

**THE EGTC POLISH-LITHUANIAN CROSS-BORDER FUNCTIONAL AREA
AS A DRIVER OF CROSS-BORDER RELATIONS IN THE SHADOW OF
MILITARY TENSIONS SURROUNDING THE SUWALKI GAP**

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LUPS-CESCI
Research Group on
Cross-Border Cooperation



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Suwałki Gap surroundings, Lithuanian-Polish border, Photo: Curioso.Photography / Adobe Stock

Migrants, the Belarusian-Polish border Photo: PAP/EPA/STRINGER, PAP/EPA/LEONID SCHEGLOV/BELTA HANDOUTwka / polsatnews.

The Suwałki Gap – An emerging hot spot in the north-eastern part of Europe



The Vishtynets tripoint, the border between Poland, Lithuania, and Kaliningrad Oblast. Photo: T. Waszczuk/PAP

Ukrainian refugees on the EU border Photo: Fot.: Jadwiga Hereta

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Strengthening cross-border cooperation in the Lithuanian-Polish borderland based on the grassroots initiative of local governments, which started communication with the EC.

These local actors presented a comprehensive analysis, a bottom-up, and place-based approach to develop a tailor-made initiative for the territories closest to the border.

Background

On March 14, 2018 Polish and Lithuanian local government officials signed a declaration for “undertaking joint actions enabling the Governments of the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania and the European Union bodies to take a decision on the creation of a Polish-Lithuanian cross-border functional area in order to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the Polish-Lithuanian border area”.



The Lithuanian and Polish local actors initiated dialogue with the EC and both governments to design a tourist cross-border functional area based on the region's common natural and cultural assets.

They attracted many local stakeholders on both sides of the border, who joined this initiative (e.g. SMEs, NGOs).

Background



June 2019

“Citizen’s Dialogue” with the EU Commission

Chairman:

Mr Marek Prawda, Head of the EC Representation in Poland

Mr Arnoldas Pranckievicius, Head of the EC Representation in Lithuania

First coordinating meeting with stakeholders from LT and PL

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When designing a touristic cross-border functional area, a partnership principle and a place-based approach were implemented in the process.

Local stakeholders were engaged in each stage of the process, and the inter-sectoral cross-border cooperation has been developed significantly since then.

Background

On August 19 and 20, 2019 workshops were held in Sejny and Lazdijai on mapping the tourist potential of the Polish-Lithuanian borderland.



Source: Joanna [Kurowska-Pysz](#)



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This cross-border initiative was widely promoted at the European Commission (EC) level and simultaneously at the level of the Interreg Programme Lithuania-Poland.

Many cross-border workshops organised on both sides of the border served not only the TCBFAs designing but also the integration of local actors and the establishment of long-term cross-border linkages, which hadn't existed before.

Background



EU REGIO Interreg
19 godz. ·

Cross-border functional area at the Polish-Lithuanian border!
Technical meetings in Poland and Lithuania support the future cross-border functional area

DG REGIO supported another technical meeting with representatives of Polish and Lithuanian municipalities who are interested in establishing the cross-border functional area, focused on tourist activities.

DG REGIO supported again two technical meetings with representatives of Polish and Lithuanian municipalities interested in establishing the cross-border functional area, focused on tourist activities: Puńsk, Krasnopol, Szypliszki, Sejny, Wiżajny, Giby, Rutka Tartak as well as Lazdijai, Kalvarija, Vilkariskis. The meetings took a place in Lazdijai (LT) and Sejny (PL) on 20.08.2019. DG REGIO was represented by Anna Modzelewska, Programme Manager in the geographical unit for Poland.

Powiązane strony

- European Committee of the ...**
Organizacja rządowa
- Association of European Border ...**
Organizacja pozarządowa
- keep.eu**
Produkt/usługa
- Interreg Alpine Space**
8.07.2020

Lietuvos-Lenkijos pasienio savivaldybėse kuriama turizmo funkcinė zona

2020-07-07

Lazdijų ir Vilkaviškio rajonai, Kalvarijos savivaldybės, Puńsko, Rutkos-Tartako, Giby, Seimų, Sipiškės, Vižainio valsčiai bei Seimų miestas yra pasirašę Pasienio savivaldybių deklaraciją, kuri skirta suvienyti partnerius bendroms iniciatyvoms. Vienas iš šios deklaracijos tikslų – sukurti Lietuvos-Lenkijos pasienio turizmo funkcinę zoną.

