subregions: Słupski, Starogardzki, Elbląski, Ełcki, Olsztyński and Suwalski. On the other hand, the overall increase depended mainly on the increase in the Gdański subregion (over 37 000 people in the analysed period), and also, although not on such a scale, in the Trójmiejski and Białostocki subregions. Thus, the most advantageous situation is for the areas within or near which the largest cities are located, the attractiveness of which draws the population of rural areas, offering greater development opportunities. It is also indicated by the net migration - positive in the three subregions mentioned above and in the Kaliningrad Oblast.

Despite the overall increase in the population of the Programme area, there is a downward trend in the rate of natural increase. In the Kaliningrad Oblast this indicator is negative, while on the Polish side, although it is positive, it has been systematically falling in recent years.

Another important issue in the field of demographic changes is the age structure of the inhabitants, which influences the demand for social services, especially health and care services. In both countries, a progressive aging of the population is observed. This is due to both the low natural growth of the population, the increasing life expectancy and migrations. The tendency of progressive aging of the society affects to a greater extent the area of the Polish side, where the share of people in retirement age is greater than that of young people under 18 years of age.

Stopping negative demographic trends, such as the general depopulation of a part of the support area, declining natural growth or negative migration balance in areas without large urban centres - are the challenges that will be faced in the Programme area in the coming years. The 2019 data on the population structure by age indicate that in Polish subregions, 20.3% of the population is post-working age, while in the Kaliningrad Oblast this percentage is 19.0%. The birth rate is systematically decreasing in the entire area covered by the Programme. The problems related to the aging population will be a common challenge, i.a. in terms of access to social services, as well as specialized geriatric services and primary care. Excessive burden on health and social care systems by the growing number of people in post-working age may have very negative effects on the quality of life of the inhabitants of the support area. Therefore, despite strengthening institutional care, it is proposed to promote and create enabling conditions for development of family- and community-based care. Undertaking joint actions related to unfavourable demographic trends may bring a number of benefits that would be impossible to achieve with single-country approach. Furthermore, sharing best national practices and learning from each other experiences in tackling those issues will be beneficial in terms of cross-border cooperation.

**When planning activities in the Programme area, the demographic structure and the changes taking place in it must be considered, as well as the possibility of taking complementary actions in a cross-border context. It is particularly desirable to undertake activities influencing the improvement of health care and social services aimed at supporting an aging society and people at risk of social exclusion or socially excluded on both sides of the border. It is also important to take actions aimed at reversing the unfavourable demographic trends in the support area.**

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#### 1.2.1.2. ECONOMIC SITUATION AND LABOUR MARKET

The conducted analyses indicate that the situation on the labour market in the area of support is relatively good. Overall, the level of employment is rising, both in all Polish subregions and in the Kaliningrad Oblast, with the highest increase in 2014-2018 being recorded in the Trójmiejski and Gdański subregions. In 2018, professionally employed

persons accounted for 59.2% of the total population of the Polish side of the support area and 60.9% of the population of the Kaliningrad Oblast.

When analysing the data from 2014-2019, a downward trend should be indicated in terms of the number of unemployed people. The greatest improvement is observed on the Polish side, where in this period the number of the unemployed people decreased by more than half (a decrease from 236.0 thousand to 109.6 thousand people), especially in the Olsztyński subregion, where - despite the fact that this rate still remains at the highest level of all subregions - during this period it fell from 40.4 thousand unemployed up to 18.7 thousand.

The structure of the unemployed in terms of age in 2019, in the case of the Polish side of the support area is dominated by people between 25 and 44 years of age (50.9%). In the Kaliningrad Oblast in 2019, the largest group of unemployed were people aged 30 to 39 (28.2%) and 50 to 59 (23.8%). Moreover, given the pandemic situation, these conclusions may soon turn out to be obsolete and the problem of unemployment - much more acute.

The economic sphere in the support area is also distinguished by the significant development of the tourism industry in recent years. The number of accommodation facilities and the number of overnight stays is increasing, as well as the interest of foreign tourists. The largest increase in the number of foreign tourists was observed in the Trójmiejski subregion, where this number increased by over 170 000 in 2014 – 2019. In the Kaliningrad Oblast in 2015-2017, the number of foreign visitors decreased from 75.7 thousand in 2014 to 58.3 thousand in 2016, then in the following years this number increased - to 99.2 thousand in 2019. The region is very popular among tourists from other Russian regions and the number of Russian visitors increased significantly as well as the number of tourists from EU countries after the introduction of e-visas. During the years of the operation of the Small Border Traffic (2012-2016) on the Polish-Russian border, the number of people crossing the border was definitely higher than in the years when the Small Border Traffic did not function (In 2014, the Polish-Russian border was crossed by 6.5 million people, while in 2018 it was over 3.5 million)<sup>2</sup>. From 1 July 2019, Polish citizens can apply for so-called e-visa authorising entry and short stay in the territory of the Kaliningrad Oblast. Some subregions on the Polish side of the support area show a downward trend in tourism indicators, which may be related to insufficient promotional and informational activities and a poorer tourist offer.

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<sup>2</sup> Tourism in 2019, Report of Central Statistical Office of Poland



Difficulties in this respect occurred in the following subregions: Starogardzki, Białostocki, Olsztyński, Elbląski, Chojnicki and Słupski.

In the period between 2014-2018, the GDP per capita indicator for all of Polish subregions showed an upward trend (on average, from EUR 8 395 in 2014 to EUR 10 119 in 2018.). In the Kaliningrad Oblast, after the decline in GDP per capita in 2015 (to 5 334 EUR from 6 443 EUR in 2014) and 2016, it increased in 2017, and in 2018 there was another slight decrease (to 6 247 EUR from 6 404 EUR in 2017). Micro-enterprises dominated both on the Polish and Russian side of the Programme area. In the structure of registered entities of the national economy by Polish Classification of Activities section, subregions were dominated by enterprises operating in the trade and repair section, which constituted 18.5% of all entities. The situation was similar in the Kaliningrad Oblast, although their share was almost twice as high and amounted to 35.6%. It is also worth paying attention to the Special Economic Zone in the Kaliningrad Oblast, established by the Federal Law of 10 January 2006. On April 1, 2016, the Kaliningrad Oblast lost the status of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), but on December 5, 2017, it was regained again. The Special Economic Zone provides a customs free zone, as well as low-tax provisions with regard to corporate profit tax and corporate property tax. Its existence largely contributes to the economic development of the region and increases its attractiveness for external investors.

Comparing the results from 2018 to 2014, the significant increase in enterprises using the Internet both on the Polish side (average for voivodeships in 2018 - 94.5%) and on the Russian side (Kaliningrad Oblast - 91.4%) was noted. The situation is similar when it comes to the use of innovative solutions in enterprises - this indicator is growing in the entire area of support compared to 2014, but on the Polish side it reaches higher values (average for voivodeships in 2018 - 21.3%, Kaliningrad District - 3.6%). Economic cooperation between Poland and Russia is important including in the context of the development and economic activation of border regions, thanks to the provision of appropriate, lasting conditions for cross-border cooperation. This cooperation is developed mainly in the SME sector, and the structure of Polish companies in the Kaliningrad region is mainly the trade and services sector.

**To sum up, the Programme should support the development of cooperation and economic ties between institutions. The socio-economic importance of the tourism sector must be considered because its share in generating GDP was growing before the pandemic (COVID-19). Therefore, it can be concluded that the area of tourism should be one of the priorities of the Programme development, which may lead to synergy and positively affect the elimination of common problems.**

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### 1.2.1.3 EDUCATION AND HEALTH

The education systems in Poland and in Russia are different from each other. However, attention should be paid to the general downward trend in the number of students per population, which is visible both in the Kaliningrad Oblast (a decrease from 31.0 to 22.0 per 10 000 inhabitants in the 2018/2019 academic year compared to 2014/2015), as well as in each of the subregions on the Polish side, with the exception of the Ełcki subregion (on average, a decrease for all sub-regions from 26.9 to 21.9 and 10 000 inhabitants in the 2018/2019 academic year compared to 2014/2015). This is the result of the demographic decline and the declining number of people of working and pre-working age. However, the existence of higher education in the area of support should be perceived as a potential enabling further Polish-Russian cooperation in the field of education and its development.

An extremely important element of this analysis, taking into account the possibilities of the Programme intervention, is the health condition of the population living in the supported area. As indicated, the average life expectancy is increasing, which may be the result of improving its quality, as well as the development of medicine and undertaking awareness-raising and preventive measures. The most common causes of death are cardiovascular diseases and cancer - in Poland's subregions, 40.0% and 26.4% of people died on average from these causes, respectively, and in the Kaliningrad District - 42.9% and 16.6%, respectively.

One of the elements of the senior policy will be the improvement of social care and health services. Secondly, as shown by statistical data on mortality and morbidity, it is necessary to take measures in the field of preventive health and safety. These problems also overlap with staff shortages - in the medical sector, as in other sectors, there is an outflow of staff to other urban centres and regions with a higher level of development potential. Inequalities in access to healthcare are manifested by the varying number of clinics, doctors and hospital beds in relation to the number of inhabitants. Attention should be paid to the decreasing number of hospital beds on the Russian side of the support area, per 10 000 people. In the years 2014-2019, this indicator dropped from the level of 90 to 81, while in Poland it did not change significantly, however, it is by more than half lower - in 2018, there were 42.9 beds per 10 000 inhabitants of Polish subregions on average (43.4 in 2014) on the Polish side. The number of beds on the Russian side of the support area has decreased due to medical treatment reform.

When it comes to the scope of social assistance provided in terms of support, both countries support vulnerable citizens. On both sides of the border, social assistance expenditure is increasing. Due to the different support systems under social assistance in both countries, it is difficult to directly compare the relevant indicators.

**The diversified level of access to health care and social services the diversified development of medicine in individual subregions carries the risk of deteriorating the health condition of the population, and thus the quality of life. Taking joint actions will allow for complementary prevention of problems related to the broadly understood quality of social and health services in the area covered by the Programme. The fundamental challenge of the area is the development of health protection, prophylaxis, diagnostic and social services, access to specialists, as well as tightening cooperation and exchange of experiences between medical, emergency and social personnel.**

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## 1.2.2. NATURAL RESOURCES AND THEIR USE – SPATIAL, FUNCTIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

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### 1.2.2.1. ENVIRONMENT

Taking into account the general state of air quality in the Programme area, it should be assumed that there was an improvement in the period covered by the analysis. There was a slight increase in the emission of gaseous air pollutants in the subregions of Poland (9 949.8 thousand tonnes in 2019 - increase by 6.6% compared to 2014), while a large decrease in the emission of dust pollutants was recorded (1.9 thousand tonnes in 2019 - decrease by 48.6% compared to 2014). More pollutants of both types were also retained or neutralized. In the Kaliningrad Oblast, the emission of gaseous industrial air pollutants from particularly harmful plants (without sulphur dioxide) was lower, but pollutants released into the atmosphere from stationary sources increased (24.0 thousand tonnes in 2018 – increase by 27.% compared to 2014), but these from mobile sources decreased (104.0 thousand tonnes in 2018 – decrease by 28.3% compared to 2014). During recent years both countries implement environmental protection measures among others regarding heat power facilities. However, in light of actively developing industrial activities the issue of air pollution remains being challenging.

