RECOMMENDATIONS
on improvement of granting and using assistance for Ukraine by the European Union within the framework of the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programme

CHERNIHIV 2018
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Territorial Cooperation Programme

Recommendations are based on the results of the research conducted within the project "Strengthening Public Impact on Development of Territorial Cooperation between Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova". The project was implemented by the NGO "Center for Cross-Border Cooperation" (Chernihiv) in partnership with the Association of Regional Analytical Centers under the auspices of the Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum with financial support from the European Union and International Renaissance Foundation within the framework of the grant component of the Civic Synergy Project.

Chernihiv - 2018
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General information on the project

The recommendations are based on the results of a study conducted within the framework of the project "Strengthening Public Impact on Development of Territorial Cooperation between Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova". The project was implemented by the NGO "Center for Cross-Border Cooperation" (Chernihiv) in partnership with the Association of Regional Analytical Centers under the auspices of the Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum with financial support from the European Union and International Renaissance Foundation within the framework of the grant component of the Civic Synergy Project.

The overall objective of the project is to improve the practice of granting and using assistance to Ukraine from the EU through the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programmes Moldova-Ukraine and Belarus-Ukraine, advocating ways to overcome the barriers that arise during their implementation and further development of cross-border cooperation.

The target audience of the project is the representatives of government authorities and non-governmental organizations of the regions of Ukraine, which are covered by the Programmes, representatives of the Parliament and central executive authorities of Ukraine (Government Office for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Ministry for Regional Development, Construction and Housing and Communal Services of Ukraine, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine, other ministries according to the sectoral priorities of the Programs), the European institutions (EC, EEAS, Committee of Regions), the structures of the Eastern Partnership (Civil Society Forum, CORLEAP), the Managing Authority and the team of the Territorial Cooperation Support Programme.

The target regions of the project are those covered by the geography of the programmes Moldova-Ukraine (Chernivtsi, Vinnysia, Odesa) and Belarus-Ukraine (Volyn, Rivne, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Chernihiv).

The content of this publication is solely responsible NGO "Center for Cross-Border Cooperation" and does not necessarily reflect the point of view of the European Union and the International Renaissance Foundation
**General description of the Programme**

The Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programme (EaPTC) is a pilot initiative launched by the European Commission in 2012. Territorial cooperation programmes open an opportunity for the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries to identify and jointly address common challenges for the border regions towards sustainable economic and social development at local level.

The overall objective of the EaPTC is sustainable territorial cooperation between border regions to benefit their social and economic development. Specific objective of the Programme is strengthening cross-border contacts between local authorities, communities and civil society organizations for the development of joint solutions to common social and economic challenges.

The main stakeholders of the Programme are state and non-state institutions with a capacity to develop and implement territorial cooperation programmes. State institutions: local and regional authorities, public service providers (hospitals, educational and research institutions, communal and social service entities, cultural institutions). Non-state institutions include a wide range of civil society organizations (independent political and research foundations, citizens’ initiatives and unions, trade unions, youth organizations, associations of small and medium-sized enterprises, etc.).

During November 2012-December 2016, the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Support Programme was in operation. Its main objective was to promote sustainable cross-border cooperation between border regions of the Eastern Partnership countries for development of joint solutions to common challenges in border areas. That was planned to be achieved through creation of favorable environment for establishment of territorial cooperation between regions along the borders Armenia – Georgia, Azerbaijan – Georgia, Belarus – Ukraine and Moldova – Ukraine with due regard to specifics of each border area, as well as by strengthening the capacity of local and regional state and non-state actors of regions for development and implementation of cross-border projects.

Territorial cooperation covers four regional programmes between the border regions of: Azerbaijan and Georgia, Armenia and Georgia, Belarus and Ukraine, Moldova and Ukraine.

The total budget of the EaPTC Programme amounted to EUR 17.5 million, including: Support Programme – EUR 5.0 million, the Managing Authority (GIZ) – EUR 3.2 million, Belarus-Ukraine Programme – EUR 3.3 million, Moldova-Ukraine Programme – EUR 3.3 million, Armenia-Georgia Programme – EUR 1.35 million, Azerbaijan-Georgia Programme – EUR 1.35 million.

The total EU contribution to the EaPTC is EUR 12.5 million.

