



Special EU Programmes Body
Comhlacht na gClár Speisialta AE
Special EU Schemes Board

EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL CO-OPERATION 2021 - 2027

Preparing the EU PEACE PLUS
Programme for the 2021 – 2027 period

CONSULTATION INFORMATION DOCUMENT

10 March to 12 May 2021



**Northern Ireland
Executive**

www.northernireland.gov.uk



**Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland**

Table of contents

Part 1: Introduction

- 1.1 Background**
- 1.2 How to respond**
- 1.3 Publication of Responses**
- 1.4 Feedback**

Part 2: Preparation of the PEACE PLUS Programme

- 2.1 How we prepared the Programme**

Part 3: PEACE PLUS Programme – Programme Strategy

3.1 Context

- 3.1.1 UN Sustainable Development Goals
- 3.1.2 European Green Deal
- 3.1.3 Political Context
- 3.1.4 Good Relations
- 3.1.5 Young People and Community Relations
- 3.1.6 New Communities
- 3.1.7 Economic Context
- 3.1.8 SWOT Analysis
- 3.1.9 Sustainable Prosperity
- 3.1.10 The Implications of the UK Exit from the EU
- 3.1.11 Covid-19 Pandemic

3.2 Community focus in the PEACE PLUS Programme

3.3 Programme Legacy

3.4 Programme area with flexibility

3.5 Eligibility of Applicants from Outside the Core Programme Area

3.6 Development of the Indicative Budget Allocations

3.7 Themes and Investment Areas

- Theme 1 – Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities
 - Theme 1 – Investment Areas
- Theme 2 – Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation
 - Theme 2 – Investment Areas
- Theme 3 – Empowering and Investing in Young People
 - Theme 3 – Investment Areas
- Theme 4 – Healthy and Inclusive Communities
 - Theme 4 – Investment Areas
- Theme 5 – Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future
 - Theme 5 – Investment Areas
- Theme 6 – Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration
 - Theme 6 – Investment Areas

3.8 Share Your View

Part 4: Reducing the Administrative Burden

4.1 Measures to Reduce the Administrative Burden

4.2 Share Your View

Part 5: Equality Considerations (Section 75) and Strategic Environmental Assessment

5.1 Promoting Equality and Good Relations (Section 75)

5.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

5.3 Share Your View

Appendix 1: Privacy Notice

Part 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The purpose of this consultation is to provide citizens and other key stakeholders with an opportunity to share their views on the content and administrative arrangements of the PEACE PLUS Programme, findings from the Equality Screening Exercise¹ and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the EU PEACE PLUS Programme for the 2021-2027 period.

The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) has the statutory responsibility for the implementation of the current EU PEACE IV (€270m) and INTERREG VA (€283m) Programmes and for preparing the successor programme, PEACE PLUS. We also have a signposting role to promote involvement in the INTERREG VB Transnational and INTERREG VC Interregional Programmes.

The Body is one of the six cross border Bodies set up under the “Agreement between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland establishing implementing bodies” signed on 8 March 1999 (the British-Irish Agreement of 8 March 1999).

The PEACE PLUS Programme will contribute to a more peaceful, prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, and will leave a lasting legacy. The programme will achieve this by funding activities that promote peace and reconciliation and contribute to cross border economic and territorial development. It will build upon previous PEACE and INTERREG Programmes.

The EU regulations pertinent to this programme have been published in draft form by the European Commission. Provision has been made for an indicative budget of approximately €1bn, including proposals from the EU budget, the Government of Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive and the UK Government.

A stakeholder engagement process took place between December 2019 and February 2020. A total of 16 public events were held across the Programme area and these were attended by over 1,000 people. Six specific events were also held with children and young people to gauge their opinions on the Programme. A significant number of survey submissions were made to the SEUPB with over 300 responses received by the deadline in February 2020. A full report which summarises the findings from the survey can be found on the SEUPB website:

[Stakeholder Engagement - Summary Report of Responses](#)

This Consultation Information Document provides information on the following:

- An overview of how the Programme was prepared;
- A summary of the proposed Programme Strategy including the Themes and Investment Areas of the PEACE PLUS Programme;
- A summary of the administrative arrangements proposed to simplify the Programme; and
- Includes key questions on the proposed Themes and Investment Areas as well as administrative arrangements for the Programme.

1 Section 75 considerations



1.2 How to Respond

There are several ways in which you can share your response, all are set out below. Early responses are encouraged but all responses should arrive no later than:

12 May 2021 at 5pm.

Please complete the survey online if you can.

This would greatly assist us with the timely processing of responses, as staff access to resources and the Clarence Street West Building in Belfast are impacted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This will also support our ongoing efforts to reduce the impact on our environment.

1.2.1 Online survey

The primary response method for this consultation is through an online survey on the Survey Monkey platform. You can access the online survey from the SEUPB webpage at <https://www.seupb.eu/PEACEPLUS> or please click [HERE](#).

1.2.2 By Email

If a large volume of email responses is received, they may take longer to process than online responses. You can obtain a MS Word consultation response survey template by emailing the PEACE PLUS Team at PEACEPLUS@seupb.eu.

1.2.3 By Post

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, staff at the SEUPB have limited access to resources and the Clarence Street West Building in Belfast. Therefore please be aware that postal responses may take longer to process. For a MS Word consultation response survey template, please email the PEACE PLUS Team at PEACEPLUS@seupb.eu or telephone the office Reception on 028 9026 6660.

Please return postal responses to:
Special EU Programmes Body
2 Clarence St West
Belfast BT2 7GP

1.2.4 Alternative Formats

Documentation in other languages and accessible formats such as MS Word, easy-read, large print, audio-CD and braille can be made available upon request. If you require the documents in these or other formats, please contact us at PEACEPLUS@seupb.eu.

1.2.5 Completing the survey

To help your understanding when responding to the questions, we recommend you read this consultation information document in advance of completing the survey.

A video presenting an overview of the Programme and process for this Consultation is available on our webpage <https://www.seupb.eu/PEACEPLUS> or please click [HERE](#).

An organisation or individual should only respond once.

There is no requirement to respond to all the questions unless you wish to do so.

You are required to provide your, and where applicable, your organisation's name, postal address and email address. This is for verification purposes and to prevent multiple responses from the same person or organisation. No anonymous responses will be considered.

All responses successfully submitted through Survey Monkey will receive a confirmation message and a follow up acknowledgment email from the PEACE PLUS Team. Emailed MS Word consultation response templates will also receive an acknowledgement email. An acknowledgement letter will be provided if responding by post.



1.2.6 Help with Queries

If you require any support during the consultation process, please do not hesitate to contact us at Reception on 02890 266660 or via email at PEACEPLUS@seupb.eu

1.3 Publication of Responses

The information collected in the survey will be analysed and a summary of responses to the consultation will be shared with the European Commission, Member States and Government Departments and published on the SEUPB website. Your responses will be used as part of the process to finalise the PEACE PLUS Programme prior to submitting to the NI Executive, Irish Government and the European Commission for approval.

The SEUPB will publish a list of organisations that have responded to the consultation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, we may publish your organisation's name unless you request not to by ticking the box in the survey.

If you are responding as an individual, we may refer to the content of your response, but not your name or address, nor will we publish anything which may identify you or other individuals.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please contact PEACEPLUS@seupb.eu. Please note, under the Freedom of Information Code of Practice (North South Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland Ltd.), all responses may be subject to release and therefore we cannot guarantee confidentiality. Further information is available on our website <https://seupb.eu/freedom-of-information>

For further information on how we will process your data and your rights, please see the Privacy Notice at Appendix 1.

1.4 Feedback

If you have any comments or complaints about the way this consultation has been conducted these should be sent to:

Complaints Officer
Special EU Programmes Body
2 Clarence St West
Belfast BT2 7GP

Telephone: Reception on 028 9026 6660
Email: feedback@seupb.eu

The SEUPB complaints procedure can also be accessed via <https://seupb.eu/complaints-procedure>.



Part 2: Preparation of the PEACE PLUS Programme

2.1 How we Prepared the Programme

The Programme has been developed as a result of intensive stakeholder engagement and review of research material, the key component parts of this are summarised in Figure 1 on p8. From the outset of the Programme development process, the SEUPB has adopted a firm partnership approach at all levels and included community actors. This has included the garnering of views of stakeholders on the priorities and focus of the Programme.

The SEUPB commenced the Programme development process for PEACE PLUS in 2019. Since then, there has been a considerable amount of preparatory work, research and stakeholder engagement undertaken. In particular, the Programme has been informed by:

- The EU Framework and objectives for all Programmes across Europe and the EU Border Orientation Paper;
- Priorities and objectives set out in New Decade, New Approach, Project Ireland 2040 and the Programme for Government;
- A socio-economic profile of the Programme area was commissioned in 2019. An addendum to the report has been added to include Covid-19 impacts. The impacts of Covid-19 were considered in each theme as they were developed;

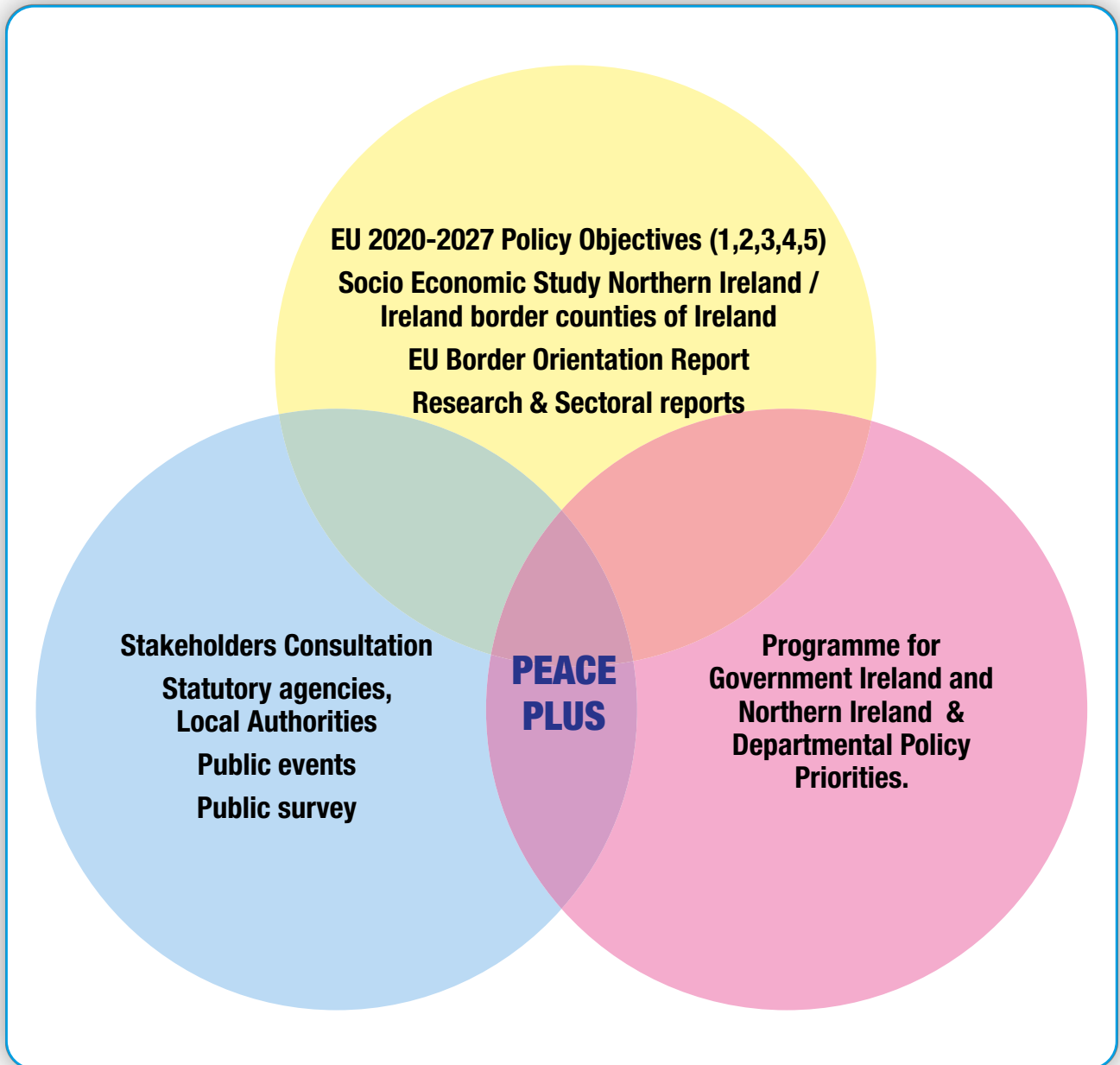
- A Stakeholder Engagement process initiated in November 2019 through to February 2020². Public events across the Programme area and over 300 surveys provided important information and views from the citizens;
- Bi-lateral engagement with Government Departments in Northern Ireland and Ireland resulting in Joint North South Draft Position Papers on core elements of the Programme. This partnership approach to the drafting in this phase will continue in particular on selection of interventions, output indicators and indicative budgets for each element of the programme; and
- Meetings with stakeholders from a wide range of sectors at all levels, including statutory agencies, local government, business representatives and community and voluntary organisations.

The Programme Development process is supported by a Programme Development Steering Group (PDSG) comprising of a broad range of representatives and experts which meets on a regular basis to provide guidance and advice to the SEUPB. The PDSG membership includes: Member State officials, economic, social and environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination, government departments and local government representatives.

2 The SEUPB Summary of Responses to Stakeholder Engagement Survey, published July 2020. [https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/styles/PEACE%20PLUS%20Stakeholder%20Engagement%202019_2020/European%20Territorial%20Report%20-%20\(HRw\).pdf](https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/styles/PEACE%20PLUS%20Stakeholder%20Engagement%202019_2020/European%20Territorial%20Report%20-%20(HRw).pdf)



Figure 1 – Programme Development 2021 - 2027



Part 3: PEACE PLUS Programme Strategy

3.1 Context

The overall objective of the PEACE PLUS Programme will be to **build Peace and Prosperity** and ensure that this Programme will leave a lasting and tangible legacy.

The first PEACE Programme was agreed in 1995 as a direct result of the EU's desire to make a positive response to the opportunities presented by developments in the peace process during 1994. As the peace process has evolved and matured, the PEACE Programmes have played an important role in reinforcing progress towards a more peaceful and stable society. There has been significant progress since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement (1998) and St Andrews Agreement (2006). However, divisions between communities are still very evident with low levels of trust and high levels of residential and social segregation. Issues around the expression of identity often result in community tensions and increased polarisation. Within this context there still remains a real need to address a number of key issues in order to support the overall peace process.

The Programme's strategy is to continue to take the opportunities and address the needs arising from the peace process in order to boost economic growth and stimulate social and economic regeneration and secondly, to promote social inclusion, particularly for those at the margins of economic and social life.