In case of the Kaliningrad region, the share of apartments connected to all networks is relatively high - including sewage systems, access to network gas and central heating. The situation is the same in the case of urban areas in subregions on the Polish side, but much worse in terms of rural areas.

The amount of produced waste is systematically growing in the entire support area. The problems in the Kaliningrad Oblast and part of the Polish subregions in the support area in the sphere of waste management include insufficient waste disposal and treatment capacity, which are necessary to provide safe waste management. . On the Polish side, the challenge is to adapt waste management plants to the requirements

related to waste recycling. In the Kaliningrad Oblast, difficulties are also related to the transport of waste of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> hazard category and recyclable materials outside of the region connected with customs procedures and documentation needed for cross-border waste transportation.

Electricity consumption in cities has remained at a similar level in recent years, both in the Polish and Russian sides of the support area. In the Kaliningrad Oblast, however, an increase in power plant capacity and energy production was recorded annually.

The use of renewable energy sources is systematically growing in Poland and the Russian Federation. However, the development in the field of energy transformation is not very fast, especially in the Kaliningrad region, which has considerable potential in this regard. However, it is important to remember about the fuel and energy complex, which makes a significant contribution to the country's social and economic development, accounting for about a quarter of Russia's GDP.

The area covered by the diagnosis is characterized by an abundance of waters, both in the form of rivers and lakes and access to the sea, as well as rich landscape values. Problems related to water management, are important e.g. insufficient water quality, insufficiently developed retention system. The pollution of the Baltic Sea with chemicals, plastic and other contaminants as well as risk resulting from the presence of large areas covered by surface waters, wetlands and numerous watercourses must be considered. This problems are related to the existing areas at risk of flooding, in particular: the Vistula Valley, area between Vistula and Nogat rivers, Drwęca Valley but also areas in the Pregoła River Basin.

Climate changes are also visible in the analysed area, as a result of which the risk of flooding is expected to increase, as well as the frequency of disasters and extreme weather phenomena. Downpours pose a very high risk, carrying the risk of flooding or landslides, e.g. on slopes in river valleys and coastal cliffs. The area is also experiencing intensified eutrophication of transitional, coastal and inland waters. The risk of fires must be considered because it may also intensify as a result of progressive climate change.

**Therefore, an important challenge for the Programme area is to reduce pollution, including air pollution, and counteract problems related to water management. The easy transfer of gaseous, dust or liquid pollutants affects the condition of the environment in the entire programme area, regardless of their direct issuer. Therefore, joint activities related to the reduction of pollution will bring positive effects for the border areas of both countries. Climate change and the resulting threats are also a cross-border (transnational threat), therefore it is important to**

**take joint actions in this area. The ecological awareness of the stakeholders and the general population of the Programme area must be increased.**

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#### 1.2.2.2. NATURAL RESOURCES AND TOURISM POTENTIAL

The favourable natural and landscape location as well as the historical and cultural potential make tourism an important element of the economy of the area covered by the Programme. Statistical data shows that in the recent years the number of tourist facilities has been increasing as well as the number of foreign tourists in the Programme area. The protected areas of the analysed territory of Poland and Russia cover a total of 2 241 260.8 ha (97% of which is located on the Polish side of the supported area). The following description includes among others objects and areas localised in the Programme area, which are particularly important from the environmental and tourism development points of view.

Both in Poland and in the Kaliningrad Oblast in Russia there are numerous deposits of amber. In addition, in the analysed voivodeships of Poland, there are deposits of writing chalk, sand, gravel and peat. The resources of the Kaliningrad Oblast, apart from amber, include high-quality oil fields, rock salt and hard coal. The region also has rich deposits of peat and building materials such as sand, clay, sand-gravel mixtures, heavy sands containing titanium, zircon and iron, as well as healing mud and highly mineralized waters.

In the territory of Poland, in the Pomorskie voivodeship, there are physical and geographic mesoregions separated within physical and geographic macroregions. These are: the South Baltic Coast, the Pomeranian Lake District and the Lower Vistula Valley. Individual regions are characterized by a specific natural environment and landscape individuality, as well as the resulting rank and nature of natural tourist values. The natural environment of the region is distinguished by its stripes - starting from the northern part, there are coastal spits, upland shores, as well as lake uplands and lake outwash plains with forests. The "non-zonal" region is the Vistula valley. The coastal areas, such as the Słowińsko-Kaszubskie Coast, the Vistula Spit (the construction of the canal on the Vistula Spit began in 2019 and is scheduled to end in 2022) and the Hel Peninsula, stand out with notable natural and tourist values. They are complemented by coastal sea waters. Almost the entirety of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeship belongs to the "Green Lungs of Poland" area. In addition to the numerous lakes (inter alia Masurian Lake District) that make the region attractive, its natural wealth is also forests and primeval forests, covering nearly 30% of the area, with nature reserves and landscape parks. The largest complexes include: Borecka, Nidzicka, Piska, Napiwodzko-Ramucka, Romincka Primeval Forests and Ławskie Forests. The Podlaskie voivodeship is also distinguished by above-average values, which include natural areas, which are

to a small extent affected by human activity, under legal protection, as well as a network of rivers and lakes, rich flora and fauna and a large share of areas with special natural values and covered by the forests (approx. 30%). Examples of areas with the above-mentioned values in Podlaskie voivodeship are, for example, Wigry National Park, Biebrza National Park, Narew National Park, as well as Knyszynska Primeval Forest

The area of the Kaliningrad Oblast is characterized by the presence of marshy areas - there are several hundred of them in total. They are located mainly in the inter-rivers and in the depths of the Pregoła valley. The region's mineral resources are not rich, but they have some economic significance and they are discussed in the chapter "Environment". The region is also characterized by unique landscapes of coastal sandy plains on the Curonian Spit (designated a UNESCO World Heritage site) and Vistula Spit. On the Russian side of the Program area there is also Vishtynetskiy Natural Park. There are also resorts - Svetlogorsk and Zelenogradsk, as well as Pionersky, Baltiysk and Yantarniy, located on the coast of the Baltic Sea. More than 18% of the region's area is covered by forests, which are on average 49 years old. Overall, the area is very diverse in terms of nature, which makes it more attractive for tourists.

Attention should be paid to the potential of cooperation, which is based on some of the above-mentioned areas, which are natural valuable and of cross-border importance. It is important to ensure the continuity of the wildlife corridors, which network is quite dense. An example of this kind of area is Romincka Primeval Forest.

**The rich flora and fauna and large share of areas with special natural values found on both sides of the border in the Programme areas should be considered. The Programme should support the protection of biodiversity, unique flora and fauna, as well as, focus on the development of local products and services that will promote the natural and cultural potential of the Programme area.**

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### 1.2.2.3. ACCESSIBILITY AND BORDER MANAGEMENT

The Polish part of the supported area is crossed by 4 roads of international importance and 2 international transport corridors (TEN-T), while through the Russian area - two branches of the trans-European transport corridors.

On the Polish-Russian border (Kaliningrad Oblast) there are 6 border crossings – 4 road and 2 rail crossings.

The analysis of statistical data showed that the length of the railway line in the analysed voivodeships of Poland has increased in recent years. Overall, the number of users of this type of transport is also growing, as is the amount of goods transported by rail, both in individual voivodeships in Poland and in the Kaliningrad region. There is a fundamental difference between the two parts of the supported area - while on the Polish side a particular increase was recorded in the number of travellers using rail transport, the use of rail transport for goods transport increased mainly in the Kaliningrad region. The most important railway junctions in the Programme area include: Gdansk Main Station, Gdynia Main Station, Kaliningrad and Chernyakhovsk.

The most important airports of the supported area are: Gdansk Lech Walesa Airport and the Olsztyn-Mazury Airport on the Polish side and the Kaliningrad-Khrabrowo Airport on the Russian side. Apart from them, there are also civil, sports and military airports. There is an upward trend in the number of travellers using air transport.

When it comes to water transport in the Programme Area, the most important seaports in Poland are the ports in Gdansk and Gdynia, while in the Kaliningrad Oblast of Russia - the ports in Kaliningrad, Pionersky and Baltiysk. Apart from those mentioned, there are also 3 other seaports operating on the Polish side with transshipment quays. Inland water transport takes place in the Kaliningrad region. River port is located in Kaliningrad. Moreover, in the summer period, the Polish carrier's hydrofoils operate between the city of Kaliningrad, Frombork and Elbląg.

Between 2012 and 2016 an agreement on local border traffic was functioning, enabling easier crossing of the Polish-Russian border by the inhabitants of the Kaliningrad Oblast and certain points of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie and the Pomorskie Voivodeships. From 1 July 2019 Polish citizens can apply for so-called e-visa authorising entry and short stay in the territory of the Kaliningrad Oblast.

Due to the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic, in 2020 there was a restriction of mobility between Polish subregions and the Kaliningrad District, including a temporary closure of borders. Due to the epidemiological threat, the flow of people and goods was hindered, which affected both the spheres of business and tourism.

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#### 1.2.2.4. COOPERATION POTENTIAL

The cross-border cooperation so far has been effective and has had a positive impact on the development of border areas. The Polish-Russian Council on cooperation of the Kaliningrad region with regions of Poland, functioning in accordance with the Agreement between Government of the Russian Federation and Government of the Republic of Poland (1992), as well as twinning relations between municipalities make a significant contribution into the Polish-Russian cooperation.

The cooperation implemented under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, concerns local culture and protection of cultural heritage, environment protection and adaptation to climate change, improving the accessibility of regions through the development of transport networks and systems and communication. The programme made it possible to carry out both Large Infrastructure Projects, as well as the so-called regular projects. Work on the implementation of three Large Infrastructure Projects was initiated, and 26 regular projects were contracted<sup>3</sup>. The territorial scope of the Programme covered the following voivodeships: Pomorskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Podlaskie (Poland) and the Kaliningrad Oblast (Russia). In establishing partnerships among the Polish and the Russian beneficiaries from both parts of the support area under the Programme for the period 2014-2020 a large role was played by the meeting (Partner Search Forum), for which about 200 people signed up. Under the Programme for 2021-2027, organizing such meetings might be hampered by the restrictions related to the pandemic (COVID-19).