Lazdijų rajono savivaldybė
20 godz. ·

Lazdijų ir Vilkaviškio rajonai, Kalvarijos savivaldybė, Puńsko, Rutkos-Tartako, Giby, Seimų, Sipiškės, Vižainio valsčiai bei Seimų miestas yra pasirašę Pasienio savivaldybių deklaraciją, kuri skirta suvienyti partnerius bendroms iniciatyvoms. Vienas iš šios deklaracijos tikslų – sukurti Lietuvos-Lenkijos pasienio turizmo funkcinę zoną.
Išsamiau – <http://www.lazdijai.lt/lt/Placiau/51875470>

26 1 udoštepnie

Powiązane strony

- Lazdijų kultūra**
Miejscze występc
- Lazdijų žvaigždė**
Firma z branży i
- Kaimo turizmo**
Centrum ponton
- Savaitraštis „D“**
Witryna informac
- Lazdijų Sporto**
Organizacja nor
- Mano Druskiniai**
Witryna internet

NEWS

TOURISTIC CROSS-BORDER FUNCTIONAL AREA AT THE LITHUANIAN – POLISH BORDER

On 29 June, Dr Joanna Kurowska-Pysz, the Director of the Research Institute on Territorial and Inter-Organizational Cooperation in WSB University presented the ongoing results of the study "Identification of key elements for creating the Touristic Cross-Border Functional Area at the Lithuanian – Polish border" to the stakeholders of the Interreg V-A Lithuania-Poland Cooperation Programme.

The study is a part of the service contract by the European Commission on the functional zones, it serves to determine the potential tourism functional cross-border area on the Lithuanian-Polish border in order to develop one future cross-border tourism destination. For many years, the Lithuania – Polish bordering territory has been only a transit area that was hardly recognised on the tourism market. Dr Kurowska-Pysz presented four potential concepts having a cross-border dimension, that would help to prepare common tourism products of the region. The expert underlined that for cross border cooperation it is important to foster cooperation not only between self-governance institutions but also it is important to involve non-governmental sector and business community.

The final study with the key elements for creating the Touristic Cross-Border Functional Area at the Lithuanian – Polish border is planned to be prepared by the end of March 2021.

CREATION OF THE TOURISTIC CROSS-BORDER FUNCTIONAL AREA BASED ON THE TOURISM ASSETS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER (2021-2023)

