EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL CO-OPERATION 2021-2027

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

Stakeholder Engagement Survey Summary of Responses

July 2020

Northern Ireland Executive
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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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1. Introduction and Methodology

1.1. Introduction

The cohesion policy of the European Union provides a framework for financing a wide range of projects and investments with the aim of encouraging economic growth in EU Member States, their regions and third countries. The next round of programmes will cover the period 2021-2027.

The EU – UK Withdrawal Agreement of 2019 reaffirms the commitment by the European Union and the United Kingdom to the North South PEACE and INTERREG funding programmes under the current multi-annual financial framework and to the maintaining of the current funding proportions for the future programme.

Since 1995 there has been a PEACE programme in the region demonstrating the EU's positive response to the Northern Ireland peace process. The PEACE Programme is unique across all member states and has evolved with the progression of the peace process. The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) manages two cross-border cooperation programmes – the PEACE IV programme and the INTERREG VA programme. The SEUPB, in line with its statutory remit has commenced the preparation of a single successor programme which is called the PEACE PLUS programme, which will combine activities previously funded under the PEACE and INTERREG Programmes.

PEACE PLUS is a new cross border programme that will contribute to a more prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The programme will achieve this by funding peace building activities and by funding activities that contribute to the cross border economic and territorial development of the region. The combination of the PEACE INTERREG type activities in a single programme and will include not only Peace building activity but also wider North/South economic, social

and environmental activities of mutual interest, which are normally associated with an INTERREG programme.

As part of its development and preparation of the PEACE PLUS Programme, the SEUPB invited input from a wide range of key stakeholders within the Programme area of Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland, utilising public events and a stakeholder engagement survey. The survey is one of a number of sources of information which will influence the shape of the new Programme. The other sources of information include but are not limited to:

- Draft Regulations including EU Policy Framework – European Commission;
- UK / Northern Ireland and Ireland policies and strategies of relevance;
- Border Orientation Paper – European Commission;
- Socio-economic Profile (SEP) Area Analysis of the Programme Area;
- Draft Joint Position Papers from Government Departments, Northern Ireland and Ireland;
- Public Roadshow across the region, 16 events with over 1000 participants (pre Covid-19).

The survey and public consultations were carried out prior to the COVID-19 crisis.

The quality and detail of the responses submitted was excellent as was the engagement at the public events. Thank you to everyone who participated.

1.2. Methodology

The purpose of the stakeholder engagement survey was to obtain direct input from stakeholders on potential funding themes for the PEACE PLUS Programme as well as feedback on delivery and implementation options as proposed by the draft regulations.

Data collection

A wide range of communication tools and interventions were employed to maximise awareness of the stakeholder engagement survey and support a high level of good quality responses. This included:

- Stakeholder engagement events (November 2019 – January 2020). Over 1000 people attended 16 events across the Programme area. In addition a number of specific youth events were undertaken;
- Smaller events arranged by umbrella organisations;
- Direct Email Campaign;
- Social media campaign;
- Website promotion;
- Advertising online and in print;
- PR campaign.

The survey was available to complete online via the survey monkey platform from 10 December 2019 until 28 February 2020. Respondents also had the option to respond to the survey by email or post. Documentation was also available on the webpage in Irish and other accessible formats were available on request.

Data analysis

A total of 320 valid responses were received (241 organisations and 79 individuals) and all were treated equally. A response was deemed to be valid if the respondent provided their name, address and answered at least one question in the survey. All valid responses received an acknowledgment letter or email from the SEUPB. A full list of respondents who agreed their names could be published is attached at Appendix 1.

Respondents were asked seventeen closed questions, and the responses were rated using a scale of one to seven. A score of one meant the respondent felt the issue was at the lowest level of relevance/beneficial and a score of seven meant the respondent felt the issue was at the highest level of relevance/beneficial. Each question also had a Don't Know box which a respondent could tick.

For reporting purposes these responses have been regrouped as follows:

- Score 1, 2, 3 = Not Relevant/Not Beneficial
- Score 4 = Neither Relevant or Irrelevant (or beneficial/not beneficial)
- Score 5, 6, 7 = Relevant/Beneficial

Respondents who answered Don't Know or did not answer the question are excluded from the relevant/ not relevant (beneficial/not beneficial) analysis.

Appendix 2 contains the survey frequency data for each of the seventeen questions.

The survey also included fourteen open ended survey questions. For analysis purposes, and to enhance reader understanding, these were categorised into key themes and summarised. Many respondents provided detailed responses running to several pages, along with additional documents. While it has not been possible to include the full detail of all responses, the SEUPB PEACE PLUS team have reviewed every response and made every effort to represent all responses as fairly and comprehensively as possible in this summary report.

The analysis, as presented in the remainder of this report, concentrates on four main areas of the survey, as follows:

- Background of respondents;
- The relevance of indicative actions to support Peace and Reconciliation;
- The relevance of activities that contribute to North/ South economic, social and environmental development of the Region;
- Simplification of the administration, management and implementation of the Programme and projects.

2. Background of Respondents

2.1. Responses by organisation or individuals

Figure 1. Breakdown of responses
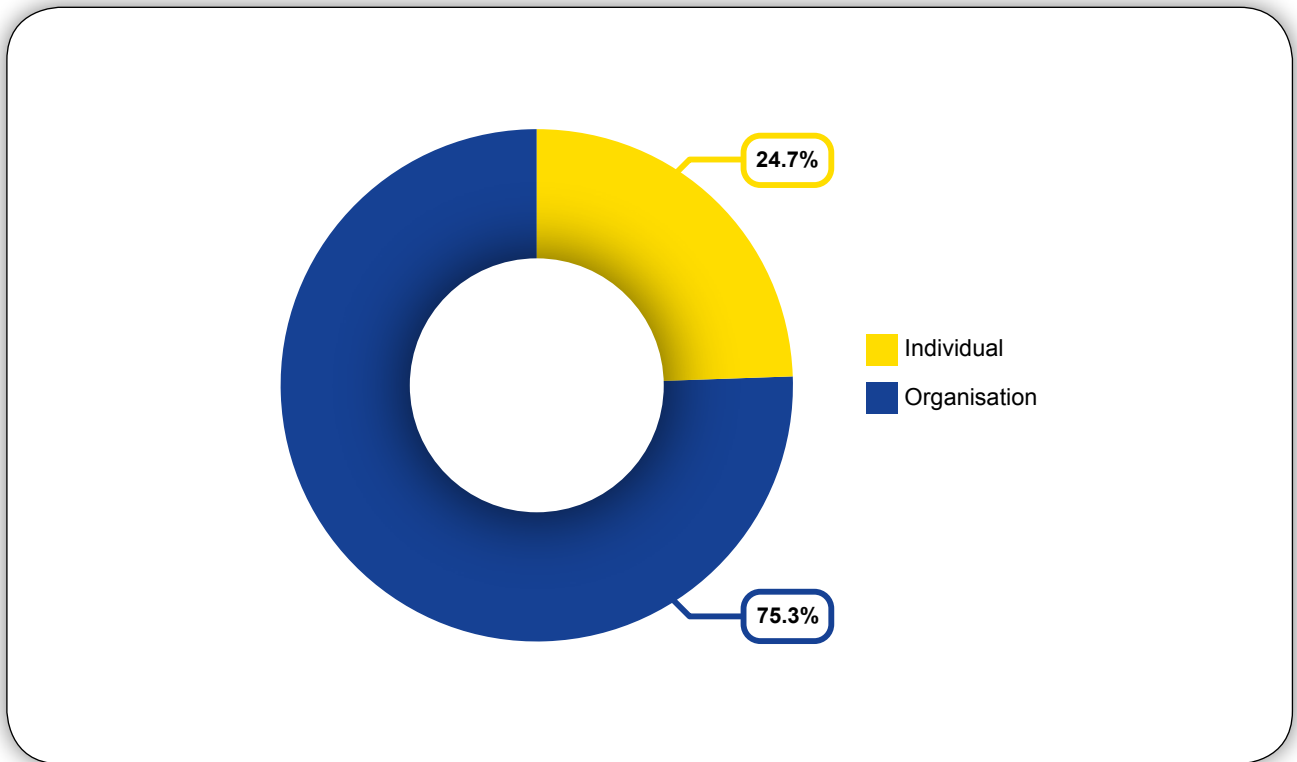
As shown on in Figure 1 above, three quarters of the sample is represented by organisations and one quarter by individual respondents.

2.2. Responses by location

Figure 2. Survey responses by location
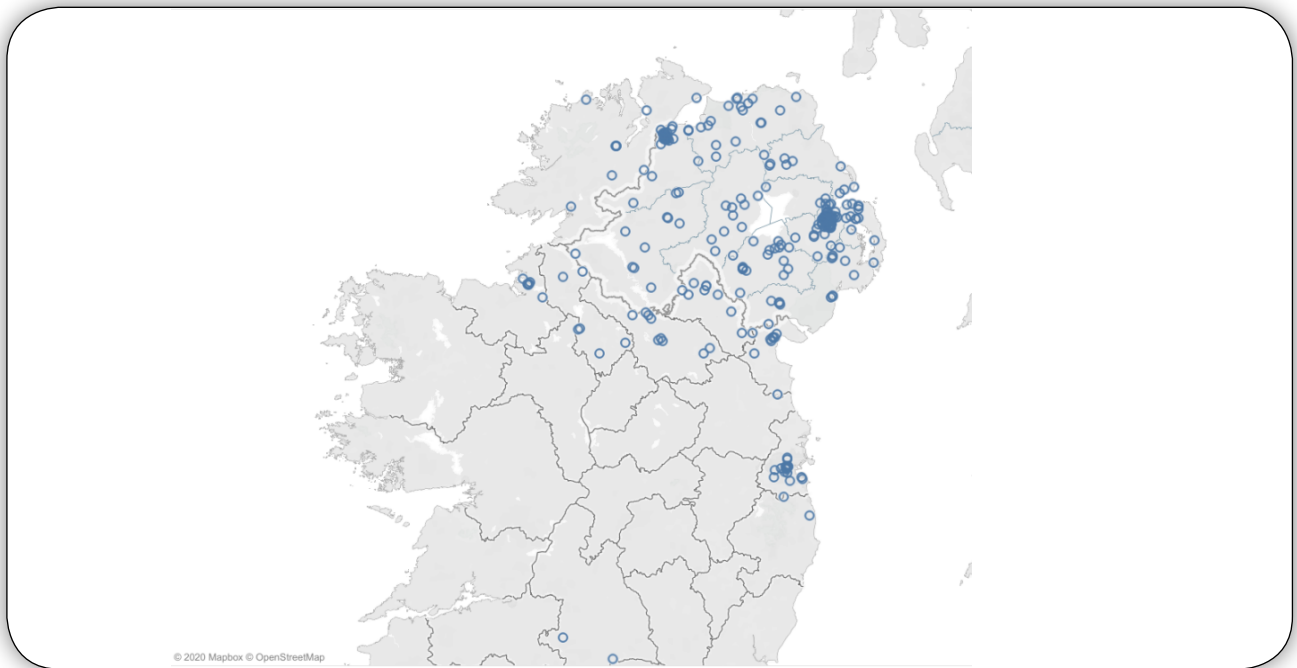
Figure 2 above shows the location of survey respondents:

- The majority of respondents (228) were based in Northern Ireland (71.3%);
- Almost one fifth (18.8%) represented those in the Border Counties (60 respondents);
- 7.8% or 25 respondents resided in other regions in the rest of Ireland;
- 1.6% were based in Scotland (5 respondents – not illustrated);
- One response came from London and another from America (not illustrated).

The location of respondents was examined across the survey questions. There were no discernible differences in responses by origin/location of the respondent with the exception of:

- reducing marginalisation through improved housing and services was considered as more relevant by those respondents who are based in the Border Counties (79.3%) and Northern Ireland (73.6%) in comparison to those based in the rest of Ireland (68.4%) and other regions (66.7%);
- Policy Objective 4 – A More Social Europe was viewed by respondents based in Northern Ireland (96.2%) and the Border Counties (96.2%) as more relevant when compared with those located in the rest of Ireland (89.5%) and other regions (83.3%); and
- Policy Objective 3 – A More Connected Europe which was rated as more relevant by respondents based in the Border Counties (90.4%) and rest of Ireland (88.9%) in comparison to those based in Northern Ireland (82.4%) and other regions (83.3%). Over half of the respondents based in the Border Counties rated PO3 at the highest level of relevance (a rating of 7), compared to 34.6% in Northern Ireland.

2.3. Description of respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate which category best described them, based on the choices outlined below. Respondents could chose more than one description.