There are two Euroregions in the support area: Euroregion Baltic - ERB (Poland - Russia - Lithuania - Sweden - Denmark). and Niemen Euroregion (Poland - Russia - Lithuania - Belarus) The strategic areas of cooperation of Baltic Euroregion are, on the other hand, lobbying activities, activities aimed at updating the added value of cooperation by establishing contacts with partners and ensuring complementarity with regional development strategies, as well as activities related to exchange of experiences and good practices allowing for building relations between the regions of the Baltic Euroregion and strengthening their cooperation. Within Baltic Euroregion there are two core groups Water Core Group and Mobility Core Group which are related to two important thematic activities of ERB.

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<sup>3</sup> It is expected that 2 more regular projects will be contracted within the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme



Priorities of Niemen Euroregion are economic and tourism development, training, education and the labour market, environmental protection, as well as the development of culture, the social sphere and transport.

Cooperation of Polish local administration units with Russian local units is based mainly on twinning relations between municipalities as well as takes place in the framework of the cross-border cooperation between Poland and Russia and within Euroregions. The implemented activities concern mainly the following spheres: education, youth exchange, culture, environmental protection, promotion of the commune, region and country, exchange of mutual experiences; infrastructure development and economic cooperation.

In the framework of the Polish-Russian cooperation partners from both countries undertake joint initiatives, especially in the cultural and social sphere. The launch of local border traffic between the Polish regions and the Kaliningrad Oblast, which functioned in the period between 2012-2016, aided the revival of social and economic relations between Poland and Russia. The local border traffic is currently suspended. Despite the implementation of e-visas by Russian Federation a decrease in the number of people crossing the border occurred (from 4.27 million in 2016 to 3.47 million in 2019). The Covid-19 pandemic further impeded the possibility to cross the border. However, partners from both countries continue to cooperate using online forms of cooperation.

The cooperation of other Polish and Russian entities, such as non-governmental organizations, cultural and labour market institutions, focuses on the activities described above, i.e. projects implemented as part of cooperation in the field of education and projects financed from EU and Russian funds.

**When planning interventions, it is advisable to strengthen the potential and administrative cooperation and promote cross-border activities as an opportunity for the development of the Programme support area.**

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### 1.2.3. SUMMARY OF THE MAIN COMMON CHALLENGES AND INVESTMENT NEEDS

To sum up, in the support area there are several common problems, the solution of which may contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in the support area. They are related, inter alia, to:

- unfavourable demographic conditions, related in particular to the aging of the society,

- insufficient development of the health protection sphere and social services sector in some parts of the Programme area,
- challenging condition of the environment, especially in terms of air and water pollution,
- potential challenges resulting from progressive climate change e.g. floods or wildfires.

The undoubted potential of the support area is the natural environment, the protection of which should also be a priority of the Programme. It is important to counteract the degradation of the natural environment and to further protect its most valuable elements. In order to maintain the continuity of wildlife corridors<sup>4</sup> and a satisfactory state of the environment on both sides of the border, it is necessary to undertake joint, well-thought-out and comprehensive projects. It is also important that threats resulting from climate change may often affect areas of the neighbouring country, and therefore the cooperation to adapt to these changes would be useful. For Poland the above-mentioned activities are in line with the EU's demand for a EU member-states to use environmental resources more efficiently.

When designing an intervention under the Programme, it is also necessary to use the existing tourism potential (related inter alia to the historical and cultural heritage, natural values) in a sustainable manner in order to improve the economic situation of the supported area while maintaining its values. Joint activities aimed at ensuring complementarity of related tourist services on the Polish and Russian sides of border may result in obtaining a synergy effect, which may bring tangible economic benefits to both countries.

As part of the further development of territorial cooperation between Poland and Russia in connection with the identified problems of the supported area, it is also necessary to deepen and improve cooperation between residents and institutions, and then to integrate the community and overcome cultural barriers. It will allow for increasing ties between the communities of both countries.

The identified inequalities related to the availability of health care and social services, the ongoing changes, as well as the pandemic situation of COVID-19 must be considered the priority of the Programme. Although the healthcare and social services systems have a highly national character, and in the previous editions of the programmes, especially the ENPI CBC Lithuania-Poland-Russia Programme 2007 –

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<sup>4</sup> Wildlife corridor is an area of habitat connecting wildlife populations separated by human activities or structures.

2013 have proven that pilot projects and exchange of experiences in specific fields between highly specialized entities can be very effective in a cross-border context.

In order to strengthen the impact of the Programme, Large Infrastructure Projects should be implemented. These strategic investments will be implemented as part of:

- Policy Objective 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"
- Policy Objective 4 "A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights"<sup>5</sup>.

Activities carried out under the 2021-2027 edition of the Poland-Russia Cross-border Cooperation Programme will take place on the border of the European Union and the Russian Federation, therefore the continuation of the existing and promotion of new cooperation between partners is particularly important.

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<sup>5</sup> The European Pillar of Social Rights is relevant for the EU member states and not relevant for the Russian Federation

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## 1.2.4. CONTINUITY AND COMPLEMENTARITY OF COOPERATION

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### 1.2.4.1. LESSONS – LEARNT FROM PAST EXPERIENCE

Cooperation between Poland and Russia within the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014 - 2020 plays an important role in the development of the Programme area as well as in the strengthening ties between Polish and Russian regions and in the interaction of the citizens in the form of people-to-people contacts.

This programme was co-financed by the European Union (EUR 41.65 million under the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the European Regional Development Fund under the European Union financial perspective 2014-2020) and the Russian Federation (EUR 20.65 million from the budget funds). The programme allows for 28 open call projects to be contracted under three thematic objectives: heritage, environment and accessibility.

In 2014-2020, the Programme focused on the following Thematic Objectives (TOs):

- Promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage (TO Heritage). As part of the TO projects relate mainly to cooperation (incl. based on modernization, renovation and new exhibitions) between institutions managing valuable objects from the historical and cultural point of view (including museums) and highlighting their tourist and heritage value. An interesting project which has been implemented under CBC Programme Poland Russia 2014-2020 is "Museums over the borders. Part II", which is a continuation of cooperation established within the Lithuania-Poland-Russia Programme 2007-2013. The project is aimed at contributing to the preservation and promotion of cultural and historical heritage of cross-border region. The point is to make cultural exchange more accessible and exciting for visitors. In order to achieve it, the partners decided among others to implement restoration and construction works in the building of "The Friedland Gate" Museum. Another interesting innovative project is related to improvement of the application "Gothic Castle Trails", which makes visiting interesting sites and places in the support area much more attractive. It is also adapted to the needs of the visually impaired. The cooperation established under the Programme for 2014-2020 may turn out to be effective also under the edition for the years 2021-2027. A particularly interesting projects are Large Infrastructural Projects "CBCycle: Cross-border cycle routes for promotion and sustainable use of cultural heritage." and "Development of tourist-recreational potential and water tourism in Svetly and Malbork towns".

- Environmental protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation (TO Environment). Under this TO projects to improve water management in the area of support among development of the water and sewage system proved to be particularly useful. Wastewater treatment projects were popular under the Programme for 2014-2020, but on the support area there is still a need to realise similar projects. This may indicate interest in such projects under the Programme for 2021-2027. Projects aimed at improving the condition of the environment and preserving its current values were also selected for implementation.
- Improvement of the accessibility to the regions, development of sustainable and climate-proof transport and communication networks and systems (TO Accessibility). As part of the thematic objective there were implemented projects mainly related to increasing the availability of road infrastructure in areas where deficiencies were diagnosed. A particularly interesting project is Large Infrastructural Project "Construction of the new route of the regional road No. 512 with the construction of the bridge over the Łyna river in Bartoszyce".
- Promotion of border management and border security, mobility and migration management (TO Borders). During the call for proposals no project proposals were submitted within the TO Borders and thus the projects were implemented in the remaining three TOs.

The 2021-2027 edition of the Programme will strengthen the existing links between the two countries and build new ones in the areas of: environment, health and long-term care, tourism and cooperation on different level, administrative as well as grass-root. Therefore, the programme will be a continuation and deepening of the development processes initiated in the 2014-2020 programming period.

Conclusions from the implementation of the Poland-Russia Programme for 2014-2020 provided the following information that should be taken into account when shaping the assumptions of the Programme for 2021-2027:

- The Programme is popular among beneficiaries of both the Polish and Russian support area - a large number of organizations involved in submitting project applications;
- In the first call for proposals, the activities under the TOs Heritage (57 projects submitted) and Environment (42 projects submitted) enjoyed the greatest interest of the beneficiaries;
- Good Polish-Russian cooperation in the field of tourism should be emphasized (joint international events, including to promote the region to foreign markets)

- Applicants indicated that trainings for applicants should be provided, and the application processing time should be shortened so that individual projects could be implemented as soon as possible.

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#### 1.2.4.2. COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE PROGRAMME

Significant for the achievement of the possible best effects of cross-border cooperation is the further maintenance of thematic and spatial links both at the supra-regional and regional level - maintaining the complementarity of interventions.

##### 1.2.4.2.1. National strategies

The thematic objectives and priorities of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme will remain complementary to the broader development priorities of the areas covered by Poland and Russia support, similar to the 2014-2020 programming period. The programme is in line with the following long-term national strategies<sup>6</sup>:

- in Poland: Long-term National Development Strategy "Poland 2030. The Third Wave of Modernity" - this document indicates the need to focus development on improving the competitiveness and innovativeness of the economy, achieving sustainable development of the potential of Polish regions, implementing the effectiveness and efficiency of the state;
- in the Russian Federation: „On the national goals and strategic tasks of the development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024“ this document presents the main national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024 which are, inter alia, ensuring sustainable natural population growth, increasing life expectancy, cutting poverty in half and improving housing conditions;
- in the Kaliningrad Region: „Strategy of Long Term Socio-Economic Development of the Kaliningrad region“ - this state programme aims to facilitate the comprehensive socio-economic development of the Kaliningrad Region for the period up to 2030, make the region attractive to investors, encourage the development of sectors that contribute most to economic growth in the region, create new production facilities and develop new industrial clusters and tourism.

##### 1.2.4.2.2. EU strategies and programmes

One of the key documents of the European Union in the field of priority interventions is the *Strategy For a Sustainable Europe by 2030*. The Strategy envisages the main lines of action, such as moving away from a linear economy to a circular economy; balancing "from farm to fork" concept; energy, construction and mobility ready for the challenges of the future; and ensuring the transformation of a just EU from a social point of view.

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<sup>6</sup> Strategy regarding Kaliningrad Oblast is also indicated.

The European Union's drive towards an economically sustainable Europe has become its commitment. The investment priorities planned under the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme for 2021-2027 are aimed at, inter alia, promoting sustainable water management and broadly understood protection of nature, environment and landscape, including increasing green infrastructure. The link between the investment priorities and the goals of the Strategy for a *Sustainable Europe by 2030* is becoming visible.

