

**European Union**European Regional
Development Fund
Investing in your futureSpecial EU Programmes Body
Foras Um Chláir Speisialta An AE
Boord O Owre Ocht UE Projects

UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERREG VA PROGRAMME

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper outlines the progress made on implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme since the last INTERREG VA Monitoring Committee meeting on 29 June 2016 and the Joint Exceptional Programme Monitoring Committee held on 7 September 2016.
- 1.2 The Programme has made significant progress in implementation over the last 6 months. There has been considerable work completed in assessing and approving applications. In total 23 applications have been approved impacting on all priority axis. These are all large strategic projects, involving multiple partners that will have a regional impact in enterprise, environment, transport and health. The programme has allocated 59% of available funding, and it is anticipated that this should rise to over 80% by the end of February 2017.
- 1.3 After a period of uncertainty following the result of the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU, agreement was reached on the basis on which Letters of Offer were to be issued. The Executive Minister of Finance, Máirtín Ó Muilleoir, and the Irish Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe, confirmed¹ in October that Letters of Offer for approved projects under the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes could be issued. The Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform have worked closely together to ensure these Programmes are successfully completed in full.

¹ Ministers Donohoe and Ó Muilleoir confirm multi-million Delivery of EU Funding
http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/Media_Press_Releases/SEUPB_AnnouncementOfEUFundingAwards_LoOIssue_28-10-2016.sflb.ashx

2.0 Implementation Progress – Programme Level

2.1 The programme opened a series of calls for applications throughout 2015 and 2016 with decisions on Stage 1 and Stage 2 applications being made by the Programme Steering Committees. The Programme Steering committee met on 3 occasions since the last Programme Monitoring Committee meeting. A total of 23 projects have been approved which equates to 59% of the total programme budget. The approved projects are on target to meet the agreed outputs of the Programme.

The key highlights are:

- 54 applications have been received into the programme;
- 23 Projects have been approved to date with a total ERDF value of €132 million (total grant value €152 million), this equates to 59% of the ERDF budget for projects, and letters of offer are in various stages of issue with the first one signed by the Lead Partner and returned before the end 2016;
- Approved projects will deliver the following outputs:
 - 495 research years in local research institutions and companies;
 - 1408 SMEs receiving support;
 - 70 SMEs engaging an innovation intern;
 - over 5,000 hectare of habitat supported;
 - 33 conservation plans and 6 plans for marine protected areas;
 - 2 water treatment projects and 3 cross border river projects;
 - 78 km of greenways;
 - over 35,000 patients /families in receipt of health and social care.
- 6 applications await stage two assessment by the Steering Committee, the combined value of these projects is €67.5 million ERDF, which equates to 27% of the ERDF budget for projects; decisions on these projects should be made by the Programme Steering Committee by the end of February 2017.

- Projects will commence implementation on the ground during the first quarter of 2017.

A full list of approved projects is attached at Annex 1.

2.2 Overall, the applications received have been strategic and of a high quality, demonstrating a result and output orientation and effective partnership arrangements. Meetings of the Steering Committee were held on the following dates:

- 27th July (SME / Health / Environment);
- 6th /7th September (Environment / Greenways / SME / Health);
- 3rd November (R&I / Environment).

An update on implementation at the Priority Axis level follows:



PRIORITY AXIS 1 - RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The economies of the region have a low level of research and innovation. The programme presents an opportunity for research institutions and universities across the region to work collaboratively in the areas of health & life sciences and renewable energy to make a real regional difference, and impact positively on the local economy. The programme also aims to increase the level of research and innovation within local SMEs and encourage those SMEs to collaborate on cross border basis.

Two areas are targeted to meet the objectives of the priority, namely:

- Enhancing Research and Innovation; and
- Business Investment in Research & Innovation.

Enhancing Research and Innovation (€45m ERDF) aims to increase business and industry relevant research and innovation capacity across the region with two target sectors: **‘Health & Life Sciences’** and **‘Renewable Energy’**. It will **Result** in *an increase in the annual number of peer reviewed journal and conference publications*

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within the two sectors, with cross-border authorship and with the potential to create economic impact. This was the last area of the programme to open.

Five projects have been approved to date with the following programme outputs agreed:

Output	Programme Target	Commitment within approved LoOs	
Research, innovation: Number of new researchers in supported entities.	514	405.05	1
Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects.	5	20	
Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support.	20	40	
Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving grants.	10	16	
Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support.	20	40	
Research, innovation: Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions.	10	40	

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Productive investment: Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects.	10	37
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- 1 A decision on two further projects will be taken at the next steering committee. If approved, the target of 514 will be met and exceeded.

Business Investment in Research & Innovation (€15.9m ERDF) aims to increase the number of SMEs engaged in cross-border research and innovation activity in the region aimed at the development of new products, processes and tradable services which will **Result** in *an increase in the percentage of SMEs and micro-businesses in the eligible area which are involved in R&I involving cross-border collaborations.*

A single project has been approved with the following agreed programme outputs:

Output	Programme Target	Commitment within approved LoOs
Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support.	1408	1408
Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving grants.	19	30
Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support.	1408	1408

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Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions.	50	70	
Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects.	5	5	
Number of enterprises receiving one-to-one innovation advice.	469	469	
Number of enterprises in receipt of an Innovation Capability Development Programme.	94	94	
Productive investment: Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects.	19	30	
Number of enterprises engaging an Innovation Intern.	70	70	

A total of €46,750,845.97 ERDF has been allocated. The total value of projects (including public and private match funding) supported in Priority Axis is €61,554,192.73.

The ERDF allocated to date represents 77% of the total ERDF budget of €60,926,835.



