

**European Territorial Cooperation
2021 – 2027
Preparing the EU Peace Plus Programme
Consultation Response Survey**

Section B Themes and Investment Areas

Co- Designed Local Community Peace Action Plans

Local government needs to be included but concern that approaches to co-design will vary widely. How will SEUPB ensure all local councils are developing peace action plans using co-design principles? Also concern that in some councils' peace action plans will be unable to address more contentious issues (e.g. flags/emblems) as councillors will be unable to agree an approach. There will be issues in some areas where communities who should be engaged in peace and reconciliation work straddle council boundaries. Tendering processes used by local authorities for delivery of peace action plans discourage smaller groups from getting involved. Concern standalone plans will ignore cross border work.

Empowering Communities

Welcome the inclusion of a small grants strand for grass roots groups - nature of Peace 4 application process excluded many of these groups. SEUPB should allow flexibility to increase indicative budget towards this investment area if demand proves popular. Welcome programmes to support institutional capacity of key voluntary, statutory and political organisations to create new models of service delivery. Community safety interventions to tackle ASB needed but should not be standalone and need to address sectarianism and attitudes informing behaviour.

Building Positive Relations

RCN welcomes that this strand will support projects which transcend local boundaries and could achieve significant peace building outcomes across the region. Also welcome that this investment area will provide support to the most marginalised in communities.

Re-imagining Communities

We support intention to create new shared space or increase shared usage of existing facilities. Will need significant resource and careful work with owners of existing and new facilities to develop community spaces that are truly shared. Welcome that this investment area will include programmes of support for sustained cross community usage. Should be used to embed learning, address any contentious issues as they arise, promote learning and examples of good practice. Strongly support actions to remove sectarian symbols and emblems.

Theme 2 – Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation

SME Development and Transition

Agree with the overall analysis that economic development should be designed, where possible, to strengthen peace and reconciliation. SMEs are particularly important in rural communities and in the border region. Economic regeneration and transformation theme should also consider how grant funded support to private businesses should include social outcomes.

Smart Towns and Villages

RCN strongly supports this investment area as it has significant potential for regeneration in rural communities. The development of digital clusters should prioritise community owned models to ensure resources generated are retained within local communities rather than extracted as private profit. Community trusts should be used to transfer assets into community ownership and democratically manage them. We also support the need to develop programmes to address digital exclusion. This investment area should also seek to support the development of new small businesses based in rural communities.

Theme 3 – Empowering and Investing in our Young People

Shared Learning Together Education Programme

RCN welcomes ongoing commitment to shared education but would like the link made between shared and integrated education to recognise that integrated models offer further potential to provide direct sustained contact between children from all backgrounds. We also welcome the inclusion of shared learning together programmes in early years and in the non-formal education sector. SLTP should aim to ensure that children and young people can avail of shared learning experiences across the full span of their educational career, early years, primary and post primary education. SLTP should also seek to engage parents and grandparents to take a whole family approach to addressing sectarianism.

Peace Plus for youth Programme

RCN supports the overall aim of this investment area. We welcome the wider range of indicative actions as, in the past, some peace and reconciliation actions focused on sports and outdoor activities. Children and young people have a wide range of interests and we suggest programmes should also include arts, drama, gaming/ICT, environmental issues. 13-16 year old boys are harder to reach, and youth work provision and programme design should address this issue. Also important to think of earlier intervention before age 14 as sectarian attitudes may already be well entrenched in some children and young people by age 14.

Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing

RCN welcomes the inclusion of this investment area in light of the effects of the pandemic and lockdown on children and young people's mental health. We are concerned that the indicative budget allocation is too low. SEUPB should consider reallocating further significant resource to this vitally important priority.

Theme 4 – Healthy and Inclusive Communities

Collaborative Health and Social Care

RCN supports the development of community based health and social care interventions. Particularly important in rural and border communities where people must travel longer distances to access health services. ICT has potential to deliver services to rural citizens, but RCN would caution that telemedicine should not be seen as a panacea as many rural citizens are digitally excluded for a range of reasons. The adoption of telemedicine needs thoughtful targeting on a case by case basis. Vital that any investment from SEUPB is truly additional to national government health spending and clearly seen to be.

Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion

RCN strongly supports the inclusion of this investment area to support social, economic and environmental projects. It is important that these actions embed investment in community owned organisations across the programme area. Whilst we acknowledge the challenges faced in rural communities the pandemic has shown the potential and opportunities rural communities can offer if the appropriate level of infrastructure is provided. Green infrastructure has been shown during the pandemic to be highly valued by citizens. RCN believes that green infrastructure investment should be spread widely across the programme area focused on local spaces and places.

Victims and Survivors

We support further funding towards services for victims and survivors. Indicative actions should focus on direct services and provision for victims and survivors across all parts of the programme area. Rural communities and communities on both sides of the border were significantly impacted by the conflict and citizens continue to be affected by generational trauma. RCN would question the level of funding allocated to this investment area and believe more investment should be allocated.

Theme 5 – Supporting a sustainable and better connected future

Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Resilience

RCN supports actions to enhance, protect and preserve nature, biodiversity and green areas. We believe that these types of actions will be even more successful if implemented using a community development approach. Initiatives to increase connection with nature are hugely important in rural communities as part of our approach to addressing climate change. Citizen science projects and education activities can increase awareness and appreciation but need to be delivered in partnership with communities.

Theme 6 – Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration.

Maintaining and Forging Relationships between Citizens

RCN strongly supports the intention of this investment area to finance smaller projects that make a strong contribution to social and civic cohesion on a cross border basis. RCN has long established links with partner rural development networks in the South of Ireland and Britain. The exchange of

knowledge and ideas and the continued development of partnerships, understanding and relationships in civic society networks across these islands is vital post Brexit.

Section C Indicative Budget Allocations

Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities

Suggest some of the allocation to 1.1 be re-directed towards 1.2 and 1.3. Strand 1 of Empowering Communities - Small grants aimed at grass roots community groups should be developed so that if demand for funding is proved that additional resource can be directed to this investment area.

Theme 3: Empowering and Investing in our Young People

Further investment is required in youth mental health and well-being. Provision was already poor pre-pandemic but SEUPB need to ensure that investment is "additional" to services that should be paid for out of national health budgets.

Theme 4: Health and Inclusive Communities

Further investment is required in Victims and Survivors investment area.

Theme 6: Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration

6.2 Maintaining and forging relationships between citizens should include an element of flexibility so that if there is a demand this needs further resource allocation.

Section D – Administrative arrangements

Proposal to make the monitoring system more user friendly

SEUPB need to rethink how they monitor for peace and reconciliation outcomes. Many people do not consider themselves PUL or CNR or other. Identity has become much more pluralistic and that should be considered in the design of monitoring systems. This is even more pronounced amongst younger people, some of whom may be perceived as coming from a Protestant or Catholic community background, but these cannot be used as proxies for any assumptions about political beliefs.