



Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund

a chance for you



History of the project; implemented activities

Our project dates back to 16th February 2007 when one of Polish national newspapers published an invitation to submitting of projects aiming at supporting cross-border cooperation. The invitation, made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asked for applications that in their second stage would request the co-financing from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the EEA Financial Mechanism. On the same day, the Board of the Association of Polish Communes convened their meeting in Elbląg, which made it possible for them to hear the proposal, and subsequently to agree to apply. In the course of the preparatory work the decision was taken for the Association to singlehandedly submit the application for the co-financing of the programme-type project with the main objective of actively supporting international cooperation in our area. The co-financing would be granted by both the Financial Mechanisms.

The support for cooperation at the local level is the major objective for our Association in Poland and the Euroregion internationally, and the one we have been implementing for a number of years now (since 1998), also by means of financial resources acquired from the EU. For example, between 1999 and 2006 the Association implemented the Phare Small Project Fund and used 6 million EUR of this pre-accession fund to co-finance 216 cross-border projects. Another important role for the Association is to promote cross-border cooperation among local governments as a growth factor that can be effectively applied in their municipalities, communes, counties and regions.

The application for the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund project was submitted to the second call in April 2007 and approved for implementation on 10 June 2008 with the decision of the Committee of the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The project is open for all potentially interested applicants, regardless of the fact whether they are or are not members of the Association (which at present comprises 83 communes and counties, out of more than 300 in the two regions), who meet general eligibility criteria for the beneficiaries. Its target group includes self-government of all levels, their subordinate units, other non-profit organisations ready to develop cross-border and inter-regional cooperation in the following areas: inter-action of administration of all levels, transfer of knowledge from more developed regions to less developed ones, eco-tourism, promotion of regional development, and development of information systems.

As a result of the project, the Association becomes institutionally strengthened with both larger and more experienced staff, as well as with administrative support from the project. It is also our hope that our activities within the project will encourage more local governments to join in the Association.

The implementation of the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund project began as scheduled in July 2008. Within the first sixteen months of its duration 1 kick-off conference, 2 calls for proposals, 14 trainings for beneficiaries with more than 400 people trained, and 5 Steering Committee meetings were organised.

Within the three calls for proposals 95 applications have been submitted and 52 approved for implementation. The third call is still in progress due to its open character. 9 more applications have so far been successfully submitted. The contracting period is planned to close before the end of December 2010.

This publication is an attempt at first analyses of the implementation status of the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund project (as of October 2009) which will focus on the objectives pursued, partnerships developed, actions taken within the sub-projects and activity displayed by the beneficiaries from our regions.





Implementing the objectives of the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund

In accordance with its objectives, the Fund supports sub-projects aiming at strengthening the cooperation of public administration units at the local and regional levels by transferring knowledge from more advanced territories to less advanced territories, promoting eco-tourism, activating social initiatives in a number of areas and developing information systems. As a result, the Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic (together with the partners: the regional governments in Pomerania and Warmia and Masuria) has intensified its activities benefiting the enhancement of cross-border and inter-regional cooperation in the territory of both the regions. In the long-term perspective these activities should contribute to the improved competitiveness of the two regions by increasing the significance of international cooperation as a growth factor in the regions.

It should be noted here that although the impact of individual micro-projects is limited, their cumulative impact becomes noticeable in the scale of the two regions.

A short description of the project implementation status is presented with focus on its specific objectives. A detailed and categorised report, which is usually of sizeable scale, will be included in the final report.

Project objective:

strengthening cooperation at local and regional levels of public administration through knowledge transfer.

As observed, the sub-projects within this objective can be divided into several groups depending on the specificity of impact area. These are:

1. Cooperation in the area of utilising existing conditions, like the joint creation of tourism products, in the socio-economic growth (both locally and regionally);
2. Cooperation in the area of improving skills of the employees of local and regional government institutions in a number of fields;
3. Partnership building with the aim of solving common problems, implementing joint development initiatives, also by exchanging experiences and adopting best practices, which will in the future form a basis for new projects outside the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund.

It seems worthwhile to look into the projects implemented also in the context of the changes proposed into the regional development policy in Poland after 2010. The new National Regional Development Strategy claims that the new regional policy in Poland 'aims at introducing and realising changes referred to as a "regional policy's new paradigm", and the major changes should take place specifically by avoiding to see the regional policy exclusively through spatial differences measured at the level of regions, and switching into making use of territories' endogenous potentials in order to achieve the objectives of the development policy: growth inducement, employment and cohesion'. We saw a few of the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund sub-projects focused their activities around joint definition of endogenous growth potentials and around methods of their application. This dimension of the cooperation has been particularly present in the bilateral Polish-Russian sub-projects, which is a result of the cross-border character of the area, shared interests of the local governments along Poland's eastern border. More and more of the Polish self-governmental representatives are aware of the opportunities resulting from the geographical location of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie region in such a vicinity to the border. Consequently, the Polish-Russian cross-border cooperation is becoming increasingly significant in our everyday relations.