Priority Axis 2 - ENVIRONMENT

The three jurisdictions face similar challenges in managing shared environmental resources, including peat bogs, river basins, loughs and the sea. Cross border collaboration is essential to address common environmental challenges, including meeting the requirements of relevant EU directives. The programme facilitates the development and implementation of common approaches to the management of the environment, and in particular:

- Protected habitats and species;
 - Marine environment;
 - Cross border loughs;
 - Cross border river basins
- **Priority 2a - Protecting and restoring biodiversity**
 - Objective 2.1 - Recovery of protected habitats and species

This objective aims to promote cross-border cooperation to facilitate the recovery of selected protected habitats (e.g. blanket bogs) and priority species (e.g. hen harrier). It will **Result** in *an increase in the percentage of selected protected habitats in or approaching favourable condition*.

Two projects have been approved with the following agreed programme outputs:

Output	Programme Target	Commitment
		Within approved LoOs

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Nature and biodiversity: Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status.	4500	5378	●
Conservation action plans.	25	33	●

Objective 2.2 - Management of protected areas and species

This objective aims to develop cross-border capacity for the monitoring and management of marine protected areas and species. It will **Result** in a *corresponding increase in cross-border monitoring and management capacity.*

Three projects have been approved with the following programme outputs agreed:

Output	Programme Target	Commitment within approved LoOs	
Network of buoys for regional seas, including telemetry and oceanographic monitoring e.g. for seals, cetaceans and salmonids.	1	1	●
Models developed to support conservation of habitats and species.	5	7	●
Marine management plans for designated protected areas complete.	6	6	●
System for the prediction of bathing water quality and the installation of real time signage.	1	1	●

- **Priority 2b - Investment in the water sector**

- Objective 2.3 - Improvement of water quality in transitional waters

This objective aims to improve water quality in shared transitional waters. It will **Result in an increased percentage of shared transitional waters in the region with good or high quality.**

A single project has been approved to date with the following programme outputs to be delivered on:

Output	Programme Target	Commitment within approved LoOs
Wastewater treatment: Additional population served by improved wastewater treatment.	10000	10000
Sewage network and waste water treatment projects to improve water quality in shared transitional waters.	2	2

- Objective 2.4 - Improvement of freshwater quality in river basins

This objective aims to improve freshwater quality in cross-border river basins, and will **Result** in an increased percentage of cross-border freshwater bodies in cross-border river basins with good or high quality.

A single project has been approved to date with the following programme outputs to be delivered on:

Output	Programme Target	Commitment Within approved LoOs
Establish 3 river water quality improvement projects.	3	0
Develop and implement cross-border groundwater monitoring wells.	50	0
Cross-border drinking water Sustainable Catchment Area Management Plan: Research and Pilot project.	1	1

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2 3

A decision on an additional project will be taken at the Steering Committee. If approved, the target outputs of 3 and 50 will be met.

In Priority Axis 2, a total of €28,655,127.94 ERDF has been allocated. The total value of projects supported (including match funding) in Priority Axis 2 is €35,521,734.86

The ERDF allocated represents 40% of the total ERDF budget of €72,000,000.



Sustainable Transport

The transport of the region is dominated by the use of the car with resulting high carbon emissions. Growth in the population and economies will accentuate this

trend unless actions are taken to facilitate a move towards more environmentally friendly forms of transport. Cross border cooperation can assist in increasing the use of public transport and cycling. The key aim of this priority is to promote cross-border, intermodal and sustainable mobility in the region which will **Result in an increase in the number of sustainable transport journeys utilising greenways, electric vehicles and public transport in the cross-border region.**

Cross-Border Greenways aims to develop cross-border greenways and cycle networks to reduce car journeys in cross-border transportation.

Three projects have been approved to date with the following programme outputs to be delivered on:

Output	Programme Target	Commitment within approved LoOs
New cross-border greenways to facilitate cross-border mobility.	80 km	78.6 km

4 Commitment slightly under output target however shortfall is not considered material.

Multi Modal Hub aims to develop a cross-border, multi-modal hub which facilitates a shift to public transport by providing modern, cross-border, integrated services, such as park and ride, public cycle schemes and car share.

No projects have been approved to date:

Output	Programme Target	Commitment within agreed LoOs
Cross-border, multimodal public transport hub encompassing cross-border integrated services.	1	0

- 5 There is one application under consideration for this theme. If successful the target output will be met.

In Priority Axis 3, a total of €19,789,321 ERDF has been allocated. The total value of projects supported (including match funding) in Priority Axis 3 is €23,281,555.

The ERDF allocated represents 49% of the total ERDF budget of €40,000,000.



Priority Axis 4 – Health & Social Care










The health and social care services across the region face challenges in meeting rising demand within a constrained budget environment. Cross-border co-operation can contribute to the more efficient delivery of health services in border regions, particularly with regard to co-ordination of services. Cooperation across the region is essential to obtain the necessary critical mass for healthcare trials. Co-ordination and sharing of e-health solutions can fast track implementation of this technology facilitating the delivery of high quality services. The key aim of this priority is to improve the health and well-being of people living in the region by enabling them to access quality health and social care services in the most appropriate setting to their needs. It will **Result** in an increased number of 'episodes of care' delivered on a cross-border basis.

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Seven projects have been approved to date with the following programme outputs to be delivered on:

Output	Programme Target	Commitment within approved LoOs	
Develop new cross-border area interventions to support positive health and wellbeing and the prevention of ill health.	12	0	6
Beneficiaries supported by new cross-border area initiatives for positive health and wellbeing and the prevention of ill health.	15000	0	7
Develop new cross-border area community support services to support 4,000 disabled people who are socially isolated (including the use of web based information outlining community assets)	2	2	
Beneficiaries supported by new cross-border area initiatives for disabled people of all ages who are socially isolated.	4000	1628	8
Develop a new cross-border area community and voluntary sector infrastructure to support clients who have recovered from mental illness (including utilisation of e-health e.g. patient records and support services)	1	1	

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Cross-border area clients in receipt of mental illness recovery services.	8000	8000	
Develop and implement new border area frameworks for early intervention with vulnerable families.	2	3	
Vulnerable families in receipt of an intervention.	5000	5125	
Establish cross-border frameworks, for scheduled and unscheduled care streams, to improve utilisation of scarce human, physical and financial resources.	4	3	
Patients benefitting from scheduled and unscheduled care streams.	15000	13000	
Patients availing of e-health interventions to support independent living in caring communities.	4500	5100	
A shared cross-border framework and service for the identification, assessment and referral of patients identified as "at risk".	2500	2500	
Specialist training and development programmes for cross-border area health and social care providers.	3800	2178	
Develop infrastructure and deliver cross-border area health care intervention trials for novel but	10	10	

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unproven healthcare interventions to prevent and cure illness.		
E-health research and evaluation mechanism for the evaluation of e-health and m-health solutions.	1	0

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A number of proposals are going to the Steering Committee which if approved may address the shortfall in these target output areas, otherwise additional calls will be made.

