



PODLASKIE AND ITS EASTERN PARTNERS

BSC Genral Assembly, Warnemünde, 27th May 2010

History/Background



Polish coat of arms



Lithuanian coat of arms

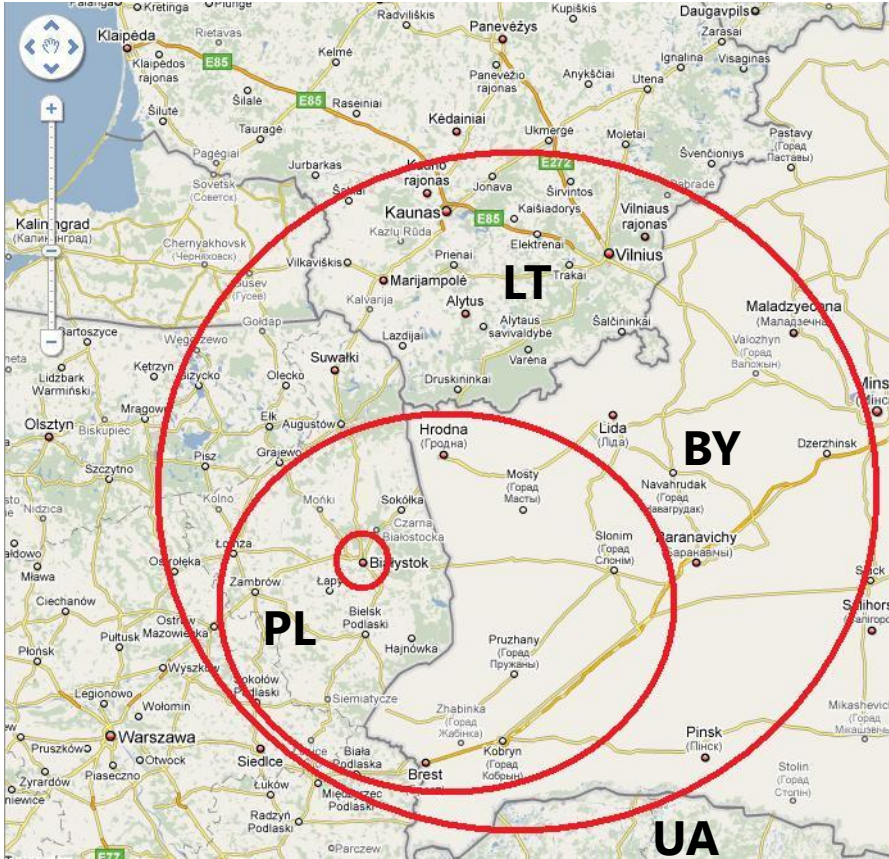


Podlaskie coat of arms

- Podlaskie has always been a **borderland region**
- Composed of **Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian** lands
- A **mixture** of cultures, religions, traditions and customs
- With **strong ethnic** (Lithuanian, Belarusian) and **religious** (Orthodox) **minorities**
- A natural **cooperation space** for people despite the everchanging borders and politics



Strategic asset



Podlaskie and its Eastern partners

- Location, Schengen link
- *Know-how*
- Language
- Common history
- EU example
- EU envoy, message
- Gateway to the EU
- EU funds



Platforms of cooperation

Regional level

- Bilateral agreements of cooperation
 - Grodno Oblast (BY)
 - Autonomous Republic of Crimea (UA)
 - Alytus County (LT)
 - Marijampole County (LT)
- Euroregions
 - Neman (PL-LT-BY-RU)
 - Białowieża Forest (PL-BY)
- Intergovernmental Committees for Cross-border Cooperation (PL-LT and PL-BY)

Other cooperation supported by the region

- Town twinning and sister cities (eg. Białystok – Grodno, Augustów - Druskininkai)
- NGOs
- Universities and schools
- Culture institutions
- Hospitals and emergency units



