

PEACE III PROGRAMME (2007-2013) - OVERVIEW

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper sets out the progress made to date on the development of Operational Programme for the PEACE III Programme and preparation for implementation. Over the last year, SEUPB's focus has been on the development of the new Operational Programme documents for the 2007-2013 period. This has involved a number of administrative processes as well as an extensive public consultation process.

2.0 The Consultation Process

- 2.1 SEUPB organised a preliminary public consultation process for the PEACE III programme in May 2006 and received approximately 60 written responses which formed the basis for the preparation of the first draft of the Operational Programme. During the autumn of 2006, SEUPB also consulted with Government Departments, both north and south, on the content of the draft programme.
- 2.2 A public consultation was then conducted on the draft programme for twelve weeks prior to 4th April 2007. A breakdown of responses is as follows:

Organisation	Peace III Responses
Business and Trade Unions	4
Community & Voluntary Sector	31
Individual	1
Local Authority/LSP	36
National and Regional Organisation	12
Political Parties MEPs/TDs	5
Rural Bodies	2
Training and Education Body	3
Womens Sector	3
Total	97

2.3 All project promoters in the programme were made aware of the consultation process. With the support of SEUPB the social partners were encouraged to arrange consultation meetings with subsequent events organised across Northern Ireland and the Border Region. All of the consultation responses and events were then amalgamated and presented at a final consultation event organised by SEUPB. At the event, submissions were made by the Joint Business Council, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, NICVA/CWC and the Agri Rural sector. The method and process of consultation organised by SEUPB was universally praised by the various sectors.

3.0 Consultative Partnership Group

3.1 SEUPB established a Consultative Partnership Group in autumn 2006 to steer the development of the Operational Programme. The Group met on a number of occasions between September 2006 and May 2007. The aim of the Consultative Partnership Group was to comment on the development of the Operational Programme and advise on a number of processes running in parallel and impacting upon development.

3.2 4 processes were undertaken which made a significant contribution to the development of the draft Operational Programme. The 4 processes are outlined in detail below and they are:

- The Ex Ante Evaluation;
- The Equality Impact Assessment;
- The Strategic Environmental Assessment; and
- The Socio-Economic Review.

In addition, the Consultative Partnership Group made a significant contribution to the various consultation events that were organised.

4.0 The Ex Ante Evaluation

4.1 SEUPB appointed the Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland (ERINI) as the Ex Ante Evaluator for the Peace III Programme. An iterative review process took place over 6 months with the Consultative Partnership Group. Final reports were submitted by the Ex Ante Evaluators in April 2007. A number of recommendations were incorporated into the Operational Programme. The evaluation was submitted to the 2 Member States and the Commission along with the draft Operational Programme.

5.0 Equality Impact Assessment

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was produced for the programme to accompany the draft Operational Programme during the 12 week consultation period. This document was produced primarily to provide information to consultees during the formal consultation phase and included information on the 7 steps undertaken in the EQIA process.

6.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment

6.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was carried out on the draft Operational Programme. The format of the SEA is dictated by legislation and requires a number of steps to be taken including an initial Scoping Report, production of an Environmental Report for consultation and the production of an SEA Statement detailing how the Programme changed in the light of the SEA. The Managing Authority appointed ADAS UK Ltd to facilitate the SEA process. Following the completion of the Scoping Report a consultation on the Environmental Report was conducted between 8th June and 6th July 2007.

6.2 This has produced a number of recommendations which will be addressed mainly through project selection criteria as well as the monitoring and evaluation procedures. SEA Statements will be formally submitted to the Commission after the programme has been adopted.

7.0 Socio-Economic Analysis

7.1 The Managing Authority has produced a Socio-Economic Analysis of the region for the programme. This was included with the draft Operational Programme submitted to the 2 Member States and the Commission.

8.0 Negotiations with the European Commission

8.1 The draft Operational Programme document for the PEACE III Programme was submitted by the Member States to the European Commission on 25th May 2007. The Member States have been in a process of negotiations over the summer and these negotiations are due to conclude in October 2007. Currently, the Programme has been sent for formal approval and it is hoped

that this will be in place for the Monitoring Committee meeting on 6th November 2007.

9.0 Main features of the PEACE III Programme (2007-2013)

9.1 The PEACE III Programme is a distinctive European Structural Funds Programme aimed at reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society and promoting reconciliation. €332.89 million will be available over the next 7 years to assist Northern Ireland and the Border Region to focus on reconciling communities and contributing towards a shared society. The Programme will carry forward the key aspects of the previous PEACE Programmes and will have a continued and renewed emphasis on reconciliation.

9.2 In carrying forward the key objectives of the previous PEACE Programmes, the overall aim of the PEACE III Programme is “to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation”. Taking this overall aim forward, the PEACE III Programme will focus on two key strategic objectives outlined as follows:

- **Reconciling Communities:** Key activities will facilitate relationships on a cross-community and/or cross-border basis to assist in addressing issues of trust, prejudice and intolerance and accepting commonalities and differences. In addition, key activities will seek to acknowledge and deal with the hurt, losses, trauma and suffering caused by the conflict.
- **Contributing to a shared society:** Key activities will address the physical segregation or polarisation of places and communities in Northern Ireland and the Border Region with a view to encouraging increased economic and social cross-border and cross-community engagement.