1 This output is not directly addressed by projects approved or under consideration.

In Priority Axis 4, a total of €37,182,071.46 ERDF has been allocated. The total value of projects supported (including match funding) in Priority Axis 4 is €44,153,843.27

The ERDF allocated represents 70% of the total ERDF budget of €53,000,000.

3.0 Programme Management

3.1 Implementation Challenges

3.1.1 UK's decision to leave the EU

The decision of the UK to leave the European Union resulted in period of uncertainty in the weeks that followed the referendum. During this period, programme implementation continued as normal within SEUPB, with projects being assessed and presented to the Programme Steering Committee. There was a HM Treasury (UK) announcement in August which gave assurance with regards to the UK proportion of any funding, post the UK's withdrawal, to those projects awarded funding in advance of the UK Chancellors Autumn Statement on the 23 November 2016. The Joint Secretariat, in cooperation with the relevant Departments, took all necessary steps to expedite the assessment of applications, within the agreed processes. Applicants were encouraged to submit applications and respond to any queries as quickly as possible in order that assessments could proceed in a timely manner. An extraordinary PMC was held in September 2016 to review the implications of the referendum on the programme. There was a further HM Treasury announcement on 3 October, which removed the 23 November deadline, and gave an assurance that the UK proportion of projects funded before the UK's withdrawal would be underwritten by HM Treasury, until they conclude, even if that is after the time that the UK exits from the EU. This assurance carries two conditions, one being that the project represents value for money, and the second being that the funding programme is still a government priority. The assessment reports of projects approved post 23 November will indicate how they have satisfactorily addressed these two criteria.

There were detailed discussions with DPER and DoF regarding how the Letters of Offer should reflect the HM Treasury assurance over the UK proportion of funding, and the implications of a withdrawal from the EU, which is likely to take effect during the programme period.

The Departments of Finance and SEUPB worked closely together to ensure that the Letters of Offer could be issued for the full programming period, and the following clause will be included in those award letters:

Letter of Offer - General Conditions

- a. *Any payment on this letter of offer is subject to the availability of ERDF funding and national funding as detailed in Section 2 of this letter of offer;*
- b. *In the event that, as a consequence of the UK leaving the EU, the UK element of ERDF funding is no longer available, this letter of offer is subject to the HM Treasury commitment that projects approved prior to the UK leaving the EU will be fully funded, even when specific projects continue beyond the UK's departure from the EU;*
- c. *In light of this, a review of funding arrangements set out in Section 2 will take place in the second half of 2018. The outcome of that review will inform the final funding proposals for projects and the nature of the funding streams;*
- d. *The project and all payments related to it are subject to, and will continue to be subject to, the Programme Rules and the EU Regulations referenced therein, as amended from time to time, for the duration of the Programme, regardless of the source of funding;*
- e. *If there is a conflict between the terms of the Letter of Offer, Standard Conditions of Grant and/or Programme Rules, the following descending order of priority applies:*
 - a) *the terms of this Letter of Offer; and*
 - b) *the terms of the Standard Conditions of Grant; and*
 - c) *the terms of the Programme Rules.*

3.1.2 Assessment of Applications

As previously notified and agreed by the PMC, the assessment process should not be longer than 36 weeks. An agreed process was put in place to meet this 36 week requirement.

The Cooperation Programme states that Stage 1 should not take longer than 12 weeks. 100% of projects (53) that applied under INTERREG VA received a decision well within that deadline. The longest time to make a decision was 9 weeks. The average length of time for applicants to receive a decision was just over 7 weeks as detailed in the table below.

Table 1: Processing times for Stage 1 applications.

Call	Number of applications	No of weeks (rounded to nearest week)
Health and Life Sciences & Renewable Energy	10	8 weeks
Enhance innovation capacity of SMEs	3	5 weeks
Habitats	4	7 weeks
Marine	6	7 weeks
Transitional waters	1	4 weeks
River Basins	2	7 weeks
Greenways	5	6 weeks
Multi—Modal Transport Hub	1	6 weeks
Health & Social care	21	9 weeks

*Calculated from the call closure date to the project notification of the decision

The Cooperation Programme states that the total assessment time, including Stage 1 and Stage 2 should not take longer than 36 weeks.

38 projects were progressed to Stage 2 of the application process. Of these 38 projects, final decisions have been made on 31 projects, on which the following analysis is based.

- 16 projects (52%) were notified of a decision within the 36 week target.
- A further 14 projects (45%) were informed of the decision within 46 weeks or less.
- One project was informed of a decision after 54 weeks.

Table 2: Processing times for Stage 2 applications

Call	Number of applications	No of weeks (rounded to nearest week)
Health and Life Sciences & Renewable Energy	6	29 weeks
Enhance innovation capacity of SMEs	2	46 weeks
Habitats	2	36 weeks
Marine	3	36 weeks
Transitional waters	1	54 weeks
River Basins	1	36 weeks
Greenways	4	32 weeks
Multi—Modal Transport Hub		-
Health & Social care	12	43 weeks

*Calculated from the call closure date to the project notification of the decision

The reason the 36 week target has not been achieved was largely due to the effect of the UK Referendum Decision and the requirement to rearrange Steering Committees in its aftermath. The “Transitional Waters”, “Health & Social Care” and “ Enhance innovation capacity of SMEs” Calls for Applications were especially effected by this. In some cases, this was compounded by the Joint Secretariat having to revert back to the applicant during the assessment to request further information, in to facilitate a

robust assessment of the project against the criteria.