Best practices 2004 – 2006

- INTERREG III A/ TACIS CBC PL-BY-UA Programme
- Total value of projects implemented via:
 - Euroregion Neman – ca. 2 MEUR
 - Euroregion Białowieża Forest – ca. 750 000 EUR
- Projects focused on:
 - Cultural, educational and social exchange
 - Small-scale infrastructure
 - Tourism development
 - Cross-border security
 - Environmental protection



Best practices 2004 – 2006

- Project: **Unknown Europe - Development of tourist infrastructure in Polish-Belarusian borderland in the area of the Augustów Canal and Neman River**
- Partners from Poland and Belarus
- Total project value: **740 000 EUR**
- Project activities:
 - Foundation of Tourist Information Centre and Active Tourism Training Centre in Grodno;
 - Trainings on agritourism, active tourism and marketing;
 - Workshops and internships for Belarusian students;
 - Drafting up common marking rules for water, cycle and hiking tourist routes;
 - Publication of guidebooks and tourist maps.



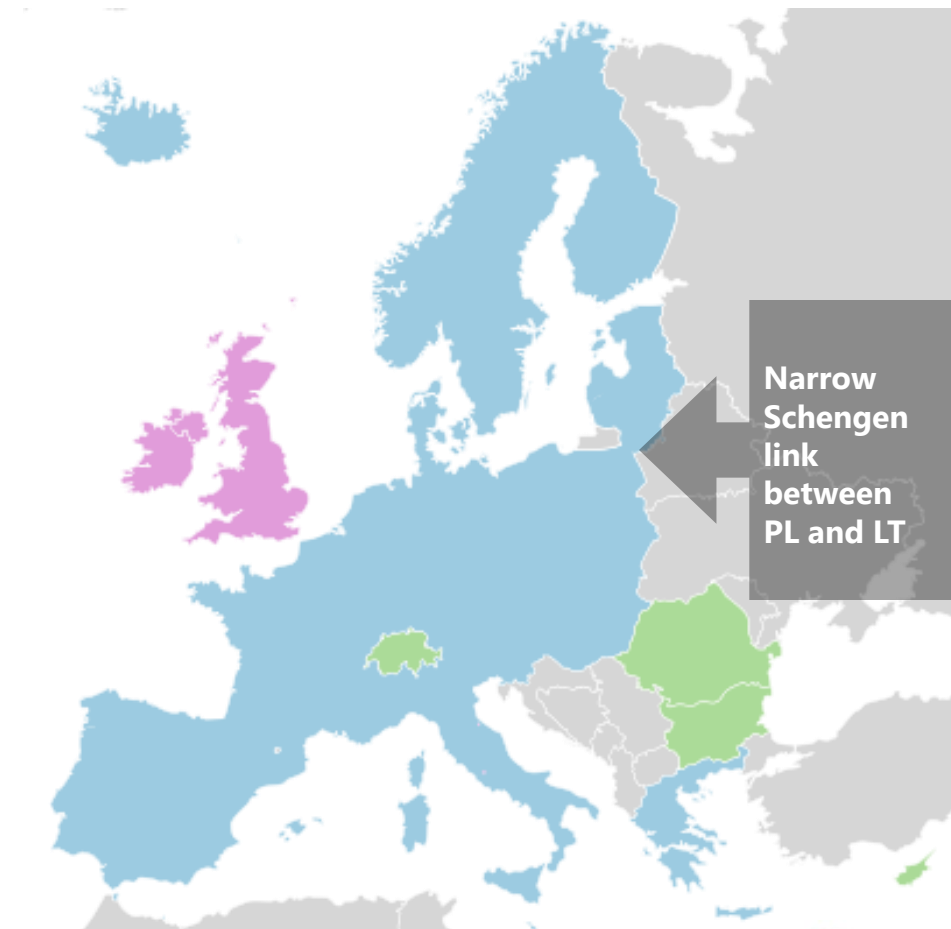
Best practices 2004 – 2006

- Project: **Development of cross-border tourism in the Białowieża Forest region**
- Partners from Poland and Belarus
- Total project value: **335 430 EUR**
- Project activities:
 - Creation of Białowieża Cross-border Tourist Route - **160 km** on the Polish side and **450 km** on the Belarusian side;
 - Development of tourist infrastructure;
 - Purchase of security monitoring system;
 - Trainings and study tours for tourist guides;
 - Publication of guidebooks and maps of Białowieża Forest;
 - Participation in tourist fairs;