Management structure of territorial cooperation programmes includes:
- joint managing committees for each territorial cooperation programme;

– Managing Authority of the Territorial Cooperation Programme.

The Joint Decision Making Committee was created by two partner countries of each territorial cooperation programme. The committee was attended by representatives of the central government, local authorities and civil society organizations. The Joint Decision Making Committee performed the following functions:

– identification of priorities of each Programme in cooperation with the EaPTC Support Programme and approval of a joint operational program;
– determining the optimal allocation of the Programme resources in accordance with its priorities;
– determination of criteria for projects selection, including development of application forms for applicants;
– selection of projects to be financed under the Territorial Cooperation Programme in agreement with the Programme Managing Authority;
– monitoring the results of activities in the process of implementing programmes goals by studying messages submitted by the Programme Managing Authority.

In December 2013, the European Commission appointed the Managing Authority of the EaPTC Programme and signed an empowerment agreement with the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). GIZ is responsible for the operational and financial management of the EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes:

– preparation of call for project proposals;
– collection and processing of project applications;
– organization of the projects selection process;
– signing contracts for grants and making payments;
– control of operational and financial issues during projects implementation;
– submission reports on financial and organizational implementation of projects to the European Commission.

Within the framework of each of the four territorial cooperation programmes, one call for proposals has been conducted.

**Moldova-Ukraine Programme**

The Joint Operational Programme Moldova-Ukraine was approved by the Joint Decision Making Committee meeting on October 6, 2014 in Kyiv.

The eligible area of the TC Programme Moldova-Ukraine includes the whole territory of Moldova and Chernivtsi, Odesa and Vinnytsia regions of Ukraine.

Operational objectives of the Programme are:

I. Improving the living conditions of local communities in the border regions through joint projects supporting economic and social development:

– promotion of closer business links across the border;
– diversification of income sources and development of alternative employment opportunities in rural areas.

II. Addressing common challenges in the fields of environment, employment, public health and any other field of common interest having a cross border dimension:
- solving cross-border environmental problems, enhancing emergency preparedness.

III. Culture, education and sports:
- promotion of multi-cultural diversity and social integration of ethничal minorities across the border;
- facilitation of people-to-people links in social sphere, culture, education and sports with focus on youth issues.

Structure of the Joint Decision Making Committee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republic of Moldova</th>
<th>Ukraine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. State Chancellery</td>
<td>1. Ministry of Economic Development and Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration</td>
<td>2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ministry of Finance</td>
<td>3. Chernivtsi Regional State Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Association of Heads of Districts of Moldova</td>
<td>5. Odesa Regional State Administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terms of financing. The amount of grants is set at a minimum of EUR 60,000 and a maximum of EUR 250,000. Grants for projects selected for funding amount to a maximum of 90% of the total eligible project costs and should be co-financed from sources other than the budget of the European Union and the European Development Fund.

Financial allocation among the operational objectives:
- Operational objective I. Improving living conditions 40 per cent;
- Operational objective II. Addressing common challenges 40 per cent;
- Operational objective III. Culture, education and sports 20 per cent.

Calls for proposals within the Programme was announced on April 15, 2015. The submission of project proposals was finished on July 14, 2015. In total, 136 proposals were received from Moldovan and Ukrainian partners. The signing of contracts took place on February 1, 2017. Currently, 15 winning projects are being implemented.

**Belarus-Ukraine Programme**

The final draft of the Joint Operational Programme Belarus-Ukraine as of November 27, 2014 was approved by written procedure after the 1st meeting of the Joint Decision Making Committee.

The eligible area of the Territorial Cooperation Programme Belarus-Ukraine includes:
- Belarus: Brest and Gomel regions;
- Ukraine: Volyn, Rivne, Zhytomyr, Kyiv and Chernihiv regions.

Operational objectives of the Programme:
1. Improving the living conditions of local communities in the border regions through joint projects supporting economic and social development:
   - support to small- and medium-size enterprises (SME) by enhancing business-related information infrastructure with special focus on cross-border trade;
   - raising touristic and investment attraction of regions;
human capital and employment, career guidance for youth, social inclusion of disabled.