Figure 3. Description of Respondents

Base 319 respondents (1 respondent did not answer)
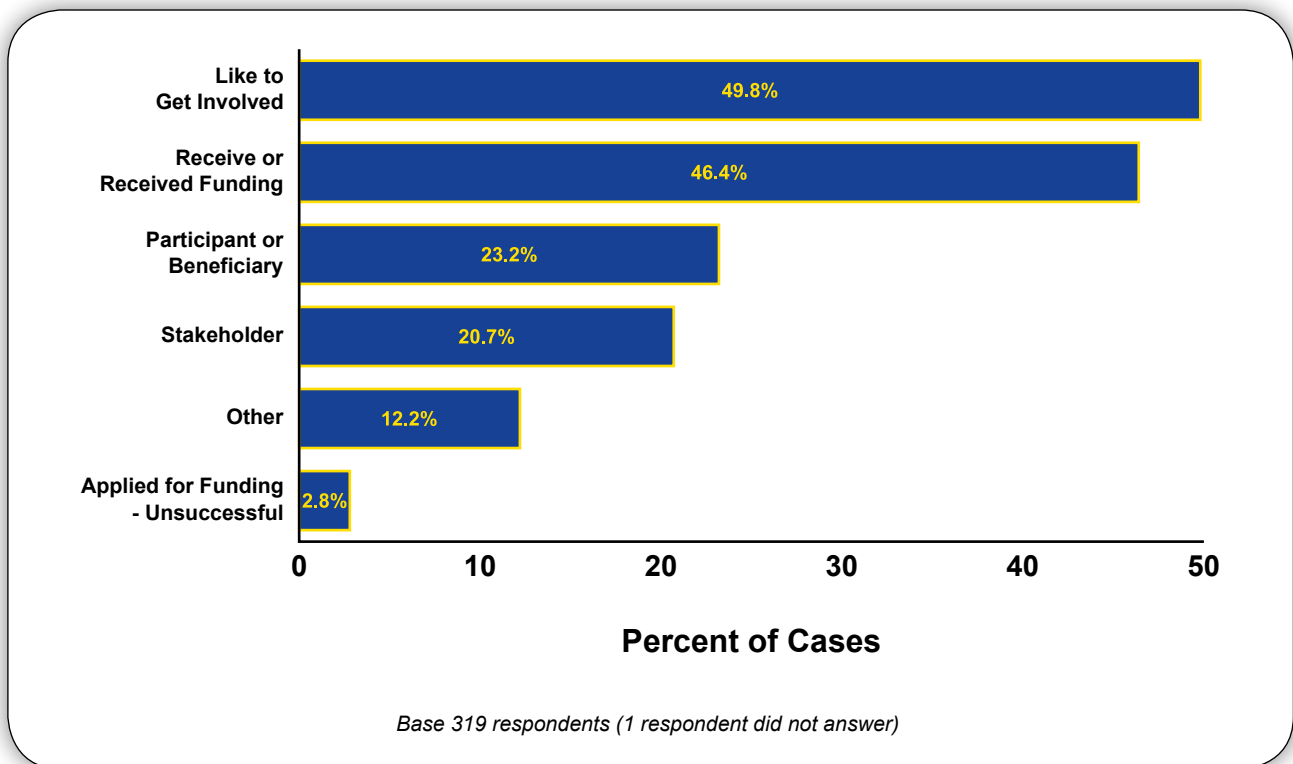
As shown by Figure 3:

- Half of respondents (159) who took part in the survey would like to get involved with the PEACE PLUS Programme. 80.5% of these respondents were from organisations (128), denoting an early interest in funding opportunities;

- In addition, 46.4% of respondents (148), receive or have previously received funding from the PEACE or INTERREG programmes as a project partner or a subcontracted organisation;

- 74 respondents (23.2%) were participants or beneficiaries of a PEACE or INTERREG funded project. 75.7% (56) of the participants or beneficiaries were from organisations and 24.3% (18) were individuals;

- 20.7% of respondents (66) were stakeholders associated with the management of the PEACE OR INTERREG programmes;

- 39 respondents described themselves as Other. This included PHD students, a local elected representative and board members from organisations;

- Only 9 survey respondents (2.8%) had previously applied to the SEUPB for funding from the PEACE OR INTERREG programme and had not been successful in receiving a funding award.

3. Survey Analysis – Peace-Building Activities

3.1. Context

This section of the report focuses on the summary of responses in relation to peace and reconciliation activities as a distinct element of the PEACE PLUS Programme.

PEACE PLUS will fund Peace and Reconciliation activities and these must be allocated within Policy Objective 4 of the draft EU Regulations[1]. Respondents were asked to rate the relevance of the following indicative actions as a means to achieve Peace and Reconciliation:

- Actions to improve community and social cohesion;
- Improving employment opportunities;

- Increasing access to quality education (quality and inclusive);
- Reducing marginalisation through improved housing and services;
- Increasing access to quality health care in the region;
- Other peace building activities.

The above relates to actions listed under Policy Objective 4 of the EU Policy Objectives as set out in the draft regulations.

Figure 4 below summarises the rating of the relevance of the individual actions, from relevant to irrelevant, as a means to achieve peace and reconciliation.

Figure 4. Relevance of Actions for achieving Peace and Reconciliation under Policy Objective 4
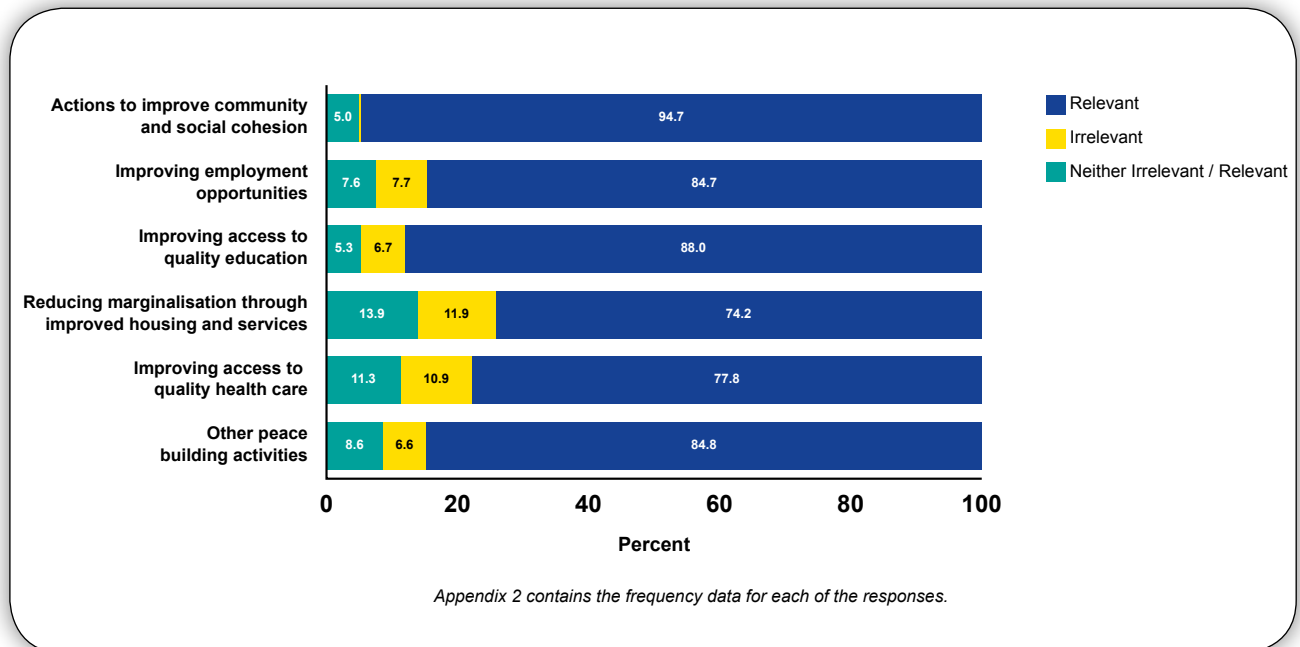
Appendix 2 contains the frequency data for each of the responses.

Key finding: Overall, respondents generally consider that the full list of indicative actions are relevant for achieving peace and reconciliation.

In the sections below, the rating of relevance for each individual action for achieving Peace and Reconciliation is examined alongside the explanation for the rating as well as recommendations for specific actions from respondents.

3.2. Actions to improve community and social cohesion

94.7% of respondents stated that actions to improve social and community cohesion was relevant and 76% of this group rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7).

- 0.3% stated that it was not relevant; and
- 5% stated that it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

Overall, the average rating is 6.5 which suggests that respondents rated this action as highly relevant.

Respondents were asked to explain why they had given their rating. Their responses can be grouped under a number of headings as follows:

- Continued need to **address existing problems** such as sectarian division, segregation and the lack of integration, inequality of access to services, unemployment, socio-political polarisation and a sense that not everyone had experienced a benefit from the peace process;

- Desire **to create outcomes** in terms of sustainable peace, economic growth, a productive, prosperous and positive society, where there is attitudinal change, a functioning post conflict society where people feel valued by society

and contribute to society and where there is a sense of belonging;

- Opportunity **to consolidate and build on success to date**, continuing to bring communities together, remove barriers, ensure community empowerment and engagement, promote interculturalism and create lasting change.

Specific actions recommended by respondents to increase social and community cohesion include:

- **Creating opportunities for integration** – cross communities, cross borders, between schools and including refugees and new local communities;

- **Skills development** – examples include conflict resolution, restorative practice, mediation, trauma informed practice and community leadership;

- **Leverage existing infrastructure (shared safe space) and utilising community spaces as social economy /enterprise hubs;**

- **Utilise other mediums** – such as arts and craft, music, sports and digital technologies;

- **Target specific groups** – including children and young people (from different traditions), people of all ages, persons at risk of paramilitary control, victims and survivors, political ex-prisoners and new communities;

- **Address specific topics** – such as sustainable peace, forgiveness, addressing conflict in a non-violent way, respecting difference, equality and diversity, trauma related to the troubles/terrorism, commemorations and anniversaries, as well as addressing local community needs.

- **Build new structures** – including local community capacity, community forums and new structures to help communities to shape decisions.

Some respondents also highlighted the need for small scale, local projects and for single identity projects to engage hard to reach sections of the community who have a particular set of needs.

3.3. Actions to improve employment opportunities

- 84.7% of respondents stated that actions to improve employment opportunities was relevant and 55.3% of this group rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7);
- 7.6% stated that it wasn't relevant; and
- 7.6% stated that it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

Overall, the average rating is 5.9 which suggests that respondents rated this action as considerably relevant.

In support of their rating of improving employment opportunities as a relevant action for achieving peace and reconciliation, respondents' comments are summarised as follows:

- To **address existing problems** of unemployment and under employment (which can lead to involvement in paramilitarism), of poverty, social exclusion, social isolation and low confidence/self-esteem, and to address limited employment opportunities;
- To **achieve desired outcomes** – including peace, prosperity and a more "normal" society, with improved health, wellbeing and emotional resilience, where there is route out of poverty and an equal distribution of wealth;
- To **target specific groups** including the long term unemployed, young people, ex-prisoners and their families and non-native English speakers.

The **initiatives recommended** by respondents to improve employment opportunities were wide ranging and included quality community and local authority based training, more and better supported work experience, research based apprenticeships and training opportunities, social economy ventures in rural areas, mentoring/role models, career pathway guidance and peace building work leading to active citizenship.

Respondents highlighted particular groups that should be targeted such as school leavers, young people, people out of work, job changers and those individuals furthest removed from the labour market.

3.4. Actions to increase access to education

- 88% of respondents stated that increasing access to education was relevant and 57% of this group rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7);
- 6.7% stated that it wasn't relevant; and
- 5.3% stated that it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

Overall, the average rating is 6.0 which suggests that respondents rated this action as considerably relevant.

A wide range of comments were made by respondents in support of their rating of the relevance of increasing access to education as outlined below:

- To **address existing problems** - including segregated education and its potential consequences such as recruitment to paramilitaries/anti-social behaviour, under achievement in education and access to universities for young people in the border regions were also highlighted;
- To **create desired outcomes** - such as improved skills and behaviours, personal growth, capacity building, social development, sustainable livelihoods and to contribute to conflict transformation and peace and reconciliation;
- To **address the needs of specific groups** - in particular the most marginalised in society and those young people who do not fit into the system.

Respondents highlighted a range of initiatives to increase access to education:

- **Collaboration** in the areas of shared education and integrated education partnerships and projects;
- Creating **specific projects** to address educational underachievement in the most affected groups, to encourage initiatives similar to young entrepreneurs, engaging local enterprises to work with schools and understanding of the social economy;
- To **invest** in bursaries to create higher education opportunities for the most marginalised.

3.5   Actions to reduce marginalisation through improved housing and services

- 74.2% of respondents stated that actions to reduce marginalisation through improved housing and services was relevant and 43% of this group rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7);
- 11.9% stated it wasn't relevant; and
- 13.9% stated it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

   Overall, the average rating is 5.4 which suggests that respondents rated this action as moderately relevant.

Few comments were made in support of the relevance rating, however, reference was made to addressing segregated housing, decreasing the polarisation and enabling PEACE PLUS to fulfil its potential.

3.6.   Actions to increase access to quality healthcare

- 77.8% of respondents stated that actions to increase access to quality health care in the region was relevant and of this group 48% rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7);
- 10.9% stated that it wasn't relevant; and
- 11.3% stated that it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

Overall, the average rating is 5.6 which suggests that respondents rated this action as moderately relevant.

Respondents felt increasing access to quality health care in the region was relevant for the following reasons:

- To **address existing problems** including economic and social deprivation, poverty, mental health issues (as a legacy from the conflict/ troubles), high rates of suicide, alcohol and drug addiction (which disintegrate cohesion of communities, families and individuals) and barriers to access to healthcare for rural residents;
- To **achieve desired outcomes** such as better general health of the population, reducing stress, improving people's capacity for social interaction, and their capacity to move into education, training or employment and to promote economic growth.

A **range of initiatives** were recommended by respondents including; social prescribing, (especially where actions are initiated and led by communities), the signposting of mental health services and advice, other mental health interventions including using the arts and nature based solutions and the development of a regional centre of excellence for addictions.

Target groups for improved health services were identified by respondents as those requiring mental health and addiction services and there should be a focus on cross-community provision. The health and wellbeing needs of victims and survivors was highlighted as a positive activity. Support to address the issues of poor physical and mental of political ex-prisoners was identified as a need.

3.7. Actions related to other peace building activities

- 84.8% of respondents stated that actions related to other peace building activities was relevant and 62% of this group rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7);

- 6.6% stated that it wasn't relevant; and

- 8.6% stated that it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

Overall, the average rating is 6.0 which suggests that respondents rated this action as considerably relevant.

Reasons provided for other peace building activity being relevant included the risk to stability with cross-border cooperation becoming re-politicised due to Brexit and the need to target specific groups such as women working in grassroots Peace and Reconciliation, as well as children and young people.

A wide range of other peace building activities were recommended by respondents to the survey, as summarised below:

- **Specific topics** – including transgenerational and intergenerational trauma, bereavement, conflict (to be explored by children, parents/guardians and educators together), language programmes (Ulster-Scots, Irish, sign language, English for new communities and other languages to address language/cultural barriers) and respect for other people's/communities traditions, history, culture and language;

- **Structures / networks / capacities** – including cross community networking, cross border capacity building, citizen assemblies, community engagement with policy makers and capital grants to run projects in the community;

- **Skills development** – in the areas of leadership, trauma training, relationship building and respect for diversity.

Respondents highlighted specific **target groups** including at risk young people (those struggling in education, involved with the justice system, who are socially isolated, who have mental health problems and who have a disability or learning needs), older people who are isolated or lonely; people with learning disabilities; refugees, asylum seekers and new communities; BAME communities and political ex – prisoners.