The administrative reform in Kaliningrad Oblast under implementation between 2009 and 2010 is another stimulus, especially on the Russian side, driving Russian partners into tighter cooperation. Polish participants in such sub-projects,





on their part, have been able to make direct observations of the reform process and transfer their experiences, and thus build future partnerships and mutual trust.

Another field wherein the objectives of the first priority have been met is the enhancement of skills of the employees working in territorial government institutions. Investment into human capital is seen as investment into growth (also in the new regional policy approach). It has been of use not only for the administration of municipalities and communes directly but also by their subordinate units, e.g. libraries, cultural centres, social care institutions, etc. The trainings involved could thus be tailor-made to best suit given groups of employees, which was of great importance. Specialist trainings have been held in e.g. operating latest software, renewable energy, applying new techniques in workshops for children and youth, in library work or good management practices in healthcare work.

The objective of the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund enabling the transfer of knowledge from more developed regions to less developed ones has been widely accessed by our beneficiaries to support the organisation of study visits facilitating the acquisition of specific and practical knowledge on how local government operates and implements its statutory tasks, meetings, conferences, presentations at partners' premises. There have been a number of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral projects of this kind. Polish territorial governments have been making use of knowledge and experience of their partners to solve problems they have encountered in a wide range of interests, e.g. protection of historic heritage, renewable energy, operation of municipal services, safety, public-private partnership, inter-action of local governments and the third sector, attraction of investors, environmental protection, tourism development, etc. These projects have presented a series of comparative exercises related to the activity of local governments and their subordinate units on the basis of the following model: western patterns – Polish patterns – eastern patterns, in which case the direction of the transfer has been from the West to the East. However, in the case of bilateral projects of this type, the transfer direction was not so obvious. In some instances, Polish partners could offer their valuable experiences and ready to use tested cooperation models.

Project objective:
activating social initiatives in some areas (health, entrepreneurship)

A few projects have been implemented with activities verging on more than one objectives. These include the projects executed by the local government in either the area of supporting entrepreneurship or healthcare, including public health. There have also been sub-projects submitted by typical non-governmental organisations, some with significantly innovative elements (e.g. projects developed in England have been transferred thanks to the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund). The aim of the Fund is to disseminate information on the possibilities to co-finance activities primarily in public health since entrepreneurial development is supported by a number of other cross-border and inter-regional facilities. Out of 52 sub-projects in total three have dealt with healthcare, including public health.



Project objective:
strengthening eco-tourism

This is an extremely popular objective among the beneficiaries of our programme. A number of sub-projects (similarly to the objective described above) have combined two or more areas, e.g. the cooperation of self-governments and eco-tourism. The partners involved have thus not only increased the level of their cooperation but have also enhanced their skills, built broad eco-tourism coalitions making use of cultural and natural heritage, cooperated in environmental protection and renewable energy sources. The activities within the projects have targeted a wide range of potential recipients, social groups interested in the development of eco-tourism: children and youth (mainly through education), territorial government representatives, potential service providers, scientists, to-be tourists and inhabitants of the regions.





Project objective: **development of information systems**

Two sub-projects co-financed by the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund fall into this objective. One Lead Beneficiary is the Marshal's Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie region, the other a non-governmental organisation. The Marshal's Office's project deals with the application of GIS (geographical information systems) in everyday work of the territorial government. The other sub-project, approved within the first tranche of the third call is concerned with civic media as information systems. It is our hope to make further promotion of this particular project.



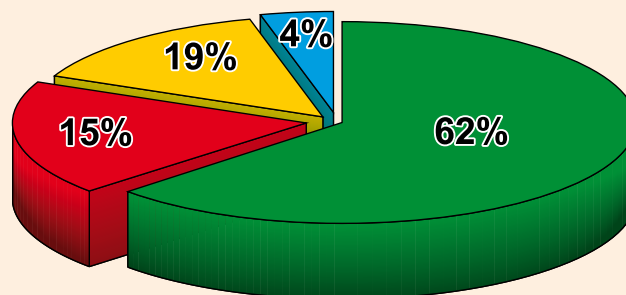
Summary:





No of objective	Objective	No of related projects
1	strengthening cooperation at local and regional levels of public administration through knowledge transfer	32 = 61.54%
1 a	cooperation in the area of utilising existing conditions, like the joint creation of tourism products, in the socio-economic growth (both locally and regionally)	6
1 b	cooperation in the area of improving skills of the employees of local and regional government institutions in a number of fields	12
1 c	partnership building with the aim of solving common problems, implementing joint development initiatives	14
2	activating social initiatives in some areas (health, entrepreneurship)	8 = 15.38%
3	strengthening eco-tourism	10 = 19.23%
4	development of information systems	2 = 3.85%





Implementation of objectives



-  strengthening cooperation at local and regional levels of public administration through knowledge transfer
-  activating social initiatives in some areas (health, entrepreneurship)
-  strengthening eco-tourism
-  development of information systems

Partnerships

In accordance with the objectives stipulated in the application all the submitted and implemented sub-projects have related to international cooperation, both at the local and regional level. As expected, most sub-project proposals have involved bilateral Polish-Russian cross-border cooperation. There have, however, been a significant number of sub-projects within the EEA and EFTA partnerships.

The table below shows partnership data of the implemented projects:

Partnership \ Projects	Projects		
Russia (Kaliningrad Oblast)	17	Ukraine / Germany	1
Germany	9	Lithuania / Russia	1
Lithuania	3	Italy / Switzerland	1
Denmark	3	Lithuania / Belarus	1
England	1	Denmark / Ukraine	1
Italy	1	Lithuania / Germany	1
Ukraine	1	Sweden / Italy	1
Sweden	1	Sweden / Norway	1
France	1	Norway / Russia	1
Czech Republic / France	1	Lithuania / Latvia / Sweden	1
Russia / Germany	2	Germany / Sweden / Lithuania / France	1
Latvia / Russia	1		





All the sub-projects have a Polish Lead Beneficiary, be it organisation, institution or territorial government. One is glad to see multi-partner projects where one partnership involves a few foreign partners and more than one Polish organization and/or institution. The table indicates numbers of organisations taking part in the sub-projects, broken down to individual countries:



No of organisations	54	No of organisations	66
POLAND		Russia (Kaliningrad Oblast)	20
Beneficiaries	45	Germany	14
Partners	9	Lithuania	7
		Denmark	3
		England	1
		Italy	3
		Ukraine	3
		Sweden	5
		Czech Republic	2
		Latvia	2
		France	2
		Switzerland	1
		Belarus	1
		Norway	2

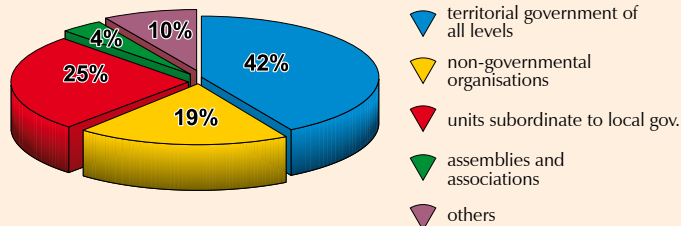


Activity of beneficiaries

The list below presents most active group of beneficiaries. 52 approved projects have been implemented by 45 Polish lead partners (various types of organisations and institutions). 7 of these lead beneficiaries have received parallel support for two sub-projects under implementation. Local governments and their subordinate bodies constitute the most active group of beneficiaries, 67% of all project applicants.

Most active groups include:

- | | | |
|---|---------------|----------|
| 1. Territorial government of all levels: | – 22 projects | – 42,30% |
| 2. Non-governmental organisations: | – 10 projects | – 19,23% |
| 3. Units subordinate to local government: | – 13 projects | – 25,00% |
| 4. Assemblies and associations: | – 2 projects | – 3,85% |
| 5. others | – 5 projects | – 9,62% |



There may be a few reasons behind such a distribution of activity among the different types of beneficiaries. The most significant factor is naturally that of the character of the objectives of the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund, which imposes the choice of territorial governmental bodies and their subordinate units as lead beneficiaries. Another explanation of the low activity level of non-governmental organisations could be their insufficient financial standing (since sub-projects must be in fact pre-financed with the advance payment not exceeding 20% of the sub-project budget), and the necessity of involving a foreign partner where not all non-governmental organisations pursue international cooperation. Within the scope of its capacities and limitations, the Association of the Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic assists applicants in search for partners from abroad, but this particular condition should still be considered as a significant obstacle.





Finances

Activity 2 (Re-granting) has an allocation of 1 million 844 thousand 530 EUR. The project includes 3 calls, of which 2 have already been held. The third call is in progress. The following statistics consider the data after the first tranche of the third call.