The non-achievement of the agreed time schedule is disappointing, however given the uncertainty created by the UK Referendum Decision, and the potential impact on future funding streams, the additional time was necessary to put in place the elements to create the environment that has allowed the funding awards to go ahead.

The above analysis is based on the time taken from the submission of the application (Stage 1) until the applicant is informed of the decision of the Steering Committee. Following this decision there is then a period of time required to construct the letter of offer, and discuss and agree the details of the final written letter of offer with the applicant.

The SEUPB is commissioning an evaluation of the implementation mechanisms, this will explore in more detail the efficiency of the assessment process.

The figures in relation to processing times will be published on the SEUPB website in order to provide full transparency in relation to the process.

3.1.3 Implementation and Impact Evaluations

The PMC has previously agreed the evaluation plan for the Programme. The plan includes both an implementation evaluation (to review processes) and an impact evaluation on each priority axis.

Implementation evaluation: the Managing Authority will commence a procurement process in January 2017 with a view to appointing an evaluator to undertake the implementation evaluation for both the INTERREG VA and PEACE IV Programmes. The Implementation Evaluation will report in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The evaluation will support the smooth delivery of the programme by assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation mechanism established for the programme, including measures to reduce the administrative burden.

Impact evaluations: As previously communicated to the PMC, impact evaluations will be carried out on each priority axis, to test the intervention logic of that priority axis, and form a view of the effectiveness and impact of the investment, with a particular emphasis on learning any lessons that could inform future programmes or other related public sector investments.

A Terms of Reference has been approved by the Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) in relation to the Health and Social Care Priority. A procurement process will commence to appoint an evaluator early in 2017. Terms of Reference for the remaining priority areas of the programme will be forwarded to the ESG for approval by written procedure with public procurement exercises commencing shortly thereafter.

3.1.4 Simplified Cost Options

The Programme is proactively promoting the implementation of simplified costs. All relevant projects will avail of a flat rate for overheads.

All calls offered applicants the option to utilise standard scales of unit costs and/or flat-rate financing for overhead and/or staff costs. Simplified cost options are established at Stage Two of the application process in consultation with the applicant and in accordance with Commission guidance.

The following simplified cost options (SCO) are used in the implementation of INTERREG VA projects:

Specific Objective		SCO
1.1	R&I – Health & Life Sciences & Renewable Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indirect Costs – Flat Rate of 25% of Eligible Direct Costs (borrowed from Horizon 2020 in accordance with Delegated Regulation 480/2014 & Art 29(1) of Regulation (EC) 1290/2013).

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Costs - Hourly rate calculated as the latest documented annual gross employment cost divided by 1720 hours (Article 68(2) of Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 refers). • Unit Cost (1) - STIPEND payments to PhD researchers in the UK. • Unit Cost (2) - STIPEND payments to PhD researchers in Ireland. • Unit Cost (3) - Training, Support & Networking costs for PhD researchers (borrowed from the Marie Skłodowska-Curie programme (Innovative Training Networks)).
1.2	R&I - SMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect Costs – Flat Rate of 15% of Direct Staff Costs (Article 68(1) (b) of Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 refers). • Staff Costs - Hourly rate calculated as the latest documented annual gross employment cost divided by 1720 hours (Article 68(2) of Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 refers). • Unit Cost (1) – Strand 1 Workshop per participant SME. • Unit Cost (2) – Strand 2 Business Process Review per participant SME. • Unit Cost (3) – Innovation Audit & Interpretation per participant SME.

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2.1	Environment – Habitats & Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indirect Costs – Flat Rate of 15% of Direct Staff Costs (Article 68(1)(b) of Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 refers). Staff Costs - Hourly rate calculated as the latest documented annual gross employment cost divided by 1720 hours (Article 68(2) of Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 refers).
2.2	Environment – Marine	
2.3	Environment – Transitional Waters	
2.4	Environment – River Basins	
3.1	Sustainable Transport – Multi Modal Hub	
3.3	Sustainable Transport – Greenways	
4.1	Health & Social Care	

3.1.5 Support to potential applicants

The SEUPB has continued to provide support to potential applicants by providing sector workshops for each call for applications. The full list of workshops held to date is outlined below.

Workshop	Date	Location	Number of attendees
Health & Social Care	17-Sep-15	Belfast	113
Business Research & Innovation	23-Sep-15	Belfast	81
Environment (3 Objectives)	27-Oct-15	Dundalk	51
Sustainable Transport	07-Dec-15	Armagh	28
Research & Innovation Health & Life Sciences	22-Mar-16	Derry / Londonderry	55
Research & Innovation Health & Life Sciences	24-Mar-16	Inverness	27
State Aid for Research & Innovation applicants	15-Apr-16	Belfast	30

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Interreg VA training in Equality Horizontal Principles	24-Nov-15	Belfast	43
Interreg VA training in Sustainable Development Horizontal Principles	20-Jan-16	Belfast	68
Interreg VA training in Equality Horizontal Principles	02-Mar-16	Dundalk	78
Interreg VA training in Sustainable Development Horizontal Principles	10-Mar-16	Dundalk	60
Interreg VA training in Equality & Sustainable Development Horizontal Principles	30-Jun-16	Glasgow	19
Interreg VA training in Equality & Sustainable Development Horizontal Principles	15-Dec-16	Derry / Londonderry	37
Total workshop attendees			690

A programme of training for Lead Partners and Partners has been developed by SEUPB and will be rolled out throughout 2017. The training will include but is not limited to sessions on partnership responsibilities, the result orientation of the programmes, fraud awareness, eligibility of expenditure and effective corporate governance. The training programme will be published on SEUPB's website with multiple sessions taking place throughout the programme area.