2021 – Lithuanian-Polish Touristic Cross-Border Functional Area



Creation of the four cross-border tourism concepts for the functional area

The mysterious land of the Yotvingian tribe



Common heritage



Green retreat – Slow Tourism and a Healthy Life



The magical borderland



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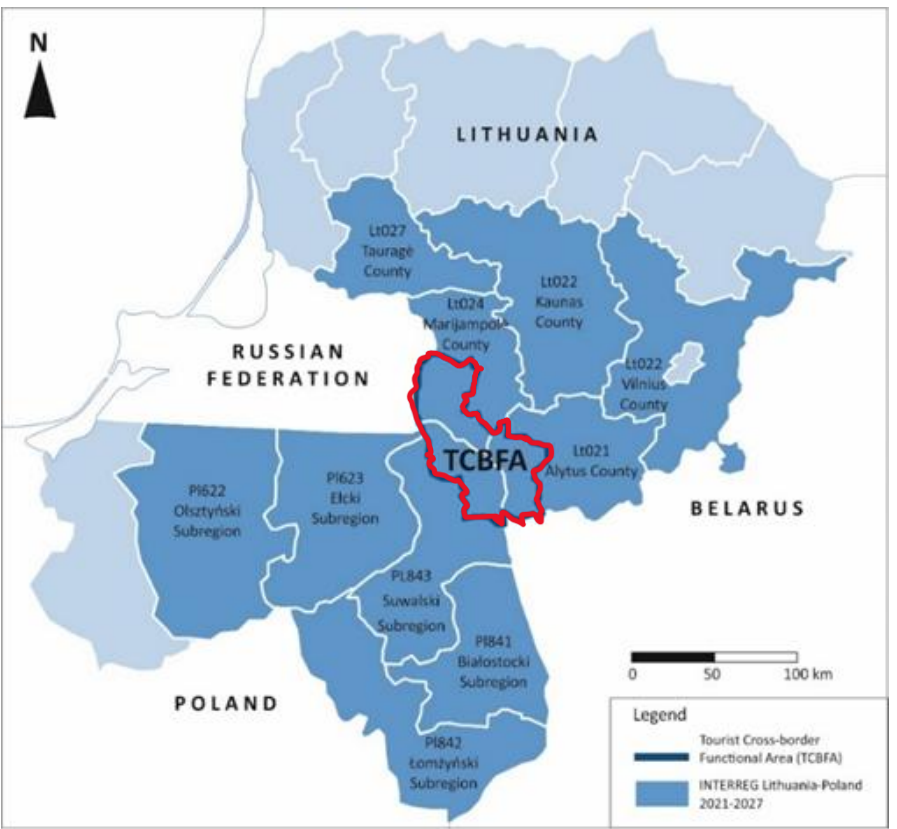
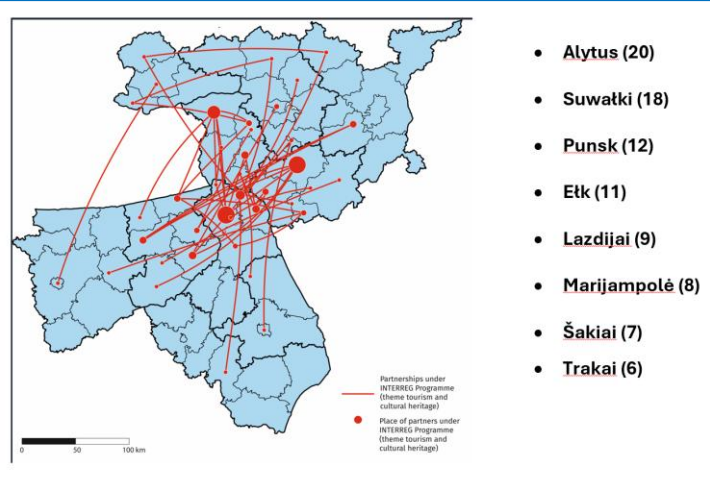


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Tourism-driven cross-border activities were fundamental when establishing the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation „Polish-Lithuanian Cross-border Functional Area”, covering the area of the previously designed Touristic Cross-Border Functional Area – 2024

The Grouping has been established to intensify, facilitate, and popularise Polish-Lithuanian cross-border cooperation, aiming to strengthen the economic and social cohesion of the Grouping’s area of operation.



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Selected findings on tourist market research (2024)

Figure 8. Number of resident tourists and foreign tourists accommodated in accommodation establishments in 2019 (top) and 2023 (bottom).