A small number of respondents rated some of the proposed actions as irrelevant. The most common reason why employment opportunities, education, housing and healthcare were deemed irrelevant was because this was the core responsibility of government and other appointed bodies. There was also some concern expressed that by investing across a broad spectrum of actions which are already the responsibility of other government departments, this could dilute funding available for actions to improve community and social cohesion .

3.8. Challenges for Peace and Reconciliation

Respondents to the survey were asked to identify the main challenges for greater Peace and Reconciliation within the region (it is highlighted that the survey was undertaken prior to lockdown and Covid-19). These fell under a number of themes as outlined below:

Challenges posed by Brexit

The most frequently cited challenge reported by a large number of respondents was the changes and uncertainty related to Brexit. It was also noted that the fallout from Brexit will not be fully felt for some time yet. The key concerns as a result of the UK exit from the European Union 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 (with potential for increased xenophobia and racism), potential for increased paramilitary and dissident activity and increasing discussion regarding a border/unity poll referendum;

- **Legislative** challenges such as the fear of the return of a hard border and complexities around changing governance.

Other Challenges

Respondents outlined **a number of other challenges to peace and reconciliation** as illustrated below:

- **Social** challenges such as demographics (ageing population and migration), education matters (segregation and integration), health matters (inequalities, chronic illness, mental health and intergenerational trauma), segregated housing and communities, poverty and deprivation, isolation (rural, social and transport) and security (anti-social behaviours, community relations and safety);

- **Dealing with the past and ongoing division**, for example addressing the legacy of the past, prevailing divisions, intergenerational trauma, unresolved matters (flags, emblems and parades), threats from dissidents, rural security issues and rural segregation (preventing residents from taking part in the economic and social life of their community);

- **Economic** challenges for example economic issues caused by the troubles/ conflict, instability in the region has caused a lack of investment, failure to address economic inactivity and skills shortages, pressure on departmental and local government budgets and its impact on the voluntary and community sector has reduced their capacity to deliver PEACE PLUS;

- **Language and identity** challenges such as disputes over cultural and identity rights at institutional and community level and marginalisation/division in other areas such as gender, sexual orientation and race.

Respondents outlined a number of challenges for the **delivery of the PEACE PLUS Programme which could impact the achievement of Peace and Reconciliation:**

- **Funding** - the lack of grassroots funding or small grant opportunities was deemed to be a challenge for many smaller organisations who believed this had the potential to impact on Peace and Reconciliation in the communities. Respondents from smaller charitable based organisations outlined their struggle for success in the funding application and some described the application as bureaucratic and off putting. As mentioned multiple times throughout survey responses, respondents felt that the new PEACE PLUS Programme must add value to other government initiatives and not be a substitute for government funding;

- **Shared Facilities** - respondents held strong views about the need for the continued development of shared facilities in order to bring people from different traditions together in shared spaces to interact;

- **Engagement** – of hard to reach groups was deemed a key challenge for delivering Peace and Reconciliation. This included hard to reach young people, people from different sides of the community, the business community not traditionally engaged in peace activities and those at risk of involvement in paramilitary or criminal activity;

- **Contact hours** - e.g. minimum of 26 hours over 3 – 6 months period as a participant on PEACE Programmes was deemed as a barrier. Some respondents posed the question of whether the Programme could concentrate on meaningful individual pieces of work, rather than minimum hours and sustained contact;

- **Partnership working** - the requirement for two partners on a common theme/issue could present difficulties in certain areas. Some respondents called for more local community organisation led delivery of projects;

- **Sustainability** - after the grant funding period expires was a key challenge identified by multiple respondents. Respondents identified the need not just for economic sustainability, but the sustainability of benefits, particularly in disadvantaged areas. The loss of technical and financial support from the European Union was expressed as a concern and many believe that it will create a vacuum resulting in overall loss of impact and momentum in the sustainability of interventions;

- **Monitoring and evaluation -** in its current format was described by several respondents as excessive, onerous and deemed a barrier to participation. It was recommended this was simplified. Challenges were raised with regard to monitoring and data collection on the basis of religious affiliation, especially concerning children and young people;

- **Brexit -** challenge to the implementation of the programme as a whole due to potential economic downturn and divergence of priorities North and South, wider implications on partnerships and challenges protecting and repairing relationships post-Brexit.

3.9. Opportunities in relation to Peace and Reconciliation

Respondents were asked to identify the main opportunities for greater Peace and Reconciliation (previously addressed under the PEACE Programme.) A wide range of opportunities were identified and these are grouped together below under the headings outlined, these are in no particular order of importance:

- **Social opportunities** - for example, a more equal and inclusive society, equal opportunities for traditional and new minority communities and those with disabilities, better health care and services and improved housing in mixed areas;

- **Children and young people** - such as engage young people in peace and reconciliation, support marginalised and disadvantaged young people, reach out to more generic youth population, give young people the tools to manage their own mental health, identify and develop young leaders as role models within their community, encourage youth participation and active citizenship and promote social economy /enterprise models focussed on young people;

- **Education** – examples include tackle educational under achievement, greater shared education and learning and increase integrated schools;

- **Language, culture and heritage** – to understand and integrate the culture of new communities, including refugees, asylum seekers and BAME, to use multi-cultural projects to explore, understand, respect and celebrate all different identities, culture, heritage and language, to focus on cultural identity, cultural awareness, cultural expression and the importance to individual and community identity and more joint language initiatives to highlight the way language could be treated in Northern Ireland;

- **Addressing legacy** – for example continue to deliver themes in support of peace and reconciliation including building positive relations, peace walls, shared spaces and services and to ensure communities are provided with the skills and knowledge so that historical narrative is maintained accurately, victims' issues are dealt with sensitively and celebrations and commemorations are delivered responsibly;

- **Community development** – to help areas become prosperous, healthier and better places to live, work and socialise, for local organisations to identify and respond to the needs and strengths of their communities and to empower local community groups through social entrepreneurship;

- **Cross-border** – opportunities to increase the level of cross border cooperation to build the political and socio-economic capital of the border regions, to increase connectivity and sustainable mobility North and South to family, employment, business sector, education, housing and health care and to develop links between local and regional elected representatives/local government on both sides of the border;

- **Economic** – opportunity to build a more prosperous and vibrant economy, moving people out of poverty, increase innovation, support business start-ups, increase the number of skilled workers and create a shared future;

- **Shared spaces** – build on community assets and establish shared, safe and sustainable spaces and to utilise the environment as a shared space.

Respondents outlined a number of **opportunities for the delivery of the PEACE PLUS Programme** for obtaining Peace and Reconciliation. These included the opportunity to build on past achievements, rethink how the programme is promoted within voluntary and community sector, stimulate creativity and innovation in programme development, strike a balance between statutory and community priorities, meet the needs at grass roots level and include those hard to reach groups, derive the benefits of working in partnership with other stakeholders while avoiding duplication of services and focus on local community and actions.

4. North/South Economic, Social and Environmental Development of the Region

4.1. Context

This section of the report focuses on the summary of responses in relation to the wider economic, social and environmental development of the region, as distinct from peace and reconciliation activities. To achieve this wider development PEACE PLUS can select from the five Policy Objectives set out in the draft EU regulations.

- Policy Objective 1: A Smarter Europe
- Policy Objective 2: A Greener, Lower Carbon Europe
- Policy Objective 3: A More Connected Europe
- Policy Objective 4: A More Social Europe
- Policy Objective 5: A Europe Closer to Its Citizens

Respondents to the survey were asked to rate the relevance of each Policy Objective and to explain why they had given that rating. An overview of the rating of each Policy Objective is provided in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5. Relevance of Policy Objectives

Appendix 2 contains the frequency data for each of the responses.
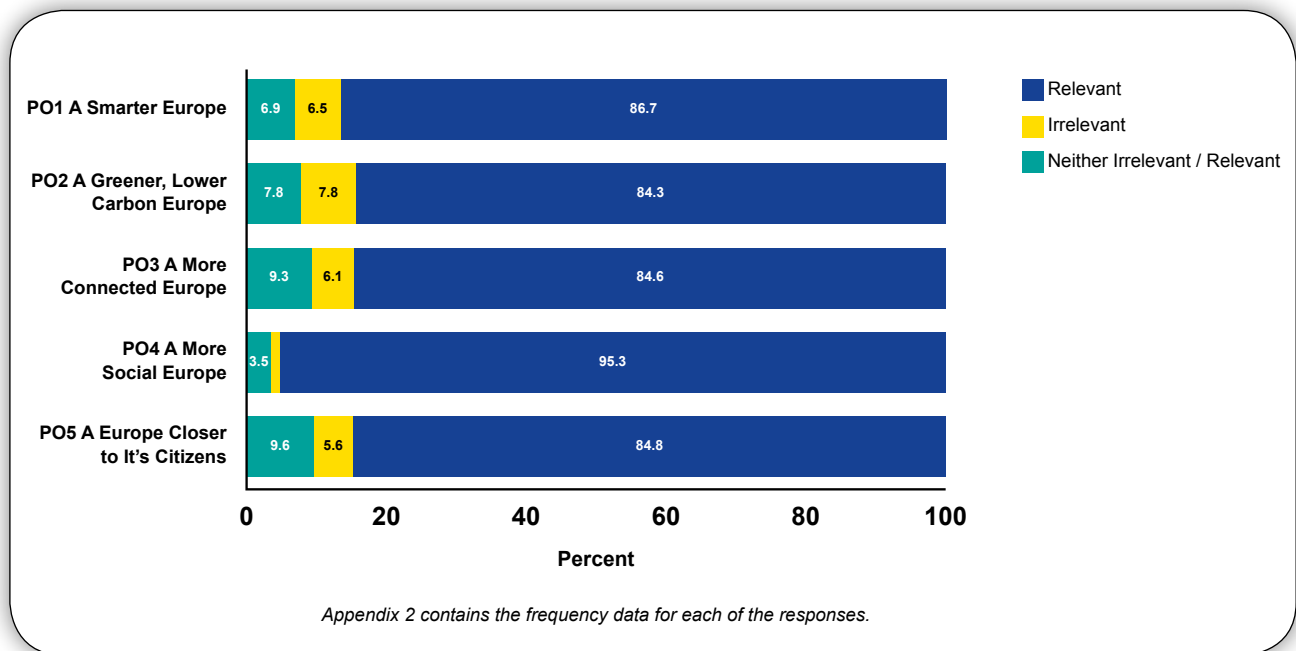
4.2. Policy Objective 1 – A Smarter Europe

As shown in Figure 5, 86.7% of respondents stated that Policy Objective 1 A Smarter Europe was relevant and 59% of this group rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7);

- 6.5% stated it wasn't relevant: and
- 6.9% stated it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

Overall, the average rating is 6.0 which suggests that respondents rated this policy objective as considerably relevant.

Actions under this Policy Objective could include:

- Measures to boost the innovation capacity of the region;
- Measures to increase the uptake of advanced technology;
- Actions to improve the growth and competitiveness of the SME sector;
- Improvements to digital services.

The relevance of Policy Objective 1 – A Smarter Europe was affirmed with the positive comments of support made by survey respondents. Responses fell into broad themes and are summarised below:

- **Economy and employment** – potential impacts include; to improve economic stability and prosperity, to increase productivity and maximise future growth. There is potential to increase employment, enable a shift to higher value added sectors, create smarter and higher paid jobs, to create innovative new businesses as well as consolidate existing businesses and to reverse the decline of SMEs. Investment could drive service efficiencies and increase competitiveness. Finally, investment could mitigate the impact of Brexit and help industry to react to fast changing global transitions;

- **People and Community** - building skills and capacity, creating vibrant communities, boost social development, improved opportunities and life chances, reduced poverty and deprivation, mitigate against digital exclusion and help keep people in the region;

- **Education and Skills** - support for filling STEM skills gaps, reinforcing the need for third level education, creating opportunities for innovation and collaboration between universities, research centres, businesses and enterprises and to attract and retain talent;

- **Infrastructure** - potential to strengthen regional infrastructure, address sub-standard connectivity in rural areas and develop indigenous food, energy and water systems.

To achieve A Smarter Europe, respondents made the following **recommendations for potential projects/ initiatives**:

- **Innovation/R&D** – continued investment in Centres of Excellence and research centres and continued innovation in the agriculture industries in areas such as carbon footprint, renewable energy, flood control, clean water and biodiversity;

- **Advanced Technology** – including advanced manufacturing and robotics growth hub, help for businesses to diversify, use of Artificial Intelligence technology across agriculture and adapting cutting edge biological and technological knowledge and methods for intensive and sustainable production;

- **Skills** – investment in training for young people (including placements and apprenticeships), upskilling and reskilling generally and skills building, entrepreneurship and innovation for rural communities;

- **SMEs** – for example, initiatives to assist micro businesses and SMEs to maximise digital capability, help for SMEs and micro businesses to scale and face Brexit challenges, innovation support projects and business courses for existing or prospective business owners;

- **Digitalisation** - connect communities with new microwave broadband technologies around remote coastal regions and a Digital Innovation and Growth Hub;

- **Collaboration / Partnerships** - establish interregional innovation partnerships in sectors where the region has demonstrated strengths, such as big data, bio economy, resource efficiency, connected mobility, Fintech, cyber security and advanced manufacturing. Develop partnerships between Councils, private sector and education departments to develop a high growth and highly skilled society, business and academia collaborations and help companies to scale through collaborations.

4.3. Policy Objective 2 – A Greener, Lower Carbon Europe

- 84.3% of respondents stated that Policy Objective 2 A Greener, Lower Carbon Europe was relevant, and 65% of this group rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7);

- 7.8% stated it wasn't relevant; and

- 7.8% stated it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

   Overall the average rating is 6.0 which suggests that respondents rated this policy objective as considerably relevant.

Actions under this Policy Objective could include the following:

- Measures to improve energy efficiency;
- Additional renewable energy production capacity;
- Smart grids for improved energy management;
- Improved disaster monitoring, warning or response systems;
- Improved water and waste treatment;
- Measures to improve biodiversity.