4.0 Regulatory Requirements

4.1 Designation of the Authorities

Programmes are not permitted to submit payment claims to the Commission until formal designation has taken place. The Audit Authority are responsible for assessing the Management and Control System and the procedures against the Commission's requirements. The procedures outline the processes for implementation which are underpinned by a drive for simplification and the reduction of administrative burden.

In January 2016, SEUPB submitted to the Audit Authority procedures to enable the designation of the Managing Authority and Certifying Authority. The Audit Authority have replied with comments. The majority of these comments have been addressed. A response to the remaining comments require the finalisation of the database. Designation requires the Audit Authority forming a positive opinion on all relevant procedures including the database.

The Programme will not be able to claim expenditure from the Commission until a fully functioning database is available.

4.2 Compliance with E-Cohesion

The SEUPB will use the INTERACT Electronic Monitoring System (eMS) to meet the requirements of e-Cohesion.

The eMS has been developed using open source software. It is available free of charge to the SEUPB under license. The SEUPB has signed a license agreement and has installed the database on a local server for testing purposes. The database is configurable, with the system administrator being able to select from menus to configure the system to meet the requirements of a particular programme. Whilst there is a level of configurability available to the user, in order to meet SEUPB's own very specific business processes a higher level of configuration will be required.

Following a public procurement exercise, the SEUPB has appointed CPB, a Vienna based company, to host and configure the system to the specific needs of the INTERREG Programme. CPB were responsible for the development of the original database for INTERACT.

SEUPB are currently in the process of working with CPB to ensure that the necessary changes to the system are made. It is intended that the system will go live early in 2017.

5.0 Update on Communications Activity

5.1 UK Referendum Decision

The Communications Team has posted a number of statements on the SEUPB website updating all stakeholders on the impact of the UK's decision to withdraw from the EU on the Programme and has responded to all media queries in relation to referendum decision. On 28 October the Communications Team issued the following joint Ministerial statement on the implementation of the Programmes – see link below:

http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/Media_Press_Releases/SEUPB_AnnouncementOfEU_FundingAwards_LoOIssue_28-10-2016.sflb.ashx

The Communications Team continue to monitor, and respond as appropriate, to all media coverage of reference PEACE and INTERREG Programmes in relation to the UK's decision to withdraw from the EU.

A number of funding announcements have issued in relation to successful Programme applicants. Please see below a sample of the print, online and broadcast media coverage secured through these announcements.

Publication: Irish News
 Date: Tuesday, November 29, 2016
 Page: 31
 Extract: 1 of 1
 Circulation: 38974
 Author: Simon Cunningham
 Headline: Cross-border research gets £14m EU funds



Cross-border research gets £14m EU funds

Simon Cunningham

A CROSS-BORDER initiative to drive research and innovation has been offered £16.6 million (£14.2m) in EU funding.

The Co-Innovate project - which also includes a Scottish element - aims to increase the proportion of small and medium businesses taking part in cross-border collaboration from 22 per cent to a third.

The programme will be lead by InterTradeIreland is expected to deliver almost 500 projects.

Business will be able to access to up to 70 so called innovation interns to help implement enhanced R&D activity.

Economy minister Simon Hamilton welcomed the funding.

"Innovation drives growth. Innovative companies are more profitable and productive than those who are not," he said.

"In Northern Ireland we need many more firms, particularly our SMEs and micro businesses, engaging in innovation and this investment will support delivery of that ambition.

"This new programme will provide tremendous opportunities and support for companies to engage in a wide range of innovation activities to



■ **INVESTMENT:** Research and innovation projects in the north and the Republic have received a major funding boost

6 Innovative companies are more profitable and productive than those who are not

- Simon Hamilton

develop new solutions that will drive their company's growth and profitability."

The scheme is among the

first to benefit from the EU's INTERREG VA programme.

Gina McIntyre, CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body added: "The funding will help create a strong export based economy through increased awareness of and engagement in innovation by both SMEs and micro-businesses, in Northern Ireland the border region of Ireland and western Scotland.

"It will lead to enhanced cross-border collaboration for the development of new products, processes and tradeable services that will strengthen the regional economy."

R&I cross-border Co-Innovate project to be delivered by Intertrade Ireland

Publication: Letterkenny Post
 Date: Thursday, December 01, 2016
 Page: 5
 Extract: 1 of 1
 Circulation: 15000
 Author:
 Headline: Over €15m funding for cross-border research businesses



Over €15m funding for cross-border research businesses

Donegal Co. Council has welcomed this week's announcement from the Special EU Programmes Body that approximately €15.6m has been offered to develop the research and innovation on a cross-border basis.

The funding offer is the first to be announced under the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme. Upon completion the project will increase the proportion of SMEs and micro-businesses involved in cross-border research and innovation collaboration within Northern Ireland, western Scotland and the border region of Ireland from 22% to 33%.

InterTradeIreland will act as the lead partner for the project, alongside Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and delivery agents Enterprise Northern Ireland and the Local Enterprise Office's.

Michael Tunney from the Donegal Local Enterprise Office in Donegal County Council welcomes this announcement saying: "The Local Enterprise Offices have been working with our partners, particularly the Local Enterprise Agencies within the Enterprise Northern Ireland Network and

InterTrade Ireland, on this project over the past two years."

He added: "The project is focussed on developing and driving innovation in small and micro businesses and aims to identify how this can be done in each business. The project will be an additional support to small businesses in Donegal and we will seek to integrate it into our current suite of supports to maximise its impact."

"We hope that through the Co-Innovates programme that up to 80 Donegal businesses will be able to engage in the first stage of the project

and that from these a strong cohort will be brought forward to the second stage."

With five distinct strands the project will provide education and capability support tailored to the needs of all participating SMEs and micro-businesses.

It will deliver 469 separate innovation audits to support new product and process development and will give SMEs and micro-businesses access to up to 70 'Innovation interns' to help implement enhanced research and innovation activity.