The Programme will help to address long standing social and economic challenges which have, and continue to, impact on communities, particularly those in rural border areas as well as ongoing challenges that exist in urban settings. It will also recognise the devastating impact of Covid-19 on society and the risks associated with the UK's exit from the EU. The Programme has been developed within the wider political, economic, social and environmental context.

3.1.1 UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Programme has also been developed with the UN Sustainable Development Goals in mind. The UNSDGs were adopted by Member States in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals³.

3 The United Nations The Sustainable Development Agenda <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>



Figure 2 – UN Sustainable Development Goals⁴

3.1.2 European Green Deal

The European Green Deal is the European Union's new growth strategy with the aim of creating a carbon-neutral Europe by 2050. All EU actions and policies, including the PEACE PLUS Programme are required to contribute to the European Green Deal objectives.

The European Green Deal is the roadmap for making the European economy sustainable in which there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, economic growth is decoupled from resource use and no person and no place is left behind.

The PEACE PLUS Programme will contribute to the Green Deal:

- Through cross border added value including renewable energy, innovative technologies and smart infrastructure to help transition to climate neutrality and clean energy transition at affordable prices; and protecting biodiversity rich land and sea areas, building on the Natura2000 network;

- By increasing our research and innovation efforts through increasing new technologies, sustainable solutions and disruptive innovation; large-scale deployment and demonstration of new technologies across sectors;
- Building new innovative value chains; and ensuring synergy with Horizon Europe; and
- In the development and implementation of the PEACE PLUS Programme that is 'greener' and climate focused.

A green and climate neutral Europe can only be achieved if we work in cooperation with all sectors of our economy.

The New Leipzig Charter^{5 6} provides a policy framework for sustainable urban development that has been incorporated into the development of the PEACE PLUS Programme. It emphasises the transformative power of cities for the common good, built on a partnership approach and through the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, as well as through just, green and productive dimensions.

4 The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

5 Endorsed by the informal council of EU ministers on urban matters on 30th November 2020

6 European Commission, The New Leipzig Charter – The Transformation Power for Cities for the Common Good, published 30th November 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new_leipzig_charter/new_leipzig_charter_en.pdf

Combined in a balanced and integrated manner, these dimensions will contribute to developing resilient cities that can deal with social, economic and ecological challenges, aiming to guarantee a high quality of life for everyone.

3.1.3 Political Context

Whilst much progress has been made in relation to peace and reconciliation in the last 20 years, a number of political issues have had an impact including the result of the UK referendum on membership of the European Union in 2016.

During the 2014 – 2020 Programme period, in an effort to deal with some of the most long running difficult issues or outstanding commitments, successive rounds of talks were held between the UK and Irish Governments and the political parties in the NI Executive. The Stormont House Agreement 2014 reached consensus on a number of issues including welfare reform, flags, parades, the past, budgets and the reform of political institutions.

Further all-party talks, focused on the full implementation of the Stormont House Agreement and measures to deal with the impact of paramilitary activity were also held. The talks concluded in November 2015 with ‘A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan’. This document set out proposals for addressing some of the most challenging issues in our society.

The ‘New Decade, New Approach’ deal⁷ was reached and published on 9 January 2020, providing the basis for the re-establishment of the NI Executive. The ‘New Decade, New Approach’ outlines provisions relating to health, public services, infrastructure and funding, some of which include:

- Transforming public services - support for the education of young people from different backgrounds together;
- Investing for the future – a balanced economy, developing an enhanced approach to careers advice, curriculum, training and apprenticeships to enhance employability and support economic growth; and
- Delivering a fair and compassionate society – commitment to tackling paramilitarism, ending sectarianism, prejudice and hate and publishing a childcare strategy.

In addition, draft Assembly legislation was published concerning language and culture. The legislation proposes establishing: the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression; an Irish language Commissioner; and a Commissioner focusing on Ulster Scots and Ulster British language, arts and literature.

2020 has also seen the formation of a new coalition government in Ireland with Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Green Party as the partners in Government.

In October 2020, the Irish Government announced a Shared Island Fund⁸ which provides €500m in capital funding over the next five years, ring-fenced for investment on a strategic basis in collaborative North/South projects that will support the commitments and objectives of the Good Friday Agreement and strengthen links across society on both parts of the island. The funding will be disbursed to departments and agencies in line with Programme for Government priorities. The Government is working in partnership with the Executive through the North South Ministerial Council to progress key cross border investment

7 The NI Executive, ‘A New Decade, A New Approach’, published 8th January 2020. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade_a_new_approach.pdf

8 The Department of the Taoiseach, ‘Shared Island Fund’, published 8th December 2020. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/de9fc-shared-island/#shared-island-fund>



projects which are part of the commitments on a Shared Island in the Programme for Government.

3.1.4 Good Relations

Devine and Robinson (ARK, 2018)⁹ analysed Northern Ireland Life and Times survey data on community and good relations collected over the past 20 years and highlighted the following key issues:

- The development of positive relationships has been neither steady nor consistent. There are peaks and troughs reflecting the impact, positive and negative, of contemporary events.
- Half of respondents in 1998 and 2017 thought that relations between Catholics and Protestants were better than the previous 5 years.
- In 1998, 62% of respondents were optimistic that community relations would improve in the next 5 years; only 43% thought this in 2017.
- There has been an increase in the proportion of respondents expressing a preference for mixed-religion neighbourhoods, workplaces and schools – in 2017 these figures were 78%, 90% and 68% respectively.
- Feelings of being intimidated by loyalist or republican murals, flags and kerb paintings has decreased since 2004, although a higher proportion of respondents feel annoyed by these.
- Attitudes and perceptions reflect contemporary events.

- 18% of respondents in 2001 thought that lesbian, gay or bisexual people were treated unfairly, this rose to 50% in 2016.

3.1.5 Young People and Community Relations

The Young Life and Times survey has raised concerns with regards to the negative or ambivalent views of young people in relation to improvements in community relations. The survey data shows young people's attitudes have generally been more negative than those of adults (ARK, 2018).¹⁰

Sectarianism in Northern Ireland: A Review (2019)¹¹ notes that the high rates of economic inactivity and high numbers of young people who are not employed or in education or training, has the effect of reinforcing social and economic divisions:

“Combined with political segregation this has a significant impact on change, and on approaches to both the past and the future.”
(Morrow, 2019)

The NI Executive's 'Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy,¹² published on 23 May 2013, reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society.

9 Devine and Robinson (Oct 2018) 20 years of good relations policy and attitudes https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/sites/default/files/2018-11/update123_1.pdf

10 Ark (Nov 2018) Recording Social Attitudes and Informing Social Policy in NI. https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/sites/default/files/inline-files/20-Years_ARK_surveys.pdf

11 Morrow (2019) Sectarianism in NI, A Review. https://www.community-relations.org.uk/sites/crc/files/media-files/A-Review-Addressing-Sectarianism-in-Northern-Ireland_FINAL.pdf

12 The Executive Office, Together: Building a United Community, published 23rd May 2013. https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/ofmdfm_dev/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf



The strategy outlines how government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community, based on equality of opportunity and the desirability of good relations and reconciliation and will achieve change against the following key priorities:

- our children and young people;
- our shared community;
- our safe community; and
- our cultural expression.

3.1.6 New Communities

There has been an increase in ‘**new communities**’ and the number of minority ethnic groups in the last two decades. In 2011, the NI Census showed that 1.8% or 32,400 of the resident population belonged to minority ethnic groups, which is double the 2001 number – the majority of which were Chinese, Indian or ‘Mixed’.¹³ There has been a similar increase in the number of ethnic minorities and new communities living in the border counties of Ireland, with an increase of over 25% in the *Black or Black Irish - any other Black background* in the border counties of Ireland which is approximately 20 percentage points higher than the overall Irish equivalent. There has been a similar increase in the *Asian or Asian Irish – any other background* population of over 25% in the border counties of Ireland.

An evaluation of the 2018 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey data concluded that 54% of respondents felt that levels of immigration should not change (Michael, 2020).¹⁴ 72% of respondents thought that migrant workers were good for the economy and between 2008 and 2018, there has been a fall in the number of respondents who feel that migrant workers put a strain on the NHS, housing and schools. It is notable that 63% of respondents believe perceptions of migrant workers are tainted by the media. A positive finding is that 81% felt migrant workers make us open to new ideas and cultures.

3.1.7 Economic Context¹⁵

The economic context is dominated by the Covid-19 outbreak which was declared as a pandemic in March 2020. Its impact has been wide-ranging, affecting the economy, general society, politics and other areas. As of 9th November 2020, over 50.4 million cases have been confirmed worldwide, with over 1.25 million deaths attributed to the virus.¹⁶

Northern Ireland

The performance of the economy is measured using the Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index (NICEI). The Index is broadly similar to the output measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) produced by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

13 NISRA, 2011 Census ‘Key Statistics for NI’, published 11th December 2012. <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/2011-census-results-key-statistics-northern-ireland-report-11-december-2012.pdf>

14 Michael, L (April 2020) Attitudes to Migrant Workers in NI: An Improving Landscape? ARK, Research Update, Number 131. <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/sites/default/files/2020-04/update131.pdf>

15 Please note the figures are based on data available at the time of writing.

16 The World Health Organisation (WHO) Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard <https://covid19.who.int/>



The most recent headline results for the NICEI¹⁷ are as follows:

- The NICEI for Quarter 2 (April-June) 2020 indicates that **economic output** fell in real terms, decreasing by 13.6% over the quarter and 17.8% over the year to Quarter 2 2020.
- The comparable figures for the UK, measured by GDP show a decrease of 19.8% over the quarter and 21.5% over the year to Quarter 2 2020.

The Index has fallen to a series low and is currently 20.8 per cent below the maximum value recorded in Q2 2007.

Economic output figures for 2018, measured as Gross Value Added (GVA), as estimated by ONS was £42.2bn. The private sector accounted for 78% of GVA and the public sector 22%. The fall in economic growth over the quarter, year and rolling annual average to Q2 2020 was driven by decreases in all private sector components of the economy (that is, Services, Production and Construction). The Services sector had a negative contribution of 9.1 percentage points (pps) over the quarter and 12.4pps over the year. The Production sector was -2.4pps over the quarter and -3.7 pps over the year.

The economy is expected to contract by 11% in 2020 and then grow by 7% in 2021.¹⁸ However, the second/third lockdown due to Covid-19 may change these forecasts.

With regard to the **labour market**,¹⁹ the unemployment rate (16+) increased over the quarter by 1.2 pps and the year by 0.8pps to 3.7% in June-August 2020. The unemployment rate remains below the UK rate which grew to 4.5% in the three months to August 2020 compared to 4.1% in the previous quarter. However, long-term unemployment (those who have been unemployed for one year or more) was 34.7% in June - August 2020.

The increase in the unemployment rate to 3.7% was the largest quarterly increase since October 2012. The data indicates that the increase was driven by those under 35 years. Within this, youth unemployment (16-14 years) doubled to an estimated 11.8%.

The economic inactivity rate (that is the proportion of people aged 16 to 64 who were not working and not seeking or available to work) decreased over the quarter (0.2 pps) to 26.6%. However, the economic inactivity rates remain significantly higher than the UK average of 20.8%.

The experimental **Claimant Count** (which includes Jobseeker Allowance Claimants and claimants of Universal Credit who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed) remained unchanged in September 2020 at 62,000. This is more than double the number of claimants recorded in March 2020. The last time claimant count levels were this high was in 2012 and 2013.

17 NISRA, Statistical Bulletin, Economic Activity in NI by Quarterly NI Composite Economic Index (NICEI), Quarter 2 2020, published 8th October 2020. www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/economic-output-statistics/ni-composite-economic-index, 8th October 2020

18 Danske Bank, NI Quarterly Sectoral Forecasts Q3 2020. <https://danskebank.co.uk/business/economic-analysis/quarterly-sectoral-forecasts/northern-ireland-quarterly-sectoral-forecasts-2020-q3>

19 NISRA, NI Labour Market Report, published 13th October 2020. www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/labour-market-report-october-2020



Finally, the number of confirmed redundancies for the twelve month period to the end of October 2020 was 4,060 (almost 3,200 of which were confirmed in the last four months). This compares to 3,100 in the previous year. From 1 November 2019 to 30 October 2020, 9,600 redundancies were proposed, the second highest annual total since records began.²⁰

The UK Government introduced a range of policy measures to help limit the economic impact of the pandemic, including the **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)** and the **Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)**. The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme is available for those who are self-employed or in a partnership who have been adversely impacted by COVID-19. The Executive has adopted these measures and the Department of the Economy has made additional interventions²¹.

In conclusion, there is a general consensus among economic commentators that unprecedented levels of support, such as the CJRS have helped to limit the impact of COVID-19 however, it is likely that the labour market will continue to weaken and a sharp rise in the unemployment rate is anticipated as we approach the end of the year.²²

Ireland

The Quarterly National Accounts for Ireland²³ (September 2020) indicate that **GDP** decreased by 6.1% for the second quarter of 2020, as the impact of coronavirus brought the **largest quarterly drop on record**. There was a decrease of 3% in GDP in Quarter 2 of 2020 compared to Quarter 2 of 2019.

Value added of Distribution, Transport, Hotels and Restaurants recorded a decrease of 30.3% in volume terms in Q2 2020 compared with the previous period. Professional and Admin Services contracted by 28.2% over the period and Construction declined by 38.3% over the quarter. Growth continued in some of the more globalised sectors, with Industry growing by 1.5%.²⁴

The economic contraction in Ireland was not as severe as that seen in other countries, including the overall GDP of the Eurozone which declined by 11.4% over the same three month period.²⁵

Real GDP is predicted to fall by 2.4% in 2020 and growth of 1.7% is expected in 2021.²⁶

-
- 20 NISRA, NI Labour Market Report, published 10th November 2020 <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/labour-market-report-november-2020.pdf>
- 21 Department for the Economy, 'Minister outlines support provided for NI Business', published 21st January 2021. <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/news/minister-outlines-support-provided-ni-businesses>
- 22 Ulster Economix, EY, Danske Bank
- 23 CSO Statistical Release, Quarterly National Accounts, Quarter 2 2020, published 07 September 2020. <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/nationalaccounts/quarterlynationalaccounts/>
- 24 CSO Statistical Release, Quarterly National Accounts, Quarter 2 2020, published 07 September 2020. <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/nationalaccounts/quarterlynationalaccounts/>
- 25 Eurostat, GDP and Main Components (Output, Expenditure and Income) https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/NAMQ_10_GDP_custom_77309/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=b74febcd-e664-4f22-9c93-2ef510fe371f
- 26 Government of Ireland, Budget 2021 Economic and Fiscal Outlook, published 12th October 2020. http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2021/Documents/Budget/201020_Budget%202021_Economic%20and%20Fiscal%20Outlook_A.pdf



With regard to the **labour market**²⁷ in Ireland, monthly unemployment was 5.4% in September 2020, up from 5.2% in August 2020 and up from 4.8% in September 2019 (based on the Standard Measure of Monthly Unemployment). The rate of unemployment for those aged 15 to 24 years was 18.9% in September 2020 (up from 12.6% in March 2020), compared to 3.8% for those aged 25 to 74 years.