 - Website.
- A nominee to the **7 Wonders of EU Funds in Poland Award**
- Project was awarded **Best Tourist Product 2008** Certificate of the Polish Tourist Organisation



Polish – Lithuanian cooperation

- EU Member States
- Schengen countries
- Common goals
- Easy and fruitful cooperation in the pre-accession period
- ETC CBC programme Lithuania-Poland 2007-2013



Polish – Ukrainian cooperation

- *Podlaskie does not border directly on Ukraine*
- ENPI CBC PL-BY-UA Programme launched Q4 2009
- UA open for Europe
- Schengen visa requirements, local border traffic in force since July 1st, 2009
- Polish MFA Foreign Aid Programme
 - Students exchange – study visit of Ukrainian students of administration to our office to discuss EU funds, transparency, democracy



Polish – Belarusian cooperation

- Ongoing people-to-people co-operation
- Schengen visa requirements
 - Slowdown in economic exchange
- Local border traffic agreement ratified by the Polish Parliament, waiting for ratification by the Belarusian side
 - Will probably become effective as of 1st January 2011.
- ENPI CBC PL-BY-UA Programme launched Q4 2009
 - New prospects for co-operation
 - EU funding facilitating joint initiatives on larger scale



The Augustów Canal

Proposed for inscription onto the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The Augustów Canal is a **cross-border** monument of technology located in the territory of Poland and Belarus.

It is a navigable watershed canal, linking the Vistula River with the Neman River. A remarkable tourist attraction.