The Multiannual Financial Framework, which was strengthened by the NextGenerationEU instrument, will become the main European Union's tool for creating jobs and directly remedying the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, while supporting the green and digital priorities of the Union. It is built on three pillars:

- Pillar 1: Supporting Member States in reconstruction
- Pillar 2: Boost the economy and aid private investment
- Pillar 3: Learning from the crisis

The first pillar consists of instruments supporting Member States' reconstruction, repair and emerging from the crisis. The second pillar is defined by the support of measures to stimulate private investment and support to enterprises in difficulty. The third and final pillar includes the strengthening of key EU programmes to strengthen the market potential and make it more resilient, and to accelerate the ecological and digital transformation.

The activities planned under the Poland-Russia Cross-border Cooperation Programme for 2021-2027 also serve to digitize, inter alia, health protection, tourism support, e.g. by creating jobs, the environment by promoting sustainable water management and increasing biodiversity and reducing pollution.

The macro-regional strategy - the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region must also be considered. The European Union strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is based on three main thematic pillars: protection of the sea, increased integration of the region and increased prosperity, and a horizontal basis. In the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, on the Polish side attention should be paid to the area focused on promoting sustainable water management related to the priority "Environment".

The European Social Fund (ESF) also attracts attention. The ESF funds initiatives that promote high employment levels, equal opportunities for men and women, sustainable development and economic and social cohesion. With regard to the situation caused by the COVID-19 virus in Europe and in the world, attention should be paid to the need for complementarity between the ESF and the Programme on the Polish side. The



implementation of the Programme priorities focuses on the issues of health protection, which on the Polish side complements the activities under the ESF, as it may consequently encourage a healthy lifestyle and strengthen the resilience of citizens.

The Polish regional and national programmes funded from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (e.g. regional operational programs, "European Funds for Eastern Poland 2021-2027" Operational Programme) will remain complementary to the Programme. In case of "European Funds for Eastern Poland 2021-2027 " Operational Programme , the effects related to the development of entrepreneurship and an increase in the level of private investments in the region will be achieved, which are measurable economic results. A very important aspect related to the priorities of the cross-border cooperation programme "Cooperation" and "Tourism" is the improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants. Through the implementation of the Eastern Poland 2014-2020 Operational Programme, it was significantly possible to limit or overcome some of the identified development barriers, as well as to increase the level of competitiveness and innovation of the regions.

A complementary support instrument for Poland may be the Internal Security Fund, which aims to ensure a high level of security in the European Union thanks to, inter alia, uniform and effective control of the EU external borders and through the efficient processing of Schengen visa applications, in line with the Union's commitment to respect fundamental freedoms and human rights. Complementarity in the scope of the aforementioned possibilities of financing from the European Union funds, due to the border character of the Programme area, is a pillar for achieving the assumed specific objectives on the Polish side under the priority Cooperation of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme.

In line with the Partnership Agreement between Poland and the European Commission for cohesion funds 2021-2027, Poland is obliged to contribute 30% of the ERDF, i.e. 14.1 billion euro and 37% of the Cohesion Fund (CF), i.e. 4.5 billion euro into expenditure aiming at achievement of climate goals. According to estimates, the share of the CF expenditure (after the transfer from ESF + to CF) in Poland for the climate target will amount to approximately 50%. This is a significant surplus in relation to the minimum share expected by the European Commission in the general regulation.

#### **1.2.4.2.3. Regional Strategies**

The programme will be implemented in cooperation with the regions from the Programme area, which will increase the chances of ensuring complementarity with the objectives and development strategies of the regions in the following voivodeships: Pomorskie, Podlaskie (until 2030), Warmińsko-Mazurskie (with a perspective until 2025). The Strategy of Long Term Socio-Economic Development of the Kaliningrad region covers the period until 2030 and is in line with assumptions of Programme. All these documents are aimed at promoting the broadly understood socio-economic and environmental development on a regional scale and improving the quality of life of the inhabitants.

Additionally, the necessity to maintain complementarity between supranational, national and regional programs and strategies should be considered. The coherence of strategic documents will allow for achievement of the assumed goals in the socio-economic, environmental and spatial terms.

### 1.3. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE SELECTION OF POLICY OBJECTIVES AND THE INTERREG SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, CORRESPONDING PRIORITIES, SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE AND THE FORMS OF SUPPORT, ADDRESSING, WHERE APPROPRIATE, MISSING LINKS IN CROSS-BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE

Table 1. Justification for the choice of Policy Objective 2 and its specific objectives.

Selected policy objectives or selected Interreg specific objectives	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for the choice
<b>Policy Objective 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</b>	Promoting access to water and sustainable water management	Environment	Despite a slight downward trend in the consumption of water from waterworks per 1 resident on the Polish side of the supported area (78.8 m <sup>3</sup> in 2014, and 78.3 m <sup>3</sup> in 2019), considering individual subregions, some of them show an increase consumption (the following subregions are characterized by particularly high consumption per capita: Starogardzki, Elbląski and Suwalski). On the Russian side of the Programme area, a slight increase in water consumption from waterworks per resident (51.8 m <sup>3</sup> in 2014, and 52.2 m <sup>3</sup> in 2018). On the Polish side, the number of sewage treatment plants in operation also decreased (536 pc. in 2014, and 527 pc. in 2019), and thus their capacity (decrease from 315 994 m <sup>3</sup> /day in 2014 to 310 779 m <sup>3</sup> /day in 2019). The socio-economic analysis also indicates the problem of water pollution, as well as insufficiently developed water and sewage management system (no rural sewage treatment plants; no institution coordinating watercourses located on the national border). Participants of the survey conducted among national and regional authorities and potential beneficiaries reported the need to implement projects related to sustainable water management. The specific objective was selected for implementation under the Programme due to the fact that taking care of non-renewable water resources (quantity and quality) is particularly important in order to maintain the natural and tourism attractiveness of the area. The ease of movement of liquid pollutants across borders, e.g. by watercourses or during surface

			<p>runoff must be considered. Due to this, it is assumed that joint activities related to pollution reduction will bring positive effects for the border areas of both countries.</p> <p>Therefore, it is recommended to constantly support and promote sustainable water management, including educational activities aimed at raising awareness of the importance of caring for exhaustive freshwater resources. Implementing investments in water supply, sewage systems and small retention facilities are also significant.</p>
<p>Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy</p>		<p>Environment</p>	<p>The socio-economic analysis indicates a number of problems faced by the support area. Despite the downward trend in the amount of waste produced on the Polish side, their amount is still high( 3 871.7 thousand tonnes of waste in 2019 - 22.6% less than in 2018). An upward trend is visible on the Russian side of the support area (1 508.3 thousand tonnes of waste were collected in 2018 - 25.7% more than in 2017). In the support area, there was also an insufficient percentage of recycled waste (20.4% of the total waste generated in the on the Polish side. In the Kaliningrad Oblast there are planned investments aimed at starting waste recycling - in Kruglovo and Barsukovka), as well as a large amount of waste deposited in landfills. It is also worth noting that in Kaliningrad Oblast and Polish subregions the issue of disposing of toxic waste and areas which needs remediation also remains unresolved. Due to the fact that municipal waste has the largest share in the production of waste in the support area, special attention should be paid to increasing the awareness of residents about waste management (incl. recycling, circular economy and their advantages). It is also important to take actions aimed at creation of new or modernization and improvement of existing recycling and waste treatment infrastructure and joint knowledge development and planning of circular economy solutions on the support area. Joint implementation of such activities will increase the efficiency and environmental friendliness of the waste management sector, and therefore contribute to the improvement of the quality of the environment in the entire support area. Additionally, undertaking joint activities in this area may turn out to be particularly effective in the context of exchanging good practices and implementing jointly developed solutions and technologies.</p>

	<p>Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</p>	<p>Environment</p>	<p>The implementation of the goal is particularly important due to the progressive suburbanization processes, and thus the construction on the biologically active areas. An important problem that should be paid special attention is air pollution, which is especially visible in urban areas. On the Polish side, the emission of gaseous air pollutants is increasing (by 6.6% in the period 2014-2019), however, a significant decrease (by almost 50%) of dust emissions has been recorded. On the Russian side, an increase in pollution released into the atmosphere from stationary sources was recorded (by 27% in 2014-2018). There is a significant increase in the number of objects emitting pollutants into the atmosphere on the Russian side. The amount of pollutants released into the atmosphere from mobile sources in the Kaliningrad Oblast decreased by over 28% compared to 2014 (data from 2018). Both on the Russian and Polish side; there are areas where air quality standards are failed. Cross-border cooperation related to the reduction of environmental pollution is particularly important due to the fact that gaseous and dust pollutants can be easily moved by air. This affects the condition of the environment in the entire support area, regardless of its direct issuer. Therefore, joint activities related to the reduction of air pollution will bring positive effects for the border areas of both countries.</p> <p>The Programme area is rich in various forms of legal nature protection, which constitute a special potential for cooperation, with particular emphasis placed on cross-border areas. On the Polish side, compared to 2014, the area of legally protected areas has decreased.</p> <p>As part of the implementation of the objective, it is important to take targeted measures to increase the number of green areas in the Programme area, which may have a positive impact on the existing environmental pollution. A very important issue is also conducting educational activities among the inhabitants of the support area. Undertaking these types of activities may have a positive impact on increasing biodiversity. An important aspect is also green infrastructure in the urban environment, which makes it more attractive and less polluted.</p>
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Table 2. Justification for the choice of Policy Objective 4 and its specific objectives.