The Irish Government has introduced a Covid-19 Adjusted Measure of Unemployment, which assumes that all those in receipt of **Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP)** would be classified as Employed for the Standard Measure of Monthly Unemployment and considers them as Unemployed for the Covid-19 Adjusted Measure of Unemployment. In September, the Covid-19 Adjusted Measure of Unemployment could indicate a rate as high as 14.7% if all claimants of the PUP were classified as Unemployed. For those aged 15-24 years, the comparable figure is 36.5% and for those aged 25-74 years it is 12%. It must be noted that this is at the upper bound for unemployment.²⁸

The October Economic and Fiscal Outlook published in tandem with the October Budget announcement predicted an unemployment rate of 10.3% in 2021.²⁹

Finally, applications received under the Redundancy Payments Scheme (which exists where employers are unable to make a redundancy payment to an employee) increased from 235 applications in March 2020, to 333 in July, 668 in August and 955 in September.³⁰

From March 2020, the Irish Government also introduced a range of **measures to provide financial support** to those people whose income had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The measures included the introduction of the **Pandemic Unemployment Payment**³¹ (available to employees, self-employed people and working students who have lost employment due to Covid-19) and the **Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS)**, which allowed employers to continue to pay their employees during the Covid emergency and which aimed to keep employees registered with their employer. Whilst both measures were originally to be short-term, the PUP will continue until April 2021 and the TWSS has been replaced by the **Employee Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS)**³². The aim of the EWSS is to ensure that where possible, employees retain their link with their employer rather than become unemployed.

27 CSO Statistical Release, Monthly Employment, published 29th September 2020.

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/mue/monthlyunemploymentseptember2020/>

28 CSO Statistical Release, Monthly Employment, published 29th September 2020. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/mue/monthlyunemploymentseptember2020/>

29 Government of Ireland, Budget 2021 Economic and Fiscal Outlook, published 12th October 2020.

http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2021/Documents/Budget/201020_Budget%202021_Economic%20and%20Fiscal%20Outlook_A.pdf

30 Department of Social Protection, Redundancy Payment Scheme Statistics, updated 13th October 2020. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/1f7f83-redundancy-payment-scheme-statistics/>

31 Department of Social Protection, Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment, published 16th June 2020. www.gov.ie/en/service/be74d3-covid-19-pandemic-unemployment-payment/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/PUP/#what-the-covid-19-pandemic-unemployment-payment-is

32 Revenue Irish Tax and Customs, Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS), published 6th November 2020. <https://www.revenue.ie/en/employing-people/ewss/index.aspx>



A **Covid Restriction Subsidy Scheme CRSS**³³ is also in place. The CRSS is a targeted support for businesses significantly impacted by restrictions introduced by the Government under public health regulations to combat the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.1.8 SWOT Analysis

The **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT)** analysis outlined below, broadly represents the key conclusions drawn from the socio-economic profile commissioned by the SEUPB at the start of 2020 and taking account of an addendum prepared in late 2020 on the impacts of Covid-19 which has exacerbated many of the threats and weaknesses.

3.1.8.1 Strengths

Despite the challenges that exist, the Programme area has many strengths which can be built upon. Between 2008 and 2018, total Research and Development expenditure in NI has more than doubled. In addition, 25% of households have access to full fibre broadband internet services, the highest rate of any Devolved Administration. Pre-COVID-19, there were low unemployment levels and declining poverty rates in the Programme area, however this is something which will be impacted significantly in the short term. There are a decreasing number of graduates unemployed after 6 months in the Programme area and SME export intensity compares well with the Irish average. Again, at the start of 2020 before the impacts of the pandemic were felt, there were a decreasing number of young people who are NEET in the Programme area.

The Programme area also sees increased levels of educational attainment with high levels of enrolment in STEM subjects at Higher Education Institutions in NI. We can also note that there is an established Social Enterprise and Community/Voluntary Sector in both jurisdictions providing services and support across a range of areas.

There has been a decrease in the number of crimes and incidents with a sectarian motivation in NI since 2005/06 coupled with an increase in cultural diversity in both jurisdictions. Increasing investment in road infrastructure has been noted and there is an increased life expectancy in the Programme area.

There are key areas of high importance for biodiversity in the Irish counties in the border area including natural habitats, native woodland and clean waters.

It is also noted that there has been a growth in the generation of electricity from renewable sources in NI with waste recycling at the highest rate ever recorded. High air quality and drinking water quality in the Programme area has been recorded.

Finally, there has been a significant decrease in the number of security-related incidents in NI over the last decade.

3.1.8.2 Weaknesses

Whilst progress has been made developing, promoting and supporting good relations, significant segregation remains and a large number of interface barriers still exist in NI.

The Irish counties in the border area has the lowest productivity out of all areas in Ireland and NI productivity lags significantly behind that of the rest of the UK. The Programme area is

33 Revenue Irish Tax and Customs, Guidelines on the operation of the Covid Restrictions Support Scheme, published 11th January 2021. <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/press-office/budget-information/2021/crss-guidelines.pdf>



underrepresented in high value-added activities and the private sector is dominated by a large, indigenous SME base with few larger enterprises in this region.

NI has a high ratio of low-paid to high-paid jobs with high levels of long-term unemployment. This will likely be exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic. There are also high levels of economic inactivity, with a large proportion of people having no qualifications. Inactivity has been increasing in the Irish counties in the border area in recent years and labour force participation rates have not recovered since the previous financial crisis.

NI has the lowest number of business start-ups or 'births' as a percentage of active enterprises and lowest percentage of innovation active firms than any other region in the UK. It also has relatively fewer patent applications. The Irish counties in the border area have the lowest levels of overall export intensity in Ireland.

There are decreasing enrolments in higher level education institutes in the Irish counties in the border area. The Programme area has lower access to internet rates than in rest of UK and Ireland. Indoor 4G coverage in urban areas is significantly lower in NI than rest of UK.

Relatively low levels of overseas tourism in the Irish counties in the border area have been recorded, but again tourism and hospitality has been impacted significantly by the pandemic.

NI emissions from agriculture and transport are above UK average and are increasing.

There is an older age demographic profile with higher old age dependency ratios.

A number of health inequalities persist in NI, with the most deprived areas reported as having poorer levels of health and/or health outcomes. From a mental health perspective, suicide rates have been increasing since the year 2000.

There is a reliance on cars in NI and the Irish border counties area with limited public transport availability.

Many of the points outlined above will be impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1.8.3 Opportunities

Opportunities could enable more enterprises to become more export orientated and undertake Research and Development, including from appropriate linkages with the Programme's Functional Area. This in particular, would enhance the potential of high value added sectors of the economy.

There are also opportunities as part of the recovery process from the pandemic to build on the strong tourism performance and continue to take further opportunities to attract overseas tourism.

There are opportunities to continue to encourage cross border education cooperation across NI and Ireland to promote Shared and Integrated Education for children from different backgrounds.

There are real benefits in optimising skills via matching demand in the Programme area. There are opportunities to promote sports participation further in order to facilitate improved physical and mental health.

There are also opportunities to reduce segregation through the removal of interface barriers. Encouragement should be provided through further investment in emission reducing activities including energy saving alternatives, renewables and green economy.



Opportunities exist for nature-based solutions³⁴ to deliver for biodiversity, water quality, climate mitigation, job creation (high and low skilled) as well as mental and physical health.

Opportunities also exist for the agriculture sector to become less emission intensive and the marine area offers potential to generate more renewable energy.

3.1.8.4 Threats

The impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic already pose a significant threat both in the short term and longer term. The UK's exit from EU has many potential implications for cross border activities, trade, economic performance and security/peace. The impact of this is likely to be most keenly felt in the border counties in Ireland. Global trade tensions pose threats to exports and environmental threats are increasing – NI is falling behind on UK emissions targets and Ireland has failed to reach its 2020 emissions targets, in addition to threats relating to biodiversity, floods, coastal erosion, and climate change.

Employment in a number of sectors is at risk as the transition to low carbon economy and increased automation threatens jobs. There are emerging skills shortages in sectors that could provide economic growth and jobs in both jurisdictions.

The threat to NI from terrorism remains severe. There is a rising number of incidents and crimes with a racial motivation coinciding with an increased number of ethnic communities in the Programme area.

3.1.9 Sustainable Prosperity

Both jurisdictions are now currently embarking on an 'energy transition', which involves a significant reduction in **carbon emissions** and a shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. It should also be noted that the European Green Deal is a major policy area of the European Union and Programmes such as PEACE PLUS are required to ensure that the Programme responds to the policy direction that has been set. In 2019, the UK became the first major economy to pass laws to end its contribution to global warming by 2050, requiring it to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Similarly, Ireland has committed to key targets for reducing emissions. This includes cutting emissions by at least 40% (relative to 2005 levels), with the share of total energy to be at least 32% renewables, and a 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency for 2030. Ireland also supports the EU 2050 target of net climate neutrality. However, neither jurisdiction is expected to achieve their respective 2020 targets which are extremely challenging.

In both jurisdictions, the sectors which produce the largest greenhouse gas emissions are agriculture, transport and energy. Most sectors have seen gradual reductions in their emissions, however agriculture and transport have seen emissions output increase in recent years. The meat and dairy industries are particularly important to both regions in terms of trade and employment. Increasing emissions in the transport sector have been driven by increasing population and associated demand for transportation, despite improvements in the energy efficiency of vehicles.

34 Nature-based solutions are actions that work with and enhance nature to help address societal challenges. The concept is grounded in the knowledge that healthy natural and managed ecosystems produce a diverse range of services on which human wellbeing depends.



Shifts in economic activity to reduce aggregate production emissions are likely to be concentrated in the high emissions sectors and as a result, jobs in these sectors are considered to be the most vulnerable in the transition to a low carbon economy. This is likely to disproportionately affect male employment in the border counties of Ireland.

Over the last decade, NI has been improving its generation of electricity from renewable sources. The contribution of **renewable energy** to the total supply of electricity over the period 2008/2009 to 2018/2019 has increased from 9% to almost 45%. In Ireland, renewable electricity accounted for over 60% of renewable energy used in 2017, sourced predominately from wind and hydroelectricity. While transport represents the single largest sector of energy use, it has the lowest share of renewables.

Transport is crucial to the economy providing businesses with links to their customers and markets as well as providing individuals with access to employment and services such as education, health and leisure. There is a strong and continued reliance on cars for transport in the Programme area, with low public transport use. The reliance on private cars as a means of transportation reflects the predominantly rural nature of the eligible regions with lower population densities and limits the viability for greater public transport infrastructure. However, there have been some developments in motorway infrastructure in recent years in an effort to increase connectivity. Investment in roads via national road grants in the border counties of Ireland has amounted to €394m since 2012.

Energy efficiency data indicates that the vast majority of the housing stock in the Programme area is not energy efficient, a factor which is likely to be affecting demand for energy and increasing energy costs to heat homes. Most homes in all 11 council areas in NI have a poor Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D, with only 0.14% of the housing stock having a good EPC rating of A. Most of the border counties of Ireland housing stock has a low C Building Energy Rating (BER) score. Housing stock in Leitrim has the poorest energy efficiency ratings, with 23% of houses in the county having an F or G BER score.

Protecting **biodiversity** is essential for sustaining the natural environment. Biodiversity and variety of life in both jurisdictions and elsewhere on earth is decreasing at an alarming rate. Regional studies indicate that there is continued and significant loss of priority habitats and species. While improvements have been made in designated site conditions, overall, the current status of approximately 80% of habitats across the Programme area are considered to be in unfavourable / bad conservation status. There is an increasing understanding of the key role of biodiversity to help address fundamental societal issues. These include climate change and population health, in addition to enhancing economic performance. As such, it is important that the goal of improving standards of living is aligned with the goal of protecting the natural environment that underpins the economy, and that decision making takes into consideration all societal as well as private costs.

The Programme area, as a single biogeographic region, hosts a wide range of specialised habitats and species of international significance, given their unique and iconic nature. These include wetland habitats such as blanket and lowland raised bogs and fen sites, which are particular to the wet and temperate Atlantic conditions experienced. Such biodiversity assets have potential to be utilised



as carbon stores and water regulators. However, due to the poor or degraded condition of many of these habitats, they are no longer contributing ecosystem services at previous levels. The region also supports a wealth of biodiversity and a significant range of ecological sites of international and national importance. In NI, there are currently 49 nature reserves. In addition, there are 8 areas designated as Areas of Natural Beauty (AONB) and 189 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), defined as being the very best wildlife and geological sites. There are a number of areas designated as Natura 2000 sites, National Heritage Areas, National Parks and Nature Reserves. Glenveagh is the sole National Park in the border counties of Ireland. The border counties of Ireland have the second highest number of nature reserves in Ireland with 13, the majority of which are located in Donegal.

The Programme area also boasts an attractive natural landscape. The border area of Ireland is the source of Ireland's two longest rivers, the Shannon and the Erne and has a considerable coastal area and unique mountain ranges. Along with its strong cultural and heritage assets, this makes it suitable for a strong tourism base. However, a balance must be struck between attractiveness from a tourism perspective and ensuring that these areas of natural vibrancy remain viable into the future.

The challenges and opportunities described require a Programme that will deliver impact, focused on the remaining challenges in regards to peace and reconciliation and also further cement north south collaboration on a range of territorial challenges, to build stability and prosperity within the Programme area.

Further information on the Programme's proposed responses to these challenges and opportunities is outlined in Section 3.4.

3.1.10 The Implications of the UK Exit from the EU

During the Stakeholder Consultation conducted by the SEUPB in late 2019 / early 2020, a number of threats were identified in relation to the implications of the UK's exit from the EU. These included:

- Social challenges such as the impact on community relations and disruption to community and social cohesion;
- Economic challenges including for example, the impact on productivity and trade, the prices of goods and services and freedom of movement;
- Political challenges including the potential for destabilisation of the peace process, compromised good relations within Northern Ireland and between the two regions, greater polarisation on national identity issues, and potential for increased paramilitary and dissident activity; and
- Challenges such as the fear of the return of a hard border and legislative complexities around changing governance.

The challenges identified for the wider economic and territorial development of the Programme area also included Brexit and the associated political, legislative and economic challenges, particularly the uncertainty that exists about its potential impact across business and trade generally, the environment, tourism and labour market. Whilst this is an evolving process, at the time of the development of the PEACE PLUS Programme, the SEUPB has ensured that where relevant, the Programme can assist with these challenges as they may become apparent on a cross border basis.