II. Addressing common challenges in the fields of environment, employment, public health and any other field of common interest having a cross border dimension:
  – joint monitoring and information exchange on environmental situation, energy saving, renewable energy sources, and waste management;
  – public health – disease prevention and early diagnostics.

III. Culture, education and sports:
  – preservation of cultural and historic heritage, promotion of cooperation in the areas of culture and sport.

Structure of the Joint Decision Making Committee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republic of Belarus</th>
<th>Ukraine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>1. Ministry of Economic Development and Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. National Coordinating Unit of EU TACIS Programme in the Republic of Belarus (2 representatives)</td>
<td>2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Brest Regional Executive Committee</td>
<td>3. Volyn Regional State Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gomel Regional Executive Committee</td>
<td>4. Rivne Regional State Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gomel Regional Development Agency</td>
<td>5. Zhytomyr Regional State Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Civil society representative</td>
<td>6. Kyiv Regional State Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Gomel Regional Development Agency</td>
<td>7. Chernihiv Regional State Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukrainian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terms of financing. The amount of grants is set at a minimum of EUR 60,000 and a maximum of EUR 250,000. Grants for projects selected for funding amount to a maximum of 90% of the total eligible project costs and should be co-financed from sources other than the budget of the European Union and the European Development Fund.

Financial allocation among the operational objectives:
- Operational objective I. Improving living conditions 40 per cent;
- Operational objective II. Addressing common challenges 40 per cent;
- Operational objective III. Culture, education and sports 20 per cent.

Call for proposals within the Programme was announced on April 19, 2016. The submission of project proposals was finished on May 19, 2016. In total, 148 applications were received². The signing of contracts took place on November 29, 2017. Currently, 18 winning projects are being implemented.

²http://eaptc.eu/struct_file.php?id=400
General research information

Problem description
The Joint Communique A New Response to a Changing Neighborhood as of May 25, 2011 underscored the importance of cross-border cooperation between the Eastern Partnership countries as one of the tools to overcome the economic inequalities of the regions and improve the quality of life on the basis of sustainable development. In 2012, the European Commission launched the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programme (hereinafter – the Programme), aimed at developing sustainable cooperation between the border regions for their socio-economic development. Ukraine participates in two programmes – Moldova-Ukraine and Belarus-Ukraine (hereinafter – the Programmes), which are pilot projects and each of them provides for a single call for proposals. Despite the calls held in 2015 and 2016, the implementation of projects started only in late 2017, which threatens to solve many of the current problems of the border regions, as well as prospects for further support of these programs by the EU in the next budget cycle.

Research subject
Problem points and inconsistencies in organizational, thematic, financial and other aspects of a) preparation and implementation of the Programmes; b) development, selection and implementation of the winning projects supported by the Programmes.

Research objective
Development of recommendations for improving the practice of granting and using assistance to Ukraine from the EU through the territorial cooperation programmes Moldova-Ukraine and Belarus-Ukraine on the basis of analysis of preparation and implementation of these Programmes in the target regions of Ukraine.

Research task
1. Analysis of the process of preparation of operational programmes for the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Support Moldova-Ukraine and Belarus-Ukraine.
2. Analysis of holding a call for proposals and concluding contracts.
3. Analysis of the start and implementation of the winning projects.
4. Preparation and discussion of expert conclusions based on the research results in the regions.
5. Drafting of general recommendations for improving the practice of granting and using EU assistance to Ukraine under the Programmes.

Structural chart of indicators of the research subject
Experts judgments will be the indicators in the research with regard to:
- effectiveness of organizational procedures for preparation of operational programs;
- effectiveness of measures to find the Belarusian and Moldovan partners, conducted with the Programmes support;
- general activity of the Managing Authority (GIZ);
– work of decision-making bodies of the Programmes;
– information support for preparation of Programmes and call for proposals;
– thematic areas of calls for proposals;
– requirements for the package of calls for proposals documents;
– procedures for selection and approval of projects;
– start and implementation of winning projects;
– support of projects by the Programmes;
– project reporting.

Research instrumentarium
The research was carried out on the basis of conducting expert interviews in selected regions with further discussion of the results during expert discussions in all target regions. The interview was conducted within the region in the form of a questionnaire.