Seasonal tourist waterway border crossing opened in 2005, kayaks and small



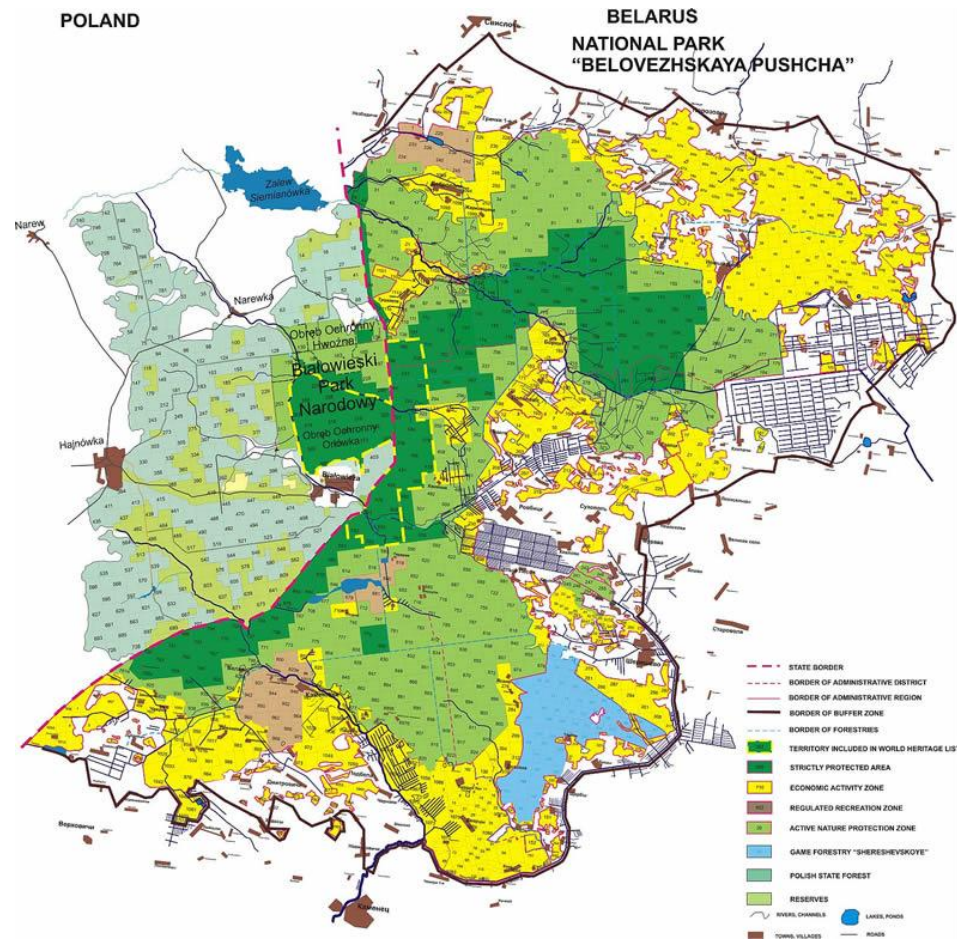
Białowieża Forest

Cross-border UNESCO World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve.

On the Polish side it is partly protected as Białowieża National Park, and occupies over 100 km². On the Belarusian side the Biosphere Reserve occupies 1,771 km².

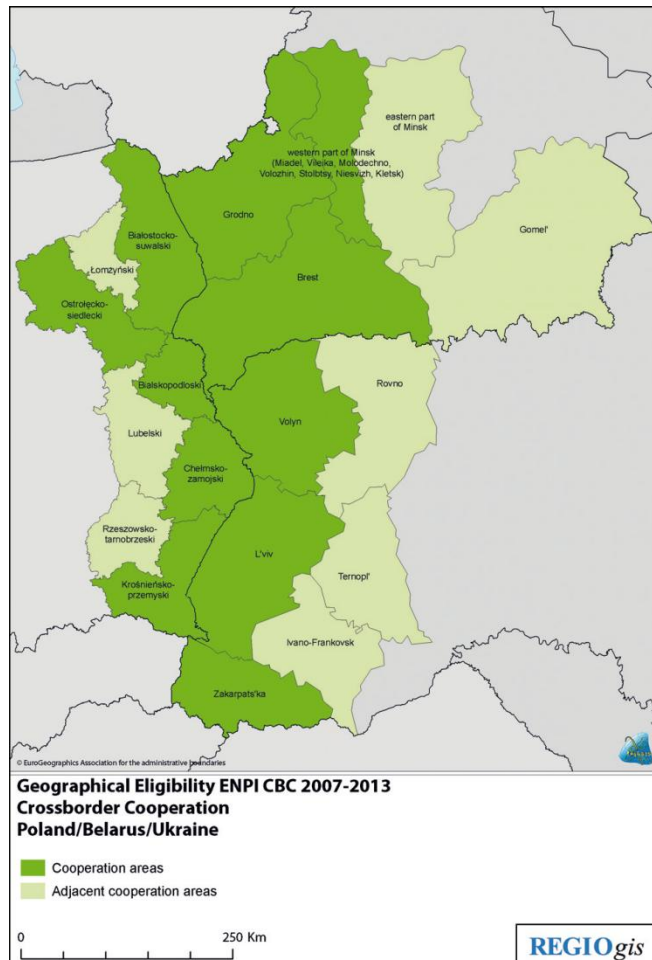
Since 2005, there is a EU-funded all-year tourist border crossing in Białowieża. Organised groups only. Visa and tourist guide required.

