

POST RELEASE

Joint Belarusian-Ukrainian cross-border projects launched in Kyiv

More than 150 participants gathered in Kyiv on November 29 to take part in the ceremony of signing the grant contracts within the framework of the EU-funded Belarus – Ukraine Territorial Cooperation Programme, which marked the start of 18 previously approved joint cross-border projects.

The Belarus – Ukraine Programme is part of a broader Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation (EaPTC). The funding of the Belarusian – Ukrainian projects by the European Union is more than 3 million euro.

Apart from the grant project partners, the signing ceremony was attended by representatives of central and local authorities of the two countries, the European Union Delegation to Ukraine, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, which is the EaPTC Programme Managing Authority, as well as the members of the EaPTC Support Programme.

"The cross-border cooperation projects, which have now been given a start, open up new opportunities", - Oksana Gryshkevych, Director of the Department for State Investment Projects and Development Support, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine, said. "Such cooperation is an important element of the State Strategy for Regional Development of Ukraine, the main goal of which is to create conditions for increasing the competitiveness of the regions, ensuring their sustainable development, high production efficiency and employment of the population."

"The signing of grant contracts under the Belarus-Ukraine Territorial Cooperation Programme is a historically significant event, to which we have been going for a long time," said Dina Goncharova, Director of the Center for International Technical Assistance of the European Union in Belarus. "However, writing a project and winning it is half the battle: its implementation and effective results are important. This is a good opportunity to implement social and economic ideas in the neighbouring regions. Among the 18 signed projects, most are aimed at improving the quality of life of the population of the border areas."

The Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation is a pilot programme for the European Union: for the first time six countries of the initiative are implementing cross-border projects without participation of partners from EU countries.

"This programme is new; it is not based on the previous experience. We are proud to be able to join efforts on both sides of the Belarusian – Ukrainian border", said Janis Aizsalnieks, Coordinator of the "Regional and Local Development, Decentralization of Power" sector, EU Delegation to Ukraine. – "Cross-border cooperation helps developing contacts between people, as well as interaction between local communities. It contributes to the development of the identity of the regions on both sides of the border, and also facilitates the development of social capital, trust and mutual understanding

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between communities on both sides of the border. This is an important element in the construction of Europe in the 21st century".

Thematically, 18 Belarusian – Ukrainian projects are almost equally divided among the three priorities of the Belarus – Ukraine Territorial Cooperation Programme: improving the living conditions of local communities; solving environmental problems, employment, health care and other important areas for border regions; support of cultural, educational and sports initiatives in both countries.

Organizations participating in the call for proposals under the Belarus – Ukraine Programme were provided with consulting support from the EaPTC Managing Authorities (GIZ) and the EaPTC Support Programme.

*"Cooperation within the framework of the Belarus – Ukraine Programme goes on many levels, including the European Union, state authorities, organizations and communities," said **Sabine Muller**, Regional Director of GIZ in Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus. – As this is a pilot programme, much will depend on the success of the implementation of these 18 Belarusian – Ukrainian projects, on the possibility to multiply their experience in the future. At the same time, the programme not only promotes the development of local authorities and non-governmental organizations, but also enhances the potential for their participation in future EU programmes."*

Belarusian – Ukrainian projects will continue to receive assistance from the EaPTC. From November 27 to December 1, 2017, trainings for the grant projects beneficiaries are being held in Kyiv, tailored to help in the better implementation of cross-border initiatives. The trainings are organised jointly by the EaPTC Support Programme and the EaPTC Managing Authority (GIZ).

Background. The Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Support Programme's (EaPTC Support Programme) goal is to create a favourable environment for territorial cooperation programmes along the borders of Moldova – Ukraine, Armenia – Georgia, Azerbaijan – Georgia and Belarus – Ukraine with due regard to specifics of each border area.

It is also aimed at developing the capacity of state and non-state bodies of neighbouring countries to jointly develop and implement joint cross-border projects. The total contribution of the European Union within the framework of the EaPTC Program is 12.5 million euros.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a European Union initiative directed at six countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The initiative aims at closer relations between the EU and the Eastern partners, deepening their political co-operation and economic integration.

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