Representatives from three organizations were elected as experts:
– winning organizations of the call for proposals;
– organizations which participated in informational meetings and/or call for proposals as the main applicant and/or partner;
– regional state administrations whose representatives were involved in the work on the operational programme or have information on the research subject.

The average number of respondents per region is 3-5 people; the total number of respondents is 35 persons.

Research results

Territorial features of the Programme implementation
It is important to take into account the specific features of the Ukrainian regions under the Programme area to analyze the processes of development and implementation of the Programme.

Ukraine participates in two Programmes – Moldova-Ukraine and Belarus-Ukraine. Both Programmes include regions that have significant differences regarding the experience of participating in the EU cross-border cooperation programmes. Thus, Volyn and Rivne regions have been involved in the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-border Cooperation Programme since 2007. Chernivtsi region has experience of participation as the main territory in the TACIS CBC Romania-Ukraine Programme (2001-2006), the Romania-Ukraine-Moldova ENPI Joint Operational Programme (2007-2013); now the Romania-Ukraine Programme (2014-2020) is being implemented in the region. Odesa region also has experience of participating in cross-border cooperation programmes (CBC), such as Romania-Ukraine-Moldova (2007-2013) and Romania-Ukraine (2014-2020). Instead, in the territories of Chernihiv, Kyiv, Zhytomyr and Vinnytsia regions, the EU CBC program have not yet been implemented.

As a result, under the Ukraine-Belarus Programme 11 out of 18 winning project proposals were submitted by the Ukrainian applicants; they included 5 – from Volyn region, 2 – from Rivne and Kyiv regions each and 1 – from Zhytomyr and Chernihiv each.
The similar distribution is observed in Belarus: from Brest region, which has been a part of the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme area since 2007, 5 projects were supported, from Gomel region, which has not had the experience of participation in CBC programmes – 2 projects.

In the Ukraine-Moldova Programme among 15 winning projects which are being implemented, only 4 projects were submitted by the Ukrainian applicants: 2 – from Chernivtsi region and 1 – from Vinnytsia and Odesa regions each.

**Reasonability of the Programme continuation**

Almost 100% of the total number of the surveyed experts expressed the opinion that the *Programmes positively influence development of cross-border cooperation of the regions and should be continued*. The similar idea was expressed during all expert discussions.

The most often mentioned positive consequences of launching the Programmes were:

a) making non-governmental organization more active;

b) enlarging of funding for cross-border initiatives;

c) increase in number of cross-border events.

Evaluating the impact of the Programmes on development of cross-border cooperation of the regions, only 8 experts out of 35 indicated that the Programmes have a significant impact on this sphere. The majority (26 people) noted that the Programmes promote cross-border cooperation of the regions only in some degree. It should be noted that all respondents mentioned the absence of negative consequences of the Programmes for the regions at the date of the research.

All respondents supported the continuation of the Programmes. At that, 16 experts indicated that the Programmes should be continued as they exist, and 19 respondents consider review as a prerequisite for their continuation. Attention is drawn to the fact that the respondents living in the regions of the Moldova-Ukraine Programme are more likely to review it: one expert advocating the Programme continuation without changes is accounted for by three experts who are in favor of continuing the Programme only after reviewing. There is another situation with the assessment of the Belarus-Ukraine Programme: the number of those who are in favor of continuation of the unchanged Programme is one and a half as much than the number of those who insist on its revision.
Expert assessment of development of the joint operational programmes

The key positive moment for development of the joint operational programmes (JOPs) was called the openness of this process by the research participants. Openness was provided both through involvement of representatives of regional state administrations in working groups on the JOPs preparation and conducting public events at the stage of the JOPs development.

26 out of 35 respondents noted that involvement of representatives of regional state administrations in the JOPs development was appropriate. 27 experts estimated inclusion of civic society representatives in working groups on the JOPs preparation as expedient.

As for effectiveness of the mechanism of accounting proposals of representatives of regional administrations and non-governmental organizations at the stage of the JOPs development, there is no unanimity in experts' assessments. Thus, 9 respondents indicated that most of effective proposals from regional state administrations were fully taken into account, 5 more respondents indicated that only a few proposals were taken into account, and 11 were not aware of suggestions from local authorities. In experts’ opinion, proposals from civic society representatives regarding JOPs were taken into account somewhat better: 8 respondents suppose that most of effective civic society offers were fully taken into account, 9 respondents – that only a few proposals were taken into account and 9 respondents were not informed about the receipt of proposals from civic society sector.
During the survey and expert discussions in all regions public events within development of the joint operational programmes were highly appreciated. During communication the experts noted the proper organizational level of all such activities.