Letterkenny Post: R&I cross-border Co-Innovate project to be delivered by Intertrade Ireland

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Cross-border greenways: EU pledges 23m euros

8 December 2016 Northern Ireland Share



Mr Hazzard said the new routes would complement Northern Ireland's five existing greenways that span around 600 miles

The EU has pledged more than 23m euros (£19.5m) to create almost 80 kms (50 miles) of new greenway linking towns and cities on either side of the Irish border.

The second phase of the Ulster Canal Greenway will also benefit.

It is hoped the projects will cut car journeys and create sustainable travel routes for cyclists and pedestrians.

Gina McIntyre of the Special EU Programmes Body said each of the projects would "substantially increase the quality and quantity of greenway offering on both sides of the border".

The Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland and Ireland's Department of Transport will match fund the EU monies.

Northern Ireland's Infrastructure Minister Chris Hazzard said the EU funding "demonstrates commitment to further develop sustainable transport options here".

"The benefits of developing greenways go well beyond transport. The health, economic, environmental and social impacts help enhance the quality of life for users".

Mr Hazzard said the new routes would complement Northern Ireland's five existing greenways that span around 600 miles.

The North West greenway - three separate routes totalling 46.5 kms linking Derry to Buncrana in County Donegal, Derry to the Donegal village of Muff, and Strabane to Lifford - is the single biggest recipient of EU funding. It will receive 14.9m euros.

The Carlingford Lough Greenway - a 10-km route linking Newry to Carlingford - has been offered 3.5m euros, while the second phase of the Ulster Canal Greenway is to receive 4.9m euros.

It follows the route of the old Ulster Canal from Smithborough in county Monaghan to Armagh.

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport Shane Ross said the greenways "further enhance the level of cross-border co-operation between jurisdictions".

"The potential for these routes to be used by commuters travelling to and from work each day offers an opportunity to reduce dependence on the private car and help reduce carbon emissions.

"They also offer excellent potential to attract visitors to the areas with positive impacts on local economies."

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BBC NI (online) – Sustainable Transport: Greenways announcement

Publication: Irish News
 Date: Friday, December 09, 2016
 Page: 3
 Extract: 1 of 2
 Circulation: 36974
 Author: Seamus McKinney
 Headline: EU to spend £20m on cross-border cycle routes



EU to spend £20m on cross-border cycle routes

Seamus McKinney
 derry@irisnews.com

ALMOST \$20 million of EU funding has been set aside to develop cross-border cycling and walking routes from Derry, Strabane, Armagh and Newry.

The Greenways project will establish new routes linking the north with Counties Donegal, Monaghan and Louth by 2023. The finance was confirmed yesterday under the EU's Inter-reg programme.

An international concept, a greenway is a long, narrow piece of land developed solely for pedestrians and cyclists.

Almost \$12.5m has been allocated to the North West Greenways network, which will link Derry with Buncrana and Moville in Co Donegal.

A route is also to be developed between Strabane and Lifford.

In Co Down, almost \$3m is to be spent developing a Greenways link between Newry and Carlingford, while more than \$4m is to be spent on the Ulster Canal Greenway between Counties Armagh and Monaghan.

The route will follow the disused Ulster Canal from Smithborough through to Monaghan town and on to Middleton.

Matched funding for all four projects

has already been agreed by Stormont and the Irish government.

Infrastructure minister Chris Hazzard said the EU money would help develop 1,000km of Greenways across the north.

"The benefits of developing greenways go well beyond transport. The health, economic, environmental and social impacts help enhance the quality of life for users," he said.

Dublin transport minister Shane Ross also said the projects would provide valuable cross-border corridors.

"The potential for these routes to be used by commuters travelling to and from work each day offers an opportunity to reduce dependence on the private car and help reduce carbon emissions," he said.

6 The health, economic, environmental and social impacts help enhance the quality of life for users

— Chris Hazzard

Irish News – Sustainable Transport: Greenways funding announcement.

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Headline: Greenway routes unveiled



Greenway routes unveiled

BY CRONAN SCANLON

AS revealed in last Friday's Donegal News, a massive €14.6 million grant has been officially confirmed for the construction of cross-border walking and cycling routes from Lifford to Strabane and Buncrana to Derry.

The CEO of Donegal County Council, Mr Seamus Neely, said the EU money was being approved jointly to the local authority and Derry City and Strabane District Council. Matching funding from both local authorities brings the total funding to €17.7 m.

Yesterday (Thursday) The EU's INTERREG VA Programme confirmed it has offered €14.6m, out of a total package of €23.27m, has been offered to the 'North West Greenways Network'. This will see the creation of a network of 46.5 km of new greenways through three distinct routes connecting: Strabane to Lifford via Lifford Bridge (3.5 km), Derry, via Penrynburn, to Buncrana (32.5 km) and from Muff Village to Derry via Culmore (10.5 km).

"These routes have been carefully

selected to achieve the greatest impact on carbon emission reduction," a spokesman for the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Welcoming the funding, Northern Ireland's Infrastructure Minister Chris Hazzard MLA, said he recently gave the green light to 1,000 km of greenways across the north.

The co-founder of the Inishowen-based Wee Greenway Initiative, Mr Ronan Gallagher, said his group has been lobbying for the funding for the past two years.

"Infrastructure is not all about road development," he explained.

"Not only will greenways help improve the quality of life and health of those that use the proposed route, it will also help attract tourists to the area, building on the benefits brought by the Wild Atlantic Way. It will help generate additional demand in the accommodation and catering sectors, creating much-needed employment in an area where unemployment remains stubbornly high."

Mr Gallagher also commended the council for its initiative and forward thinking.

Donegal News Derry People – Sustainable Transport: Greenways announcement

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Ulster University gets almost £20m in research funding

By John Campbell
BBC News NI Economics & Business Editor

5 January 2017 Northern Ireland

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The money will be used for projects in health and life sciences and renewable energy

Ulster University has been awarded almost £20m in research funding from an EU cross-border scheme.