Selected policy objectives or selected Interreg specific objectives	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for the choice
<p><b>Policy Objective 4: A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights</b></p>	<p>Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care</p>	<p>Health and long-term care</p>	<p>The socio-economic analysis showed that the main causes of death in the Programme area are cardiovascular diseases (approx. 40% in the subregions on the Polish side, and 42.9% on the Russian side) and cancer (26.4% on the Polish side). The socio-economic analysis also shows problems in some areas of the Programme territory related to under-financing of development activities in the field of health, insufficient availability of preventive programmes, low availability of specialist services and specialist doctors, as well as their high burden.</p> <p>A big problem in terms of health protection in the Programme area is also the poorly developed local emergency services and their main concentration in areas with high population density, as well as the outflow of qualified employees from the health service, which causes a high workload of medical services employees and, as a result, causes poor residents' access to high-class specialists in the field of medicine.</p> <p>The aging society within the support area is also a significant problem. Due to this phenomenon, it is necessary to take actions aimed at support of geriatric, palliative and other social care for elderly and disabled people including developing social services in the support area, exchanging good practices among social workers, promoting family- and community-based care as well as activation and support of broadly understood socially excluded people.</p> <p>The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in 2020 was a very heavy burden and disorganization for the entire health system, both on the Polish and Russian side. This situation caused, among others, limiting the availability of medical services, the workload of people employed in the sector, a decrease in the liquidity of financing medical services, a decrease in the availability of drugs and patients withdrawing from therapy. The occurrence of COVID-19 forced both countries to undertake a number of changes in the field of population health protection, among which</p>

			<p>there are changes in the law, the creation of single-name hospitals, restrictions on the operation of facilities (including contacts with patients), changes in the methods of performing diagnostic tests, and telemedicine development.</p>
	<p>Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation</p>	<p>Tourism</p>	<p>Due to economic benefits, tourism is treated as a priority sector on a global scale. The GDP of both countries depends to a certain extent on the amount of income related to the sale of tourist services. Economic entities that take part in servicing tourist traffic form a service chain consisting of links such as hotels and other accommodation facilities, catering establishments, travel agencies, transport companies, etc. The largest contribution to GDP among the links of tourism is usually made by hotel and transport enterprises. The number of foreign tourists on both sides of the Programme area is increasing. In 2018 to the Kaliningrad Oblast came 83.9 thousand foreign tourists (an increase by 10.8% compared to 2014), while the sum of foreign tourists on the Polish side of the support area in 2018 was 855.3 thousand (an increase by 14.2% compared to 2014).</p> <p>Due to the location of the support area, its tourist values are largely based on the access to the Baltic Sea, access to resorts and health resorts. It is also important to support the existing cultural and tourist facilities. The Programme area allows to visit monuments of rich historical heritage (churches, forts, castles) and old towns, which in some cases have retained their historical character. There are also very good conditions for water sports in the Kaliningrad Oblast. The border areas of Poland and Russia constitute an area of natural and cultural interest, and at the same time constitute an important tourist potential. Actions taken in this direction may contribute to economic improvement. Additionally, it should be taken into consideration to joint use of objects of shared cultural heritage for tourism purposes and development of joint tourism products.</p> <p>It is important to take into account the changes caused by the pandemic situation and their possible long-term consequences, both on the Russian and Polish side. Due to the existing limitations, the tourism industry is one of the most threatened with negative economic effects. The decline in revenues mainly affected the hotel industry, catering services, and tourist and travel agencies. Estimates indicate that in 2020, both on the Polish and the Russian side, there was a decrease in the number of visitors (including visits by Poles in the Kaliningrad Oblast</p>

and Russian citizens in the subregions of Poland included in the support area) compared to 2019.

**Table 3. Justification for the choice of Interreg Specific Objective 1 and its specific objectives.**

Selected policy objectives or selected Interreg specific objectives	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for the choice
<b>Interreg Specific Objective 1. A better cooperation governance</b>	Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions	Cooperation	<p>According to the results of analyses commissioned by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the international activity of Polish local administration units is constantly increasing. Over 70.0% of Polish local administration units declare that they undertake international cooperation, among others in the implementation of specific projects or partnerships allowing for joint ventures. The national studies discussed in 2016 showed that 72.0% of local administration units undertook foreign cooperation, including: 85.0% of voivodeships, 86.0% of poviats, 95.0% of cities and 52.0% of rural communes.</p> <p>The cooperation of Polish local administration units with Russian local units is based primarily on bilateral agreements between Russia and Poland and cooperation of the cross-border areas (including cooperation within Euroregions Niemen and Baltic). The implemented activities concern such spheres as education, environmental protection, promotion of the commune, region and country, exchange of mutual experiences, development of infrastructure (road, tourism), and economic cooperation. It should be emphasized that the indicated issues constitute a particular potential for the development of cooperation within the Programme.</p> <p>In the framework of the Polish-Russian cooperation partners on both sides are trying to maintain joint initiatives at least in the cultural and social sphere, among others through the implementation of cultural and tourist events. The launch of local border traffic between the Polish regions and the Kaliningrad Oblast positively affected the revival of social and economic relations, however it was suspended. Despite the fact, both parties are interested in</p>



			<p>maintaining and constantly expanding the existing cooperation between both countries. The new electronic visa regime implemented in Russia for visiting the Kaliningrad region in 2019 was highly demanded and increase dramatically the number of visits to the region from all over the world.</p>
	<p>Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions</p>	<p>Cooperation</p>	<p>Community cooperation is a great opportunity for development for both the Polish and Russian sides of the Programme. The cooperation between non-governmental organizations so far has not been particularly intense. The cooperation of Polish and Russian entities, such as non-governmental organizations, cultural institutions and labour market institutions focus on activities such as projects implemented as part of cooperation in the field of education (including youth exchange, implementation of scientific projects), as well as projects co-financed from EU and Russian funds. An example of cooperation in the field of culture is the project "Together - cultural cooperation on the Polish-Russian borderland" implemented under TO Heritage of the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. Taking more integration activities may significantly increase trust and establish interpersonal contacts between the inhabitants of the Programme area.</p>

## 2. PRIORITIES

### 2.1. PRIORITY: ENVIRONMENT

Support for infrastructure is assumed as a part of the activities under this priority.

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#### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: PROMOTING ACCESS TO WATER AND SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT

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

As part of the specific objective related to the promotion of sustainable water management, it is assumed to implement thematic actions such as:

#### **1. Undertaking activities related to sustainable water management, including promotional and educational actions.**

Due to the fact that in the CBC Programme for 2014-2020 wastewater treatment projects were popular, but on the support area there is still a need to realise similar projects, it is proposed to implement such projects in the Programme for 2021-2027. It is also worth emphasizing that in the first call for proposals (2014-2020 Programme) activities under TO Environment (42 submitted projects) enjoyed interest among beneficiaries. Socio-economic analysis shows an increase in water consumption from water supply systems per capita in some Polish subregions and on the Russian side of the Programme area, as well as the rich water resources of the area, such as a dense network of watercourses, lakes and access to the Baltic Sea, the Gdansk Bay and the Vistula Lagoon, but also the problem of their pollution. Therefore, it is recommended to constantly promote sustainable water management, taking into account educational activities aimed at stakeholders from various age groups, in order to raise awareness about how to protect water resources and its benefits. A very important element of this course of action should be the promotion and creation of small retention facilities in the area covered by the Program, which, apart from the function of storing water resources, can simultaneously fulfil a number of other functions, e.g. flood protection, recreation and fire protection. Rational water management and promotion among the inhabitants of the Programme area will positively affect non-renewable water resources (quantity and quality). Educational activities may also have a positive impact on reducing the pollution of surface waters, which may have a cross-border impact. It is also important that improper water management intensifies threats resulting from climate change, which can often affect areas of the neighbouring country, and therefore cooperation to adapt to these changes would be useful.

## **2. Implementation of projects aimed at management, protection, monitoring and improvement of the quality of water resources.**

Due to the fact that in some subregions in the Programme area there was an increase in water consumption from water supply systems per capita and pollution of the waters and the ecosystem of the Vistula Lagoon and the Gdansk Bay and the remaining large water resources such as rivers and lakes, which quality is insufficient, it is proposed to undertake supporting activities in the field of water management, e.g. in the form of developing strategies, solutions, programs and innovative and investment projects aimed at improving the quality and protection of water resources. Within this course of action, it is also very important to implement projects in the field of watercourse management all over the Programme area. It is also proposed to implement projects aimed at the exchange of good practices in the field of management, protection, monitoring and improvement of the state of water resources across borders in the form of meetings, workshops and conferences. Coherent management plans and monitoring of water resources by Polish and Russian institutions will facilitate the protection and improvement of the condition of water resources. The cross-border aspect is of particular importance here, due to the ease of movement of liquid pollutants across borders, e.g. by watercourses or during surface runoff.

## **3. Implementation of actions in the field of access to fresh water and sewage infrastructure.**

Despite the annual increase in the length of the water supply and sewage system in the Programme area, it is still insufficiently developed (over 15% of living accommodation in rural areas still do not have access to the water supply system, and over 50% of living accommodation do not have access to the sewage system). On the Polish side of the support area, the number and capacity of sewage treatment plants is decreasing. The amount of sewage entering surface waters decreased by 9.2% in the Kaliningrad Oblast in 2014-2018, however as much as 71.6% of sewage discharged into surface waters is insufficiently treated and 17.9% is uncleaned. On the Polish side, there was also a decrease in wastewater treatment (which requires treatment) from 99.6% in 2014 to 98.7% in 2018. There was also an insufficient number of rural sewage treatment plants. In order to neutralize the above-mentioned problems, it is proposed to take measures aimed at appropriate management of municipal wastewater, the high quality of which is necessary to maintain good quality of water in the Programme area. It is also important to take measures aimed at improving access to fresh water. It is proposed that the projects implemented under this measure should be aimed at supporting the sustainable management of water resources in the Programme area.

The uneven development of the water supply and sewage infrastructure on both sides of the border is not able to ensure the desired effect (ensuring universal access to water and sewage systems and reducing water pollution in the area). Therefore, this measure is important for the sustainable development of border areas.

## Indicators

Table 4. Product indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate objective (2024)	End objective (2029)
<b>Environment</b>	Promoting access to water and sustainable water management	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Participation		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

Table 5. Result Indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	End objective (2029)	Data source	Comments
<b>Environment</b>	Promoting access to water and sustainable water management	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Participation	0				
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				

## Main target groups

**Inhabitants of the Programme area** will be the main target group of actions under promoting sustainable water management.

Intervention in this area may significantly improve the quality of waters in the support area, and thus improve the condition of the entire natural environment. These activities will have a positive impact on the quality of life of the local population. It may also affect the tourist attractiveness of the Programme area, and thus it will constitute a great potential for the development of entrepreneurship.

In reference to investment activities, additional initiatives are planned aimed at promoting sustainable water management, e.g. organizing events, meetings, workshops and conferences, as well as promotional campaigns and educational activities. Participants of such events may be anyone interested in the subject related to the specific objective, e.g. residents, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations, research centres, local government units and other entities.

Actions under this specific objective may be undertaken by beneficiaries such as:

- Units of public, regional and local administration, associations of these units and institutions subordinated to them
- Other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies)
- Units of higher education and research institutions (including branches of the research institutions without the status of legal bodies)
- Non-governmental organizations.

## Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of integrated territorial investments, community-led local development or other territorial tools

Due to the fact that on the Russian side of the Programme area there are no instruments corresponding to those applied in the European Union, e.g. integrated territorial investments, therefore the use of specific territorial tools is not applicable at the Programme level. It was decided not to designate any target areas, and thus the entire Programme area will be covered by the support.