The experts appreciated effectiveness of trainings and information seminars held within the JOPs development. 16 experts noted that trainings and information seminars really contributed to development of the high-quality JOPs and formed the proper basis for holding call for proposals. Another 14 respondents believed that trainings and information seminars gave some idea about development of the JOPs and made everybody aware of the forthcoming call for proposals. 2 respondents insisted on the zero effectiveness of the mentioned public events, 3 more respondents did not take part in them and could not give estimation.

Experts also called the conducted activities to find project partners and capacity-building activities within the JOPs development quite effective. 4 out of 35 respondents indicated that they did not need to search a partner; 3 respondents did not participate in the events and communicated with their partners independently; 3 experts, had to find partners on their own in spite of participating in activities and using partner databases.; 15 respondents called the idea of those public events interesting, but found partners without the help of the Programme; due to such activities and partners databases of the Programme 10 respondents found at least one partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, thanks to such events and databases of the Programme partners we found at least one partner</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, the idea was interesting, but we found the partners without the help of the Programme</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, despite participating in events and using databases of the Programme partners, we were forced to look for partners on our own</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, we did not take part in such events, and found the partners ourselves</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We were not interested in searching partners</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's difficult to answer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The duration of the JOPs development was estimated by the majority of experts (19 respondents) to have taken more time than it was needed. The duration of preparation of the joint operational programmes was called appropriate by 8 experts, and 2 more experts considered the JOPs to be developed within a short time. 6 respondents could not give an unambiguous answer to this question. Such distribution of estimates is approximately the same for both analyzed programmes.

Expert assessment of the joint operational programmes

According to opinion of 22 out of 35 experts, the operational objectives and priorities of the Programmes cover only a certain part of the key areas for development of cross-border cooperation of the regions, and 2 more respondents indicated complete non-compliance. 5 respondents noted a distinct correlation between priorities of the Programmes and priorities for development of cross-border cooperation of their regions. 6 experts failed to give an unambiguous answer owing also to lack of references to CBC in strategic documents of the region. The indicated estimation distribution is characteristic for both of the analyzed Programmes.

During all expert discussions and in answers to open questions of the questionnaire, the experts focused on the following problem issues of the joint operational programmes:

1. Distribution of funding for Programmes administration and calls for proposals. The experts are of the opinion that the costs for JOPs development have been significantly overestimated, which led to reduction of the amount spent on project financing. This problem was mentioned by experts in all regions during discussions.
2. The JOPs do not resolve the issue of risk sharing between participating countries. According to the experts, the joint operational programmes do not include mechanisms for taking into account the specific risks that arise in a cross-border environment and are caused by different laws of neighboring countries. This problem was most often mentioned by the experts working in the regions participating in the Belarus-Ukraine Programme, mainly due to the need to register projects by the Belarusian partners. Failure to take into account the specifics of national legislation at the stage of call for proposals preparation leads to risks of non-compliance with the schedule of projects and even the risk of refusal to implement them.

3. The identity of the operational objectives of the Belarus-Ukraine and Moldova-Ukraine JOPs. According to the experts, such approach to formation of operational objectives significantly reduced the effectiveness of the Programmes because of the failure to take into account the specifics of not only certain regions, but also the territories of CBC development. Differences in prioritization of the Belarus-Ukraine and Moldova-Ukraine JOPs did not solve this problem.

Expert assessment of conducting calls for proposals

Only 5 out of 35 experts did not participate in calls for proposals within the Programmes, 22 respondents were the main applicants, and 8 respondents were only the partners in project proposals. At the same time, 29 experts highlighted the preliminary experience of preparing project proposals according to the EU requirements.