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The money will be used for projects in health and life sciences and renewable energy.

It comes from the Interreg programme that funds projects in Northern Ireland, some border counties of the Republic of Ireland and western Scotland.

The largest portion, £7.3m, will go to a personalised medicine programme.

It will focus on five common diseases including diabetes and dementia.

Just under £7m will go to the Eastern Corridor Medical Engineering Centre (ECME) project.

It will collect cross-border data on cardiovascular and respiratory disease to help develop early point-of-care detection systems.

The remaining money is for a project aimed at developing a range of renewable energy storage devices.

Match-funding for the projects has been provided by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in Ireland and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland.

Economy Minister Simon Hamilton said the projects "offer high growth potential opportunities to our local economy, and as new markets open and opportunities emerge, it is vital that we invest further in the research capacity".

The Interreg programme has a total value of £240m which is due to be distributed by 2020.

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BBC NI (online) – R&I announcement with Ulster University

The SEUPB's Communications Team will be issuing more project funding announcements over the coming months under each objective of the INTERREG VA Programme.

5.2 New Corporate Website (Update)

There have been some challenges in relation to mobilizing the corporate website contract, including lengthy engagement with the Central Procurement Directorate and the impact of the UK's decision to withdraw from the EU on staff time/resources. In terms of progress, the splash page, main site, sub-pages, navigation, search facility and extranet are all under development following sign-off on the design concept. The Communications Team will have full access to the test site at the start of November.

At this point the SEUPB will be able to start migrating copy across and finalise the site's structure. Pen-testing of the new site should take place in February 2017.



Draft design of new website 'splash page'

Recommendation

The Monitoring Committee is requested to;

- **Note** the progress that has been made with regards to Programme Implementation
- **Note** progress that has been made with regards to the Regulatory Requirements of the Programmes including SEUPB's use of the eMS;
- **Note** the Communications Activity since the last Programme Monitoring Committee meeting.

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

Annex 1 Title Needed Here

Specific Objective	Lead Partner & Project Details	ERDF	Central Gov't Match	Other Match Funding	Total Project Cost
Priority Axis 1 - Research & Innovation					
1.1 Research & Innovation	Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)	€6,788,247.64	€946,549.00	€780,276.45	€8,515,073.09
BREATH (Border and Regions Airways Training Hub)					
BREATH aims to tackle Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) by harnessing the complementary resources and expertise of the partners.					
1.1 Research & Innovation	South West College (SWC)	€5,067,829.80	€734,596.40	€302,568.62	€6,104,994.82
Renewable Engine					
Renewable Engine aims to facilitate the creation of a unique cross-border R&I 'supercluster' involving internationally recognised partners in the area of renewable energy and advanced manufacturing technologies.					
1.1 Research & Innovation	Ulster University	€7,108,479.55	€1,043,237.98	€211,199.60	€8,362,917.13
Eastern Corridor – Medical Engineering Centre (ECME)					
ECME aims to implement a cross border centre of critical mass and excellence that will enable the partner research institutes to improve their credibility and standing in the international community through jointly published cutting edge research in the field of remote patient monitoring.					

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

Specific Objective	Lead Partner & Project Details	ERDF	Central Gov't Match	Other Match Funding	Total Project Cost
Priority Axis 1 - Research & Innovation					
1.1 Research & Innovation	Ulster University	€5,668,754.22	€794,173.65	€240,317.80	€6,703,245.67
Storage Platform for the Integration of Renewable Energy (SPIRE 2)					
SPIRE 2 aims to create a Virtual Research Graduate school in the area of Mass Energy Storage (MES). The project will boost collaboration between Research Institutes and SMEs and intensify technological innovation and commercialisation in the region.					
1.1 Research & Innovation	Ulster University	€7,415,032.62	€1,213,952.74	€795,941.31	€9,424,926.67
Centre for Personalised Medicine, Clinical Decision Making and Patient Safety (CPM)					
CPM aims to establish a Centre of Personalised Medicine; Clinical Decision Making and Patient Safety (CPM) which will enhance the regional capability while serving as a magnet for regional and FDI industry to create innovative products and new optimised care pathway tools in priority disease areas for patients and commercial benefit.					
1.2 SMEs	InterTradelreland	€14,702,502.14	€1,969,241.65	€5,771,291.56	€22,443,035.35
Co-Innovate (The Innovation Pathway Programme)					
Co-Innovate aims to target manufacturing and tradable services SMEs with export potential and to increase the proportion of SMEs engaged in cross-border research and innovation (R&I)					
Total funds committed in this Priority Area		€46,750,845.97	€6,701,751.42	€8,101,595.34	€61,554,192.73

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

Specific Objective	Lead Partner & Project Details	ERDF	Central Gov't Match	Other Match Funding	Total Project Cost
Priority Axis 2 - Environment					
2.1 Habitats & Species	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council	€7,097,234.67	€1,076,454.57	€175,998.61	€8,349,687.85
Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN)					
The CANN project aims to promote cross-border co-operation to facilitate the recovery of selected protected habitats and priority species.					
2.1 Habitats & Species	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Northern Ireland (RSPB NI)	€4,066,904.82	€552,436.50	€165,252.58	€4,784,593.90
Co-operating Across the Borders for Biodiversity (CABB)					
CABB aims to work on a cross border basis to bring about the recovery of protected habitats (active raised and blanket bog) and priority species (breeding waders and marsh fritillary) at specific key sites.					
2.2 Marine	British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)	€3,708,660.32	€612,445.94	€297,639.90	€4,618,746.16
Sea Fate					
Sea Fate aims to address the need for better cross-border capacity for monitoring and management of MPAs and species through the establishment of suitable designated site management structures.					
2.2 Marine	Agri Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)	€5,632,724.75	€656,469.59	€1,437,246.81	€7,726,441.15
Collaborative Oceanography and Monitoring for Protected Areas and Species (COMPASS)					
COMPASS aims to deliver the first fully coherent network of monitoring buoys across the regional seas of the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Western Scotland.					