9.3 The cross cutting themes will act as strategic guidelines for those engaged in the implementation of the Programme and include:

- Cross border co-operation;
- Equality;
- Sustainable Development;
- Impact on Poverty; and
- Partnership.

9.4 Building on the lessons from PEACE II, the PEACE III Programme has incorporated the key strands of reconciliation, as defined by Hamber and Kelly, into the objectives of the Programme. This ensures that the Programme has adopted a greater focus on peace and reconciliation goals and provides a clear distinction with the other Structural Funds Programmes. In line with this approach, the PEACE III Programme will place a strong emphasis on promoting cross community relations and understanding. In addition, priorities within the Programme will be specifically targeted on areas and groups that have been affected by the conflict and experience particular problems of segregation, marginalisation and isolation.

9.5 In the PEACE III Programme, the 2 strategic objectives will be implemented by 2 key priorities that include:

- Priority 1 - Reconciling Communities: will have a budget of €190m and will focus on two key areas. Firstly, 'Building Positive Relations at the Local Level' aims to challenge attitudes towards sectarianism and racism and to support conflict resolution and mediation at the local community level. Secondly, 'Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past' aims to provide advice, counselling and support services for victims, their relatives and those who care for them. In addition, this area will also create opportunities to acknowledge and deal with the past.

- Priority 2 - Contributing to a Shared Society: will have a budget of €120m and will focus on 2 key themes. The first theme is 'Creating Shared Public Spaces' which aims to regenerate urban, rural and border areas that appear derelict, segregated, underused, threatening and unwelcoming and transform them into shared spaces. The second theme, 'Key Institutional Capacities are Developed for a Shared Society', aims to develop the capacity, knowledge, culture and mechanisms of key institutions, including those in the public sector, to deliver a shared society within Northern Ireland and on a cross-border basis.

(Annex 1 below illustrates the overall structure of the PEACE III Programme).

10.0 Update on Implementation of the PEACE III Programme

10.1 Although the Programme is still in the negotiation phase between the Member States and the Commission, SEUPB has been working prudently over the summer months to put in place as many of the implementation arrangements as possible, prior to formal Programme approval.

10.2 SEUPB are the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) for the Programme and will therefore be responsible for creating a project pipeline, making calls for applications, assessing applications, issuing letters of offer, monitoring projects and processing claims. In addition, a number of Steering Committees will be established on a cross border/partnership basis. The members of the Steering Committee will have the necessary experience and independence to select projects for funding.

10.3 In relation to the various themes of the Programme SEUPB has made the following progress:

- **Priority 1- Theme 1- Building Positive Relations at the Local Level:**
The JTS has engaged extensively with Local Authorities in the eligible region to put in place mechanisms to produce local action plans. SEUPB have issued detailed Guidelines for Peace III Priority 1.1 and have hosted a workshop on the Priority in July, at which a significant number of Councils and Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs) were in attendance. Prior to the issue of formal guidance, the SEUPB have had significant contact with the Local Authorities, NILGA, SOLACE and Government Departments with regard to 1.1 'Building Positive Relationships at the Local level' and the Chief Executives were invited to comment on draft guidance early in May.

Negotiations are at an advanced stage to appoint the Community Relations Council for Northern Ireland and Border Action to provide development support to Local Authorities in the production of the plans. It is expected that plans will be produced by the end of the year. The JTS has also issued an Expression of Interest call in relation to regional projects under this theme. 48 expressions of interest were submitted of which 13 were short listed for inclusion in the project pipeline.

- **Priority 1 - Theme 2 - Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past:**
The Managing Authority is currently in negotiations with the Community Relations Council for Northern Ireland and Border Action to appoint these organisations as the Implementing Body for this theme. It is envisaged that these negotiations will conclude in October 2007.
- **Priority 2 - Theme 1 - Creating Shared Public Spaces :** Following approval of the Operational Programme for Peace III, SEUPB will launch a Capital Build Programme with an indicative budget of €82m. In June 2007, with a view to the early establishment of projects, a call was made for Expressions of Interest for significant projects with a capacity to provide shared space, be iconic and leave a lasting legacy. Demand

has been significant and SEUPB received over 125 applications with a cumulative cost in excess of €750m. The 125 applications have been assessed with 20 selected based on the best match to objectives, creating shared space for both communities, capacity to leave a lasting legacy and be iconic on a region wide not just local basis. The 20 applications selected total in excess of €125m. A workshop for the 20 short listed applications was held on 10th July; applicants were provided with a draft list of application questions which are due to be completed and submitted to SEUPB by 31st August 2007. SEUPB have reviewed 17 applications and progressed 9 to the Economic Appraisal stage.

- **Priority 2- Theme 2 - Key Institutional Capacities:** Preparations for the implementation of this theme are currently at the planning stages.

11.0 Recommendation.

The Monitoring Committee is requested to:

- **Note** the overall structure of the PEACE III Programme.
- **Note** the approach taken to date by SEUPB in relation to the development of the project pipeline.

Annex 1

Overall structure of PEACE III Programme