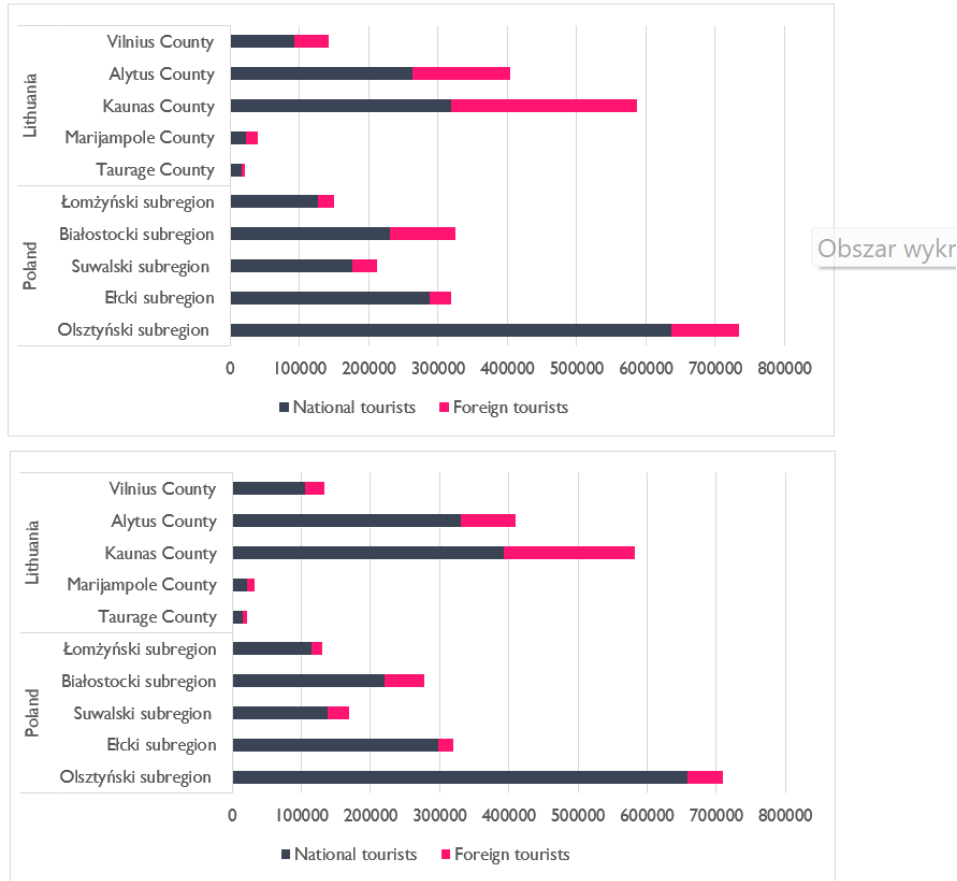
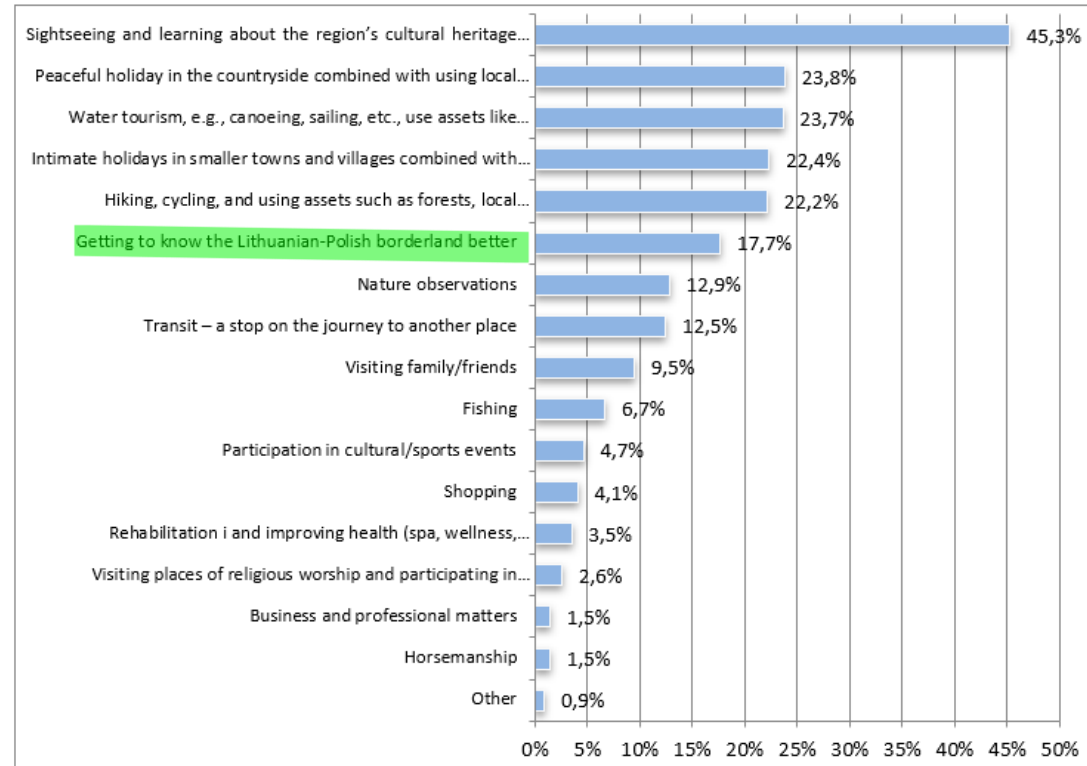


Chart 2. Distribution of answers to the question: What are the purposes of your stay in the region?



Source: own study based on a survey study.

e: Own elaboration based on: [Officialios statistikos portalas, https://osp.stat.gov.lt/pradinis](https://osp.stat.gov.lt/pradinis). Local Data Bank, Statistics Poland, <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl>.

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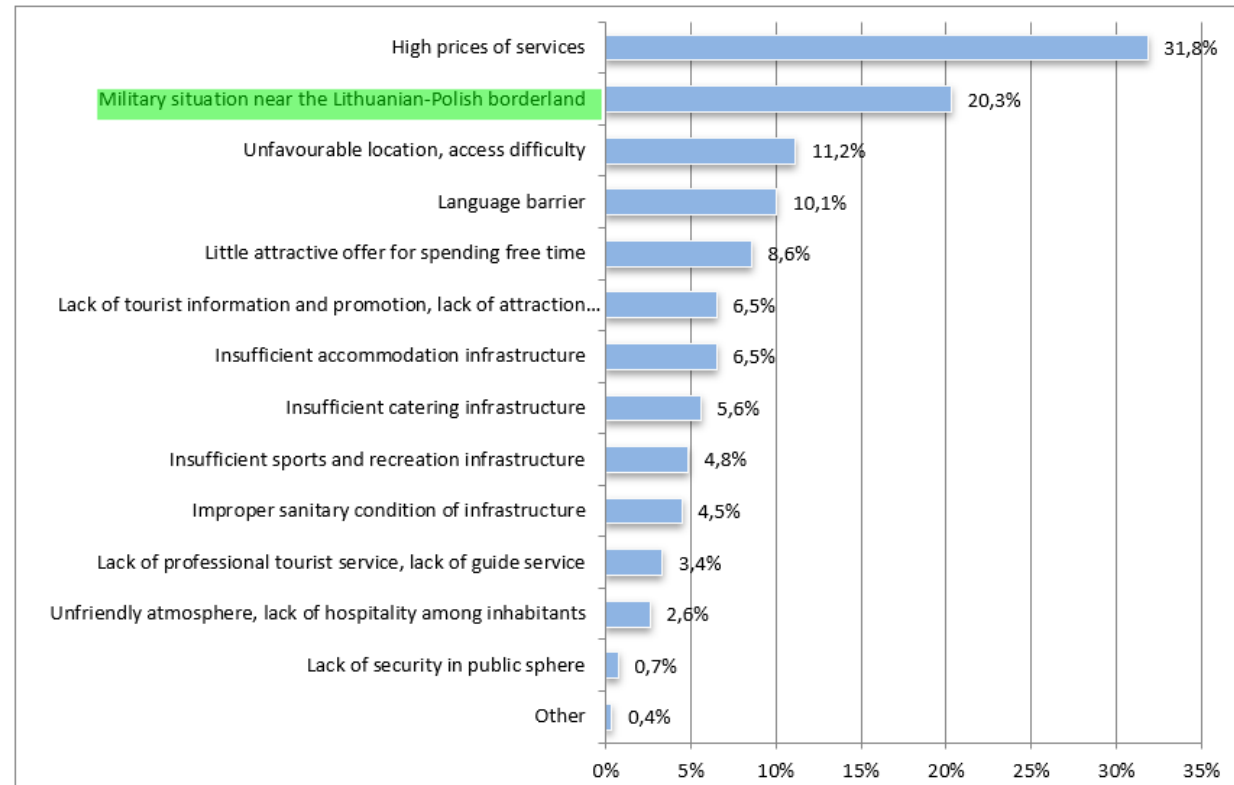
Selected findings on tourist market research (2024)

Table 4. Distribution of answers to the question: How do you assess the region's tourist offer?

Type of offer / service	Definitely bad	Rather bad	Neither good, nor bad	Rather good	Definitely good	No opinion
Offer attractiveness – hiking and cycling	1,3 %	3,4 %	13,0 %	24,8 %	39,1 %	18,4 %
Offer attractiveness – water tourism	0,9 %	3,0 %	13,8 %	22,5 %	36,7 %	23,1 %
Offer attractiveness – cultural tourism, sightseeing, etc.	1,5 %	3,7 %	11,6 %	34,3 %	37,4 %	11,6 %
Offer attractiveness – health tourism	1,7 %	1,7 %	18,4 %	21,2 %	16,6 %	40,4 %
Offer attractiveness – rural tourism and agrotourism	1,1 %	3,4 %	12,9 %	26,3 %	27,6 %	28,9 %
Offer attractiveness – intimate holiday in smaller towns	0,6 %	2,8 %	14,0 %	28,3 %	35,9 %	18,4 %
Quality of accommodation	0,9 %	2,1 %	11,9 %	28,5 %	35,0 %	21,6 %
Quality of catering	0,6 %	2,1 %	12,3 %	30,4 %	40,8 %	14,0 %
Quality of tourist service and guide services	1,3 %	0,9 %	10,4 %	21,4 %	46,0 %	19,9 %
Quality of tourist information, attraction marking	1,5 %	2,6 %	10,8 %	30,0 %	44,9 %	10,2 %
Availability of local transport access, communication of the region	2,8 %	6,2 %	17,0 %	19,6 %	21,6 %	33,0 %
The atmosphere of the stay, hospitality and kindness of the inhabitants	1,7 %	1,3 %	9,7 %	22,9 %	57,4 %	7,1 %
Cleanliness	0,9 %	1,9 %	10,8 %	29,6 %	52,1 %	4,7 %
Security level	0,9 %	2,1 %	8,2 %	23,1 %	56,8 %	8,9 %

Source: own study based on a survey study.

Chart 12. Distribution of answers to the question: In your opinion, what discourages you from staying in the region the most?



Source: own study based on a survey study.

CONCLUSIONS

Due to the special attention given to the Suwałki Gap, several key areas of cross-border cooperation require urgent action supported by the EGTC Polish-Lithuanian Cross-Border Functional Area, as follows:

Strategic orientations on the hard investments:

- Strengthening Security and Resilience to Threats (Civil and Military);
- Improving cross-border military mobility (Transport infrastructure (road and rail, e.g., Rail Baltica, Via Carpatia/Via Baltica);
- Cooperation in energy security, e.g. cross-border integration of grids, development of strategic transport and energy Infrastructure;
- Developing cross-border crisis response procedures in responding to crises, natural disasters, border incidents, and hybrid threats.

Strategic orientations on the soft investments:

- Increasing societal cross-border resilience (e.g. educational and informational programs for residents concerning disinformation, hybrid threats, and rules of conduct in crises);
- Supporting SMEs e.g. creating cross-border cooperation platforms, advisory and training programs etc.
- Promoting cross-border tourism offers, including products and services;
- Facilitating cross-border labour mobility;
- Environmental protection and sustainable development, ecological education and promotion of sustainable tourism: Supporting "people-to-people" initiatives
- Promoting the learning of the neighbour's language.

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Selected ongoing activities towards the future



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Project: **CLLD-oriented facilitation of cross-border planning across the Polish-Lithuanian Functional Area (II – IX 2025)**

WP 1. Strengthening of **internal governance**, communication and sharing information within the EGTC

WP 2. Building and establishing cross-border structures of **intersectoral collaboration**, networking, and promoting partnership principle and CLLD approach within the EGTC

WP 3. Designing and facilitating **durable commitment** to build long-term **capacity for sustainable cross-border cooperation**

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Engagement in the project: **B-Shapes**
Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies.
Horizon Europe (workshop 25 April 2025)

Analysis of the scenarios on the possible models of developing cross-border cooperation in the future




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THANK YOU!

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