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## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: PROMOTING THE TRANSITION TO A CIRCULAR AND RESOURCE EFFICIENT ECONOMY

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

As part of the specific objective related to promotion the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy it is assumed to implement thematic activities related to:

### **1. Prevention of environmental risks resulting from waste management through creation of new or modernization and improvement of existing recycling and waste treatment infrastructure**

Despite the downward trend in the amount of waste produced on the Polish side, their amount is still high (3 871.7 thousand tonnes of waste in 2019 - 22.6% less than in 2018), but an upward trend is visible on the Russian side of the support area the support area - in (1 508.3 thousand tonnes of waste were collected in 2018 - 25.7% more than in 2017). There is also insufficient percentage of recycled waste (20.4% of the total waste generated in the on the Polish side and in the Kaliningrad Oblast there are planned investments aimed at starting waste recycling - in Kruglovo and Barsukovka), as well as a large amount of waste deposited in landfills, it is proposed to undertake activities focusing on implementation of innovative investments projects and new solutions concerning activities ensuring sustainable waste management from its generation to final disposal. This term covers the collection, transport, treatment and disposal of waste, including the monitoring and regulation of the waste management process.

Socio-economic analysis shows also that in Kaliningrad Oblast and some Polish subregions the issue of disposing of toxic waste also remains unresolved (for example asbestos products and other dangerous substances like toxic industrial waste). Decreasing number of waste landfills (on the Polish side a decrease by 9 compared to 2014) and presence of illegal landfills (on both side of the border), which indicate an increase in degraded areas requiring rehabilitation. Under the action line, it is proposed to implement projects regarding land reclamation and the neutralization of hazardous waste, including exchange of good practices.

### **2. Joint knowledge development and planning of circular economy solutions**

Due to the insufficient level of innovation in the waste management sector resulting from, inter alia, low level of waste recycling in the support area, it is proposed to take measures to develop innovative solutions and technologies by representatives of institutions of both countries (including scientific ones) that could improve the efficiency and environmental performance of waste management facilities (including

waste recycling and planning of circular economy solutions). It is also proposed to undertake activities focusing on the exchange of good practices among institutions from both sides of border. It is also important to introduce jointly developed smart technologies and solutions in order to actually improve resource efficiency and waste management.

### **3. Raising awareness of residents about waste recycling and sustainable consumption**

The socio-economic analysis indicates a number of problems faced by the support area, despite the downward trend in the amount of waste produced on the Polish side, their amount is still high (3 871.7 thousand tonnes of waste in 2019 - 22.6% less than in 2018), but an upward trend is visible on the Russian side of the support area the support area - in (1 508.3 thousand tonnes of waste were collected in 2018 - 25.7% more than in 2017). It is also worth noting that the percentage of waste that is recycled is also unsatisfactory. Due to the fact that municipal waste has the largest share in the production of waste in the support area, it is proposed to undertake a number of activities aimed at increasing the awareness of residents about the benefits of selective waste collection, recycling, sustainable consumption and the concept of a circular economy which is aimed at minimising the generation of waste and maintaining the value of products, materials and resources in the economy for as long as possible. It is proposed to implement, among others, awareness-raising campaigns or workshops for local leaders.



## Indicators

**Table 6. Product indicators**

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate objective (2024)	End objective (2029)
<b>Environment</b>	Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Participation		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

**Table 7. Result Indicators**

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	End objective (2029)	Data source	Comments
<b>Environment</b>	Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Participation	0				
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				

## Main target groups

**Inhabitants of the Programme area** will be the main target group of actions under specific objective related to promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy.

Intervention in this area may significantly improve the quality of environment in the support area. These activities will have a positive impact on the quality of life of the local population, thus reducing the amount of waste. Activities undertaken within the specific objectives may also increase the use of innovative technologies in the support area.

In reference to investment activities, additional initiatives are planned aimed at raising awareness of residents about waste recycling and sustainable consumption, e.g. organizing events, meetings, workshops and conferences, as well as promotional campaigns and educational activities. Participants of such events may be anyone interested in the subject related to the specific objective, e.g. residents, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations, research centres, local government units and other entities.

Actions under this specific objective may be undertaken by beneficiaries such as:

- Units of public, regional and local administration, associations of these units and institutions subordinated to them (including waste management public institutions),
- Other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies),
- Units of higher education and research institutions (including branches of the research institutions without the status of legal bodies),
- Business Support Institutions,
- Non-governmental organizations.

## Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of integrated territorial investments, community-led local development or other territorial tools

Due to the fact that on the Russian side of the Programme area there are no instruments corresponding to those applied in the European Union, e.g. integrated territorial investments, therefore the use of specific territorial tools is not applicable at the Programme level. It was decided not to designate any target areas, and thus the entire Programme area will be covered by the support.

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SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: ENHANCING PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF NATURE, BIODIVERSITY AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING IN URBAN AREAS, AND REDUCING ALL FORMS OF POLLUTION

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

As part of the specific objective related to increasing biodiversity, green infrastructure in urban greenery and reducing pollution, thematic activities related to the following should be implemented:

**1. Protection, monitoring, regeneration and sustainable use of naturally valuable areas**

The Programme area is characterized by the wealth of various forms of legal nature protection, which constitute a special potential for cooperation. On the Polish side, compared to 2014, the area of legally protected territories has decreased. In order to maintain naturally valuable areas in good condition, it is proposed to take measures to protect, monitor and regenerate them in order to neutralize harmful anthropogenic activity. This may contribute to reducing pollution and increasing the tourist attractiveness of the Programme area. Activities related to the monitoring of the environment quality will make it possible to obtain data on the existing situation in the field of the environment - this will enable the comparison of changes taking place in the area covered by the Programme over the years. It is also advisable to take actions aimed at creating joint entities or operating as part of permanent cooperation in the development of naturally valuable areas that are important for both countries. As part of the implementation of the objective, it is important to take targeted measures to increase the number of green areas in the Programme area, which may have a positive impact on reducing environmental pollution. The protection and regeneration of ecological corridors and natural habitats, especially in the context of cross-border areas are important to consider. Undertaking such activities may have a positive impact on increasing biodiversity in the Programme area.

**2. Raising environmental awareness regarding the protection of nature (including air) and naturally valuable areas in the Programme area.**

Due to the insufficient level of ecological education and awareness of the inhabitants of the area covered by the Programme about the valuable natural areas and air pollution. On the Russian and Polish side of the Programme area there are places where air quality standards are failed. Due to this problem, it is necessary to take actions aimed at increasing the environmental awareness and the level of knowledge of

residents about the common natural heritage, protected areas and their unique value, as well as about the impact of their activities on air quality in the Programme area. It is proposed to implement educational projects and information campaigns aimed at all social groups living in the Programme area.

### **3. Protection and strengthening of biodiversity including the development of green and blue infrastructure in urban areas**

The implementation of the objective is particularly important due to the progressive processes of suburbanization, and hence pave over of biologically active areas. Due to these problems, it is proposed to undertake activities aimed at promoting, strengthening and creating green and blue infrastructure facilities in cities and strengthening the existing biodiversity in the Programme area. Taking this type of action will have a positive effect on reducing pollution, and thus improving the quality of life in urban areas. In order to protect nature, it is also very important to raise the environmental awareness of the inhabitants of the Programme area. It is also proposed to undertake "soft" activities aimed at the exchange of good practices across borders, e.g. in the form of meetings, workshops, conferences, discussion panels, or joint development of strategies.

## Indicators

Table 8. Product indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate objective (2024)	End objective (2029)
<b>Environment</b>	Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	RCO81	Participations in joint actions across borders	Participation		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

Table 9. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	End objective (2029)	Data source	Comments
<b>Environment</b>	Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Participation	0				
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				

## Main target groups

**Inhabitants of the Programme area** will be the main target group of actions under the priority Environment in terms of enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution.

Activities undertaken as part of this specific objective concerning, inter alia, strengthening biodiversity and improving the protection and management of naturally valuable areas, increasing environmental awareness among residents will positively affect the quality of life of inhabitants. It may also affect the tourist attractiveness of the Programme area, especially in the context of ecotourism and health tourism. Additional initiatives are planned aimed at enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution, e.g. organizing events, meetings, or jointly creating of strategies. Participants of such events may be anyone interested in the subject related to the specific objective, e.g. residents, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations, research centres, local government units and other entities.

It is proposed that interventions, under the Environment priority, in the scope of enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution should be undertaken under the support of the Programme by:

- Units of public, regional and local administration, associations of these units and institutions subordinated to them,
- Other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies),
- Administrations and managements of nature protection areas, such as national parks, landscape parks, biosphere reserves, etc.,
- Entities administering forest areas and state forest holdings with their organizational units,
- Units of higher education and research institutions (including branches of the research institutions without the status of legal bodies),
- Non-governmental organizations.

## Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of integrated territorial investments, community-led local development or other territorial tools

Due to the fact that on the Russian side of the Programme area there are no instruments corresponding to those applied in the European Union, e.g. integrated territorial investments, therefore the use of specific territorial tools is not applicable at the Programme level. It was decided not to designate any target areas, and thus the entire Programme area will be covered by the support.

## 2.2. PRIORITY: HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE

Support for infrastructure is assumed as a part of the activities under this priority.

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SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: 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

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

In order to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of health care systems and long-term care services across borders, it is proposed to take actions such as:

### **1. Development of specialist medicine infrastructure with particular support for the equipment of hospitals, medical centres and other medical entities**

The socio-economic analysis of the support area showed that in individual subregions there is unequal access to medical services, insufficient availability of specialist services and specialised doctors, human resources problems in the health care system, poor condition of the infrastructure in the health service (shortage in premises and equipment in health care institutions - hospitals, clinics) as well as insufficiently developed treatment and health resort infrastructure. Therefore, it is proposed to support the health infrastructure and equipment of health care facilities in order to provide better access to specialized health care services (among others regarding cardiovascular diseases, cancer, COVID-19 and its complications) to the inhabitants of the Programme area. Problems related to mental health and needs in this area need to also be considered. It is assumed that the effect visible in the longer term will be the improvement of health condition and the extension of the average life expectancy of the inhabitants of the area covered by the Programme. Activities may include the purchase of equipment, renovation and superstructure of facilities providing specialized health services, as well as support for management improvements to improve the efficiency of existing health care systems.