According to the respondents and participants of the expert discussions, the greatest complications of the participants in the call for proposals were caused by the following characteristics:

1. Volume and form of applicants’ own contribution. According to the call for proposals terms, a cash contribution of 10% of the project budget was included. Given the fact that the Programmes were pilot-oriented and implemented in the regions with not sufficient number of subjects having experience of implementing large-scale projects, this criterion had a very negative impact on the number of applications submitted. Even with preparation of projects with a minimum budget (EUR 60,000), the applicant should have found at least EUR 6,000 of own contribution, which is an extremely difficult task for the vast majority of civil society organizations. Besides, the risks associated with keeping on a schedule for projects implementation which were highly relevant to the Programmes, greatly complicated the search for additional funding in the form of funds from other donors. This problem was mentioned during expert discussions in all regions of the project implementation.

2. Conduct of competitive selection at one stage with the requirement to complete the full application form. According to the research participants, that significantly limited the number of applications submitted, as well as caused considerable dissatisfaction among those call participants who spent a lot of time filling out the full application form and then received a negative response to the project support.

3. Language of a project proposal and package of documents for a call. In spite of the announced parameters of the upcoming call for proposals which should have been much simpler and focused on a wide range of applicants, it was in fact conducted in
accordance with the rules and requirements of the EU project applications. That significantly contributed to reducing the number of applications submitted and discriminated against applicants, as participants from the regions with experience of participating in CBC programmes received significant benefits to their counterparts from the regions which took part in such calls for the first time. The experts during the discussions noted that the applicants had the greatest complications because of the need:

– to prepare the project application in English;
– to form a large package of documents, the experience of which they did not have (for example, logical framework matrix, budget according to the EU requirements, etc.).

It was also noted that the lack of opportunity to submit an online application led to significant time expenditures for the preparation of a paper package of documents in duplicate.

Preparation of a project proposal in English also increased time expenditures for the Belarusian participants of the call due to the need to translate it into the national language for the project registration procedure in the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus.

4. Irrelevant priorities. The priorities of the call were based on the priorities of the JOPs, which had a relatively low level of correlation with the strategic priorities of development of the Ukrainian regions participating in the Programmes. The experts from most regions noted that the priorities of the call often did not correspond to the aspects of work of most civil society organizations in their regions.

During the survey and discussions, the participants repeatedly stressed that the list of problem parameters of the call significantly restricted the applicants’ circle, especially regarding the regions which did not have experience of participating in CBC programmes. According to experts, the high requirements for a project application preparation made it impossible for applicants from small close to border settlements to participate in the call. After all, they could have urgent problems, settling of which requires joint efforts.

**Expert assessment of projects implementation process**

18 out of 35 experts participating in the survey were involved in implementation of the Programmes projects as a lead applicant or a partner. 16 of them indicated that their projects started with a delay. *The problem of delay in projects start* was most urgent during the expert discussions; it was mentioned in all regions without exception.

Participants of both programmes noted that considerable time expenditures at the stage of projects selection and conclusion of contracts with the winners significantly increased the risks of:

– compliance with projects schedules, where the delay in a project start and the absence of the possibility of prolonging a project led to necessity
of reducing project duration, which was not always possible, for example, due to seasonality of activities or the need for tender or approval procedures;

– preservation of partnerships, when they reviewed the decision on participation in a project through personnel changes in partner organizations, which was especially relevant for partners from local authorities and budget institutions;

– search and use of co-financing, when changes in a project schedule did not coincide with the schedule of use of funds received as co-financing from other donors.

**How do you assess the project reporting system?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is simple and clear</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is clear but preparation of reports takes some time</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is complicated. Preparing reports takes a lot of time and requires constant consultation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's difficult to answer</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experts called the *complicated reporting system and frequent changes in reporting* as another problem in implementation phase of the Programme projects. During the survey, only 3 respondents indicated that the reporting system was simple and clear. 5 respondents called the reporting system as a complicated one; in their view it takes a lot of time and requires constant consultations. The majority of respondents participating in projects (11 out of 18) consider the reporting system to be clear, but require time for preparation. A specific issue pointed out by the experts from all regions was the change in requirements for separate procedures and reporting on the part of the Managing Authority at the stage of a project implementation. In particular, the experts mentioned changes to preparation of financial statements and requirements for promotional products.