Reasons respondents gave in support of selecting Policy Objective 2 – A Greener, Lower Carbon Europe as relevant are grouped under the headings below and included:

- **Environment** – environmental crisis exists today and needs to be addressed urgently in order to reverse environmental decline, underfunding and under investment and improve resilience to weather impacts. Decarbonisation, water quality, water and waste management, protecting the natural and built heritage and enhancing biodiversity were highlighted. The opportunity for development of new skills e.g. retro fitting;

- **Economy** – environment issues impact economic development. Opportunity exists to ensure sustainable fuel supply, address fuel poverty, improve energy efficiency, as well as create jobs and improve productivity and competitiveness of companies. Problems caused by economic development at the expense of the environment are global;

- **People / Community** – the environment is a unifying agenda, affecting the quality of life for current and future generations, is relevant to health and wellbeing, a sustainable future and a prosperous society. People/communities are concerned about the impact of climate change and better resilience through adaptation to climate change is needed. Natural environment is a neutral space;

- **Cross Border Cooperation** – enables a more strategic regional approach and would create a more sustainable long term legacy.

- **Actions and project ideas** proposed by survey respondents for Policy Objective 2 – A Greener, Lower Carbon Europe were wide ranging and included:

- **Water and Waste Treatment** – water quality improvement, preservation and monitoring of water supply, river restoration, improve urban drainage, build on existing projects (Peace IV), and empower and educate communities to protect rivers and lakes;

- **Disaster Monitoring, Warning or Response Systems** - Community Resilience programmes that increase capacity to respond to challenges and impact of extreme weather conditions and climate related emergencies, reinforce waterways and river banks to protect rural dwellings;

- **Biodiversity** – restore key habitats and species including wetlands, peatlands and woodlands, biosecurity to prevent invasive non-native species spread, tree planting for increased carbon storage including peace forests, naturalise urban areas with tree planting, management of carbon resource in the marine environment and map and monitor biodiversity levels;

- **Renewable / Energy** - increase capacity of renewable energy distribution and storage facilities, domestic/commercial energy infrastructure projects, utilise wind and tidal energy sources, renewable energy management underpinned by research, burning of waste to produce power and SMART grid for EV charging;

- **Transport** - hydrogen vehicles, low carbon alternative fuel buses, diversification of HGV fuel sources, carbon neutral air transport, improve pedestrian areas to improve air quality and support for green and blue infrastructure;

- **Educational Programmes** – for example citizen science initiatives, using nature as teaching medium, develop a climate action research and education 'exosystem', empowering young people e.g. environmental ambassadors programme and awareness raising in the areas of climate change, biodiversity and recycling;

- **Political / Local Authority** – examples ranged from work at grassroots level to mitigate climate change to Climate Citizens Assemblies and an all-Ireland panel on environmental policies and regional and transnational marine planning;

- **Rural/agricultural communities** - Engage in green initiatives with extensive grass areas, forests and hedges and care for the environment. Innovative actions could be delivered through the agriculture sector e.g. energy production and storage, biodiversity, water and waste management, disaster monitoring and warning response systems. Protecting the environment and innovation within agriculture will require reskilling, as well as creating new employment opportunities;

- **Other project ideas** – including develop the circular economy, encourage sustainability across the voluntary and community sector, create a "climate solutions platform" to address challenges of energy distribution and encourage SME innovation.

4.4. Policy Objective 3 – A More Connected Europe

- 84.6% of respondents stated that Policy Objective 3 A More Connected Europe was relevant and 49% of this group rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7);

- 6.1% stated it wasn't relevant; and

- 9.3% stated it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

Overall, the average rating is 5.9 which suggests that respondents rated this policy objective as considerably relevant.

This Policy Objective focusses on improving transport (e.g. cross-border transport infrastructure) and ICT infrastructure.

Respondents to the survey identified a range of reasons in support of the relevance of this Policy Objective falling into three categories as outlined below:

- **Cross- Border Connectivity** - improvement in cross border infrastructure is thought to help attract investment, increase cross-border trade, increase economic growth and competitiveness. Connectivity is relevant to mitigate post Brexit customs and regulatory protocols;

- **Transport Connectivity** – will result in better access to services and employment, is vital to young people's future, is required to address the needs of the growing population living within a 40 mile commute of the Dublin/Belfast corridor and can reduce social isolation, tackle disadvantage and exclusion, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas. Transport connectivity will increase tourism and visitors. Local, regional and national sustainability can be improved with development of railways and greenways;

- **ICT Connectivity** – there is poor ICT infrastructure/ Connectivity in Rural/Border regions, which is crucial for those in marginalised communities and drives rural urban migration. Connectivity is important for business and quality of life through connectedness, competition and productivity rates, enables remote working and has the positive knock-on effect of lowering carbon emissions.

Respondents identified a range of **project ideas and actions** as illustrated below:

- **Cross- Border Connectivity** - improve rail/road between Dublin and Belfast and cross border networks between Drogheda, Dundalk and Newry, improve the Enterprise services with infrastructure, hourly service and electrification, development of railways generally, development of cross border route connecting Dublin to the border counties and strengthen links to South East extending to Rosslare Europort;

- **Transport** – affordable and accessible transport projects, community owner transport and improvements to public transport specifically for rural communities. Development of an integrated transport system linking major towns to their coastal perimeters and rural hinterland for citizens and visitors, invest in cycle lanes and parks, walking routes and bridges and stimulate active travel. Capital investment in greenways and extension of waterways was also mentioned. Investment in zero carbon and low carbon transport, electric vehicles and electrification of rail services;

- **ICT** – examples included improve digital connections on North/South basis, investing in digital infrastructure including urban and rural broadband, exploring 5G connectivity, especially in rural areas and connect to other planned full fibre networks e.g. Project Kelvin.

4.5.   Policy Objective 4 – A More Social Europe

- 95.3% of respondents stated that Policy Objective 4 A More Social Europe was relevant and of this group 76% rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7);

- 1.2% stated it wasn't relevant; and

- 3.5% stated it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

Overall, the average rating is 6.5 which suggests that respondents rated this policy objective as highly relevant.

Many of the PEACE activities and interventions for PEACE PLUS must be set within the context of this objective. However, this objective can also fund activities for the wider economic, social and environmental development of the region. Actions that can be funded under the activities include:

- Actions to improve community and social cohesion;

- Improving employment opportunities;

- Increasing access to quality education (quality and inclusive);

- Reducing marginalisation through improved housing and services;

- Increasing access to quality health care in the region.

Many of the responses received for this Policy Objective were reflective of the information provided in the earlier section of the report (PO4 Peace-building). Hence, the supporting information for rating the relevance of PO4, recommendations for other activities/actions under this Policy Objective are not replicated in this section of the report.

Some points are outlined in the section below that were not raised under PO4 Peace-building.

Tackling the issues faced by specific groups including BAME, disabled persons and underprivileged communities was highlighted as relevant to this policy objective. Gender inequality was also referenced. In terms of increasing employment, the lack of female compared to male entrepreneurs was noted, as was gender stereotyping in education (around skills and vocations) and the need to attract and retain talent through a highly skilled STEM workforce was mentioned. The need to address homelessness was also raised as a current issue that is relevant to reducing marginalisation.

Actions identified under PO4 (not previously identified as peace-building activities) included cross-border links for education e.g. cross-border schools projects. There were some additional actions noted in respect of increasing access to quality healthcare such as developing resources (digital tools to support health and wellbeing and research on the delivery of healthcare through innovative digital technology), integrated health hubs and data sharing across the health and social care sector. Reference was also made to collaboration and the organisation of healthcare. Examples of actions include cross border health initiatives, cross sectoral collaboration to improve health outcomes by addressing root causes, community based services (for palliative care and alcohol/drugs services), as well as health interventions delivered where people live and finally using voluntary and community services to help older people access health care.

4.6. Policy Objective 5 – A Europe Closer to Its Citizens

- 84.8% of respondents stated that Policy Objective 5 A Europe Closer to Its Citizens was relevant and 57% of this group rated it at the highest possible level of relevance (grade 7);
- 5.6% stated it wasn't relevant; and
- 9.6% stated it was neither relevant nor irrelevant.

The average rating is 5.9 which suggests that respondents rated this policy objective as considerably relevant.

Actions under this Policy Objective could include:

- Activities to boost tourism;
- Measures to promote cultural heritage;
- Improving community facilities;
- Measures to improve security.

The relevance of Policy Objective 5 – A Europe Closer to its Citizens was affirmed with the positive general comments made by survey respondents. Responses fell into broad themes and are summarised below:

- **People and Community** – cultural heritage can help develop mutual understanding, empathy and respectful relations. It can bring people together in a positive way and promote peace and cohesion through working on joint initiatives;
- **Economy and employment** – tourism and hospitality are recent growth areas and are important to economic sustainability, creating new opportunities especially for young people and job creation;
- **Addressing Imbalance** – there is a need to invest across all areas including rural, border and coastal areas.

To achieve A Europe Closer to its Citizens, respondents made the following **recommendations for projects/ initiatives**:

- **Activities to boost tourism** – examples include; to encourage domestic tourism/cross border tourism, sustainable tourism, rural, wildlife and coastal tourism, community festivals, arts and cultural tourism, and niche areas of tourism e.g. food, literacy tourism. Investment in marketing campaigns was also suggested, as well as investing in larger international events in Northern Ireland, interventions that drive tourism from Ireland to Northern Ireland and greater Irish/ Scottish collaboration on tourism matters. Finally,

exploring employment opportunities for young people, the marginalised or those re-entering the workforce in the areas of community heritage and tourism;

- **Measures to promote cultural heritage** – for example; development of educational programmes to help understand diversity and different cultures, embedding cultural heritage activities in wider programmes, cultural heritage for crafts to bring communities together, language/cultural schools and cultural exchange programmes;

- **Improving community facilities** – for example; increasing the number of large shared spaces for communities and visitors and ensuring access for all in society, particularly marginalised/emerging communities, developing attractive, well-resourced facilities and using public spaces for cultural activity;

- **Measures to improve security** – including; focussing on improving community relations to increase safety and reduce crime and the PSNI and Garda working in collaboration.

4.7. Challenges for the wider economic and territorial development of the programme area (INTERREG Programme)

Respondents to the survey were asked to identify the main challenges and opportunities for the wider economic and territorial development of the programme area (previously addressed under the INTERREG programme).

Outlined below are the challenges identified by respondents and there is some similarity to the challenges previously identified for greater peace and reconciliation:

- **The political, legislative and economic challenges of Brexit** were highlighted, particularly the uncertainty that exists about its potential impact across business and trade generally, the environment, tourism and labour markets;

- **Long-term challenges**, such as economic inactivity, lack of skills/qualification, lower paid jobs, issues of productivity, entrepreneurship, innovation, growth and competitiveness. Many of these challenges were emphasised for cross border areas.

- **Social challenges** which were wide ranging in nature. Examples include; an ageing population, high levels of migration, inadequate skills levels and skills gaps, unemployment and inactivity, health matters such as mental health, alcohol/drug dependency and chronic illness. The social challenges specific to the border areas such as; depopulation generally, young people leaving due to lack of opportunity or investment and remote, marginalised poorly served communities on both sides of the border;

- **Technology/Infrastructure challenges** for instance; the lack of connectivity especially in border regions as illustrated by poor roads and broadband infrastructure which impacts future development and a lack of public transport infrastructure leading to an overreliance on cars. There is also concern that technological advancements such as automation and artificial intelligence may impact on low skilled workers;

- **Environmental challenges** which were broad ranging in nature and included; addressing the threats of climate change such as rising sea levels, floods, adapting to climate change in every aspect of life and transition to low carbon economy including delivering carbon-neutrality within the agricultural sector. Water quality, pollution, waste and biodiversity were mentioned, as well as the energy sector and its management.

Finally, respondents identified a number of programme delivery challenges including Brexit and its impact due to potential economic downturn and the divergence of priorities North and South, the potential use of PEACE PLUS funds to fill gaps in existing government budgets North and South, the interoperability of data North and South, barriers to participants to access programmes and the simplification of application and administrative procedures.

4.8. Opportunities for the wider economic and territorial development of the programme area

Respondents outlined their views on some of the opportunities for the wider economic and territorial development of the programme area (previously addressed under the INTERREG Programme.) These opportunities are summarised (by Policy Objective) below. There is a level of cross-over between these opportunities and the points raised by respondents in support of the relevance of a policy objective and initiatives/actions identified:

Policy Objective 1 A Smarter Europe – examples include:

- **Boosting innovation and capacity** through increased research and innovation projects, improving links between university and academia, tech college research, post graduate and local industry, and commercialising research and innovation;

- **Increasing the growth and competitiveness of SMEs** through enhancing entrepreneurship, supporting existing and new businesses through smart means, driving an enterprise ecosystem along Dublin-Belfast corridor, scaling up local small companies to compete internationally, training skilled staff and the development of social economy and enterprise models;

- **Improving the uptake of advanced technology and digital services by** addressing IT/digital access challenges for communities and business, improving regional telecoms connectivity, digital trailblazing with 5G capabilities/digital hubs, bringing companies together to deploy new technologies to add value to the region and attracting skilled people to growing sectors.

Policy Objective 2 A Greener, Lower Carbon Europe - examples include:

- **Improving energy efficiency** through hydrogen and electric public transport, supporting the voluntary and community sector, businesses and public to become energy efficient, retrofitting residential/commercial buildings with insulation and solar energy and encouraging decarbonisation which will create new products and services, new skills and jobs, access to new markets, attract foreign direct investment, and better health and wellbeing;

- **Increasing capacity for renewable energy production** through utilising natural resources to combat climate change, further development of offshore wind energy projects, development of thermal heat and power, and all-island hydrogen economy;

- **Improving resilience to climate change impacts** by ensuring the resilience of critical infrastructure so that it is capable of withstanding, adapting and recovering from adverse events, by introducing measures for flood mitigation and adaptation and developing a cross border climate emergency response;

- **Improving waste and water management** through planning, protecting and funding water management and cross border governance framework to prevent and address the impairment of water quality;

- **Improving biodiversity** by conserving and protecting natural habitats, developing new urban and rural agricultural models in response to declining arable lands, creating the conditions for growth and recovery of bog species, marine planning, renewables development and fisheries management and developing a cross border governance framework to address biodiversity.

Policy Objective 3 A More Connected Europe - examples include:

- **Improving transport** by improving transport links (including cross border) to increase business activity, improving TEN-T routes, upgrading Dublin-Belfast rail service and making it commutable, investment in electric/hydrogen fuelled public transport to lower emissions; and smart parking infrastructure to better manage parking, disabled parking and mobility issues;

- **Improving ICT infrastructure** in order to support modern technology and the use of ICT for environmental and emergency management.