The PEACE PLUS Programme has been drafted to allow for support for activities that will address these challenges and opportunities as they arise over the coming years. Specifically, there will be investment within the economic regeneration theme to include support for business and skills development, and further within the partnership and collaboration theme there will be support for strategic planning and cementing cross border collaboration at various levels between government (local and national), communities and citizens more generally.

3.1.11 COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic will have profound and lasting socioeconomic consequences. Therefore, it is vital that appropriate mitigation measures are incorporated within the PEACE PLUS Programme design.

A socio-economic profile of the Programme area for the PEACE PLUS Programme (2021-2027) was prepared by the NICS Economist Profession in the Department of Finance and the Irish Government Economic & Evaluation Services in the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform. The issues and needs identified within the Socio-economic Profile will remain and many will be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic from an economic and social perspective. With that in mind, the SEUPB has ensured the Programme is developed to assist, in part, to the recovery in the years ahead for people and communities. All areas of the Programme will provide investment opportunities for many sectors to address some of the known aftershocks of the pandemic.

The SME Development and Transition Programme will be designed to incorporate supports to enable businesses to adapt and thrive in the post COVID-19 economic environment.

Our young people, particularly those from disadvantaged areas, have been identified as the demographic group most likely to be impacted by the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic. The education sector has been challenged by COVID-19 at all levels, including early childhood, primary and secondary.

The PEACE PLUS Youth Programme will build on the PEACE4Youth Programme and be further developed to include supports for barriers to engagement including childcare, language and disability access. The programme will also incorporate additional counselling and addiction support services.

The extent of health inequalities has been further highlighted by the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic also illustrated the potential for ICT to transform healthcare services. This learning will be incorporated within the Collaborative Health and Social Care Programme, to ensure a more resilient health and social care sector, which contributes to improved population health and wellbeing and reduced health inequalities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on many victims and survivors across the region. The **Victims and Survivors' Programme** will provide an opportunity to build upon the work of the Peace IV programme to further improve the lives of victims and survivors and create a more cohesive society.



3.2 Community Focus in the PEACE PLUS Programme

Each Thematic Area of the Programme includes a strong community led focus, leading to a more prosperous and 'healthy' society. The SEUPB have developed the Programme on the basis of actions and initiatives which will **support, develop, engage and enable communities throughout the Programme area**. The SEUPB has created a Programme which requires meaningful community engagement and in particular, with statutory agencies to consider new innovative approaches to deliver community engagement at a local level.

The SEUPB has championed from the outset of the development work, the need for the Programme themes and structure to encompass civil society at all levels, in relation to the development and implementation of actions and initiatives to address societal and community challenges.

We have listened and taken account of all policies and priorities and established a Programme that best addresses those requirements.

3.3 Programme Legacy

The Programme will focus on those communities and organisations best placed to deliver real and lasting impacts and critically within communities and groups that have been most affected by the legacy of the troubles/ conflict. Communities will be encouraged to take pride in and promote an understanding of their culture, customs and heritage through initiatives funded by the Programme, particularly those associated with regeneration.

The Programme will continue to empower communities to work together, cementing relationships through initiatives which sustain peace and leave a legacy of friendship and understanding. Engaging those most marginalised in society to become involved in improving their physical and social environment, through activities that will regenerate local areas.

Investment in our young people providing opportunities for them to improve their life chances, skills, education, confidence building, creative and sporting activities and encouraging social entrepreneurship. The Programme will also focus on enhancing community leadership and ensuring that a new generation of leaders are appropriately skilled to deal with the challenges of sustaining peace and good relations.

Investment in the economy, providing support for SMEs, research and innovation in specific areas of need, and targeted interventions in sectors most adversely affected by the impact of Covid-19. Support for the skills programmes, life-long learning and diversification will be available. Investment in the Social Economy also has the potential to make a significant contribution to the economy and community, and therefore support will be offered to provide an ecosystem to underpin and grow this sector.

There will be a renewed focus on rural and border communities in particular, through initiatives which will support the regeneration and reimagining of rural areas which have been most affected from a lack of investment for decades and suffer in relation to geographic isolation and a lack of opportunity and access to services. Rural and border areas, which have been left behind, are suffering population decline and are going to encounter the most negative effects of Brexit have been considered, and actions that will encourage cross border activity for the mutual benefit of citizens and the economy have been incorporated into the Programme.



The delivery of iconic spaces, new and restored through the Programme will help to create new vibrant public realms in our cities, towns and villages and will leave a lasting and shared legacy.

Supporting a sustainable future on a cross border basis by enhancing nature protection, biodiversity and green infrastructure as well as mitigating and adapting to climate change, is critical to future economic and social development and will define the legacy left for future generations.

The legacy will be a lasting contribution to sustaining a peaceful and shared society, something which the Programmes have contributed to since 1995. However, now more than ever, the Programme will have the need for legacy to be at the core of the programme to respond to longer term challenges.

3.4 Programme Area with Flexibility

The Programme area includes Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, namely Counties Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo. This is the core Programme area, however there is also flexibility to include partners or activity outside the core Programme area if appropriate. This is explained in section 3.5.

This new programme represents an exciting opportunity to continue to fund peace building interventions alongside activities which help to make the Programme area a more prosperous, healthier place to live through funding areas of mutual interest on a cross border basis.

According to statistics from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), NI's population stands at just over 1.88 million people (June 2018), representing 2.8% of the UK total population. Almost a fifth (18%) of the population live within the Belfast Local Government District (LGD), followed by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon LGD (11% total).

The geographical area of Counties Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo, encompasses an area of 12,156 sq. km. from the Atlantic Ocean on the west coast to the Irish Sea on the east coast. The population of these counties are 523,200 (2016 Census). This is equivalent to 11% of the Irish population.

The Programme area has a largely young population. In 2016, the proportion of people aged 0-24 in the border counties of Ireland was 33.9%, with the corresponding figure in NI being 31.9% (June 2018). The proportion of the population aged 65 and over in NI was 16.4% in June 2018, with the corresponding figure for the border counties of Ireland being 14.6% (2016).

The demography of the border counties of Ireland is expected to change alongside other regions in Ireland as birth rates decline and mortality rates improve. This is expected to affect dependency ratios³⁵ and will likely have demand implications for Irish services across health, education, housing, childcare and employment.

35 A dependency ratio gives insight into the number of people of non-working age compared to the number of those of working age.



The Central Statistics Office (CSO) population and dependency ratio projections demonstrate the changing demographic impacts in both the border counties of Ireland and at an Irish level. The dependency ratio in the border counties of Ireland is expected to change over the next seven years, with the young dependency ratio estimated to fall from 33% in 2021 to 28.8% in 2026, and the old dependency ratio expected to increase from 27.2% to 30.7% in 2026. Irish average demographic patterns have similar projected patterns in young and old age dependency ratios, with greater expected changes than in the counties of Ireland although is expected to continue to have average dependency ratios higher than the Irish average.

The Programme area encompasses a number of urban areas, as well as rural areas. The area is characterised by an attractive natural environment and habitat including mountainous terrain as well as an attractive coastline, which is a valuable resource for the tourism industry and has further future potential for this sector.

In addition, the natural habitat of the Programme area and the extensive coastline and neighbouring marine area also represent a potentially valuable resource in terms of the green economy and the generation of renewable energy.

3.5 Eligibility of Applicants from outside the Programme Area

Cross border collaboration is not strictly limited to the administrative borders of the Programme but has a flexible geography depending on the topic concerned. This is called **a functional area** and allows for organisations and institutions not based in the core programme area to get involved in projects, by linking with partners within the core Programme area.

Indeed for some interventions, the solution can only be found if partners outside the Programme area are involved. For example, to have a good research project, the involvement of a university which is in the capital of the country may be necessary; to reduce the risks of floods project, you may need to reintroduce wetlands or dams upstream of a river but outside the programme area; and to facilitate cross border health care/service you may have to develop a project with neighbouring regions and with national authorities. There are many examples in the current INTERREG IVA Programme of projects including partners from outside the area.

For some other interventions, the solution is purely local, corresponding to an area much smaller than the core Programme area.

This shows that problem-solving may be based on the functional areas rather than on the administrative boundaries defining the Programme. What matters is that the benefits of the project are significant for the Programme area. The location of the project or the location of the partners is not a defining matter.

The benefits of this new approach are:

- (1) It enables the projects to be more effective as they can build on the experience of a wider range of relevant partners and as they can be located where the impact is bigger;



- (2) It clearly shows that INTERREG is a policy tool supporting projects to improve the economic environment; and
- (3) It avoids the creation of artificial new borders outside the Programme geography.

3.6 Development of indicative budget allocations

The indicative budget allocations outlined in Section 3.7 have been developed on the basis of the specific challenges and needs that have been identified. This includes the need for thematic concentration on core EU Objectives such as the development of ‘a more social’ Europe’ and a ‘greener, lower carbon Europe’ and the budget allocations that will make an impact on creating peace and prosperity. Other factors that have impacted on the development of the indicative budgets are benchmarking with other similar activities, indications of project pipelines and past performance of activities under previous iterations of the Programme.

The SEUPB has developed a range of indicative budgets following a process of close engagement with all Government Departments in both jurisdictions. These budgets are indicative and subject to the public consultation with the final decision on budget allocations to be agreed by the NI Executive and Irish Government.

Please note that Technical Assistance for the Programme will be at 7% of the overall budget for the Programme. Technical Assistance will provide for the administration costs for the Programme and will also be used for developmental support for all areas of the Programme.



3.7 Themes and Investment Areas

Based on the extensive engagement described, **SIX KEY THEMATIC AREAS** have emerged.

Figure 3 Detail of THEMES, INVESTMENT AREAS AND INDICATIVE ACTIVITY



There are a range of Investment Areas / Specific Objectives associated with each of these Thematic Areas. An indicative budget allocation has been assigned to each Investment Area of the Programme, and each Theme is described over the following pages.



Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities



Indicative Budget €210m

Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland are experiencing a period of relative post conflict stability. Often, peace building is thought of in a negative sense, i.e. the absence of fighting or violence, rather than the positive aspects of peace, which are the presence of relationships, institutions and other factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive in a post-conflict transformational society. Peace and reconciliation are essential for ongoing socio-economic development and prosperity. As such, actions to improve community and social cohesion are a priority for the governments of both jurisdictions.

Continued and considered investment in proven pathways to reconciliation is required to build peaceful and thriving communities. Such investments should result in a legacy of change, achieved through physical and social improvements, which facilitate increased social inclusion and improved cross community and cross border relations.

Everyone in the Programme area has the potential to contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous society. Therefore, individual Investment Areas have been designed to optimise engagement and participation across all ages, communities and sectors and thus, ensure the maximum contribution to peace and reconciliation in the Programme area.



Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities

Co-designed Local Community PEACE Action Plans

Indicative Budget: €90,000,000

Investment Area 1.1: To enable and empower local community partnerships, led by the local authorities, to select and deliver priority projects on a cross community basis, which will result in shared and inclusive local services, facilities and spaces; and make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation.

PEACE PLUS Action Plans will be produced for each of the 17 local authority areas. These will be designed to complement the community planning arrangements currently adopted across the Programme area.

Local Community PEACE PLUS Partnerships will be established for designated cluster areas, which collectively comprise all areas within each local authority district. Individual local authorities may wish to build upon existing structures and/or established community planning partnership areas. Alternatively, they may wish to establish partnerships on the basis of District / Local Electoral Areas. These partnerships will reflect the diverse nature of our communities. Each Local Community PEACE PLUS Partnership will be resourced to develop a priority action plan for their individual area, which combined will form an overall PEACE PLUS Action Plan for each of the 17 local authority areas.

The **Co-designed Local Community PEACE Action Plans** will enable diverse partnerships to establish priority actions for their local areas and collectively address these in a manner which will make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation. Actions within the localised plans will span the range of social, environmental and economic interventions included within the PEACE PLUS Programme. However, principally, the plans will be centred around three core themes:

1. **Local community regeneration and transformation;**
2. **Thriving and peaceful communities; and**
3. **Building respect for all cultural identities.**

This Programme will enable and empower local community partnerships to self-determine and deliver priority projects on a cross community basis, which will result in improved, shared and inclusive local services, facilities and spaces and make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation.

Actions to be supported

The PEACE PLUS Programme will invest in the creation of a local authority Peace Action Plan for each local authority area. To enable this process, the types of actions to be supported will include:

- The preparation of 17 overarching PEACE PLUS Action Plans (one for each local authority area);
- The creation of PEACE PLUS Local Community Partnerships for designated cluster areas which collectively comprise all areas within each local authority district within each local authority area;
- The development of a Co-designed Action Plan by each PEACE PLUS Local Community Partnership. These plans will span the range of activities included within the PEACE PLUS Programme, for example: youth development programmes; health and wellbeing initiatives; community regeneration projects; redevelopment and reimagining of existing community facilities for shared usage; initiatives to build positive relations; social innovation; social enterprise and education and skills development programmes. These programmes will address issues of racism and sectarianism, increase social inclusion and promote civil leadership; and
- Resources to assist with the implementation of projects in areas where these are required.



Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities

Empowering Communities

Indicative Budget: €30,000,000

Investment Area 1.2: To empower community, voluntary and statutory organisations at all levels across the Programme area to contribute to the creation of a more peaceful and prosperous society.

The **Empowering Communities Programme:** All citizens, communities and organisations have a role in creating a more cohesive society. The Programme will develop the institutional capacity of community, voluntary and statutory organisations to embed and promote peace and reconciliation practice and services. It comprises three programme strands, which are distinct, yet interlinked.

Strand 1: The Empowering Communities to Embed Peace Small Grants Programme will support the delivery of people to people projects by local community organisations. It will enable participation by smaller organisations who can often be best placed to effect real change and embed peace at local community level, through the provision of a small grants programme, with more streamlined and simplified bureaucracy and access. It will facilitate a bottom up approach, designed to empower people and organisations at a grass roots level to make a direct contribution to peace and reconciliation within their local community.

Strand 2: The Institutional Capacity Development Programme will ensure issues related to trust and leadership are supported through collaborative actions between key voluntary, statutory and political institutions across multiple levels. It will build capacity to develop new models of service delivery in key areas such as transport, health, education, media and housing, which have significant potential to contribute to increased peace and reconciliation.

Strand 3: The Community-Based Safety Interventions Programme will support projects with the potential to improve peace and reconciliation within local communities. It will facilitate collaborative approaches by the statutory, community and voluntary sectors, designed to address anti-social behaviours which undermine peace and reconciliation. In this way, the Programme will contribute to the creation of strengthened and more cohesive local communities.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Peace and reconciliation projects, including anti-sectarian initiatives (funded through a small grants programme), which incorporate significant and sustained contact between individuals and groups from different community, cultural and political backgrounds; the outcomes of which are clearly linked to improved community relations. The thematic focus of these programmes will span a broad range of areas and groups including for example: children and young people; sport; arts and culture; history; health and wellbeing; community education; victims and survivors; ex-prisoners; ex-members of the security services; community safety; community regeneration; and social innovation / enterprise;
- Programmes designed to support the development of the institutional capacity of key voluntary, statutory and political organisations, including those with an emphasis on trust and leadership, which will lead to the creation of new models of service delivery; and
- Local community safety interventions designed to contribute to increased levels of peace and reconciliation.



Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities

Building Positive Relations

Indicative Budget: € 30,000,000

Investment Area 1.3: To promote positive relations characterised by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

The **Building Positive Relations Programme** will provide support for projects which transcend local boundaries and have the potential to achieve significant peace and reconciliation across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

Significant progress has been made in improving cross community relations. However, within Northern Ireland, significant levels of spatial and social segregation still exist between the two largest communities. It is important to invest in activities which enable groups and individuals from different community and cultural backgrounds to develop meaningful relationships, which are built upon significant and sustained contact.

The Programme will place particular emphasis on providing support to those most marginalised within our communities. While not an exhaustive list, these include for example, women; older people; minority communities (including migrants and refugees); those living with disability; those with issues arising from the legacy of the conflict including ex-prisoners and ex-security services personnel; members of the Traveller Community; and those from the LGBT community.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Projects which help build the capacity of regional and local organisations through cross community and cross border collaboration;
- Projects which facilitate conflict resolution (including anti-sectarian initiatives) which contribute towards building positive relations;
- Projects which increase civic participation, including that by minority and newcomer communities (this may include the requirement for language support);
- Projects which facilitate positive cultural expression within diverse communities and will lead to mutual trust and respect for each other;
- Projects which develop new community leaders and enhance the capacity of existing community leaders and volunteers to promote and facilitate peace and reconciliation;
- Projects which showcase the benefits of cross community and cross border contact to achieve greater community cohesion;
- Projects which increase minority groups and women's participation in public and political life; to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society through the promotion of reconciliation amongst all communities;
- Projects which build, improve and sustain relationships between and within communities by addressing issues of trust, prejudice and intolerance;
- Projects which engage those with opposing and dissenting views, which if not challenged, will contribute to continued segregation and endanger the peace process;
- Community justice interventions that contribute to peace building and positive relations; and
- Projects which address challenges related to sensitive cultural expression and celebration, leading to cross community engagement and understanding.



Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities

Re-Imaging Communities

Indicative Budget: €60,000,000

Investment Area 1.4: To create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of transformative shared space and services, which will support and embed peace and reconciliation.

The **Re-Imaging Communities Programme** is a transformative re-imaging programme, which will create new significant shared spaces for use by all communities; or increase the shared usage of existing facilities. It will result in an increased number of individuals and groups utilising shared spaces and accessing shared services.

The creation of strong, cohesive communities is critical to the continued economic and social development of the Programme area. A legacy of the conflict is the prevalent and persistent physical and psychological division that limits our society. In some areas, the point of segregation is denoted by physical or invisible boundaries referred to as 'interface barriers'. Many people live highly segregated lives, residing, learning, working and socialising within their traditional communities. This Programme will invest in initiatives to bring people from different communities together through the creation of shared spaces and services.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Actions which will enable key representatives and leaders of different communities to collaborate and co-design re-imaging projects on a cross border and/or cross community basis, which will result in significant social and economic regeneration transformation;
- Actions which will result in the re-imaging of existing spaces including the removal of sectarian symbols and emblems to encourage increased shared usage and deliver significant peace and reconciliation outcomes for the entire community;
- The development of re-imaged and new facilities which will accommodate social enterprise and social innovation projects, which will benefit the entire surrounding community; this should include facilities left vacant post the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The development of new shared spaces which will have a transformative effect on local areas and enable shared usage by groups and individuals from different community, cultural and political backgrounds; particularly within those communities which have been most impacted by the conflict and experience poverty, inequality and social exclusion as a result;
- The development of shared facilities and programmes which enable significant and sustained multi and inter-generational usage on a cross border and/or cross community basis;
- Programmes which address the levels of sectarianism and racism which prevent shared usage of spaces and access to shared services; and
- Programmes which support the sustained cross community sustained usage of new and re-imaged community spaces and facilitate access to shared services. These programmes may encompass a wide range of Thematic Areas including children and young people; health and wellbeing; social enterprise; education; arts and culture; tourism and heritage; and sport and recreation.



Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation



Indicative Budget €143m

Peace and prosperity are synonymous with one and other, and peace is a necessary precondition for sustained economic growth. In turn, the prosperity arising from a stable and rising economy, can help foster and embed peace. Conflict and peace, both shape and are shaped by the economy. As such, economic development in post conflict regions must take account of this and, where possible, be designed to strengthen peace and reconciliation.

The Programme area experiences low levels of entrepreneurship and innovation generally. This situation contributes to a high ratio of low to high paid jobs and comparatively higher levels of unemployment.

There is an opportunity to encourage SMEs to achieve scaling through clustering and facilitate innovation, in a manner which will garner performance in an ever changing and competitive marketplace, while increasing competitiveness, productivity and export levels.

A more innovative culture is being fostered across the Programme area. There is an opportunity to build upon this positive cultural shift and invest in high level research and innovation initiatives. This will facilitate commercially driven partnerships involving the Programme area's best researchers and companies of all scales, in a manner which will contribute to significant economic growth.

To secure our economic future, it will be essential to assess and address emerging skills gaps in high value sectors on a cross border area basis, in a way which will future proof the Programme area and encourage cross border labour mobility.

The creation of Smart Towns and Villages will build upon a proven social innovation led approach, to maximise the potential of Information Communications Technology (ICT) to deliver improved social and economic outcomes across the Programme area, particularly in rural areas.

This Theme offers the most potential for projects based on functional areas, i.e. including partners from outside the Programme area.



Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation

SME Development and Transition

Indicative Budget: €20,000,000

Investment Area 2.1: To enhance sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs, including by productive investments.

There is a need to provide continued strategic and structured support to the Programme area SME sector, particularly those entities with high growth and export potential. Businesses that innovate and collaborate are more productive and more likely to be engaged in exporting and employ highly skilled individuals.

The **SME Development and Transition Programme** will build upon existing investment to support SMEs to: operate at scale through cross border collaboration; engage in commercially led innovation; effectively transition to engage in the low carbon, circular economy; deliver productivity improvements or transition to the latest digitisation tools; and strengthen capacity for maximum engagement in a post Brexit, post COVID-19 economic landscape.

The Programme will encompass specific recovery and rebuilding supports, for those sectors most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including for example, Tourism. It will result in the development of a stronger, more innovative and collaborative SME base across the Programme area, which is delivering higher levels of productivity, exports and sustainable employment.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Detailed SME capability assessment and mentoring programming to increase capacity in target areas including: sustainable development practices; new product and/or process development; digitisation; and post COVID-19 recovery and adaptation planning;
- Cross border collaborative research and innovation projects centred around core areas including sustainable / advanced manufacturing, to develop new products and/or processes designed to increase competitiveness;
- Creation and management of innovation focused, collaborative, cross border clusters;
- Cross border academic and industry collaborative projects; and
- Creation and management of support for scaling networks in key growth sectors.



Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation

Innovation Challenge Fund

Indicative Budget: €58,000,000

Investment Area 2.2: To develop and enhance research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies in a manner which delivers maximum economic regeneration and transformation.

Investment in collaborative innovation is key to the economic development of the Programme area. The **Innovation Challenge Fund** will support high level, commercially focused research, development and innovation within key Programme area growth sectors, resulting in increased productivity, higher export levels and sustainable employment. It will deliver major change innovation projects, which result in lasting local and national economic and social benefit.

Investment will result in the development of strong and entrepreneurial, innovation led eco-systems, which encompass partnerships within specific sectors, in which there is the potential for competitive advantage. The Programme will provide key complementary support for Research & Innovation elements of locally led development plans and area-based strategies, such as activities included within the Programme area investment plans including the City and Growth Deals, and the National Planning Framework, which can deliver cross border economic cooperation.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- High level cross border research, development and innovation projects, capable of demonstrating commerciality, which will contribute to Programme area growth sectors including Life & Health Sciences; Renewable / Bio Energy; Advanced Manufacturing; Agri-food; Cyber Security; and Artificial Intelligence;
- Initiatives which support the application of advanced technologies across other sectoral areas including, the development of advanced technology hubs, which assist enterprises of all scales to develop new products and/or processes;
- Programme area scaled facilities incorporating incubation and research space, digital facilities which will accommodate innovation led clustering in key sectors; and
- STEM based initiatives that provide opportunities for young people from disadvantaged areas, who are not in mainstream education, to engage in the Research & Innovation sector.



Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation

Programme Area Skills Development

Indicative Budget: €35,000,000

Investment Area 2.3: To develop skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship.

Programme Area Skills Development will support area-based approaches, designed to address key skills gaps, which will result in increased productivity and employment and higher levels of cross border labour mobility. The Programme will enable cross community and cross border collaboration between education and training-based organisations which will reduce duplication and maximise the capacity to address existing and emerging skills gaps. It will encompass the opportunity for upskilling, reskilling, training and job placement opportunities.

The Programme will also incorporate community skills development, with an emphasis on those which will contribute to improved peace and reconciliation. These will include support for social economy / innovation enablers. These programmes will target the more marginalised and under-represented groups in our society.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Programmes which enable area-based cross community and cross border clusters to respond to the sub-regional skills gaps and requirements (including upskilling through life-long learning);
- Programmes which maximise the delivery of cross border programmes by further and higher education providers to minimise duplication of resources;

- Development and delivery of joint educational awards administered by cross border partnerships where possible, to minimise education provision duplication and ensure alignment with evidence-based education to address recognised skills gaps;
- Support to address the barriers to participation in skills development programmes, particularly by marginalised and disadvantaged groups including: affordability; childcare and caring responsibilities; language skills; and disability access. Programmes should be designed to improve the working conditions and employment prospects of minority groups;
- Research into the medium-term skills needs of the Programme area, with particular reference to the economic impact of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Development of cross community and cross border strategies, aimed at risk reduction to employment sectors, subject to job displacement through technological development, including the development of innovation and entrepreneurship in the Programme area;
- Development of an all-island skills research hub; and
- Identification of synergies and shared learning opportunities from skills, education and training policies in areas such as digital skills, apprenticeships, research and innovation within the border counties of Ireland, which will encourage new models of cross border collaboration and delivery.



Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation

Smart Towns and Villages

Indicative Budget: €30,000,000

Investment Area 2.4: To reap the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisation and public authorities.

The **Smart Towns and Villages Programme** will provide greater access to and awareness of telecommunications. An area-based approach will be adopted to the creation of Smart Towns and Villages. This proven model utilises a social innovation led approach to maximise the potential of Information Communications Technology (ICT) to deliver improved social and economic outcomes in target areas, particularly those of a rural nature. The Programme will also incorporate measures for the transformation of vacant spaces and facilities within town and village centres for communal recreational and social usage.

The PEACE PLUS Programme will support the development of Smart Towns and Villages on a cluster area basis, resulting in considerable cross community and cross border collaboration. This approach will broaden the impact and benefits of related social innovation based technological solutions. It will also lead to increased integration and the creation of a more cohesive communities. In 2021, the SEUPB will prepare a roadmap of areas that could achieve most impact from this proposed investment.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- The design and development of advanced mobile digital hubs, to ensure the widest possible opportunities for digital access for rural citizens in particular;
- The design and delivery of digital mentoring programmes to be delivered through the proposed mobile digital hubs in rural communities and businesses in particular, to increase digital skills/knowledge and thus provide opportunities for less isolation and increased social interaction;
- The development of digital clusters to increase remote working and by so doing reduce the need for rural citizens to leave their communities and commute long distances to work;
- The development of projects which will help transform existing assets within town and village centres for citizen recreational and social usage; and
- The development of social enterprise / innovation led projects designed to apply advanced ICT to create new models of social service and economic development.



Theme 3: Empowering and Investing in Our Young People



Indicative Budget €110m

Investing in our young people is essential to ensure the long-term peace and prosperity of the Programme area. Whilst the current generation of young people has not experienced direct conflict to the extent their parents and grandparents did, they live with the legacy of the conflict. This situation impacts upon many areas of their lives. Many have grown up in predominately single identity areas and attended single identity schools. Combined, these factors have resulted in limited, if any opportunity to develop relationships with those from different community, cultural and political backgrounds. This has often engendered feelings of fear and mistrust in our young people. A considerable number have grown up in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, which have experienced under investment as a direct result of the conflict. In many cases, this situation has contributed to lower levels of educational attainment and an inability to participate in the diverse labour market, which would improve their individual life circumstances, while enhancing peace and reconciliation. Building on existing experience and expertise in the Integrated Education Sector, will enable peace and reconciliation work to be effectively progressed across pre-school, primary, post primary and youth settings, and on a cross border basis.

There is an opportunity to build upon the experience of delivering the current PEACE IV Shared Education Programme, to further develop current cross community and cross border school partnerships and meet demand from those schools and other settings not yet participating. To enable young people from all sectors to engage in shared learning, the opportunity to participate in non-curricular shared education programmes should be extended to youth organisations, including on a cross border basis.

There is a potential to build on the current PEACE4Youth Programme to build the capacity of marginalised and disadvantaged young people within the Programme area. This will include young people from those areas most impacted by the conflict. Related investment should build upon the existing model, with an additional focus of addressing barriers to engagement, such as caring responsibilities, transport and language support.

There is an opportunity to build upon current models of mental health support which provide accessible, age appropriate, early prevention and recovery activities and are delivered on a cross community and cross border basis. This will result in an increased number of resilient young people with the level of capacity required to be in control of their own lives and make a positive contribution within their communities.

THEME 3: EMPOWERING AND INVESTING IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

Shared Learning Together Programme**Indicative Budget: €45,000,000**

Investment Area 3.1: To provide direct, sustained contact between children from all backgrounds through collaboration between early childhood settings, schools and youth organisations, to promote good relations and enhance children's skills to contribute to a cohesive society.