2009, New7Wonders of Nature cross-border candidate, officially supported by both



ENPI CBC

Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme

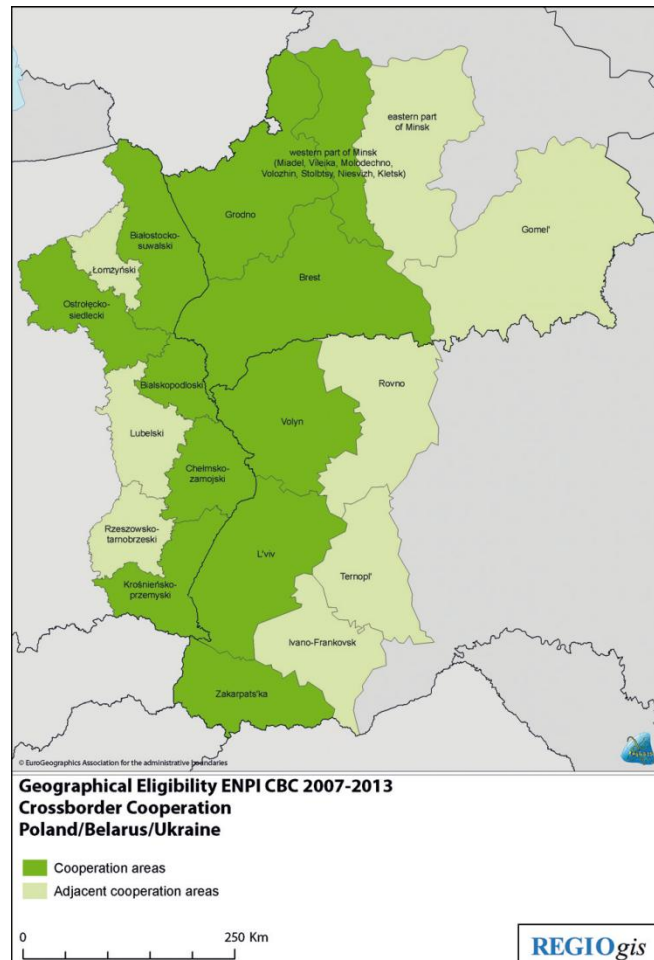


- TOTAL ALLOCATION
 - **186.201 MEUR**
- PRIORITIES:
- **Increasing competitiveness of the border area including:**
 - Better conditions for entrepreneurship
 - Tourism development
 - Improving access to the region
- **Improving the quality of life including:**
 - Natural environment protection in the borderland
 - Efficient and secure borders
- **Networking and people-to-people cooperation including:**
 - Regional and local cross-border cooperation capacity building
 - Local communities' initiatives



ENPI CBC

Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme



- ENPI CBC PL-BY-UA Programme launched Q4 2009
- Already submitted **3 joint projects with Hrodna Oblast**
 - Focus on: health care infrastructure, medical staff trainings and co-operation capacity building
 - Currently undergoing quality evaluation
 - Total value: **4.5 MEUR.**
- Other projects being prepared
 - Small infrastructure (local roads etc.)
 - Tourism
 - Culture and education
- Ongoing trainings on applying for EU funds in Belarus