Policy Objective 4 A More Social Europe – examples include:

Many of the opportunities identified for programme development under **Policy Objective 4 A More Social Europe were similar to those identified under PO4 Peace-building and have not been replicated in this section of the document. However, a number of additional points were raised under increasing access to health care** including shared society initiatives to build resilience, address social isolation and help prevent/tackle mental health issues, investment in preventative care and early intervention to reduce alcohol and drug related harm and a greater role for the community and voluntary sector in tackling and reducing health inequalities.

Policy Objective 5 A Europe Closer to Its Citizens - examples of opportunities include:

- **Boosting tourism by** focussing on experience, activity and cultural based tourism, creating virtual/augmented reality tourism, agricultural tourism and developing tourism in the border region which is rich in natural and cultural assets;

- **Economic development through development of** local economic forums to provide long term plans and sustainability, collaboration between academic labs and commercial partners to build local economies;

- **Territorial (regional) (local) development** by complementing strategies and policies such as City Deals, Councils Corporate and Investment Plans, environmental, water and energy policy initiatives, by building on cross border cooperation to ensure core services can be delivered to remote and peripheral parts of the region and by expanding involvement of local authorities in the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. Finally addressing issues relating to Brexit such as its impact, regulatory and legislative matters.

Finally, respondents to the survey identified a number of opportunities for programme delivery (across all of the policy objectives under wider development of the region.) Examples include: the opportunity to build on previous INTERREG programmes and address deficits, a collaborative and partnership approach to delivery, using existing local authority and development company structures to plan and deliver programmes, a robust geographical spread of projects, cross border and cross community projects, an assets-based approach with emphasis on building community capability/capacity and encouraging community led initiatives and nature based solutions in all strategic development and accountability mechanisms (green infrastructure and natural capital audits.)

Respondents also made a number of recommendations for programme delivery under Policy Objective 4 – A More Social Europe including: multi-sector partnerships tailored to meet local needs, gender equality and gender proofing needs to be embedded and referenced in all of the areas of PO4, account should be taken of all marginalised communities (not focussing solely on traditional divisions), a focus on cross-border activities and a need for coordination and joint actions between both jurisdictions.

5.   Delivery Mechanisms and Administration

5.1. Context

Sound, effective and efficient management of European funds and public money, requires appropriate, effective and transparent systems. Management and control systems must ensure the prevention and detection of irregularities and processes must exist to capture results in order for projects to be accountable and demonstrate achievement and value for money. At the same time the delivery system should be as simple and streamlined as possible to ensure efficient implementation and the reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries.

During the current PEACE IV AND INTERREG VA Programming period, the SEUPB initiated a number of measures to reduce the administration burden for applicants and to increase the results orientation of the programme. This included a number of simplified cost options that are used for payment to projects.

The draft regulations for the new programme period 2021-2027 contain a number of provisions to further simplify the management and implementation of projects and make them more focussed on results. Respondents were asked to give their views on a range of questions about increasing simplification, project development support and funding rates. The results are summarised below. Please note that not all comments are in line with the simplifications recommended within the EU regulations, however the SEUPB is actively considering how best to simplify the Programme.

A glossary of key terms has been included at Appendix 3.

5.2. Increasing simplification: flat rates and unit costs

The main types of simplified costs used by the current programme are:

- Flat rates – where costs are calculated through an automatic calculation;
- Unit costs – where payments are tied to the delivery of pre-agreed outputs rather than based on the direct costs related to producing the output.

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the greater use of flat rates and greater use of unit costs would further simplify management and implementation of projects.

Figure 6. Extent the following measures would further simplify the management and implementation of projects

Appendix 2 contains the frequency data for each of the responses.
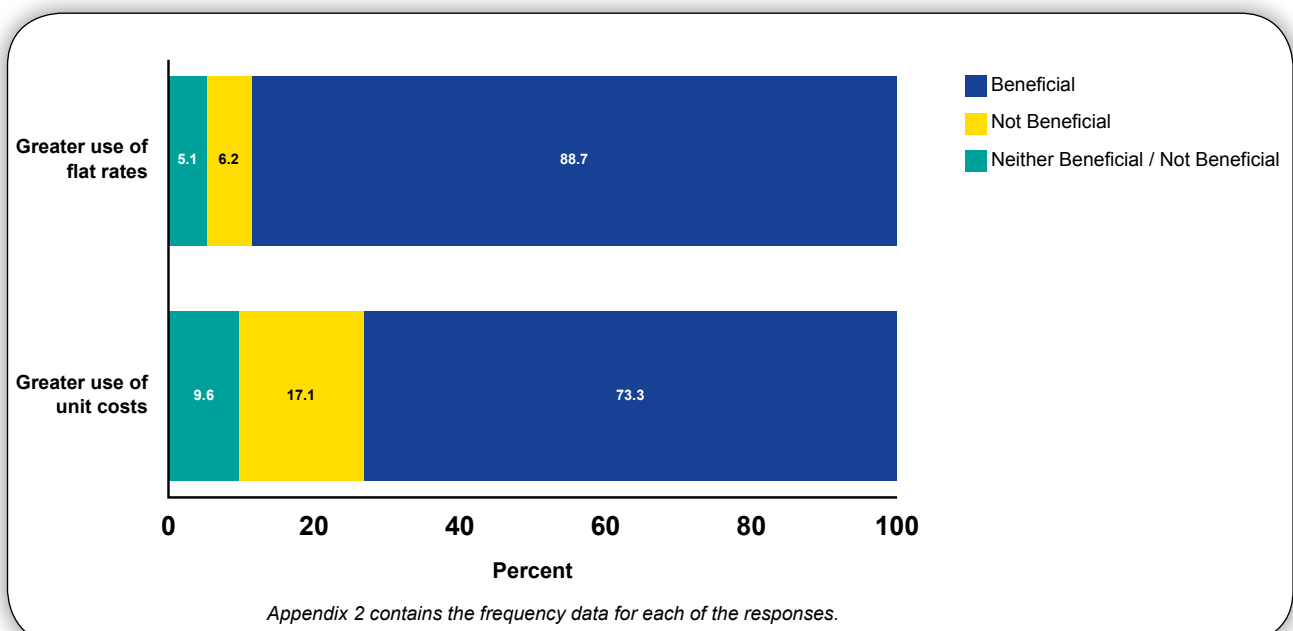
- 88.7% of respondents stated that greater use of **flat rates** would be beneficial and 62% of this group rated it at the highest possible level of benefit (grade 7);

- 6.2% stated it wasn't beneficial; and

- 5.2% stated it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial.

  Overall, the average rating is 6.1 which suggests that respondents rated this measure as particularly beneficial.

- 73.3% of respondents stated that greater use of **unit costs** would be beneficial and of this group 53% rated it at the highest possible level of benefit (grade 7);

- 17.1% stated it wasn't beneficial; and

- 9.6% stated it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial.

  Overall, the average rating is 5.3 which suggests that respondents rated this measure as somewhat beneficial.

Unit costs received the largest number of responses who rated it at the lowest possible level (grade 1) of benefit.

Benefits of unit costs and flat rates

There was significant support among respondents for flat rates and unit costs as a way to lessen administrative burden and making project management more effective and efficient. In particular, flat rates and unit costs would be beneficial for financial management of projects (including budgeting) and audit and claim processes and procedures, for example by facilitating uniform project costs, simplifying audit and verification processes and improving the speed at which claims can be verified and paid.

Many responses pointed to the link between unit costs and flat rates and a greater focus on results by for example, reducing the administrative work to put towards delivery citing the following reasons:

- Reduction of administration work frees up additional resource for delivery;

- Reimbursement tied to outputs rather than expenditure gives projects greater freedom to deliver their projects so that they have as much impact as possible;

- A shift from collecting evidence of expenditure to collecting evidence of outputs lead to higher scrutiny of the quality of projects.

Respondents identified several groups that would benefit from adopting unit costs and flat rates. Small organisations with limited resources and organisations involved in several EU funding programmes or with multiple income streams would particularly benefit. Some also highlighted that private sector businesses do not normally operate under EU funding requirements, thus simplified cost options would support them with the associated complexity.

However, some respondents indicated that the beneficial impact of flat rates and unit costs depends on the nature, experience and size of organisations and projects. In line with this, it was suggested to apply these simplified cost options on a case-by-case basis: options could be outlined to allow applicants to consider which ones to apply to their project; i.e. sufficient flexibility is requested to allow partners to opt out if such arrangements are deterrent for the organisation.

How to mitigate risks of unit costs and flat rates

Several submissions state that with diligent work at programme/project set-up using accurate and agreed flat-rate and unit cost compilation, the delivery can be all about outcomes and improvement. In order to successfully set up and implement flat rates and unit costs, respondents highlighted the following measures:

Table 1. Measures to consider in setting up and implementing flat rates and unit costs

	Flat rates	Unit costs
Setting up		
• Inflation and other possible fluctuations: a method for change/update during multi-year projects is needed	✔	✔
• Equating to full cost recovery (e.g. few submissions consider that 15% flat rate for is not enough to cover actual overhead costs)	✔	✔
• Currency rates		✔
• Type of outputs they relate to (e.g. given the sensitivity of supporting victims and survivors, it would be inappropriate to attach a cost to participants in these projects)		✔
Implementation		
• Providing support in early stages of application process to identify occasions to employ simplified cost options	✔	✔
• Providing clarity around evidential base required in supporting claims	✔	✔
• Allow more flexibility in terms of the verification of unit costs during the monitoring of outputs (e.g. if the output target is that participants must complete X hours engagement on the programme, and they achieve 90% of this, then consideration should be given to counting this output (albeit at 90%) and funding the actual cost rather than zero for that participant)		✔
• Releasing funds based milestone achievement		✔

Note that in order to implement any of the above there is a requirement to be in line with EU Regulations

Best practice

Some submissions note their positive experience of using flat rates and unit costs in the current programmes (INTERREG and PEACE). Other point to best practice from other funding programmes (including Erasmus+, ESF, H2020 and the National Heritage Lottery Fund). Respondents encouraged the programme to investigate options currently used in other EU programmes[2] and increase synergies with other ETC programmes.

5.3. Project development support

In the current programmes support to potential applicants is available in a number of forms, including the SEUPB website and through events promoting calls for funding.

The SEUPB would like to consider other ways of providing project development support during the new programming period.

Respondents were asked to rate how beneficial a range of measures could be in providing project development support. The results are outlined in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Rate how beneficial the following examples of measures could be in providing project development support

Appendix 2 contains the frequency data for each of the responses.

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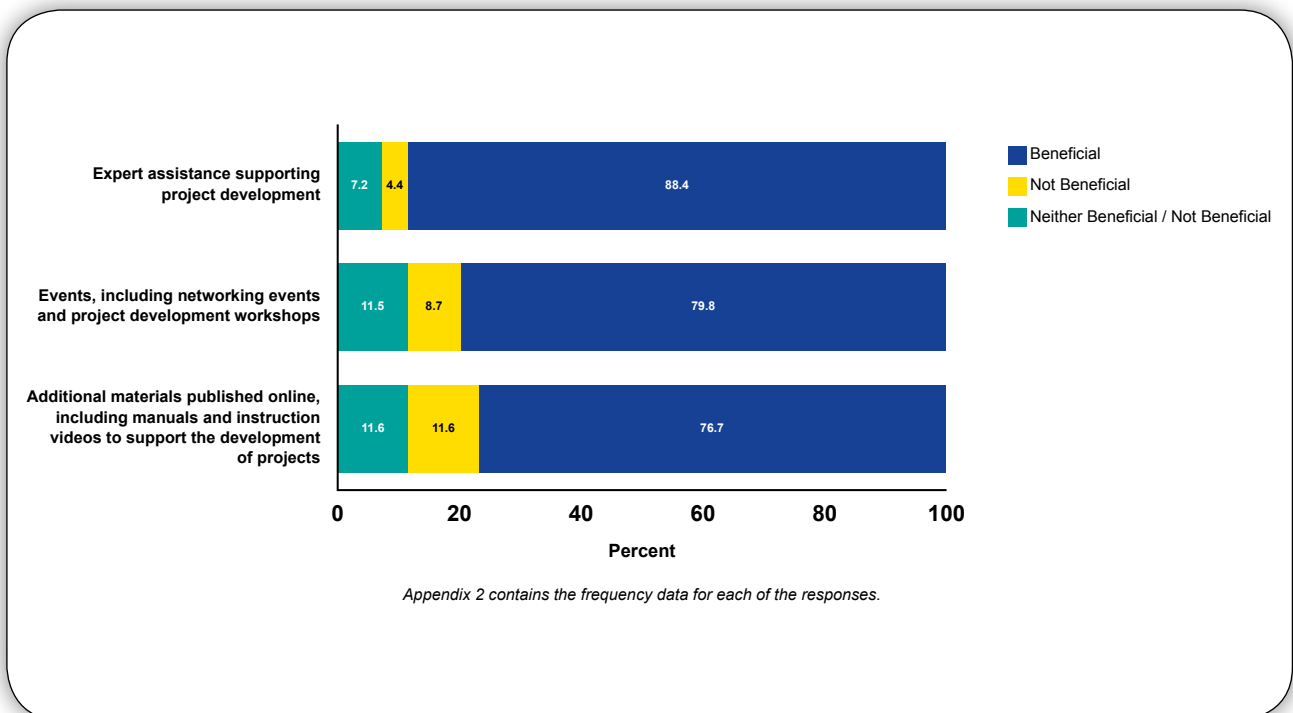
2   This includes reviewing the communique from the European Commission "80 simplification measures in cohesion policy 2021-2027" (Section VI)

- 88.4% stated that **expert assistance** supporting project development was beneficial and of this group 69% rated it at the highest possible level of benefit (grade 7).
- 4.4% stated it wasn't beneficial; and
- 7.2% stated it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial.

Overall, the average rating is 6.2 which suggests that respondents rated this measure as particularly beneficial.

- 79.8% of respondents stated that events, including **networking events** and project development workshops were beneficial and of this group 55% rated it at the highest possible level of benefit (grade 7).
- 8.7% stated it wasn't beneficial; and
- 11.5% stated it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial.

Overall, the average rating is 5.8 which suggests that respondents rated this measure as somewhat beneficial.