The **Shared Learning Together Programme** design builds upon the learning and experience derived from the PEACE IV Shared Education Programme. It will enable further, sustained development of existing shared education relationships, while ensuring the involvement of early years settings, schools and youth organisations yet to participate in the Programme. It will facilitate the education together of those of different religious beliefs, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Catholic children and young persons; those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not; which is secured by the working together and cooperation of two or more relevant education providers. The Programme will incorporate a broader participant base, to include the wider school community and schools in other parts of Ireland, where involvement will contribute to increased social inclusion and enhance the experience and learning of the participants. It will support peace and reconciliation training and development in Education, to specifically foster an integrated ethos. This will support community cohesion, enhanced education opportunities for all and provision of shared professional development. It will also support youth to youth Shared Learning Together programmes, delivered by youth sector organisations, which facilitate cross community and cross border partnerships.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Shared Learning Together programmes in early years settings, incorporating the principles of the 'Sharing from the Start' model and a focus on the wider family;
- Shared Learning Together programmes in the formal education sector, will seek to increase the number of schools participating in shared education, in addition to exploring ways to sustain support for some existing participating shared education schools. Mindful of the demonstrable educational benefits, increased social inclusion and contribution to improved community relations across the Programme area, actions will also provide collaborative opportunities for the Department of Education and Skills and other disadvantaged education settings in areas outside the border counties of Ireland, in addition to schools in Northern Ireland which operate the Extended Schools Programme;
- Programmes which will help end the cycle of educational disadvantage by supporting related initiatives which address the additional learning needs of pupils at risk of underachievement including upskilling parents to take a more active role in their children's development and education, including digital based learning activities;
- Digital based approaches which will contribute to the development and sustainability of shared education partnerships, including those of a cross border nature;
- Awareness raising programmes outlining the benefits of shared and integrated education;
- Development and delivery of youth to youth Shared Learning Together programmes in the non-formal education sector, delivered by youth organisations, which facilitate youth-based organisation partnerships on a cross community and/or cross border basis. These

THEME 3: EMPOWERING AND INVESTING IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

youth based, non-curricular approaches designed by young people and youth workers should incorporate cultural awareness activities and the opportunity for significant and sustained contact, including the development of cross border exchange programmes;

- Programmes which develop youth work capacity on a cross border basis that will include enhancing relationships between youth workers across the Programme area; and
- Collaborative initiatives which enable stakeholders from all education sectors to further develop approaches to shared learning, for the benefit of young people across the Programme area.



THEME 3: EMPOWERING AND INVESTING IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

PEACE PLUS Youth Programme**Indicative Budget: €45,000,000**

Investment Area 3.2: To enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background, develop their confidence and future potential and contribute towards the creation of a more cohesive society.

The **PEACE PLUS Youth Programme** is a targeted capacity building programme for young people aged 14-24 years, who are disadvantaged, excluded or marginalised, have deep social and emotional needs and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, violence or paramilitary activity. The Programme is outcomes focused across a number of key areas including good relations, personal development, citizenship and employability.

The PEACE PLUS Youth Programme, which builds upon the successful Peace4Youth Programme, will place even more emphasis on enhancing the employability of participants and the incorporation of activities to develop their entrepreneurial and or social enterprise potential. This is particularly important given the extent to which the youth population will be impacted by the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will involve addressing the principal barriers to the young person achieving enhanced social and economic mobility, including their perception of their own abilities and potential. A primary aim of the Programme will be to increase the capacity, confidence, aspiration and achievement of every young person participating.

Please note that coordination arrangements to support the quality and coherence of this element of the Programme will also be put in place.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Targeted programmes for young people, which use a range of mediums to deliver the PEACE PLUS Youth Programme intervention model to include:
 - Mentoring based on the core critical relationship, incorporating “one good adult” approach;
 - Social action projects including those involving volunteering;
 - Cultural exchanges and visits;
 - Sports/physical activities (adventure/ outdoor pursuits);
 - Environmental themed initiatives including Work placements, work taster sessions and other world-of-work activities;
 - Initiatives which enable young people to harness their entrepreneurial skills and learn about the social economy as a pathway to employment;
 - Short courses leading to qualifications (including Essential Skills, personal development, employability, good relations and citizenship courses, and those in areas such as First Aid, Food Hygiene or Health and Safety that are useful when seeking work); and
 - Earlier intervention i.e. 14-16 years, in instances where this could prevent early disengagement from education and is complementary to mainstream provision.



THEME 3: EMPOWERING AND INVESTING IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing**Indicative Budget: €20,000,000**

Investment Area 3.3: To enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society.

The legacy of the conflict has left an impact on many communities in the Programme area. Evidence indicates that children growing up in areas of conflict demonstrate higher levels of mental ill health and anti-social behaviours. Through intergenerational transmission of trauma, the legacy of the conflict continues to impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing. This can affect their ability to engage with education, leading to underachievement and restricting their opportunities for employment, and as a consequence, their ability to interact with people from different community, cultural and political backgrounds.

The **Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme** will support additional, non-formal activity involving cross community and cross border youth programmes with a focus on fostering good youth mental health and wellbeing, improving understanding of and delivery of wellbeing and youth mental health supports among young people and youth practitioners, and the sharing of best practice to improve related interventions. In addition to mental health, supported projects will also focus on the social, emotional and environmental wellbeing of young people and building their capacity. The Programme will make a considerable contribution to peace and reconciliation through the development of enhanced emotional resilience in our young people.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- The expansion of successful non-formal youth mental health and wellbeing models on a cross community and cross border basis;
- Programmes which provide young people with opportunities to make a meaningful contribution to project design, including the creation of youth advisory groups;
- Programmes which incorporate innovative approaches to the proven mentor led model and facilitate peer mentoring support;
- Programmes which incorporate the innovative use of digital resources including social media platforms, applications and podcasts;
- Training for key youth workers, which builds their capacity to better support children and young people's emotional resilience and good relations;
- Programmes which incorporate innovative approaches to youth mental health and wellbeing focused education and development;
- Peace and reconciliation focused youth leadership programmes; and
- Programmes which instil young people with the confidence to improve wellbeing within their communities and act as agents of change, building peace for future generations.

Theme 4: Healthy and Inclusive Communities



Indicative Budget €155m

The provision of adequate levels of inclusive health and social care provision, within economic constraints, is a challenge for all governments. Research has shown that social, economic and environmental factors can influence an individual's health outcomes. Health inequalities can therefore arise when the aforementioned factors result in unequal health outcomes for different social groups. COVID-19 has provided a spotlight on the negative impact of health inequalities. Considerable developments have been made in the provision of collaborative cross border health care provision in recent years, much of it funded by the INTERREG Programme. There are now established arrangements for the provision of specific cross border healthcare services between the Department of Health in Northern Ireland and the Department of Health in Dublin. The PEACE PLUS Programme provides an opportunity to build and expand upon this work within other areas, which are suitable for cross community and cross border collaboration.

Our rural communities have significant strengths but also face considerable challenges, which can result in inequalities, including access to healthcare provision. The PEACE PLUS Programme presents an opportunity to develop a strengths-based model, which will enable and empower rural communities to reach their full potential. Investment will contribute to the creation of thriving rural communities, delivering significant social, economic and environmental benefits.

It is important that victims and survivors of the Conflict are acknowledged and supported. The PEACE Programme has previously invested in programmes which have provided an evidence base for the most appropriate interventions and support. The PEACE PLUS Programme will build upon the provision of health and wellbeing supports and resilience-based capacity building programmes.



THEME 4: HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Collaborative Health and Social Care

Indicative Budget: €80,000,000

Investment Area 4.1: To ensure equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care and promoting the transition from institutional to family and community-based care.

Health and social care is an area in which collaborative cross border approaches are proven to deliver considerable benefits to the citizen and the Programme area. The **Collaborative Health & Social Care Programme** will build upon existing and new cross community and cross border collaborative approaches to health and social care delivery models (within specified treatment areas), to deliver an increased number of episodes of care. It will support the development of innovative community based health care interventions, which complement statutory provision (including social enterprise models). The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the potential of information communications technology to transform healthcare services and reduce inequalities. The Programme will support further advancements within this area and seek to address the longer-term impact of COVID-19 upon healthcare provision across the Programme area. This will improve the health and well-being of people living in the Programme area, by enabling them to access quality health and social care services in the most appropriate setting to their needs. It will result in a more resilient health and social care sector, which contributes to improved population health and wellbeing and reduced health inequalities.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Initiatives designed to deliver cross border collaborative approaches to health and social care service delivery, in those clinical areas identified as being most suitable to cross border service delivery models;
- Development of cross border healthcare intervention trials;
- Development of a social equality approach to promote social inclusion, citizenship and better life outcomes for disabled people and those with complex needs;
- Development and implementation of support and cooperation services on a cross border basis, for community and voluntary organisations involved in the provision of health and social care services within their own communities;
- Development and delivery of primary care and older people services, supporting caring communities and independent living;
- Development and delivery of initiatives designed to address the Trauma of the Troubles on the Health and Mental Wellbeing of citizens and communities, by adopting a strengths-based, cross community and cross border mental and emotional resilience and recovery model; to include the development of addiction treatment facilities and programmes;
- Initiatives to enable early authoritative intervention within vulnerable families;
- Development and delivery of new models of working, both in scheduled and unscheduled care streams, by better utilising scarce physical, financial and human resources; and
- Cross border training and development interventions for healthcare professionals, social care professionals and personnel in community and voluntary organisations involved in the provision of cross border health and social care support services.



THEME 4: HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion

Indicative Budget: €50,000,000

Investment Area 4.2: To create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of community spaces, key services and supports in rural areas.

Our rural communities have significant strengths including high levels of entrepreneurialism, education attainment and social capital, in addition to natural heritage and environmental assets. However, rural communities face particular challenges, including higher levels of social isolation and reduced access to key services such as health and transport. This situation impacts the rural citizen at all stages of their life cycle, and can affect health and wellbeing opportunities, thus creating disparities between rural and urban areas. There is a need to provide strategic investment, which will redress this imbalance and allow rural communities to thrive and reach their full potential through health and wellbeing focused solutions.

The **Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion Programme** will support social, economic and environmental projects which contribute to sustainable regeneration, social inclusion and the creation of healthy and thriving communities in rural areas. By adopting a strengths-based approach, the Programme will contribute to the creation of a more balanced society, in which our rural communities thrive.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Deployment of human resources to co-ordinate collaborative (cross community and cross border) approaches; progress key strategic projects; and deliver core community services, including those related to health and wellbeing, across designated rural area boundaries;
- Development of centralised facilities to support the provision of key family support services, ranging from early years to older people, in a setting which will facilitate increased levels of cross community contact;
- Deployment of resources to support diversification in the Agricultural Sector and the development of social farms (including collaborative approaches) for social and economic benefit;
- Development and delivery of rural specific social enterprise support programmes including those focused on increasing health and wellbeing. This will incorporate support for: volunteer recruitment and development; product and or service development; awareness, promotion and sectoral marketing; funding mechanisms; and capital assets required for service delivery and expansion; and
- Development of green infrastructure to promote active lifestyles and support enterprise and tourism within rural areas (including those on a cross border basis) and the interconnection of rural and urban areas.



THEME 4: HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Victims and Survivors**Indicative Budget €25,000,000**

Investment Area 4.3: To create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of services.

The needs of victims and survivors are unique, complex and diverse. The PEACE IV Programme currently supports an integrated, outcomes based, community led support programme for victims and survivors. This has improved the lives of many victims and survivors in the Programme area and beyond, including cross community and cross border interventions. The **Victims and Survivors Programme** presents an opportunity to learn from and build upon this work, to presents additional support to victims and survivors. The proposed areas are as follows:

- Further development of the health and wellbeing case worker network model;
- Advocacy support programmes (Truth, Justice and Acknowledgement);
- Sector training and development;
- Research, including new co-designed and action based approaches; and
- Further development of the resilience programmes.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Access to trauma-informed integrated support and services including a resilience programme to address the long term and changing needs of victims and survivors;
- Development of bespoke training programmes to address current and emerging needs;
- Further development of the Health & Wellbeing Casework Network to improve support and services for victims and survivors at an individual, family and community level and to improve the equity of services at a geographical level;
- Continuation and further development of the Advocacy Network to increase recognition and acknowledgement of the experiences of victims and survivors;
- Implementation of strategies to address barriers to engagement in support and services by victims and survivors;
- Continued development of a trauma-based education and training programme for staff, practitioners and volunteers to include online training models to extend geographical reach;
- Extension of the current trauma education qualifications supported to include Masters level trauma specific programme (building on the progression of qualification levels supported by previous PEACE Programmes); and
- A co-designed research programme integrating academic research with practice and experiential based learning, training, monitoring, evaluation and policy development to improve support and services and provide an evidence base for further understanding and investment in this area.



Theme 5: Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future



Indicative Budget €265m

Our natural environment is one of our most important assets and its enhancement and protection is critical to the future economic and social development. In recovering from COVID-19, there is an opportunity to deliver a sustainable thriving environment, in which businesses can flourish. A clean, green and accessible environment makes a major contribution to people having long, healthy and active lives, as well as creating a place where people want to live, visit and invest. Strategic cross border investment will enhance and protect our environment, while strengthening the economy in the Programme area.

Community awareness and education is essential to ensure that everyone can play their part in protecting our environment. Community and citizen participation initiatives and education and awareness training programmes will therefore be a feature of activity across this Theme.

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth and is crucial to human life. Healthy ecosystems produce vital services, including fresh water, food and fuel sources as well as carbon storage and flood alleviation to help combat climate change. It also provides strong links to human health and wellbeing. Threats to biodiversity include loss of habitats, nutrient enrichment and invasive alien species, which all reduce the resilience of our nature rendering it more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, so must be addressed. Good air quality is essential for the natural environment and biodiversity in particular, which given the transboundary nature of air pollution, can be more effectively managed on a cross border basis.

The marine area comprises all marine waters including: seabed, sub soil, sea loughs and tidal rivers. The marine environment is an important economic asset to the Programme area and considered a growth sector. In addition to economic

benefits, the marine and coastal environment provide important societal benefits through ecosystem services. These include: waste assimilation, coastal defence, carbon absorption, recreational, heritage, fisheries and aquaculture.

Water is a resource which is vital for all life forms. Catchments and their water resources are a key environmental and economic asset within the Programme area and deliver significant benefits to society through ecosystem services. These include drinking water, wastewater assimilation, angling, tourism and culture / heritage amenities. The main pressures upon the cross border water environment are related to excess nutrients and runoff. Investment in nature based solutions is fundamental to sustainable catchment management, including facilities for wastewater and drinking water treatment.

Cross border collaboration to progress the replacement of fossil fuels by indigenous renewable energy in the heat sector will render the economies of Ireland and Northern Ireland less dependent on imports. This will enhance the security of energy supply, in line with EU, Irish and UK policies. This will also make a significant contribution to the achievement of local, national and EU CO2 emission reduction targets.

Transport is essential for our economic and social development. It is a crucial economic driver as it connects businesses with markets and facilitates employee mobility. From a social perspective, transport provides access to education, health and leisure services. Therefore, it is essential to invest in transport infrastructure and connectivity. From a peace and reconciliation perspective, investment in transport is important to build upon current levels of cross border mobility in a sustainable manner. Hence, building connections and facilitating sustainable cross border mobility, is a key component of peace and reconciliation on this Island.



THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE

Biodiversity, Nature Recovery & Resilience**Indicative Budget: €15,000,000**

Investment Area 5.1: To enhance protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution.