**How do you assess the activity of the Managing Authority for consulting and information support of the winning projects?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistance of the Managing Authority is relevant and allows to resolve current issues quickly</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance of the Managing Authority is relevant, but solving current issues is complicated</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance of the Managing Authority is not enough, solving current issues is delayed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not need to contact the Managing Authority</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's difficult to answer</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opinions of the respondents were divided as to effectiveness of communication with the Managing Authority of the Programme. During the survey, half of the respondents involved in the projects implementation (9 out of 18) noted that consultation and information support of the winning projects by the Managing Authority was proper and allowed to resolve current issues promptly. 4 experts noted that resolving current issues with the Managing Authority was complicated, while 5 respondents called the assistance of the Managing Authority insufficient and complained of the delay in solving current issues. A similar distribution of opinions was obtained during expert discussions, where both positive assessments of the procedure of communication with the Managing Authority and critical responses were spoken.

The most acute problem for all participants of the Belarus-Ukraine Programme was the need for registration of projects in the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus in accordance with the requirements of the Belarusian legislation. It was mentioned by practically all participants of the survey from the relevant regions and was central during discussions in the regions bordering on Belarus. The very fact of the registration was not assessed as critical by the participants of the research; there were called the following sources of risk a) undetermined clear deadlines for consideration of applications for projects registration by the Belarusian legislation and b) possibility of rejection of registration, which makes it impossible to implement the project in Belarus. Within the framework of implementation of the Belarus-Ukraine Programme these risks were exacerbated as they were not taken into account by the Joint Operational Programme and the period of the winning projects implementation was reduced due to lengthy selection and contracting procedures.

Conclusions

Analysis of various aspects of preparation and implementation of the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programmes Moldova-Ukraine and Belarus-Ukraine shows that they were focused primarily on large projects, the number of which was limited through the Programmes budget. Such an approach, according to researchers, did not meet the interests of territorial communities of the border regions. Taking into account the specificity of the Programmes implementation area, the strategy for attracting a wide range of participants of cross-border cooperation to projects implementation is more effective under current conditions, due to simplification of application procedures and differentiation of competitive conditions as to the limits of budget amounts in particular. This would enable to promote cooperation at the borders, to form stable thematic partnerships, to increase the expertise of NGOs in project management, and to create the appropriate prerequisites
for effective implementation of the European approaches to development of cross-border cooperation.

Despite the general positive perception of the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programmes Moldova-Ukraine and Belarus-Ukraine, there are several problematic issues that, according to experts, have reduced its effectiveness.

1. **Discriminatory call for proposals.** In view of heterogeneity of the experience of the regions participating in the Programme, a number of regions have gained significant benefits through calls for proposals conducted in accordance with the EU requirements. Thus, the requirement to prepare projects in English, conducting a call at one stage, the need to prepare a large number of documents for a call, percentage and conditions of co-financing, combined with a high minimal bar of projects budget, prevented the participation of a large number of potential applicants from the regions with relatively less experience of participation in cross-border cooperation programs. The result was a tangible geographical imbalance: in the Belarus-Ukraine Programme out of 11 Ukrainian projects there were 5 winners from Volyn region, which had significant experience of participating in the Poland-Ukraine-Belarus Programme, and in the Moldova-Ukraine Programme out of 15 winning projects that are currently being implemented, only 4 were submitted by the Ukrainian applicants, and 11 projects were won by more experienced Moldovan representatives.

2. **Failure to adhere to the schedule for the Programmes development and competitive selection.** According to participants of the research, inappropriate administration of the Programmes caused a number of problems due to missing deadlines for certain stages. Significant duration of the JOPs development has led to increasing expenditures for the Programmes administering and, accordingly, reducing the budget for project purposes. Delaying the process of approval of winning projects has sharply increased the risk of adhere to the projects schedules and negatively impacted effectiveness of project activities. In addition, significant time lag between public events significantly reduced their effectiveness.

3. **Unification of joint operational programmes,** which concerned not only priorities but also approaches to assessing the risks of cooperation at different borders. The priorities identified in the joint operational programmes Belarus-Ukraine and Moldova-Ukraine were identical and did not take into account the differences in priorities of cross-border cooperation not only in certain regions, but also in the Ukrainian-Byelorussian and Ukrainian-Moldovan cooperation. Also, the problem of non-compliance of the priorities of the announced calls for proposals with the activities of regional civil society organizations was a problem, which negatively affected the number of submitted project applications. Failure to consider specific risks, such as those arising from the peculiarities of the national legislation of the participating countries, led to a number of acute problems at the stage of project implementation.

Despite the existence of problem points, the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programmes Moldova-Ukraine and Belarus-Ukraine had a significant positive impact on development of cross-border cooperation of the Ukrainian regions. Their implementation even at the stage of development of joint operational programmes contributed to increase of the number of cross-border contacts,
mobilization of participants and partnerships in the border regions, and made the issue of developing cooperation with the territories of neighboring countries actual for local authorities.

In addition to possibility of financing CBC projects in the regions not bordering the EU countries, the Programmes have implemented a number of positive functions:
– contributed to increasing the capacity of participants of cross-border cooperation;
– formed cross-border and inter-regional partnerships in thematic sectors;
– facilitated communication between civil society sector and local authorities.

No negative effects of the Programmes were revealed under the research.

Continuation of the Programmes implementation, with account of the gained experience and elimination of the identified challenges, will contribute not only to development of cross-border cooperation of the border regions of Ukraine but also to attracting a wide range of participants from small settlements to the Programmes, expansion of partner networks and spheres of cooperation that will allow to resolve cross-border issues more efficiently.

**Recommendations**

**General guidelines for improving the effectiveness of programmes addressed the EU**

In order to increase the impact of the Programmes on developing cross-border cooperation of the regions and increasing the number of participants it is necessary to:

1. Establish Joint Technical Secretariats and delegate them tasks related to the ongoing activities under the Programmes.
2. Introduce division of projects into “small” and “infrastructure” and reduce the size of the minimum budget for “small” projects from the current EUR 60,000 at least twice.
3. Increase the funding of the EU Programmes in the next budget cycle and simplify the requirements for co-financing of “small” projects.

The implementation of the above steps will allow increasing the number and geography of applicants, increasing the role of the Programmes in solving common problems of the border regions and improving the quality of life of small communities.

**Managing Authority should (on condition of activity continuation):**

1. Ensure strict adhering to the schedule of preparation and implementation of the Programmes, as well as the process of evaluation and selection of applications.
2. Apply a differentiated approach to working with national governments in developing and agreeing joint operational programs.
3. Avoid artificial complications and irrelevant changes in rules and procedures during implementation of the winning projects and reporting on the results of their implementation.
4. Assist applicants in registering projects in accordance with the current legislation of Ukraine through unification of processing registration documents package.

**Central authorities should:**

1. Ensure effective communication with the relevant EU institutions as to continuation and improvement of the Programmes in the next budget cycle as well as the relevant central authorities of the neighboring countries in order to take into account the interests of the border regions of Ukraine.

2. When developing the State Strategy for Regional Development and the State Programme for Development of Cross-border Cooperation for the period after 2020, take into account specific features of functioning of the Belarus-Ukraine and Moldova-Ukraine Programmes on the territory of the border regions.

3. At the next development of operational objectives, priorities and directions of the Programmes activities, ensure their correlation with the provisions of the State Strategy for Regional Development and the State Programme for Development of Cross-border Cooperation for the period after 2020.

**Local authorities should:**

1. Envisage the use of potential of cross-border cooperation, by means of attracting funds from the CBC programmes in particular, in strategic documents of regional development of the regions. When forming a system of indicators of effectiveness and efficiency, it is necessary to take into account the need for their correlation with the indicators for monitoring effectiveness of the Programmes.

2. Provide funds in local budgets that can be used to co-finance cross-border projects that are in line with the strategic priorities of the region.

3. Influence actively the formation of priorities of the CBC programmes, taking into account the strategic guidelines for development of the region; coordinate the own position with representatives of other regions the participants of the Programmes and central authorities.

4. Provide information support to development of joint operational programmes; participate actively in informing potential CBC participants about the potential of the Programmes and calls for proposals, and the possibility of co-financing at the expense of budgetary funds.

5. Provide support to potential participants of calls for proposals in search of partners abroad, and use the potential of existing Euroregions and interregional cooperation agreements for this purpose.

6. Provide information support to the winning projects, disseminating the positive experience of developing cross-border cooperation in the region.