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

Specific Objective	Lead Partner & Project Details	ERDF	Central Gov't Match	Other Match Funding	Total Project Cost
Priority Axis 2 - Environment					
2.2 Marine	University College Dublin (UCD)	€877,398.09	€154,834.96	€57,988.00	€1,090,221.05
System for Bathing Water Quality Monitoring (SWIM)					
SWIM aims to enable short-term pollution to be predicted through the development of a bathing water quality prediction model.					
2.3 Transitional Waters	Northern Ireland Water (NI Water)	€3,098,772.07	€546,842.13	€0.00	€3,645,614.20
Shared Waters Enhancement and Loughs legacy (SWELL)					
It is anticipated that the project will leave an ecosystem model for use by the water companies, environmental regulators and other stakeholders in the eligible area to identify future improvements to enhance water quality.					
2.4 River Basins	Northern Ireland Water (NI Water)	€4,173,433.22	€736,488.22	€396,509.11	€5,306,430.55
Source to Tap					
The project aims to deliver a Sustainable Catchment Area Plan (SCAMP) for the Erne and Derg cross border catchments. This will help to secure safe drinking water sources and will contribute to improvements in cross border raw water quality.					
Total funds committed in this Priority Area		€28,655,127.94	€4,335,971.91	€2,530,635.01	€35,521,734.86

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

Specific Objective	Lead Partner & Project Details	ERDF	Central Gov't Match	Other Match Funding	Total Project Cost
Priority Axis 3 - Sustainable Transport					
3.3 Greenways	Louth County Council	€2,949,240.75	€520,454.25	€0.00	€3,469,695.00
Carlingford Lough Greenway					
The project aims to develop a 10.1km cross-border greenway from Newry in Northern Ireland to Carlingford in Ireland (5.2km in NI and 4.9km in Ireland).					
3.3 Greenways	Derry City & Strabane District Council	€12,632,009.80	€2,229,178.20	€0.00	€14,861,188.00
North West Greenway Network (NWGN)					
The project aims to develop 46.5km of greenways at three cross-border locations in the North West region.					
3.3 Greenways	Waterways Ireland	€4,208,071.20	€742,600.80	€0.00	€4,950,672.00
Ulster Canal Greenway					
The project aims to create 22km of greenway between Smithborough in Co. Monaghan and Middletown in Co. Armagh along the N54/N12/A3 road corridor.					
Total funds committed in this Priority Area		€19,789,321.75	€3,492,233.25	€0.00	€23,281,555.00

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

Specific Objective	Lead Partner & Project Details	ERDF	Central Gov't Match	Other Match Funding	Total Project Cost
Priority Axis 4 - Health					
4.1 Health	Health Service Executive (HSE)	€6,472,538.06	€1,142,212.60	€0.00	€7,614,750.66
Innovation Recovery (I-Recover Project)					
The aim of the project is to assist people who have experienced mental health issues to self-manage their own recovery. The approach establishes a virtual recovery college and will be a social model rather than a clinical approach and will combine the knowledge of mental health patients with the clinical skills of mental health practitioners.					
4.1 Health	Health Service Executive (HSE)	€7,661,100.04	€1,149,675.16	€202,283.67	€9,013,058.87
Connecting Services, Citizens and Communities – Acute Services					
The project aims to increase acute episodes of care to patients, through improved/reformed service delivery on a cross-border basis to assess and treat significantly higher volumes of patients more effectively in the most appropriate patient setting.					
4.1 Health	Health Service Executive (HSE)	€4,258,704.09	€751,536.02	€0.00	€5,010,240.11
Multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (MACE)					
The project aims to transform the lives of vulnerable families who are at risk from multiple adversities in their lives by identifying, intervening early and providing nurturing support within their homes and communities.					
4.1 Health	Public Health Agency	€7,515,417.17	€1,326,250.09	€0.00	€8,841,667.26
Cross-border Healthcare Intervention Trials in Ireland Network (CHITIN)					
The project seeks to develop and maintain the knowledge , skills, expertise and structures needed to improve equity in access to Healthcare Intervention Trials (HITs) across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, maximising sustainability by providing a supportive framework to maintain the capabilities, skills, relationships and collaborations developed during the programme.					

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

Specific Objective	Lead Partner & Project Details	ERDF	Central Gov't Match	Other Match Funding	Total Project Cost
Priority Axis 4 - Health					
4.1 Health	NHS 24	€7,402,325.15	€526,856.01	€779,436.66	€8,708,617.82
mPower: Connecting Citizens, Communities and Services					
The service provided will be a hub and spoke construct (an integrated delivery framework), with a core unit and 7 local deployment teams. The core unit will be virtual in nature allowing for an effective and consistent operating presence across the three jurisdictions.					
4.1 Health	Clondalkin Behavioural Initiative Ltd (Archways)	€2,297,513.87	€365,170.28	€360,459.35	€3,023,143.50
The Changing Lives Initiative					
The purpose of the programme is to reduce the prevalence of hyperactive disorder. It targets children aged between 3-7 years old and focuses on most disadvantaged areas where, given the nature of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), prevalence is highest.					
4.1 Health	Royal National Institute of Blind people (RNIB)	€1,574,473.08	€237,579.26	€130,312.71	€1,942,365.05
Need to Talk (NTT)					
The project will provide services to individuals blind at birth, those who have lost their sight later in life and to those who are partially blind. The services that are being provided are cross-border counselling, confidence building programmes and peer support programmes for socially isolated people with sight loss.					
Total funds committed in this Priority Area		€37,182,071.46	€5,499,279.42	€1,472,492.39	€44,153,843.27
TOTAL COMMITMENT		ERDF	CENTRAL GOV'T MATCH	OTHER MATCH FUNDING	PROJECT COSTS
		€132,377,367.12	€20,029,236.00	€12,104,722.74	€164,511,325.86