Biodiversity and healthy ecosystems contribute significant social and economic services including: the provision of fresh water; the air we breathe; healthy soils and food supplies; and contribute to medical and pharmaceutical developments. Biodiversity is decreasing at an alarming rate. Approximately 80% of habitats across the Programme area are considered to be in unfavourable / bad conservation status. There is an increasing understanding of the key role of biodiversity to delivery key ecosystem services and help address fundamental societal challenges. These include providing nature-based solutions to combat climate change and air pollution, which will enhance health and well-being, in addition to supporting economic performance.

The **Biodiversity, Nature Recovery & Resilience Programme** presents an opportunity to build upon current INTERREG VA Programme by continuing to promote cross border co-operation and facilitating the recovery of additional protected habitats and priority species. Investment will be directed towards further delivery of conservation actions proven to redress biodiversity loss and preserve these important environmental, social and economic assets.

Actions to be supported

The Programme will encompass five individual Thematic Areas. The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Protected site restoration:** Delivery of further necessary conservation measures in areas supporting the selected habitats and species to improve conservation condition and increase ecological and climate resilience. This includes: development of wildfire resilience plans; and the development of nature-based solutions to improve the capacity of habitats to store carbon (including sustainable grazing solutions, positive adjustments to hydrological flow and reductive strategies for encroaching scrub species); and monitoring to demonstrate conservation outcomes;
- **Development and management of nature recovery networks and nature-based projects:** Identification of key areas for nature recovery and the development and implementation of ecological recovery networks, including green infrastructure; monitoring of species to determine necessary conservation action; and the identification and implementation of nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation, including restoration of habitats to increase carbon storage and/or attenuate flooding risks;
- **Initiatives to increase connection with nature:** Initiatives which increase appropriate recreation within, and appreciation of, important areas for nature recovery areas; innovative solutions and rural enterprise activities linked to nature recovery areas, which promote nature conservation; and localised biodiversity action, citizen science projects, and education activities that increase awareness and appreciation; and
- **Initiatives to address invasive alien species (IAS):** Development of an all-island strategy on invasive alien species; establishment of an all-island biosecurity group; commissioning of baseline awareness surveys; and development of systems to capture and centralise all-island invasive species data.



THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE

Marine and Coastal Management**Indicative Budget: €12,000,000**

Investment Area 5.2: To promote climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account ecosystem based approaches.

Marine and coastal heritage assets are irreplaceable and can be damaged and/or destroyed by natural processes and human activities. As such, there is an increasing need for the development of marine environment specific climate change mitigation and adaptation plans.

The marine environment is transboundary in nature and does not respect environmental, legal or administrative boundaries. Therefore, this area is well suited for cross border collaboration. The extent and severity of the situation to be addressed differs geographically. On this basis, area-based studies will be required to develop bespoke, place-based solutions. This collaboration will result in an improved performance in achieving related targets set at national and European levels. The

Marine and Coastal Management Programme will enable a cross border approach to the protection of the marine and coastal environment from natural and anthropological threats; safeguarding this irreplaceable natural asset and resulting in economic, social and cultural benefits to the Programme area.

Actions to be supported

The Programme will encompass four individual Thematic Areas. The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Coastal change:** Activities including repeat surveys and mapping; sea level wave and hydrodynamic modelling; coastal vulnerability assessments; coastal monitoring; habitat recovery and restoration; development of nature based solutions; development of adaptation and resilience plans for key sites; site cultural asset development plans; teaching and awareness raising resources; decision support tools; and training programmes;
- **Climate and pelagic systems:** Activities including instrumentation based oceanographic and hydrodynamic modelling; enhancement of monitoring network and sampling activities; developing proven, high quality and cost-effective methods for pelagic habitat evaluation; integrated assessment of marine food webs; evidence based pelagic species protection methodologies; and evidence based transboundary action plans;
- **Natural capital, habitats and human:** Activities including bird surveys, benthic habitat surveys and seabed mapping in areas for potential renewable energy; quantification of marine ecosystem services; trans boundary action plans for selected benthic species; geohazard repeat mapping surveys; and underwater cultural heritage surveys to support the further development and refinement of national and regional historic environment records; strategies or protocols reflecting principles of the circular economy that will reduce marine litter; and
- **Local action to protect marine biodiversity and coastal and marine heritage:** Activities including local level stewardship arrangements; Marine Protection Area climate change action plans; community and citizen participation initiatives; and education and awareness training programmes.



THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE

Water Quality and Catchment Management**Indicative Budget: €21,000,000**

Investment Area 5.3: To promote access to water and sustainable water management.

Water is essential for the functioning of all life forms that exist on earth. However, it is a limited resource and needs to be carefully managed to protect human life and the natural environment. The main pressures on the status of water bodies are agriculture and wastewater impacts (urban development). The Water Framework Directive (WFD) adopts a holistic approach to the management of water resources (including quality and quantity) requiring the protection and restoration of the water environment, including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and ground waters.

The **Water Quality and Catchment Management Programme** will enable a cross border collaborative approach to the management and improvement of water quality in selected cross border water bodies. In line with the Water Framework Directive, this will be demonstrated by an improved classification over time. The Programme will promote sustainable water management. It will improve freshwater quality in cross border river basins and result in an increased percentage of cross border freshwater bodies in cross border river basins with good or high quality.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- A pilot/pilots for nature-based solutions or innovative nature based solutions to restore catchments including: peat restoration, water management measures to reduce runoff (sediment loss) and nutrient loss to waterways and to reduce impacts from flooding, e.g. green infrastructure;
- An operational strategy for dealing with nutrients (soil, organic manures and chemical fertilisers, digestate, sewage sludge) and trans boundary movements in cross border catchments to include elements such as flow of nutrients, tracking systems, innovative solutions for optimum use of nutrients for sustainable utilisation of all nutrients;
- Initiatives which result in a measurable change in behaviours/ mind set of landowners; and
- A project legacy initiative which will develop or enhance community-focused environmental learning resources to improve understanding of cross border catchment from environmental, cultural, social or economic views; and /or improve amenity value through nature recovery networks.



THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE

Water Quality Improvement Programme**Indicative Budget: €32,000,000**

Investment Area 5.4: To promote access to water and sustainable water management.

The current INTERREG VA Programme has illustrated the benefits of adopting a cross border, collaborative approach to adequately address the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, in all water bodies, including transitional waters. Modelling of cross border transitional and coastal waters will identify the sources of pollution and the optimum way to achieve and maintain good or high-water quality status. This will facilitate the implementation of common approaches to the management of water resources and the sharing of best practice and technical expertise across the Programme area in relation to wastewater treatment and drinking water, drawing upon the relative strengths in both jurisdictions.

The **Water Quality Improvement Programme** will result in an improvement in the water quality of three specific transitional water bodies through cross border collaboration: Lough Erne, Lough Melvin and Donegal Bay. In addition, raw drinking water quality will be improved through the reduction of pollutants, including those of an agricultural nature.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- The development of a comprehensive cross border catchment plan focused on the cross border catchments of Loughs Melvin, Erne and Donegal Bay;
- The development of a suite of integrated models that will act as tools for the management of shared inland freshwater bodies (Lough Erne, Lough Melvin and Donegal Bay) as a complete ecosystem; and to incorporate sustainable treatment technologies and innovative solutions;

- Research and development in wastewater treatment technologies, including the use of sustainable technologies with direct relevance to shared transitional waters;
- Capital projects delivering decarbonisation during both the construction and operation;
- The development and delivery of innovative solutions for sewage related pressures in rural areas in priority catchment(s), to be adopted by the local utility;
- The production of enhanced fishery assessments for both Lough Erne and Lough Melvin;
- The production of a comprehensive ecosystem model for the above catchments, coupled with an advanced network of instrumentation;
- An assessment of ecosystem services within the target transitional waters;
- The design of bespoke management plans for drinking water catchments (to include modelling and GIS data sharing);
- Strategic projects designed to improve raw water quality which focus on the reduction of pollutants affecting drinking water quality (including those of an agricultural nature);
- Projects which encourage improved pesticide practices and develop sustainable farm practices across catchments to minimise impact upon water quality, including the development of a holistic pesticide plan to reduce / eliminate pesticide use within cross border catchments;
- Upstream catchment based initiatives to encourage uptake of catchment measures that achieve multiple benefits for water quality, quantity and biodiversity;
- The provision of alternative sustainable treatment systems such as reed beds, willows and wetlands;
- The provision of nature-based solutions and value added blue green infrastructure wherever possible, such as Integrated Constructed Wetlands; and
- The delivery of education and outreach events for locals including citizen science and school visits.



THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE

Geothermal Energy Demonstration Programme**Indicative Budget: €20,000,000**

Investment Area 5.5: To promote energy efficiency and reduce green-house gas emissions.

Reducing the reliance on fossil fuels and increasing the uptake of renewable energy sources is a global priority. Heat production is a significant contribution to GHG emissions. The deployment of district heating networks and the use of heat pumps for individual dwellings or in communal heating systems (including businesses), are key to heat decarbonisation. Geothermal energy can provide consistent, sustainable and more cost-effective low carbon energy (for heating and cooling), as has been demonstrated in many European countries.

The **Geothermal Energy Demonstration Programme** will build the knowledge, skills and capacity required to develop a policy framework and encourage investment in the geothermal technology sector. Associated cross border collaboration to achieve the replacement of fossil fuels by indigenous renewable energy in the heat sector, will result in a reduced reliance on fossil fuels and enhanced energy security. It will deliver economic, social and environmental benefits across the Programme area.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Demonstration projects which build awareness regarding the benefits of and support for increased uptake of geothermal technologies in the residential, industrial and public sectors;
- Initiatives which demonstrate the application and efficiency of heat networks using shallow geothermal energy and Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) systems, including those within the SME sector;
- Initiatives which demonstrate the application of Deep Geothermal Energy (>400m), particularly for decarbonising District Heating Systems;
- Initiatives designed to increase market penetration of GSHPs;
- Initiatives which involve the design, build and operation of geothermal surface infrastructure within social housing sector in the Programme area;
- Initiatives which support the growing geothermal technologies sector in the Programme area;
- Initiatives which contribute to the development of a cross border policy framework designed to promote and support cross-sectoral uptake of geothermal technologies across the Programme area;
- Geothermal related energy efficiency studies focused on areas most affected by fuel poverty; and
- Programmes for citizens to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of Geothermal heating solutions.

THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE

Enhanced Sustainable Travel Connectivity**Indicative Budget: €165,000,000**

Investment Area 5.6: Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross border mobility.

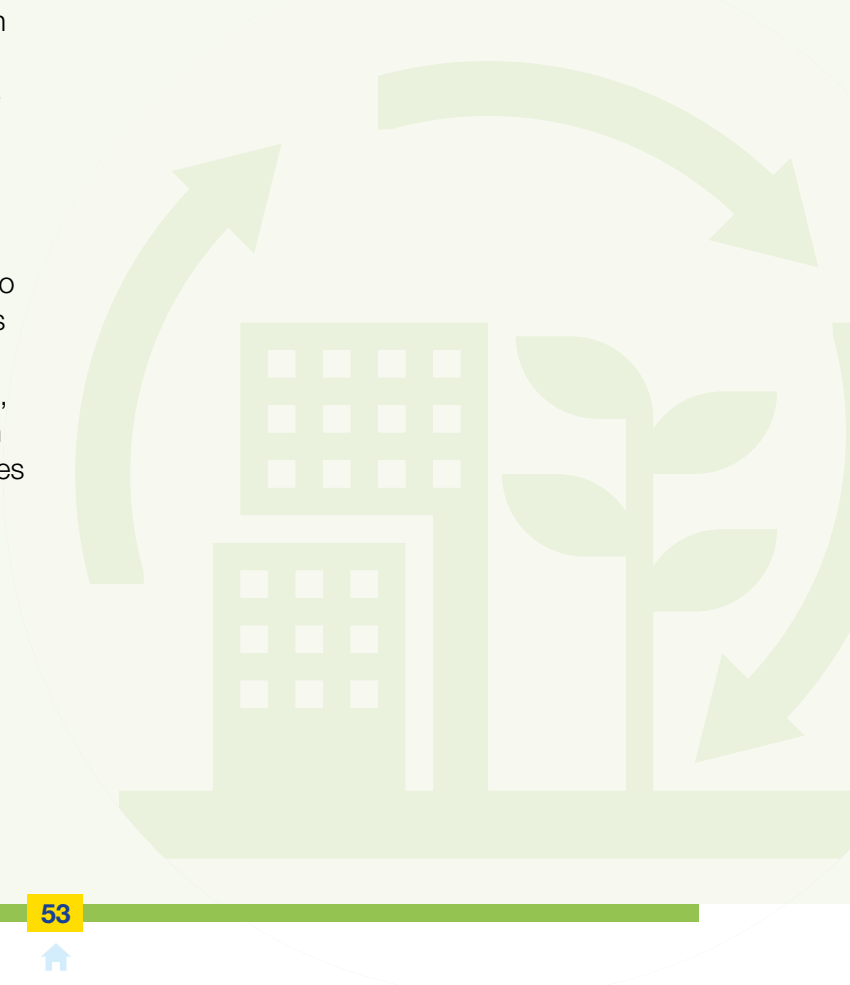
Increasing the level of cross border mobility is essential for economic and social and territorial cohesion across the Programme area. This includes the further development and embedding of peace and reconciliation. Transportation facilitates connectivity and contact between people from Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

The **Enhanced Sustainable Travel Connectivity Programme** will increase connectivity in the form of sustainable public transport. It will involve significant investment in sustainable rail stock. The improvement of the rail service linking the two capital cities and the smaller adjacent urban centres of Portadown, Newry, Dundalk and Drogheda can exploit this dynamic to its full potential, providing spin-off agglomeration and wider economic and environmental benefits, including contributing to the long-term development of a zero emissions rail network. Investment in transport will be a catalyst for regeneration and economic growth, in particular on the economic corridor between Belfast and Dublin, including the border counties in both Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- New rail rolling stock and infrastructure upgrades to facilitate the introduction of an hourly service between Dublin and Belfast. The investment will work towards the achievement of an increase in service levels and passenger numbers.



Theme 6: Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration



Indicative Budget €47m

Whilst the INTERREG and PEACE Programmes have made a significant contribution within the Programme area to cementing cross border collaboration, challenges still persist, some of which have arisen in the last number of years. Most of the remaining obstacles arise from diverging national legislations on either side of the border (incompatible administrative processes, or simply lack of common territorial planning).

In 2016, the European Commission identified legal and administrative obstacles for the Northern Ireland-Ireland border (UK-IE).

Some of the sectors in which the obstacles exist are: industry and trade (exportation of goods, cross border commercial services, e-commerce, cross border economic advice services and commuter flows); labour market education (mobility of trainees, students and teachers, and access to tertiary education); social security system (access to social insurance system); and access to health care services and medical treatment. These obstacles are particularly relevant to the challenges that may also arise in the future regarding the border following the UK's exit from the EU.