### **2. Increasing access to medical facilities, in particular those providing prophylaxis and diagnostic services**

Due to the role of prophylaxis and diagnostic services in the early detection of various types of dangerous diseases, it is proposed to undertake a number of activities aimed at ensuring better – more common access to tests and raising public awareness of the essence of prophylaxis and diagnostic services. Socio-economic analysis showed high

mortality rate among the inhabitants of the support area due to diseases which, thanks to widely available prophylaxis and diagnostic services, could be detected faster and treated more effectively, it is proposed to provide better access to this type of offer. In order to treat diagnosed diseases in the long term, adequate access to rehabilitation services aimed at returning to general fitness and independence of the patient are necessary. Conducting activities related to a healthy lifestyle may also contribute to social inclusion and social integration, which in turn may have a positive effect on the mental health of the inhabitants. It is also essential to support the development of more effective health infrastructure to better ensure access to health services. An important aspect is the adaptation of this infrastructure to the needs of elderly and people with disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to use architectural solutions such as ramps and toilets adapted to the needs of people with disabilities. Activities may include the purchase of equipment, renovation and superstructure of facilities providing prophylactic and diagnostic services, including those introducing facilities for the elderly and people with disabilities. It is also proposed to undertake actions for the benefit of a joint cross-border offer of care facilities providing services in the field of prophylaxis and diagnostics in the entire Programme area.

### **3. Increasing access to geriatric and palliative care facilities and other social services**

On the Polish side of the Programme area, people in retirement age constitute 20.3% of the population, while on the Russian side it is 19.0%. Data for 2018 shows that the number of palliative care beds per 100 000 inhabitants are 1.6 for the Podlaskie Voivodeship, 0.3 for the Pomorskie Voivodeship, and 2.4 for the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship<sup>7</sup>, while for the Kaliningrad Oblast this indicator is 12.8<sup>8</sup>. For comparison, the indicator for the whole of Poland is 7.29, and for the whole of Russia is 8.54. Due to the phenomenon of the aging society and above-mentioned problems occurring in the Programme area resulting from the socio-economic analysis, it is proposed to take measures to provide adequate geriatric, palliative and social care to an increasing number of seniors. As part of the action line, it is proposed to create new and support existing geriatric, palliative and social institutions, e.g. in the form of equipment purchase, joint training for staff, exchange of good practices. Projects may also concern the improvement of accessibility to the existing geriatric, palliative or social institutions, e.g. in the form of adapting them to the needs of people with disabilities. Undertaking this type of action is particularly important in order to ensure adequate care for people of senior age and disabled.

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<sup>7</sup> Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office in Poland

<sup>8</sup> <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/561559319> - access 12.03.2021



#### **4. Increasing the availability of e-services and telemedicine based on development of digitization in health and social care**

In order to provide more effective and modern medical and social services in the Programme area, the methods of modern digitization in health and social care should be used. These activities are particularly important during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. They may include support in the field of financing IT devices, software for the provision of telemedicine and social services, services for storing and handling digital medical records, as well as in the form of employee training in the use of the system. Through the installation of information technologies, the provision of health care in prophylaxis, diagnostics and treatment as well as monitoring of patients' health will be improved. All these activities will enable cooperation between medical personnel from both supported countries. It is also proposed to create an integrated information system on the possibilities and principles of using healthcare in the neighbouring country. This system improves access to the use of medical services for all residents using medical care in the area covered by the Programme. It is also proposed to undertake activities aimed at the exchange of good practices between medical centres from countries participating in the Programme regarding the effective digitalization in health and long-term care.

#### **5. Joint improvement of qualifications and exchange of good practices among medical, emergency personnel and social workers across borders**

Integration between healthcare and social providers is to exchange skills and experience among medical, emergency personnel and social workers in the Programme area. As a result, these activities are supposed to have a positive impact on the quality of the services provided and, consequently, result in greater effectiveness in the treatment and prevention of diseases and better social care. As part of the activities, it is proposed to organize joint meetings aimed at the exchange of good practices between medical, emergency and social personnel, purchasing of equipment, but also organization of trainings, workshops and conferences aimed at improving qualifications and solving common problems of health and social care as well as emergency services in the area covered by the Programme.

## Indicators

**Table 10. Product indicators**

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate goal (2024)	Final goal (2029)
<b>Health and long-term care</b>	Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care	RCO69	Capacity of new or modernised health care facilities	Persons/year		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

**Table 11. Result indicators**

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	Final goal (2029)	Data source	Comments
<b>Health and long-term care</b>	Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care	RCR73	Annual users of new or modernised health care facilities	Users/year	0				
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				

## Main target groups

The main target groups for actions under the Health and long-term care priority to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of health systems and long-term care services across borders will be the **inhabitants of the Programme area**.

Undertaking an intervention in this area may significantly improve provided health and long-term care, and thus improve the health condition of inhabitants. Activities related to long-term care will have a positive impact on the quality of life **of elderly and terminally ill residents**. Investments in infrastructure, equipment and improving the qualifications of medical and emergency personnel will significantly affect the comfort of work and the number of successes achieved by **health care and emergency services workers**.

In relation to the investment activities, additional initiatives are planned which are aimed at improving the accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of health care systems and long-term care services across borders, e.g. organization of events, training, exchange of good practices among specialists operating in the Programme area.

Activities under this specific objective may be undertaken by the following beneficiaries:

- Units of public, regional and local administration, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them that deal with medical and social care,
- Public entities providing medical and social services and long-term care services,
- Emergency services
- Educational units in the field of health, including entities of higher education, e.g. medical universities etc.,
- non-governmental organizations.

## Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of integrated territorial investments, community-led local development or other territorial tools

Due to the fact that on the Russian side of the Programme area there are no instruments corresponding to those applied in the European Union, e.g. integrated territorial investments, therefore the use of specific territorial tools is not applicable at the Programme level. It was decided not to designate any target areas, and thus the entire Programme area will be covered by the support.

## 2.3. PRIORITY: TOURISM

Support for infrastructure is assumed as a part of the activities under this priority.

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### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: ENHANCING THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

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

As part of the specific objective related to enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation, it is proposed to implement measures such as:

**1. Promoting tourism as an attractive business and other activities supporting entrepreneurship in the tourism services sector, focused on shared services.**

Natural and cultural tourist values of the Programme area, constitute a special potential for the development of entrepreneurship related to tourism. It is important to support tourism entities, among others, in the form of conferences, workshops and trainings covering issues related to the creation of joint tourism products and the development of tourism in the region. Actions are also proposed to promote a common branding, including by creating and intensifying the activity of tourism clusters. The benefits of implementing activities related to social tourism, understood as creating local tourist services based on grassroots social activity, should be considered. Undertaking this type of activities may contribute to the activation of excluded communities and those at risk of exclusion. The situation resulting from the pandemic significantly affects the tourism industry, including by reducing tourist traffic and by limiting the activities of enterprises in the tourism, cultural and recreational sectors. The important task is to adapt services to the COVID-19 pandemic situation as well as to support recovery plans.

**2. Protection, conservation, reconstruction, promotion and development of infrastructure related to cultural heritage and recreation in order to increase the tourist attractiveness of the Programme area.**

Due to the special values of cultural heritage and the complex, rich history dating back to the Middle Ages, measures aimed at promoting these values and common history should be considered for tourism in the area. There are numerous castles and sacred buildings, unique buildings, urban and rural layouts, as well as the marine and river

heritage, which significantly increase the attractiveness of the area, especially in terms of tourism. The Programme area is also distinguished by its cultural and religious diversity. Characteristic for the Programme area is also the great diversity and richness of the landscape. The Programme area has particular potential for the development of tourism by promoting culturally valuable areas and facilities as well as the natural heritage. The potential increase in the number of tourists may be ensured by the development of recreational, entertainment or cultural services. It is important to create an appropriate tourist infrastructure allowing visitors to stay longer in the Programme area. The presence of a coherent accommodation base with a gastronomic network as well as historical monuments, cultural facilities and the accompanying natural values allows for increasing role of tourism in economic development. Support is foreseen in the form of renovation, reconstruction or superstructure of the existing facilities constituting the tourist potential of the area covered by the Programme as well as construction of new touristic objects. It is also proposed that the projects implemented under the action line also increase the accessibility to existing facilities providing tourist services (run by public entities, e.g. museums or theatres) by adapting them to the needs of people with disabilities. Activities aimed at supporting tourism and cultural entities carried out by non-governmental organizations are also important, e.g. organizing events promoting the intangible heritage of the area covered by the Programme. There are proposed additional activities, including the establishment of long-term, cross-border cooperation between institutions involved in particularly valuable heritage sites and cultural institutions on both sides of the border. It is proposed that such cooperation should include exchange of good practices in the field of management of cultural goods, creation of joint touristic products and tourist routes related to the historical and cultural heritage of the Programme area. Involvement in the activities of local authorities and tourism and cultural entities will have a positive impact on social integration, and will also strengthen the promotion of the historical and cultural heritage of the Programme area.

### **3. Protection of the common natural heritage and promotion of agritourism, ecotourism and health tourism**

The Programme area is very rich in natural value, mainly coastal areas, numerous lakes, forests and primeval forests on the Polish side, as well as the presence of a large number of wetlands in the area of the Kaliningrad Oblast. Apart from that, the region is distinguished by unique landscapes of coastal sandy plains. The support area also includes areas under legal protection, such as: 6 national parks and a large number of natural reserves, landscape parks and Natura 2000 areas (the Birds and Habitats Directives). A large number of naturally valuable areas and low human interference in the natural environment and landscape in some of the subregions covered by the Programme constitute a special potential for the development of ecotourism, cycle

tourism, agritourism, health tourism, which are gaining popularity. Thanks to this potential support area has favourable conditions for the implementation of projects related to the promotion of active recreation, such as cycling projects, outdoor sports events for amateurs etc. Conducting activities related to an active recreation may also contribute to social inclusion and social integration across borders. Undertaking joint activities aimed at supporting and promoting those types of tourism in the support area may have a positive impact on increasing the popularity of the area covered by the Programme among tourists, and thus economic development and increasing the wealth of the local population.

The potential for the development of agritourism is particularly noticeable in rural areas. It is also proposed to undertake activities aimed at composing a cross-border integrated tourist offer, e.g. by creating joint cross-border products and tourist routes, as well as their active promotion. The measure also includes projects aimed at promoting ecotourism and cycle tourism as a responsible and sustainable form of using the naturally valuable areas in the supported area. Projects which are focused on creation of bicycle paths as green infrastructure and the financing of which is not possible from other sources due to their cross-border nature, can be supported by the Programme.

Promotional projects carried out under this action line may be based, for example, on the creation of a promotional campaign, films and tourist guides. The involvement of both local authorities and tourism and cultural entities in the activities will have a positive impact on social integration. Initiatives aimed at supporting promotional activities carried out by non-governmental organizations, e.g. organizing events promoting the natural values of the area covered by the Programme assumptions, will also be important. It is also proposed to undertake actions involving the establishment of long-term cross-border cooperation between institutions dealing with the development and promotion of natural heritage, agritourism, ecotourism and health tourism.