	1 st call	2 nd call	3 rd call	Total
Submitted projects	41 sub-projects	35 sub-projects	19 sub-projects	95 sub-projects
<i>Total budget</i>	1 284 612.64	1 002 619.68	551 883.74	2 839 116.06
<i>Co-financing</i>	1 068 722,52	819 149.17	459 721.88	2 347 593.57
Rejected after technical evaluation	8	6	4	18
<i>Total budget</i>	252 800.50	156 053.40	108 515.49	517 369.39
<i>Co-financing</i>	211 681.06	117 199.34	92 913.17	421 793.57
Contracted	20	23	9	52
<i>Total budget</i>	581 291.59	670 900.95	251 325.23	1 503 517.77
<i>Co-financing</i>	485 247.41	554 866.92	204 416.04	1 244 530.37
<i>National financing declared</i>	96 044.18	116 034.03	46 909.19	258 987.40

Average amounts (in EUR) of the approved projects:

	Total budget	Co-financing amount	Co-financing %
1 st call	29 064.60	24 262.37	83.48
2 nd call	29 169.61	24 124.64	82.70
3 rd call	27 925.03	22 712.89	81.33
Average for 52 sub-projects	28 913.80	23 933.28	82.77





One of the sub-projects is presented below.

Tourism on the Polish-Russian border

The seven-month long project, Cross-Border Tourism World – Conditions and Perspectives of the Development of Border Areas, has come to an end.

The initiative undertaken by the Department of Promotion and Local Development of the Municipal Administration of Bartoszyce has been possible due to the financial means acquired through the Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund within the framework of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the EEA Financial Mechanism.

The project targeted directly entrepreneurs, owners of small and medium enterprises operating in the tourism business, as well as the administration civil servants working with the issues of tourism, promotion and local development. The project indirect beneficiaries have been tourists. The project has resulted in the organisation of a two-day training for actors dealing with tourism and an agro-tourism training, in the construction of the Joint Strategy for the Promotion and Development of Cross-Border Tourism, in the publication of a Polish–Russian brochure summing up the project and including photographic documentation, in the construction of the project website, in the commissioning of two information boards presenting touristic attractions, monuments and sights of interest in the border area around Bartoszyce, Bagrationovsk and Pionersk, and of the seven more boards describing historic monuments with texts translated into English, Russian and German.

The time has thus come to summarise the project. Let us ask ourselves the following question. Has the project been successful?

The main objective of the project has been to define common directions for the development and promotion of tourism in the border territories



including the areas of Bartoszyce, Bagratonovsk and Pionersk, as well as to enhance cross-border cooperation.

Joint actions in the field of tourism constitute one of the most significant stimuli of economic growth.

How have the past several months been for us? Well, we have definitely been working hard.

Participating in joint initiatives, seminars, trainings, courses, etc has enabled us to understand better our neighbors from across the border, bringing their problems closer. With this project we have created conditions for the inhabitants of our cross-border territory to learn about each other more, to familiarise themselves with each other's history and present, to be able to find what brings them together and to get over mistrust and disinclination. It has been good to work hard. We now know we share opportunities and we have told our children to work together and continue developing the contacts we made. We may be speaking different languages at home but the most significant achievement of our project has been the facilitation of a favourable cross-border climate which will make it easier to broaden the opportunities for entrepreneurial development and tourism traffic intensification, as well as to further develop personal and commercial contacts. With the project we have created a cooperative platform where information and experience in tourism can be exchanged. Moreover, we hope to build solid and permanent cooperation structures to implement common tourism development policies.

The Cross-Border Tourism World – Conditions and Perspectives of the Development of Border Areas project has been greatly successful. We are sure more will be achieved in this area in the future, not only thanks to this project. For all of us who have participated in the project the border has become not the dividing line but the line of understanding. We have been able to find out about our territories' strengths and weaknesses and the meetings we have held have proven to be the proper steps into more integration and cooperation between the tourism sector and local governments.





The cross-border area of Bartoszyce, Bagratonovsk and Pionersk possesses an enormous potential as to the growth of tourism economy (favourable location, resources and natural conditions, inflow of capital into the cross-border area, financing opportunities from EU funds). The challenge remains to overcome the problem of the lacking coordination of promotional and marketing activities and the limited information on touristic offer. To address the situation will be possible by involving in cross-border cooperation more partners in Poland and Russia. Our project will positively improve the access of the inhabitants and visitors to the assets of regional cultural heritage. It will furthermore increase awareness of similarities and differences between the two cultures and traditions.

I would like to thank all of you, the project participants who have made the effort worthwhile. Our project has come to an end but we are satisfied with the experience and belief that we should continue with the cooperation.

written by
Katarzyna Basak
Head of the Department of
Promotion and Local Development

Location of sub-projects

(seats of the Polish applicants in the regions
of Pomerania, and Warmia and Masuria, as of October 2009)



Geographical scope of sub-project partnerships

(as of October 2009)