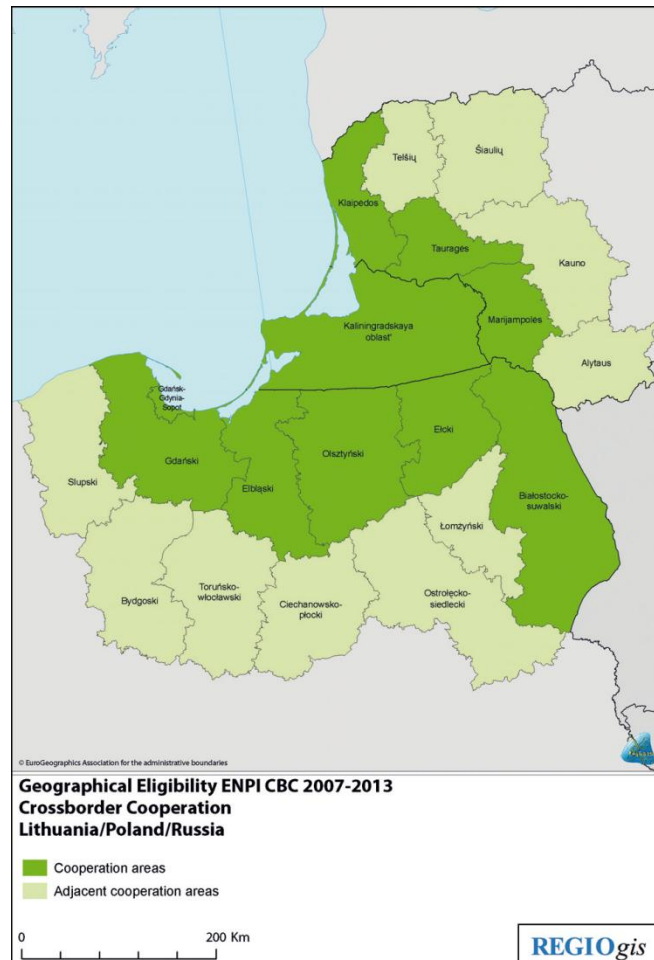
Polish – Russian cooperation

- *Podlaskie does not border directly on Russia*
- Contacts and cooperation cut-off until recently
- 2nd Forum of Polish and Russian Regions, held last week in Warsaw
 - With the support of Russian Federation Council and Polish Senate
 - Accompanied by direct 2-day visits in Polish regions



ENPI CBC

Lithuania-Poland-Russia Programme



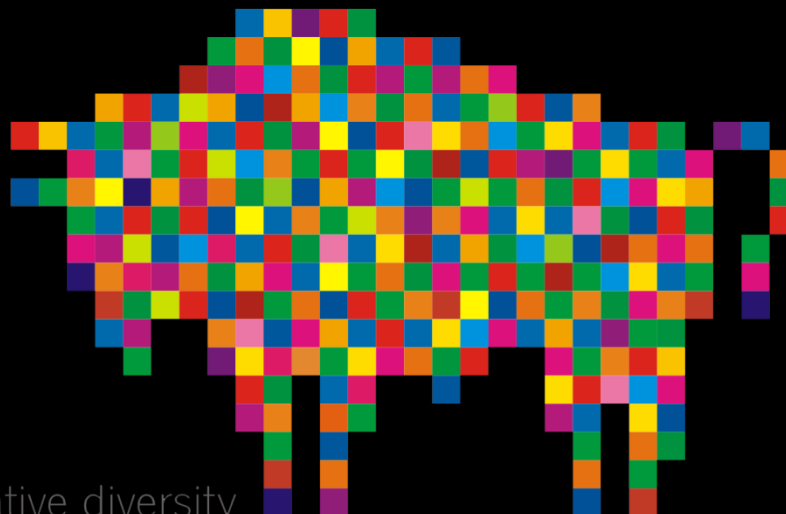
- TOTAL ALLOCATION
 - **132.130 MEUR**
- PRIORITIES:
- **Contributing to solving common problems and challenges:**
 - Sustainable use of environment
 - Accessibility improvement
- **Pursuing social, economic and spatial development including:**
 - Tourism development
 - Development of human potential by improvement of social conditions, governance and educational opportunities
 - Increasing competitiveness of SMEs and development of the labour market
 - Joint spatial and socio-economic planning
- **(horizontal priority) To promote people to people cooperation aiming at:**
 - Developing local initiatives to increase the administrative capacity of local and regional authorities
 - Increasing cooperation in culture, sport, education



Hindrances

- We depend on state level politics
- Schengen visas (60€ Schengen visas, 20€ Polish visas)
- No local border traffic agreement with Belarus
- The higher the level, the less intensive the cooperation





Podlaskie creative diversity

Podlaskie Region
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