THEME 6: BUILDING AND EMBEDDING PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Strategic Planning and Engagement**Indicative Budget: €27,000,000**

Investment Area 6.1: To support a better cooperation governance.

Despite the proximity and absence of language barriers, there is a need to address cross border obstacles that adversely affect socio-economic fluidity across the border and more generally, the reconciliation process throughout the Island.

The **Strategic Planning and Engagement Programme** will support the engagement of strategic stakeholders, targeting legal and administrative obstacles to cooperation in relevant sectors. The funding will focus on enabling joint development and management of strategies; cooperation capacity building; and identification of solutions to reduce obstacles to cross border cooperation.

The Programme will operate in synergy with other policies (e.g. cross border mobility), legal instruments (e.g. bilateral agreements, treaties, EGTCs) and other funding not limited to INTERREG (e.g. European Cross Border Mechanism).

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Dialogue between different actors to establish the challenges and possible solutions to facilitate increased cross border collaboration in key sectors including Business, Health Care, Tourism, Environment (including air quality) and Energy;
- Cross border feasibility studies and data collection activities designed to develop solutions to address current obstacles to cross border collaboration in key areas. For example, research related to the cross border labour market and future skills mapping; and air quality modelling and analysis to establish emerging issues and increased levels of evidence;
- Joint development of cross border strategies, including for example, a joint tourism marketing and branding initiative and cross border council strategies;
- Pilot project initiatives informed by the dialogue and feasibility work undertaken, designed to implement jointly developed solutions to strategic cross border collaboration;
- Exchange of experience and demonstration initiatives to share solutions and increase their impact in key areas; and
- Training, peer reviews and staff exchanges to enhance institutional capacity.



THEME 6: BUILDING AND EMBEDDING PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Maintaining and Forging Relationships between Citizens**Indicative Budget: €20,000,000**

Investment Area 6.2: Building up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people to people actions.

The **Trust Building Measures between Citizens Programme** will put in place mechanisms to finance smaller projects that make a strong contribution to the social and civic cohesion on a cross border basis.

Trust between partners, organisations and citizens is an essential requirement for effective cross border cooperation. Trust needs to be built and maintained. This is a long-term investment which aims at fostering cooperation minded future generations.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- Small projects to promote citizens cooperation around specific shared challenges, e.g. climate change;
- North South joint events and activities that develop mutual understanding and cement partnership; and
- Trust building activities, such as linking up sports clubs, cultural organisations, community groups etc.



3.8 Share your View

The questions are listed here for your reference only. Please do not respond on the Consultation Information Document. **Please provide your answers online, if possible by clicking [HERE](#).**

There is no requirement to answer all of the questions unless you wish to do so.

Themes and Investment Areas

Q1. Theme 1 - Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Investment Areas within Theme 1?

Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plans
Empowering Communities
Building Positive Relations
Re-imagining Communities

Q.2. Please outline your reasons why. (Optional)

(Max 500 characters per Investment Area)

Q.3 Theme 2 - Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Investment Areas within Theme 2?

SME Development and Transition
Innovation Challenge Fund
Programme Area Skills Development
Smart Towns and Villages

Q.4 Please outline your reasons why. (Optional)

(Max 500 characters per Investment Area)

Q.5 Theme 3 – Empowering and Investing in our young people. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Investment Areas within Theme 3?

Shared Learning Together Education Programme
PEACE PLUS for Youth Programme
Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing

Q.6 Please outline your reasons why. (Optional)

(Max 500 characters per Investment Area)

Q.7 Theme 4 – Healthy and Inclusive Communities. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Investment Areas within Theme 4?

Collaborative Health and Social Care
Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion
Victims and Survivors



Q.8 Please outline your reasons why. (Optional)

(Max 500 characters per Investment Area)

Q9. Theme 5 – Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Investment Areas within Theme 5?

Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Resilience
Marine and Coastal Management
Water Quality and Catchment Management
Water Quality Improvement Programme
Geothermal Energy Demonstration Programme
Enhanced Sustainable Travel Connectivity

Q.10 Please outline your reasons why. (Optional)

(Max 500 characters per Investment Area)

Q.11 Theme 6 - Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Investment Areas within Theme 6?

Strategic Planning and Engagement
Maintaining and Forging Relationships between Citizens

Q.12 Please outline your reasons why. (Optional)

(Max 500 characters per Investment Area)

Indicative Budget Allocations

Q.13 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the indicative budget allocations for the six key Themes outlined below?

Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities	(€210m)
Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation	(€143m)
Theme 3: Empowering and Investing in our Young People	(€110m)
Theme 4: Healthy and Inclusive Communities	(€155m)
Theme 5: Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future	(€265m)
Theme 6: Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration	(€47m)

Q.14 Please outline your reasons why. (Optional)

(Max 500 characters per Theme)



Part 4: Reducing the administrative burden

The PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes have sought to establish effective and transparent systems that ensure accountability and value for money for public expenditure. At the same time, the SEUPB aims to continually improve processes so that they are as simple and streamlined as possible, allowing efficient implementation and the reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries. Examples of measures introduced in the 2014-2020 programming period include, use of simplified cost options, workshops and information events for potential applicants, sample-based verification of claims and an online application process.

Responses from the Stakeholder Engagement Survey, while recognising the importance of simplification measures introduced between 2014 and 2020, highlighted a number of areas where the level of administration places a heavy burden on applicants and partners, as well as areas where processes could be simplified.

4.1 Measures to reduce the administrative burden

In developing the administrative arrangements for PEACE PLUS, the SEUPB recognises a need to shift the emphasis in the administration of the programme from the verification of expenditure to the quality of delivery, while still meeting the requirements to deliver outputs/results as required under the Programme.

With this in mind, and drawing on stakeholder feedback, the SEUPB are examining a range of new measures for PEACE PLUS to deliver the following:

- Increase focus on the quality and results;
- Increase the capacity of potential applicants and project partners through training;
- Streamline processes across different programme priorities;
- Increase flexibility for applicants and project partners through for example greater use of simplified cost options;
- Enable greater participation by smaller organisations;
- Speed up and simplify processes;
- Reduce administrative workload; and
- Learn from best practice of other funds and programmes.

The areas so far identified as having potential to reduce administrative burden, and on which we would like to receive your feedback, are the following:

	Area with Potential to Reduce administrative burden	Potential Benefit
Application and Assessment		
Project Development Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater use of preparatory workshops including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thematic capacity-building workshops. Process workshops (e.g. on bid-writing, on the application process and programme rules). Financial support for developing projects (e.g. preparation costs lump sums where necessary). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase stakeholder capacity, and reduce the iterative process during the assessment process. Give applicants greater security to invest more in their applications. Make the application process more accessible, and improve quality of projects.
Calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflections on the capacity of stakeholders in the development of calls. In some themes, staggered calls that give greater time to develop applications before submission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the needs and capacity of stakeholders are taken into account when developing calls. Allow applicants with less capacity greater time to submit applications.
Application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplified application forms for smaller grants (at Phase 1 and Phase 2). Greater synergies between SEUPB and Accountable Department process. Agree a “core process” with scope to flex arrangements to meet the needs of particular calls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce workload for applicants and programme bodies. Reduce the need for repeated requests for clarification on aspects of an application by both parties. Ensure that assessment is proportionate to the risk and value of projects.
Project Implementation		
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased training opportunities for project partners, including face to face training, workshops, online materials and electronic monitoring system training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide all project partners the resources to manage their own projects and ensure compliance. Make programme rules and processes simpler and more accessible.
Electronic Monitoring System (for processing applications and projects)³⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved monitoring system that is more user friendly/intuitive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make programme rules and processes simpler and more accessible.
Simplified Cost Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased use of Simplified Cost Options, including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation cost lumps sums; Travel and accommodation costs paid through a flat rate Delivery of small projects exclusively through Simplified Cost Options; and Standard scales of unit costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce complexity of claims and the level of evidence required for costs to be reimbursed.
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting parameters within which projects can adjust project delivery and notify the Managing Authority without the need to seek formal approval. Streamline modification approval processes, for changes that do not fundamentally affect project delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater scope for flexibility would give projects greater control over project delivery and would reduce need for modifications.
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicators that allow the programme greater scope for capturing quality of projects. Simpler project report templates with more focus on project quality and results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the shift of emphasis away from verification of expenditure to the quality of delivery while delivering on outputs/results.

36 Includes processing, assessments, claims, payments and all audit



It should be noted that these measures are still in a stage of development. Final proposals will be developed through further discussions with Government Departments and other programme bodies, as well as a result of responses received through this consultation

4.2 Share your View

The questions are listed here for your reference only. Please do not respond on the Consultation Information Document. **Please provide your answers online, if possible, by clicking [HERE](#).**

There is no requirement to answer all of the questions unless you wish to do so.

Administrative Arrangements

Q15. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following proposals would help to reduce the administrative burden for applicants to the new Programme?

Proposal to increase project development support

Proposal to introduce more participation and flexibility in calls for applications

Proposal to simplify the application process

Proposal to increase training opportunities for project partners

Proposal to make the monitoring system more user-friendly

Proposal to increase the use of simplified cost options

Proposal to increase flexibility in project management

Proposal to make indicators and reporting more focused on quality

Q.16 Please outline your reasons why. (Optional)

(Max 500 characters per proposal)



Part 5: Equality Considerations (Section 75) and Strategic Environmental Assessment

5.1 Promoting Equality and Good Relations

The SEUPB, as the responsible Body for the development of the PEACE PLUS Programme is required to ensure that equality is promoted within the Programme. In addition, specifically related to Northern Ireland, as a designated public authority under Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the SEUPB has a statutory obligation to promote both equality of opportunity and good relations. More specifically, in carrying out its functions and duties the SEUPB must have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, and without prejudice to this duty, the SEUPB must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. In line with these statutory duties and to ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations, the SEUPB has undertaken a thorough screening of both PEACE and INTERREG. The SEUPB would welcome your views on both the screening process and the screening decisions for the draft new Programme. The Section 75 screening documents can be found via the SEUPB

webpage <https://www.seupb.eu/PEACEPLUS> or please click [HERE](#).

It should be noted that there are specific horizontal principles on equality which are stipulated by the European Commission under EU Programme including PEACE PLUS, applications under the Programme will be assessed against these requirements. Please also note that all public bodies in Ireland have responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. This is a legal obligation, called the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, and it originated in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014³⁷.

5.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

The PEACE PLUS Programme is subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The SEA is a systematic process for evaluating the environmental consequences of proposed plans or programmes to ensure environmental issues are fully integrated and addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision making, with a view to promoting sustainable development. The process of SEA was introduced under European Directive 2001/42/EC¹².

37 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, The Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014. https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/ihrec_act_2014.pdf



The Directive requires that the SEUPB, as the managing authority, assess the likely significant effect of the PEACE PLUS Programme on: “the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship of the above factors” including “secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium, and long-term, permanent and temporary positive and negative effects”.

Findings from the SEA for the PEACE PLUS Programme, including the Environmental Report and the Non-Technical Summary, can be found via the SEUPB webpage <https://www.seupb.eu/PEACEPLUS> or please click [HERE](#).

5.3 Share your View

The questions are listed here for your reference only. Please do not respond on the Consultation Information Document. **Please provide your answers online, if possible, by clicking [HERE](#).**

There is no requirement to answer all of the questions unless you wish to do so.

Q.17 Do you agree with the Equality screening findings for the PEACE PLUS Programme?

Q. 18 If no, what additional actions do you think we need to take and why?
(Max 1000 characters)

Q.19 Do the findings from the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the PEACE PLUS Programme cover all the relevant information?

Q.20 If no, what else do we need to consider and why?
(Max 1000 characters)



Appendix 1

Privacy Notice

The SEUPB is using Survey Monkey to conduct this survey. Survey Monkey processes and stores data on a server in the United States. You can view Survey Monkey's Privacy Policy at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/privacy/>

The SEUPB will analyse the information collected in this survey and a summary of responses to the consultation will be shared with the European Commission, Member States, Government Departments (Northern Ireland and Ireland) and published on the SEUPB website.

Your responses will be used as part of the process to finalise the PEACE PLUS Programme prior to submitting to the NI Executive, Irish Government and the European Commission for approval.

Article 6(1) (e) UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and specifically Section 8(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018, permits processing of personal data when necessary for an activity that supports or promotes democratic engagement.

The GDPR offers data subjects specific rights in relation to the collection and processing of their Personal Data. We can help you with:

Accessing Your Personal Information: You can ask us for a copy of the personal information we hold. You can ask us about how we collect, share and use your personal information.

Updating and Correcting Your Personal Information: You can ask us to update or correct personal information we hold about you that is inaccurate or incomplete.

Removing Your Consent (Your right to Object): You can change your mind wherever you give us your consent, such as direct communications or marketing, or using your sensitive information, such as medical data.

Restricting and Objecting: You may have the right to restrict or object to us using your personal information if for example you consider the data is inaccurate or that the processing is unlawful.

Deleting Your Information (your right to be forgotten): You may ask us to delete or destroy your personal information. In some cases the SEUPB will retain information where it is required for lawful purposes.

Moving Your Information (your right to portability): Where possible we can share a digital copy of your personal information directly with you or another organisation.

Should you seek to exercise any of these rights, you should contact:

Data Protection Officer
 Special EU Programmes Body
 7th Floor
 The Clarence West Building
 2 Clarence Street West
 Belfast
 BT2 7GP
 Email: dataprotection@seupb.eu
 Telephone: Reception on 028 9026 6660



Information provided by respondents to this consultation exercise will be disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and GDPR (EU) 2016/679. The SEUPB is required to keep the information collected from this survey to satisfy the audit requirements of the Programme. We may also retain the information collected from the survey for historical purposes.

Making a Complaint

If you have a complaint about the use of your personal information or how it has been processed, you can in the first instance, contact us to give us the opportunity to put things right as quickly as possible. If you wish to make a complaint you may do so by telephone, in writing and by e-mail by contacting:

Complaints Officer
Special EU Programmes Body
7th Floor
The Clarence West Building
2 Clarence Street West
Belfast
BT2 7GP
Email: feedback@seupb.eu
Tel: Reception on 028 9026 6660

Please be assured that all complaints received will be fully investigated. We ask that you supply as much information as possible to help us resolve your complaint quickly.

If you remain dissatisfied then you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Northern Ireland
3rd Floor
14 Cromac Place
Belfast
BT7 2JB

Telephone: 028 9027 8757 / 0303 123 1114
Email: ni@ico.org.uk



Published by the
Special EU Programmes Body

Belfast Office:
7th Floor, The Clarence West Building,
2 Clarence Street West, Belfast,
Northern Ireland,
BT2 7GP
Tel: +44 (0)28 9026 6660



Special EU Programmes Body
Comhlacht na gClár Speisialta AE
Special EU Skemes Boadie



Northern Ireland
Executive

www.northernireland.gov.uk



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland