



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**1 November 2010**

**INTER-COMMUNITY SOCIAL HOUSING INITIATIVE**  
**RECEIVES £3.5M OF EU SUPPORT**

A new initiative designed to encourage greater levels of social integration within Northern Ireland's housing sector has just been launched with assistance from the EU's PEACE III Programme.

The project called 'Bric – building relationships in communities' has received a total of £3,522,000 worth of assistance under PEACE III and is being delivered through an innovative partnership approach involving the Rural Development Council (RDC), the Housing Executive and the specialised community relations organisation TIDES Training.

According to figures from the Housing Executive, approximately 90% of social housing in Northern Ireland is still segregated into single identity communities. This has created further barriers to effective and long-term social integration and has served to further polarize many communities across the region.

The primary objective for the four year project is to help reverse the history of that trend for segregated social housing, by promoting the idea of good relations and greater levels of community cohesion. The project will achieve this by empowering the Housing Executive staff to develop a new approach founded on the principles of integration, tolerance and mutual respect.

RDC Vice- Chair Ruth McAreavey said: "RDC is delighted to be involved in this innovative and ambitious partnership. We hope to build the institutional good relations capacity of the Housing Executive while also enhancing the capacity of communities to be in effective active citizens. Consequently we are seeking to sustain the good relations work that will be developed as a result of this project by shifting values and practices within the Housing Executive and among the participating communities. This project is the first of its kind to pilot a unique service delivery model within a public sector agency and we anticipate that it will mainstream good relations within the Housing Executive".

Pat Colgan, Chief Executive of the Special EU Programmes Body also welcomed the initiative saying: "The creation of a truly shared society, which embraces diversity and opposes sectarianism, is one of the core objectives of the EU's PEACE III Programme.



The “bric” project will help to tackle one of the main obstacles to full integration within our society which has resulted from historic residential segregation. In creating new opportunities to support the development of cross-community housing it will address some of the underlying problems of sectarianism, prejudice and intolerance that exist across the region. Its innovative model of delivery that will place a new and distinctive focus on peace and reconciliation through institutional capacity-building, within a key regional public service organisation will greatly contribute to the promotion of a shared society.”

Over a four year period the programme will be delivered through three distinctive and complementary themes. It will deliver a bespoke Good Relations training programmes to Housing Executive staff from board level to the housing estate wardens plus 80 residents groups from 80 housing estates across Northern Ireland under the theme ‘Changing Minds’.

Under the ‘Sharing Visions’ theme, it will create opportunities that will provide Housing Executive with the skills to influence the re-imagining of up to two physical interfaces.

Finally, as part of a ‘Crossing borders’ theme, it will also use a cross-border approach to the analysis of the housing market with a view to facilitate better planning in the border areas. It will explore housing policy on a cross-border housing market delivery model and promote joint government action on cross-border housing issues.

Speaking on behalf of the Housing Executive, the Chief Executive Paddy McIntyre said: "The Housing Executive is delighted to be part of this important new programme which will embed Good Relations into every aspect of the Housing Executive's work".

Mike Mullan Chair of Tides Training commented: “This is a long term initiative involving well established partners that will help build capacity within the Housing Executive and grassroots communities to support improvements to their own areas and create a shared vision for the future”.

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**Photo Caption:** John Cherry, SEUPB; Paddy McIntyre, Chief Executive of the NIHE; Ruth McAreavey, Vice- Chair RDC; and Mike Mullan Chair of Tides Training next to a peace wall at Weaver’s Court, in Belfast.



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### **Notes to the editor**

The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Finance in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU structural funds Programmes PEACE III and INTERREG IVA designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society. The programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and in the case of INTERREG IVA, Western Scotland.

The PEACE III Programme is worth €333 million and is aimed primarily at reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society and promoting reconciliation. It focuses on helping Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland to reconcile communities and contribute towards a shared society.

For more information on the SEUPB please visit [www.seupb.eu](http://www.seupb.eu).