#### **4. Increasing the role of culture in social inclusion and social innovation as well as strengthening cooperation between cultural institutions across borders**

Despite taking actions aimed at social inclusion of people at risk of exclusion or socially excluded, social integration and activation of the unemployed by both countries, this problem is still important and should be given special attention. Culture plays a very important role in social inclusion. It contributes to increasing social activity, and also influences the development of the need for community and integration activities among residents. It also enables the intensification of social capital. Projects implemented in the field of culture teach how to cooperate and learn about different points of view. This favours mutual acceptance and social inclusion. For this reason, it

is proposed to undertake activities aimed at creating places of culture, as well as cultural activities aimed at social inclusion and integration of the inhabitants of the Programme area. In the case of such projects, it is very important to integrate the inhabitants of the Polish and Russian sides of the support area, due to the fact that it may significantly increase the openness of the inhabitants. Due to the many effective cooperation between partners related to history and culture on the Polish and Russian sides, among others, under the Programme for 2014-2020, high interest in projects related to this course of action is expected. It is also proposed to support activities aimed at strengthening cooperation between cultural institutions on both sides of the border, including by nurturing and promoting common cultural assets and local artists. This type of cooperation will help to strengthen the creative potential of the area and promote it in the international arena. An additional advantage of implementing this type of activities may be the promotion of common historical and cultural heritage and related natural values.

## Indicators

Table 12. Product indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate goal (2024)	Final goal (2029)
<b>Tourism</b>	Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	RCO77	Number of cultural and tourism sites supported	Cultural and tourism sites		
		RCO115	Public events across borders jointly organised	Events		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

Table 13. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	Final goal (2029)	Data source	Comments
<b>Tourism</b>	Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	RCR77	Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported	Visitors/year	0				
		RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Participation	0				
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				



## Main target groups

Actions under the Tourism priority in terms of enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation will be targeted at **people visiting the Programme area and its inhabitants**. Undertaking an intervention in this respect may significantly increase the tourist attractiveness of the support area, and thus provide a great potential for the development of entrepreneurship.

In relation to investment activities, additional initiatives are planned in the field of enhancing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation, especially in the context of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic e.g. organization of events, workshops, trainings, conferences, exchange of good practices among specialists operating in the Programme area. The participants of such events may be all, i.e. **residents, entrepreneurs, local government units, non-governmental organizations** operating in the Programme area.

Activities under this specific objective may be undertaken by the following beneficiaries:

- Units of public, regional and local administration, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them,
- Other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies),
- Organizations and institutions operating in the field of culture,
- Units of higher education and research institutions (including branches of the research institutions without the status of legal bodies),
- Administrations and managements of nature protection areas, such as national parks, landscape parks, biosphere reserves, etc.,
- Business Support Institutions,
- Non-governmental organizations.

## Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of integrated territorial investments, community-led local development or other territorial tools

Due to the fact that on the Russian side of the Programme area there are no instruments corresponding to those applied in the European Union, e.g. integrated territorial investments, therefore the use of specific territorial tools is not applicable at the Programme level. It was decided not to designate any target areas, and thus the entire Programme area will be covered by the support.

## 2.4. PRIORITY: COOPERATION

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: ENHANCE EFFICIENT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION BY PROMOTING LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE COOPERATION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN CITIZENS, CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS, IN PARTICULAR, WITH A VIEW TO RESOLVING LEGAL AND OTHER OBSTACLES IN BORDER REGIONS

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

In order to increase the efficiency of public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation as well as integration between citizens and institutions, it is proposed to undertake actions such as:

**1. Lobbying activities aimed at removing barriers to cross-border cooperation and promoting participation in joint activities of administrative units, societies and organizations for activating the economy as well as non-governmental organizations across borders**

The territorial analysis shows a number of barriers and problems that hinder cross-border cooperation between entities from both sides of the border, such as the language barrier, cultural differences, different administration methods, differences in the way of doing business in individual countries, the lack of a coherent information system on the possibility of setting up a business in a neighbouring country and the high costs of setting up such activity. The existing cooperation between local governments is at a fairly good level, however, there is still a high potential for the development of this cooperation in area covered by the Programme. It is proposed to undertake a number of activities aimed at improving the possibilities of cross-border cooperation of administrative units, business entities and non-governmental organizations. An example of this type of undertaking may be the organization of joint workshops or conferences aimed at developing common solutions to the identified barriers and problems in Polish-Russian cooperation. It is also proposed to popularize access to information on legal, fiscal and formal conditions related to running a business in individual countries of the supported area.

## **2. Jointly organized public cross-border events, supporting the integration of representatives of authorities, public entities, universities, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations and residents, as well as supporting entities in establishing cooperation**

Due to the high potential of cooperation between Polish and Russian entities, which is not fully used, limited mobility between Polish subregions and the Kaliningrad Oblast, as well as complicated procedures and different legislation, it is proposed to undertake actions aimed at creating joint strategies and cross-border cooperation development plans and organizing events such as conferences, meetings, workshops or fairs aimed at stimulating new and existing economic ties and promoting jointly operating organizations of entrepreneurs contributing to the economic development of the area covered by the Programme. These types of events also represent a great potential for the integration of local government officials and non-governmental organizations, which may result in strengthening relations between them and undertaking joint actions in the future. It may also be very helpful to support advisory services provided to entities willing to cooperate with a foreign partner, consisting in indicating the most advantageous ways to undertake this type of activity. In the context of this course of action, it is also very important to support emergency services (including firefighters) in the form of joint training or purchase of equipment to respond to similar threats on both sides of the border.

## Indicators

Table 14. Product indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate goal (2024)	Final goal (2029)
Cooperation	Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solutions developed		

Table 15. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Identification number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	Final goal (2029)	Data source	Comments
Cooperation	Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy / action plan	0				

	resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solutions applied	0				
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## Main target groups

Actions under the specific objective Cooperation, in terms of increasing the efficiency of public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions, especially in order to eliminate legal obstacles and other barriers in border regions, will be targeted at the **inhabitants of the Programme area**. Intervention in this area may also favor entrepreneurs and representatives of local government units by facilitating local government cooperation and conducting cross-border economic activity, which may contribute, inter alia, to the creation of new jobs and greater integration of local communities.

There are planned initiatives aimed at increasing the efficiency of public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation as well as cooperation between citizens and institutions, especially to eliminate legal obstacles and other barriers in border regions, e.g. in the form of public consultations, workshops and conferences in the supported area. Everybody can participate of such events, i.e. residents, entrepreneurs, local government units, non-governmental organizations and scientific and research operating in the Programme area.

Activities under this specific objective may be undertaken by the following beneficiaries:

- Units of public, regional and local administration, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them,
- Other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies),
- Non-governmental organizations,
- Emergency services,
- Schools and educational institutions,
- Units of higher education and research institutions (including branches of the research institutions without the status of legal bodies),
- Business Support Institutions.

## Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of integrated territorial investments, community-led local development or other territorial tools

Due to the fact that on the Russian side of the Programme area there are no instruments corresponding to those applied in the European Union, e.g. integrated territorial investments, therefore the use of specific territorial tools is not applicable at the Programme level. It was decided not to designate any target areas, and thus the entire Programme area will be covered by the support.

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SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: BUILD UP MUTUAL TRUST, IN PARTICULAR BY ENCOURAGING PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE ACTIONS

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

As part of the specific objective related to the integration of the area's community and building mutual trust, the following activities are assumed:

**1. Supporting joint cross-border initiatives to activate and integrate communities from the Programme area.**

The territorial analysis shows that a level of social integration and social commitment of the inhabitants can be improved. In the cross-border dimension, this may be influenced, among others, by language barrier, cultural differences, , visa regime, limitations in maintaining permanent cross-border contacts. In order to increase the integration of residents and social involvement in the Programme area, it is proposed to undertake activities enabling joint creation of projects, building or strengthening social ties in the Programme area.

**2. Social inclusion of marginalized groups in joint activities across borders favouring social inclusion**

A significant problem observed in the Programme area is the risk of social exclusion. In order to minimize the impact of the above-mentioned problem affecting the life of residents, it is proposed to take a number of actions aimed at social inclusion and integration of individual groups with special needs. This type of activities aimed at integration and social inclusion may also relate to thematic issues related to, inter alia, activation of the unemployed (for example in form of improving computer skills, language courses) or increasing awareness of the needs of people with disabilities. It is possible to implement projects concerning, among others implementation of training programmes, workshops and integration meetings. This will allow the exchange of good practices between countries as well as strengthening ties between recipients of support on both sides of the border.

**3. Support for the activities of educational and research institutions in the field of cross-border cooperation, including integration and educational or research activities, and transfer of innovative solutions.**

Due to the insufficient level of social integration and the language barrier, cultural differences, it is important to continue the integration of the community including in the form of youth or student exchanges. Such initiatives will allow the elimination of barriers. Promotion and organization of exchanges among schoolchildren or at

universities in the area covered by the Programme helps mutual understanding, including respect of someone else's cultural identity. They will also pay attention to the socio-cultural similarity between the inhabitants of the support area. Educational programmes and initiatives should be related to the unique character of border areas, in particular related to the common cultural and natural heritage. Youth exchanges also provide the opportunity to strengthen ties between participants and create long-term relationships. It is also proposed to organize exchanges among the research staff of the support area, which may accompany activities consisting in the transfer of innovative solutions or the exchange of good practices between academic staff



## Indicators

**Table 16. Product indicators**

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Intermediate objective (2024)	End objective (2029)
<b>Cooperation</b>	Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions	RCO85	Participations in joint training schemes	Participation		
		RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisations		
		RCO115	Public events across borders jointly organised	Events		

Table 17. Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID number	Indicator	Unit of measure	Base value	Reference year	End objective (2029)	Data source	Comments
<b>Cooperation</b>	Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions	RCR81	Completion of joint training schemes	Participants completion	0				
		RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Organisations	0				
		RCR85	Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion	Participation	0				

## Main target groups

The main target groups of measures under the priority Cooperation, in terms of building mutual trust by encouraging people-to-people contacts, will be the **inhabitants of the Programme area**. Intervention in this area may contribute to the integration of local communities, youth, employees of educational institutions and research staff across borders.

Activities under this specific objective may be undertaken by the following beneficiaries:

- Units of public, regional and local administration, associations of these units and institutions subordinate to them,
- Other public law entities (e.g. chambers, government administration bodies),
- Schools and educational institutions,
- Units of higher education and research institutions (including branches of the research institutions without the status of legal bodies),
- Business Support Institutions,
- Organizations and institutions operating in the field of culture,
- Non-governmental organizations,

## Specific territories targeted, including the planned use of integrated territorial investments, community-led local development or other territorial tools

Due to the fact that on the Russian side of the Programme area there are no instruments corresponding to those applied in the European Union, e.g. integrated territorial investments, therefore the use of specific territorial tools is not applicable at the Programme level. It was decided not to designate any target areas, and thus the entire Programme area will be covered by the support.