- 76.7% of respondents stated that **additional materials** published online, including manuals and instruction videos to support the development of projects were beneficial and of this group 48% rated it at the highest possible level of benefit (grade 7);
- 11.6% stated it wasn't beneficial; and
- 11.6% felt it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial.

Overall, the average rating is 5.5 which suggests that respondents rated this measure as somewhat beneficial.

The Benefits of Project Development Support

The benefits of project development support is highlighted by the majority of responses, with the following considered beneficial: expert assistance, networking events and workshops and online materials and videos. Beneficial outcomes of these support measures included early identification of projects not likely to result in a successful application, better understanding of the commitment required during application process and delivery, improved efficiency and effectiveness of project assessment and decision, higher quality projects (with smoother launch and implementation) and better project standardisation and capacity building.

However, some comments indicated that certain measures were particularly effective for specific goals, as outlined in the table over:

Table 2. Effectiveness of Project Development Supports

	Expert Assistance	Networking Events and Workshops	Online Materials and Videos
Contributing to de-risking of projects from the outset	✓		
Improved efficiency and effectiveness in resource allocation: the development of projects is costly from both a time and resource perspective	✓	✓	
Ensuring investment is targeted at need	✓	✓	
A catalyst for ideas and collaboration of partners and projects, enabling them to develop ideas in a supported environment, form partnerships; and identify synergies alongside gaps in provision and prevents duplication		✓	
Source of learning, networking and support, facilitating meeting other potential applicants and sharing good practice		✓	
Facilitates consistency of advice given to applicants			✓
Clear and simplified guidelines make applicants less reliant on programme staff			✓

Furthermore, some submissions state that project development support measures would be particularly beneficial for new applicants, applicants with limited experience and organisations with limited resources and capacity (e.g. community and voluntary organisations).

Current programmes: What has worked well and what could be improved

In relation to the current PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Programmes, respondents suggested that some improvements could be made to event and online materials provision for the current programme including simplification of the current guidance, improving the eMS manual and making all application and claim processes online. They also made some suggestions relating to the format and content of expert assistance events and online material. For example:

- **Expert assistance supporting project development** – hands on support and advice when completing applications, on line webinars and conference calls to advise partners remotely without having to attend meetings, fundamentals of project design and delivery methodology and working within programme rules and regulations;

- **Events, including networking events and project development workshops** – networking events and workshops for each priority or theme, including best practice information sessions involving successful projects, sectorial workshops and focus groups, and exploring cross sectorial innovation and exchanges.

- **Additional materials published online, including manuals and instruction videos** – flow chart guide of the process, FAQs, e-learning tools and video tutorials and best practice guidance and examples of successful projects.

Factors that determine whether support is effective

A range of factors that determine whether support is effective were identified by respondents. The quality of support (people, materials and events) is key to meeting applicants and partners' needs, the support provided must be accessible, reaching diverse groups and being jargon-free. Also the support should be timely, consistent and avoid duplication. Finally it was highlighted the no "one size fits all" and a mixture of support measures is required.

Risks associated with Project Development Support

Finally, submissions identified a number of risks associated with providing support measures, which the programme should take into account, including the expense of support measures (as this money could be directly supporting communities) and applicants being too dependent on project support.

5.4.   Project preparation lump sums

Survey respondents were asked to rate how beneficial lump sum payments for preparation costs would be while applying for funding. The results are illustrated below.

Figure 8. Rate how beneficial lump sum payments for preparation costs would be

5.3%   3.3%

Beneficial

Not Beneficial

Neither Beneficial / Not Beneficial

91.5%

Appendix 2 contains the frequency data for each of the responses.
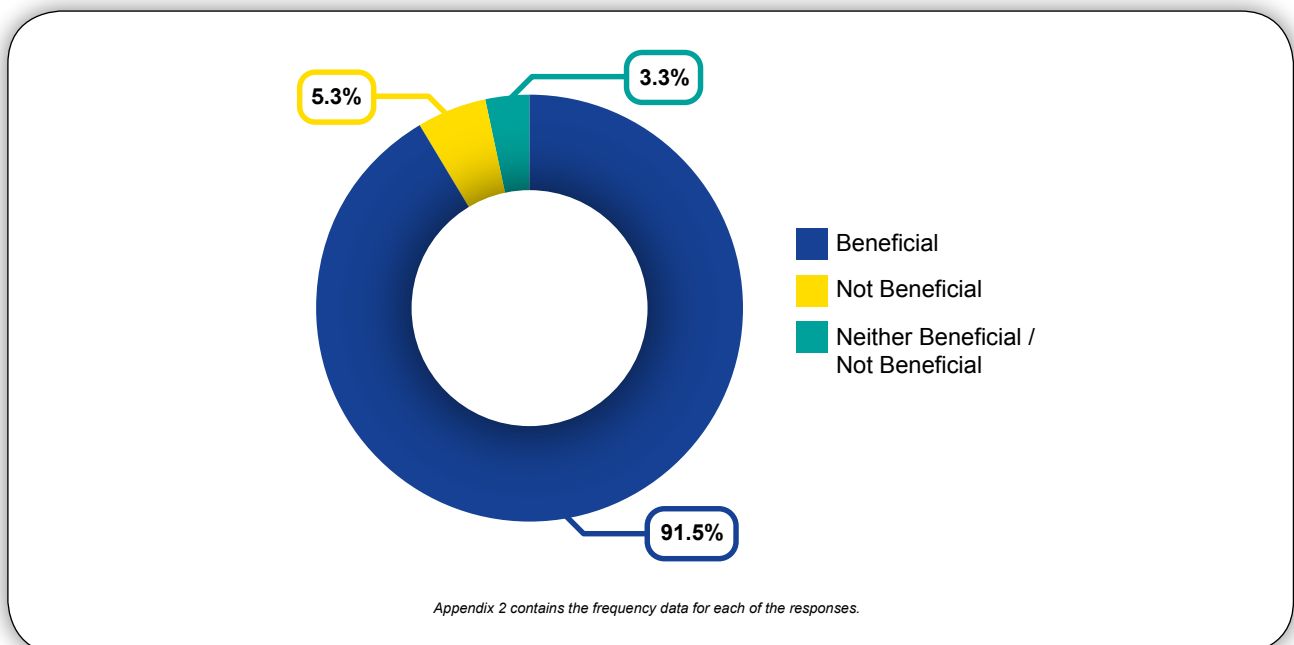
- 91.5% stated that this was beneficial, and of this group 72% rated it at the highest possible level of benefit (grade 7);

- 5.3% stated it wasn't beneficial; and

- 3.3% stated it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial.

Overall, the average rating is 6.3 which suggests that respondents rated this issue as considerably beneficial.

Benefits and risks of project preparation lump sums

A large majority of respondents are in favour of project preparation lump sums to cover project development costs. Benefits cited include reducing the barriers to applying for funding thereby making the programme more accessible, high quality applications and ultimately projects, a smooth project launch and covering the cost of compulsory/statutory studies.

Some risks associated with lump sums for project development were identified including the need to safeguard against a lack of commitment by applicants if they are not required to contribute their own resources as part of the application process.

Alternative ways to provide financial support

Respondents provided a number of alternative suggestions for how the programme can provide financial support during the project development phase including **project development grants and advance payments** (in support of project definition, application development and business plan development).

5.5. Match-funding

Projects under the current PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes are commonly funded up to 100% of project costs. However, there are also many projects that include a contribution from the project partners where they are capable of doing so (referred to as match-funding).

Survey respondents were asked if the current arrangements to source match-funding should continue, or should some or all of the match-funding be provided by the applicant (public or private). Submissions indicate that the majority of respondents are in favour of the current arrangements of match-funding continuing in PEACE PLUS, i.e. projects commonly being funded 100%. A range of reasons were highlighted including:

- Several applicants would not be in the position to provide match-funding, due to affordability or internal organisational constraints;

- Obtaining match-funding from different funders would place additional administrative burden on partners because of the need to meet each funder's requirements. In addition, it is rare to find match-funders' objectives and timelines align entirely;

- 100% funding maximises investment potential of projects, ensuring innovative and pilot projects and unlocking opportunities for community-led responses.

Match-funding provided by government departments, as part of the programme structure demonstrates commitment to projects and EU funding, ensuring Departmental buy-in and outcomes and objectives that are rooted in the programme area plans and that are aligned with regional and government priorities.

Many respondents consider that 100% funding facilitates the widest participation, as requiring match-funding from applicants could be a barrier for many organisations to access funding, resulting in valuable project opportunities being missed and a programme dominated by larger institutions which would not recognise the importance of small scale projects.

However, some respondents are in favour of applicants providing some match-funding and are themselves willing to provide at least a percentage of match funding. These respondents argue that provision of match-funding by applicants demonstrates commitment from applicants towards the project, and represent a mechanism for ensuring project ownership and that applicants value their project. It also serves to maximise the envelope of available funding and supports long term sustainability, thereby increasing the overall impact of the programme.

Finally, there are some specific suggestions as to how to implement match-funding arrangements other than receiving 100% funding from the PEACE PLUS programme:

- In-kind match-funding, through voluntary contribution and provision of premises, equipment, running costs, etc. In order to apply this, it is considered that the verification levels should be simplified;

- Tiered approach based on size of partners and projects, for example by introducing an equitable and transparent form of "means testing" based on turnover and unrestricted reserves.

5.6. Programme delivery and implementation

A large number of ideas were presented to the SEUPB within survey responses about programme delivery and implementation. Without adding commentary in this report, these ideas and suggestions are under active consideration by the SEUPB with a view to adopting best practice in order to develop key programme and project processes and procedures. The key areas of focus included:

Application and assessment processes

Perception that the process is complex, bureaucratic and could be more accessible. The consequence of this being that it disadvantages small organisations, reduces the pool of potential applicants and lowers the quality of applications.

Respondents felt that a more tightly defined programme criteria limit the ability of organisations to develop creative and innovative projects that have potential to deliver the best possible outcomes and give partners the opportunity to define the need themselves. Smaller groups could either miss out on projects they are suited to deliver and end up with projects with unattainable outcomes.

Eligibility and reimbursement of expenditure

Respondents felt that clearer, more simplified guidance would help the smooth implementation of projects. They also asked for more regular training for all project staff. Some stated that more information upfront would be beneficial to assist understanding and preparation.

With regards to claims, respondents highlighted that the length of time for processing claims can result in cash flow issues (especially for SMEs and community organisations), can delay a project's ability to implement learning from findings for several months and exchange rates may have changed substantially since between defrayment and reimbursement.

Electronic Monitoring System (EMS)

With regards the Electronic Monitoring System, a number of respondents submitted positive remarks including most parts are easy to use, it is beneficial at both application stage and for quarterly project reporting, it is fit for purpose for the overall management of the programme and EU's reporting requirements and digital reporting is highly preferable to paper based reporting.

However, a large number of respondents expressed frustration with the system and suggested solutions including, but not limited to, training and demonstration workshops for all users, from the outset of the projects (including application stage) through the duration of project implementation.

In addition to the areas outlined above, respondents have made a number of suggestions across a range of areas including project launches, communications, programme design and best practice all of which will be reviewed and considered by the SEUPB.

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of consultation respondents

When completing the survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether they were responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. The following 143 organisations submitted a response.

- Academy for International Science and Research
- All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care
- Annagh social farm CIC
- Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Arc21
- Ard na li
- Armagh City Banbridge Craigavon Borough Council
- Armagh City Banbridge Craigavon Borough Council Sports Development
- Ballykelly Men's Shed
- Belfast City Council City and Neighbourhood Services Department
- Belfast Metropolitan College
- Building Communities Resource Centre
- Building Intercultural Communities Project, c/o, Donegal Travellers Project
- Catalyst
- Cavan Arts Festival
- Cavan County Council
- Cavan Innovation and Technology Centre
- Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy
- Centre for Cross Border Studies
- Centre for Independent Living NI
- Coiste na nIarchimí
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
- Controlled Schools' Support Council
- Communities Creating Jobs
- Co-operation and Working Together Partnership (CAWT)
- Co-operation Ireland
- Culmore Community Partnership

- DAFM, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department for the Economy
- Derry City and Strabane District Council
- Derry City and Strabane District Council Peace IV Partnership Board
- Derry City and Strabane District Council Rural Partnership LAG
- Destined Ltd
- Dolans Social Farm
- Donegal County Council
- Drogheda Civic Trust
- Drumlin Wind Energy Co-op
- Dundonald Sea Cadets
- Early Years NI
- East Belfast Community Development Agency
- East Border Region
- Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
- ERNACT
- FAEB, AFBI
- Foroige Amplify South Donegal North Leitrim
- Foróige National Youth Organisation
- Foróige Office
- Foróige Sligo/Leitrim
- GEMS NI
- Greenhill YMCA
- Guysmere Development Panel, Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Healthcare Analytics Ltd
- Housing Rights
- HSC R&D Division, Public Health Agency
- Inspire Business Centre
- Integrated Education Fund
- Interim Selling Solutions
- Inver Colpa Coastal Rowing Club
- Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh
- Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd
- Irish Football Association

- Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful
- Lagan Valley Vineyard Church
- Landscape Institute
- Larnród Éireann
- Liberty Consortium
- Linking Generations Northern Ireland
- Lisburn and Castlereagh Church and Faith Forum
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
- Local Authority Waters Programme, c/o Leitrim County Council
- Loughs Agency
- Lough Neagh Partnership Ltd
- Louth County Council
- Marine Renewables Industry Association (MRIA)
- Marine Scotland
- Mencap
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council - Investment and Funding Unit
- Mourne Heritage Trust
- National Economic and Social Council
- National Youth Council of Ireland
- NESC
- New-Bridge Integrated College
- Newry and Mourne District Council
- NI Environment Link
- Northern Ireland Water
- NIACRO
- NICVA
- Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
- Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
- Northern Regional College
- Northern Visions/NVTV
- Northlands Independent Treatment Centre
- O'Brien Centre for Science - East, University College Dublin (UCD),
- Omagh Forum for Rural Associations
- Open Doors Project

- Optimum Results Ltd
- Pat Finucane Centre
- Peace Bytes
- Perspective Economics
- POBAL
- Portadown Wellness Centre
- Queen's University Belfast
- Queen's University Belfast (Research and Enterprise)
- River Blackwater Catchment Trust (RBCT)
- RSPB NI
- RSPB Scotland
- Rural Community Network
- Shaping Ourselves and Our Children (SOOC)
- Skills North West
- Sligo County Council
- Smashing Time International Centre for the Arts and Equality
- Social Farming Support Service
- South West College
- Springhill Community House
- St Patricks/Badoney Ladies
- STEAM Zone Charity, NI Science Park/Catalyst
- Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project Ltd
- Sustrans
- Tar Isteach
- The Agri-food and Bioscience Institute
- The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
- The Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC)
- The Eastern Corridor Medical Engineering Centre (ECME)
- The Edge Youth & Community Centre
- The Genesis Programme
- The Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation
- The Prince's Trust
- The Victim and Survivors Service
- The Wheel

- Translink
- Údarás na Gaeltachta
- Ulster Farmers Union North West Derry Group
- Ulster Farmer's Union
- Ulster GAA
- Ulster Human Rights Watch
- Ulster Wildlife
- University of the Highlands and Islands
- University of Ulster, Centre for Advanced Sustainable Technologies, Jordanstown Campus
- University of Ulster, Magee Campus
- Volunteer Ireland
- West Armagh Consortium
- Women's Centre, Derry/L'Derry
- WRAP, Business in the Community
- YouthPact on behalf of the partners Cooperation Ireland, Ulster University, POBAL and the National Youth Council of Ireland.

- Aighneacht
- Conradh na Gaelilge
- County Councils - Joint submission
- Executive Office – Peace Plus
- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
- Leitrim County Council
- Mid South West Regional Council
- Mid Ulster District Council
- Monaghan Co Council
- Rural Action
- Strategic Investment Board
- Strive Youth Partnership
- Northern Ireland Youth Forum

A further 98 organisations submitted a response but asked for the details of their organisation not to be published.

We have not included a list of 79 individuals who responded, however, all responses were given equal status in the analysis.

Additionally, the following 13 organisations provided submissions outside the formal survey process that were analysed as part of the qualitative analysis.

Appendix 2. Survey data frequencies

Figure 1: Rate the relevance of actions to improve community and social cohesion
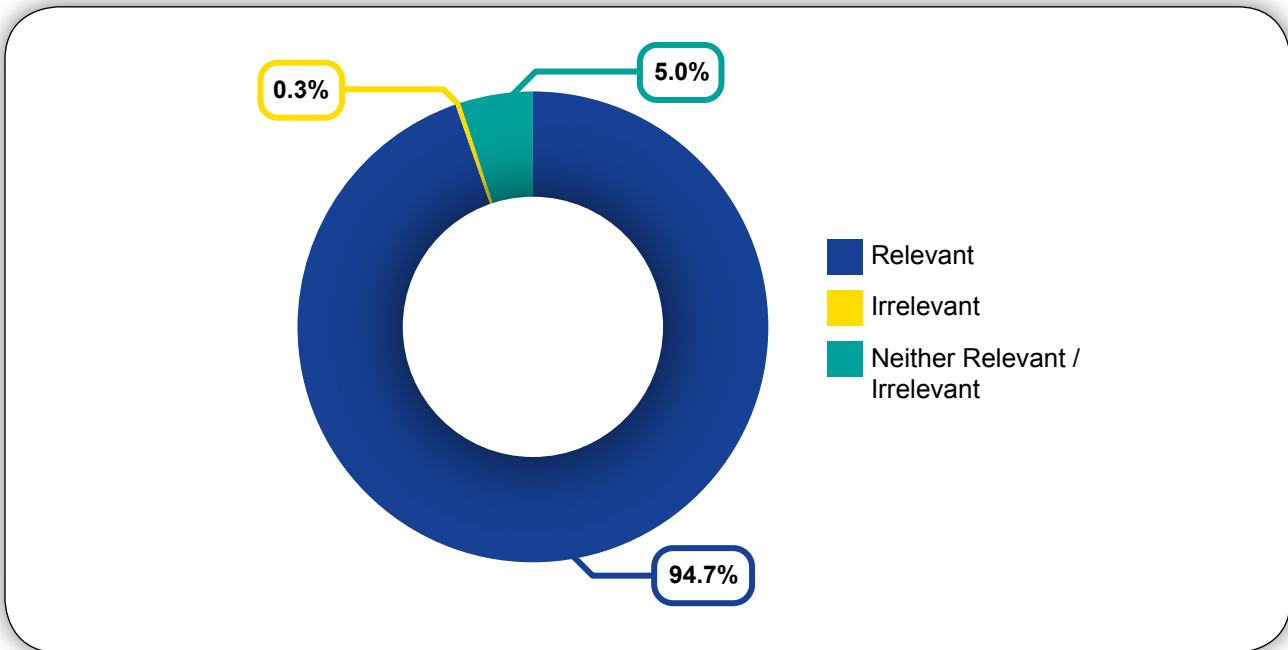
Rating	Frequency
2	1
4	15
5	29
6	39
7	216
Total	300
Missing*	20
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Relevant	284	94.7%
Irrelevant	1	0.3%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	15	5.0%
Total	300	100.0%

Missing includes: Don't Know (4) and did not answer (16)

Almost all respondents (94.7%) felt this was relevant, three quarters of which (76%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 6.5 which suggests that respondents rated this action as highly relevant for achieving peace and reconciliation.

Figure 2: Rate the relevance of actions for improving employment opportunities
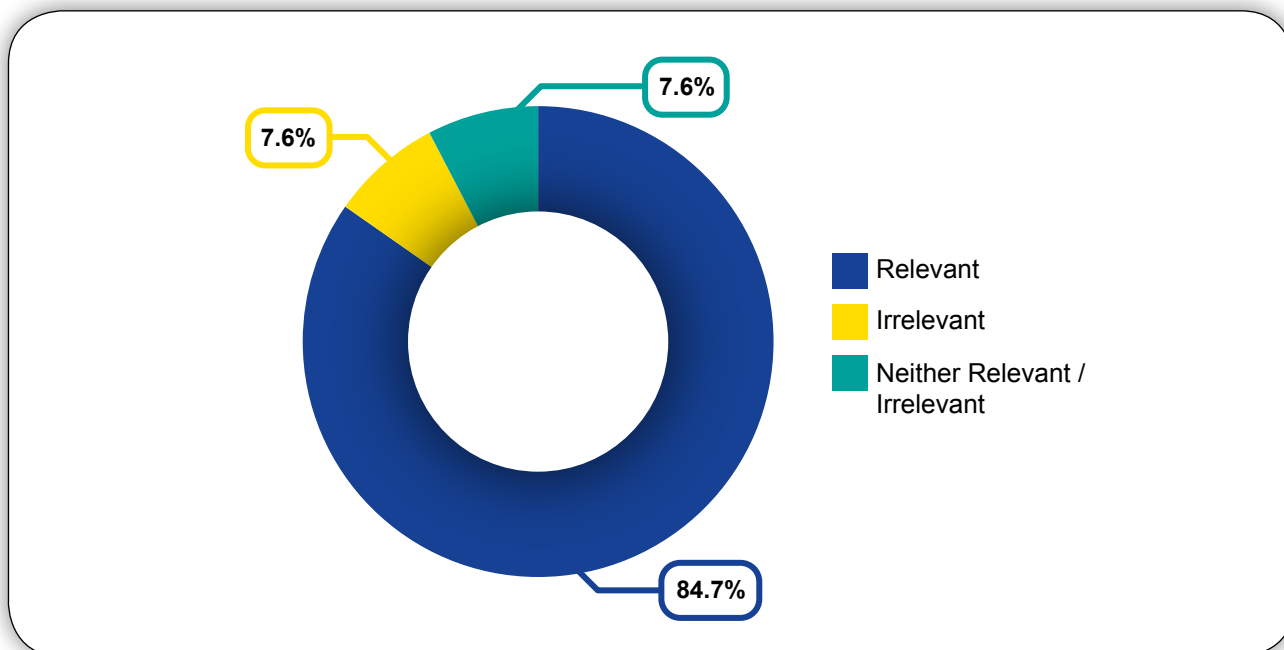
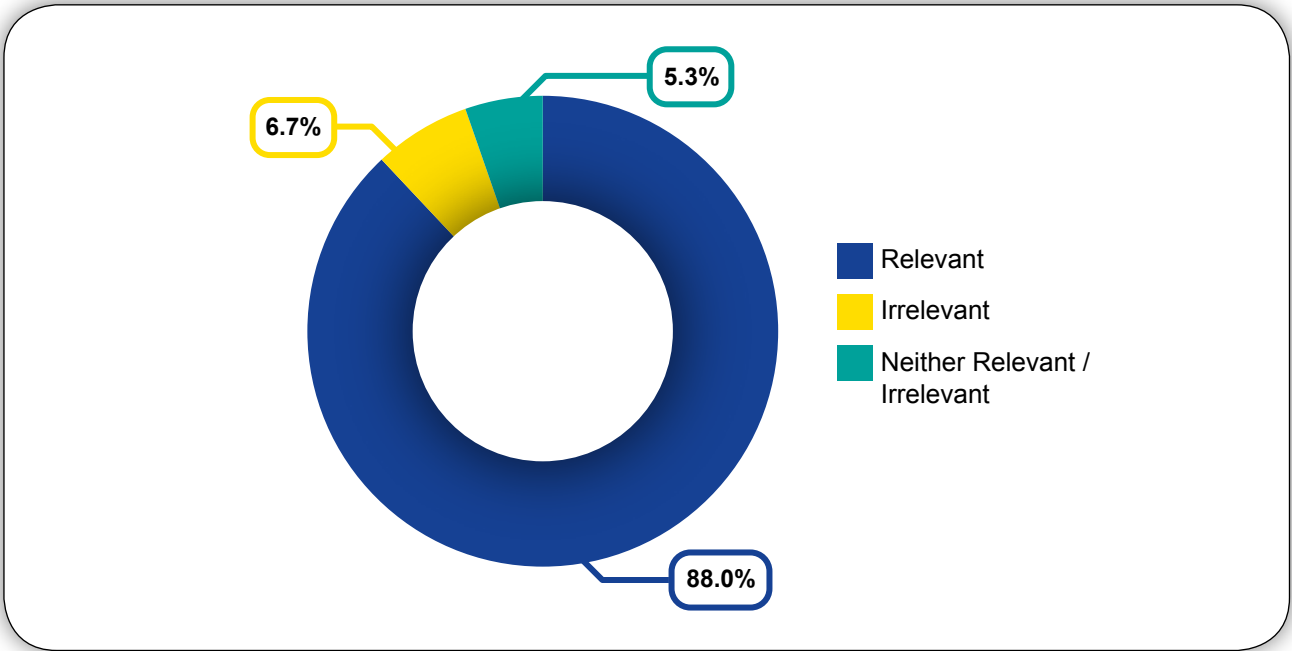| Rating	Frequency
1	2
2	6
3	15
4	23
5	54
6	60
7	141
Total	301
Missing*	19
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Relevant	255	84.7%
Irrelevant	23	7.6%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	23	7.6%
Total	301	100.0%
Missing*	19	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (5) and did not answer (14)

Over eight in ten respondents (84.7%) felt this was relevant, 7.6% felt it wasn't relevant and 7.6% felt it was neither relevant nor irrelevant. Of those that considered it relevant, over half (55.2%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 5.9 which suggests that respondents rated this action as considerably relevant for achieving peace and reconciliation.

**Figure 3: Rate the relevance of increasing access to quality education**

Rating	Frequency
1	1
2	8
3	11
4	16
5	43
6	71
7	150
Total	300
Missing*	20
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Relevant	264	88.0%
Irrelevant	20	6.7%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	16	5.3%
Total	300	100.0%
Missing*	20	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (6) and did not answer (14)

Almost nine in ten respondents (88.0%) felt this was relevant, 6.7% felt it wasn't relevant and 5.3% felt it was neither relevant nor irrelevant. Of those that considered it relevant, over half (56.8%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 6.0 which suggests that respondents rated this action as considerably relevant.

Figure 4: Rate the relevance of reducing marginalisation through improved housing and services
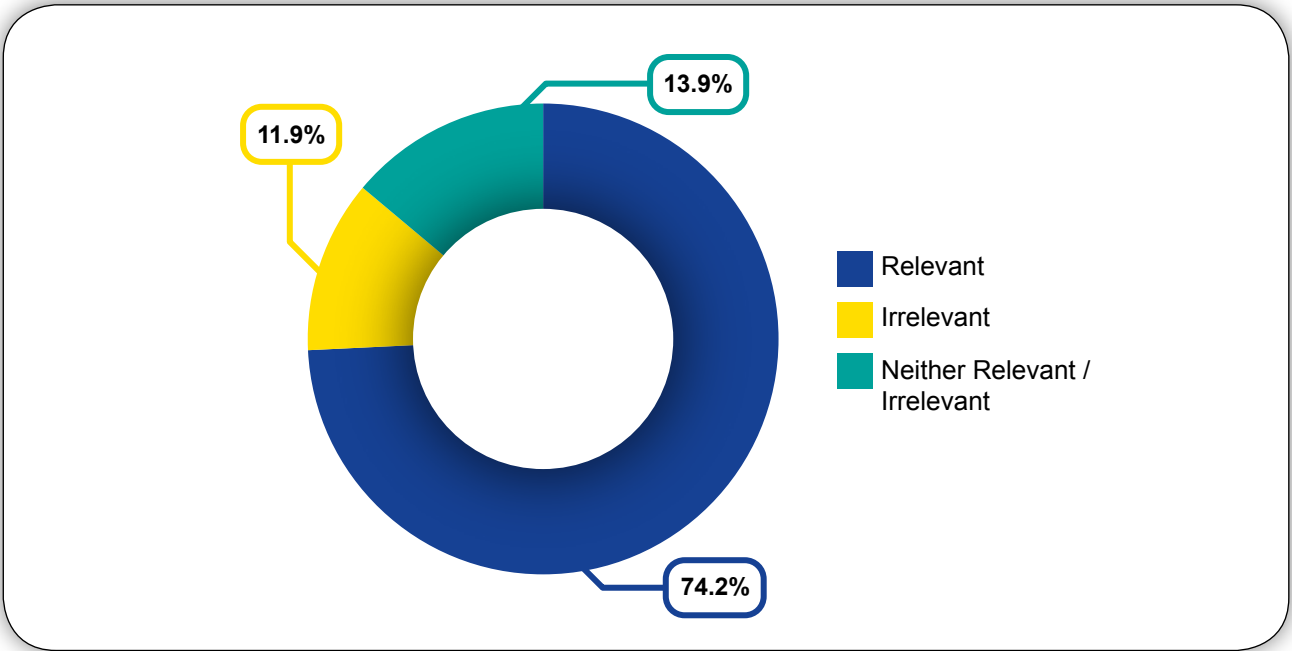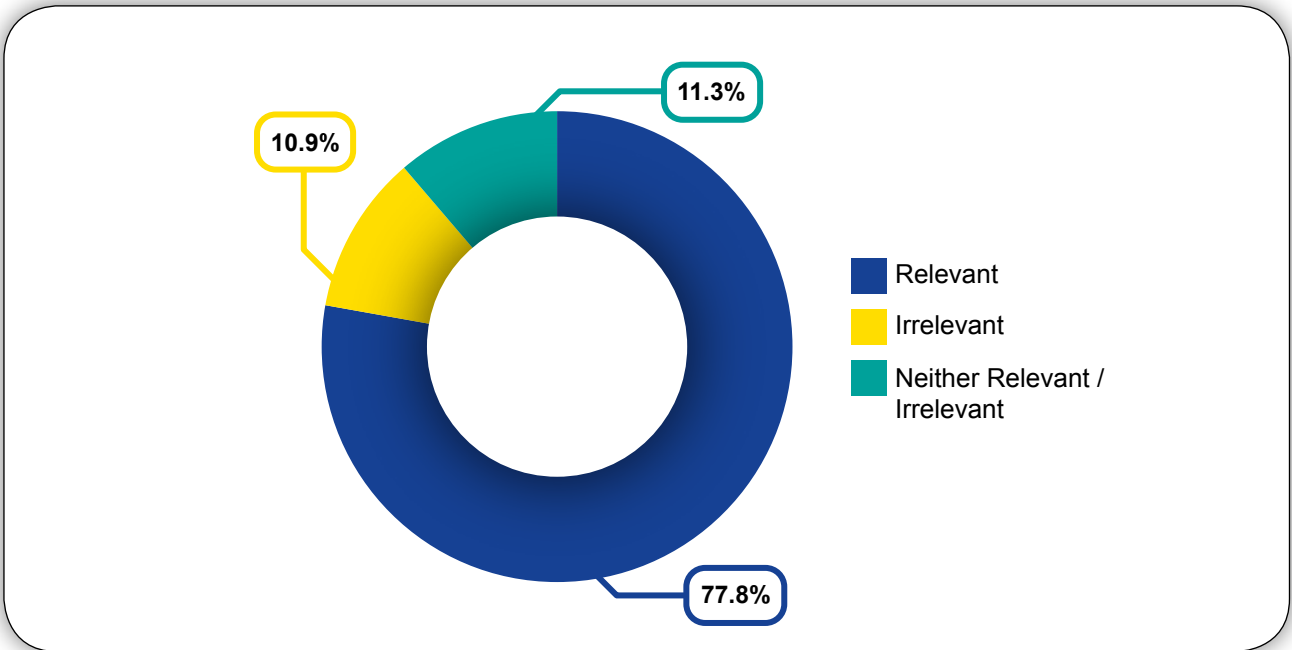

Rating	Frequency
1	2
2	13
3	20
4	41
5	64
6	60
7	95
Total	295
Missing*	25
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Relevant	219	74.2%
Irrelevant	35	11.9%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	41	13.9%
Total	295	100.0%
Missing*	25	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (7) and did not answer (18).

Almost three quarters of respondents (74.2%) felt this was relevant, 11.9% felt it wasn't relevant and 13.9% felt it was neither relevant nor irrelevant. Of those that considered it relevant, less than half (43.4%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 5.4 which suggests that respondents rated this action as moderately relevant.

Figure 5: Rate the relevance of increasing access to quality healthcare in the region
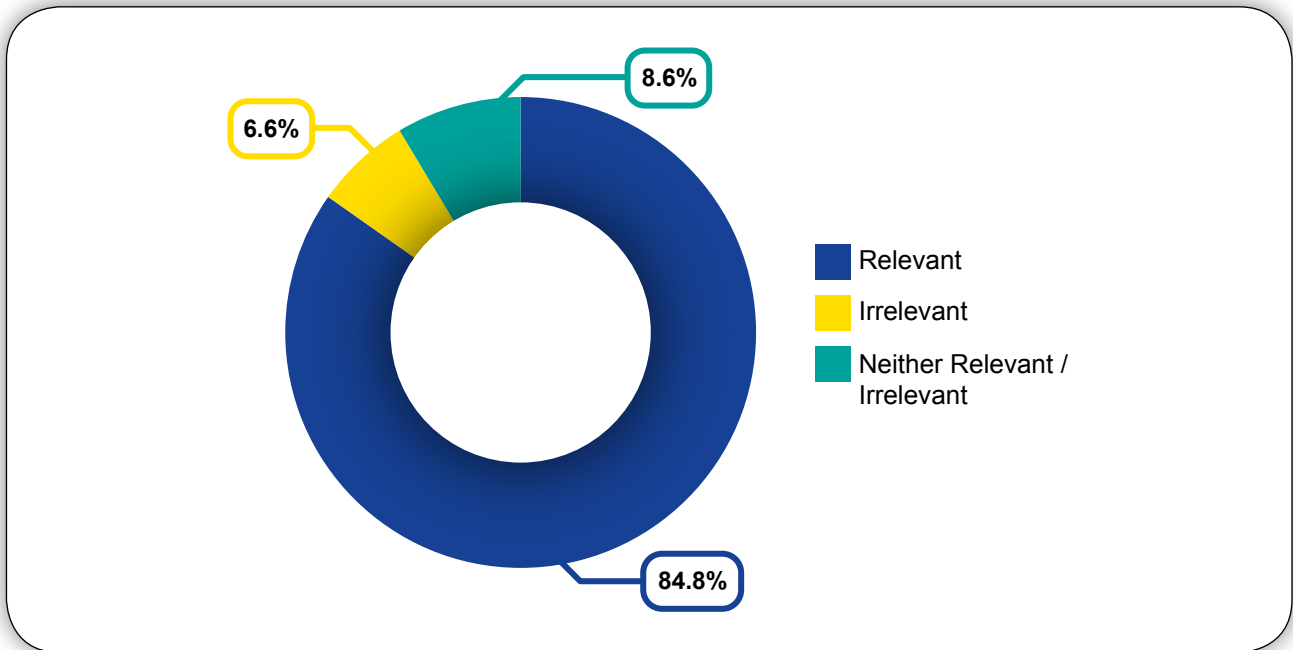

Rating	Frequency
1	4
2	10
3	18
4	33
5	59
6	60
7	109
Total	293
Missing*	27
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Relevant	228	77.8%
Irrelevant	32	10.9%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	33	11.3%
Total	293	100.0%
Missing*	27	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (9) and did not answer (18).

Almost eight in ten of respondents (77.8%) felt this was relevant, 10.9% felt it wasn't relevant and 11.3% felt it was neither relevant nor irrelevant. Of those that considered it relevant, almost half (47.8%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 5.6 which suggests that respondents rated this action as moderately relevant.

**Figure 6: Rate the relevance of other peace building activities**

- 8.6%
- 6.6%
- 84.8%

Legend:
- Relevant
- Irrelevant
- Neither Relevant / Irrelevant

Rating	Frequency
1	4
2	6
3	7
4	22
5	29
6	54
7	134
Total	256
Missing*	64
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Relevant	217	84.8%
Irrelevant	17	6.6%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	22	8.6%
Total	256	100.0%
Missing*	64	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (28) and did not answer (36)

Over eight in ten of respondents (84.8%) felt this was relevant, 6.6% felt it wasn't relevant and 8.6% felt it was neither relevant nor irrelevant. Of those that considered it relevant, well over half (61.7%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 6.0 which suggests that respondents rated this action as considerably relevant.

**Figure 7: Rate the relevance of Policy Objective 1 - A Smarter Europe**
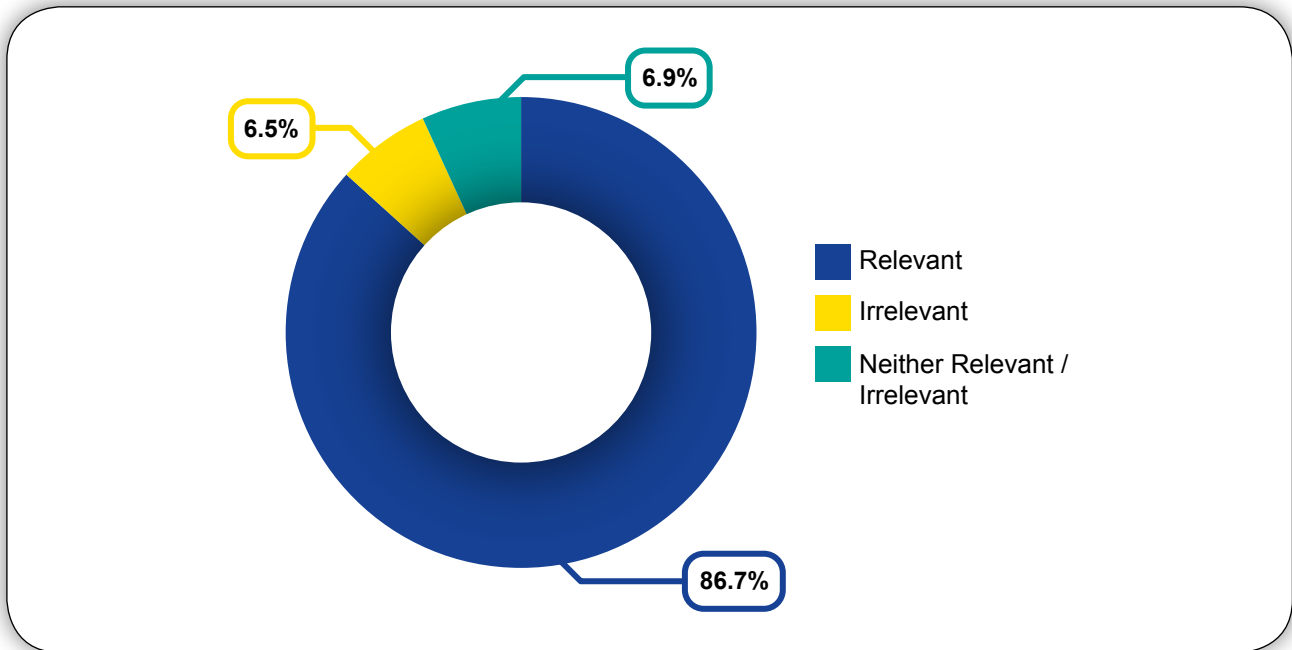
Rating	Frequency
1	2
2	3
3	11
4	17
5	41
6	48
7	126
Total	248
Missing*	72
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid §%
Relevant	215	86.7%
Irrelevant	16	6.5%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	17	6.9%
Total	248	100.0%
Missing*	72	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (16) and did not answer (56)

Almost nine in ten of respondents (86.7%) felt this was relevant, 6.5% felt it wasn't relevant and 6.9% felt it was neither relevant nor irrelevant. Of those that considered it relevant, well over half (58.6%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 6.0 which suggests that respondents rated this policy objective as considerably relevant.

Figure 8: Rate the Relevance of Policy Objective 2 - A Greener, Lower Carbon Europe
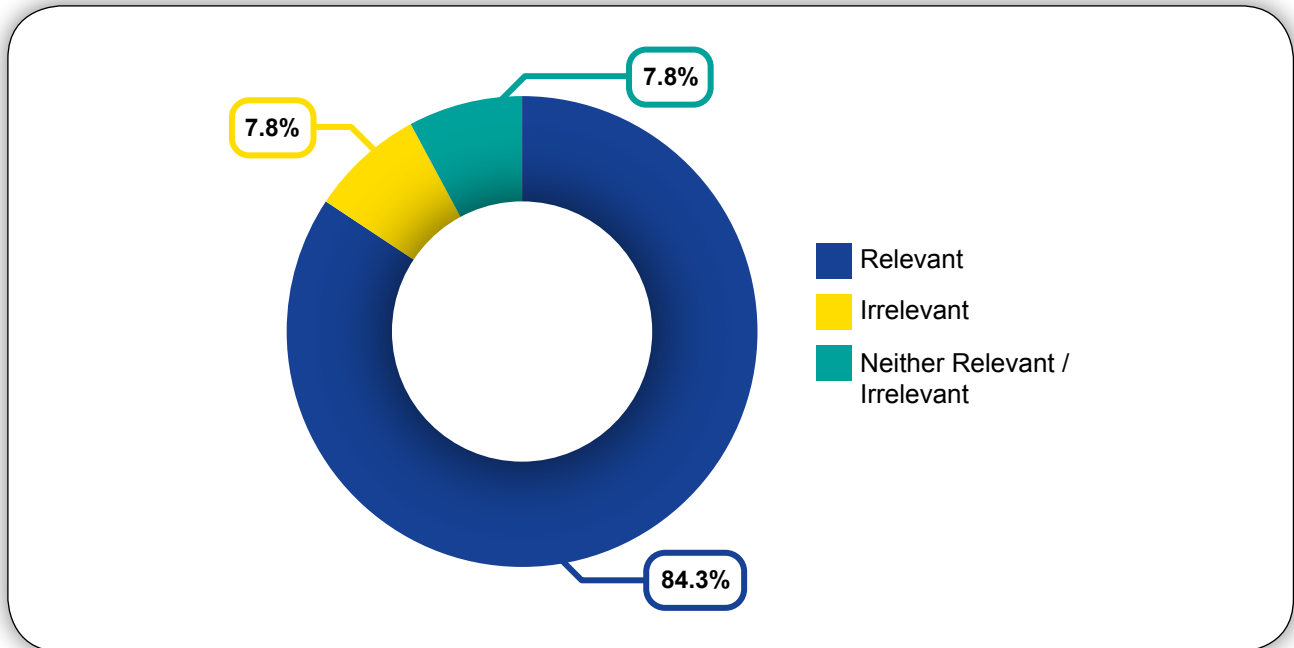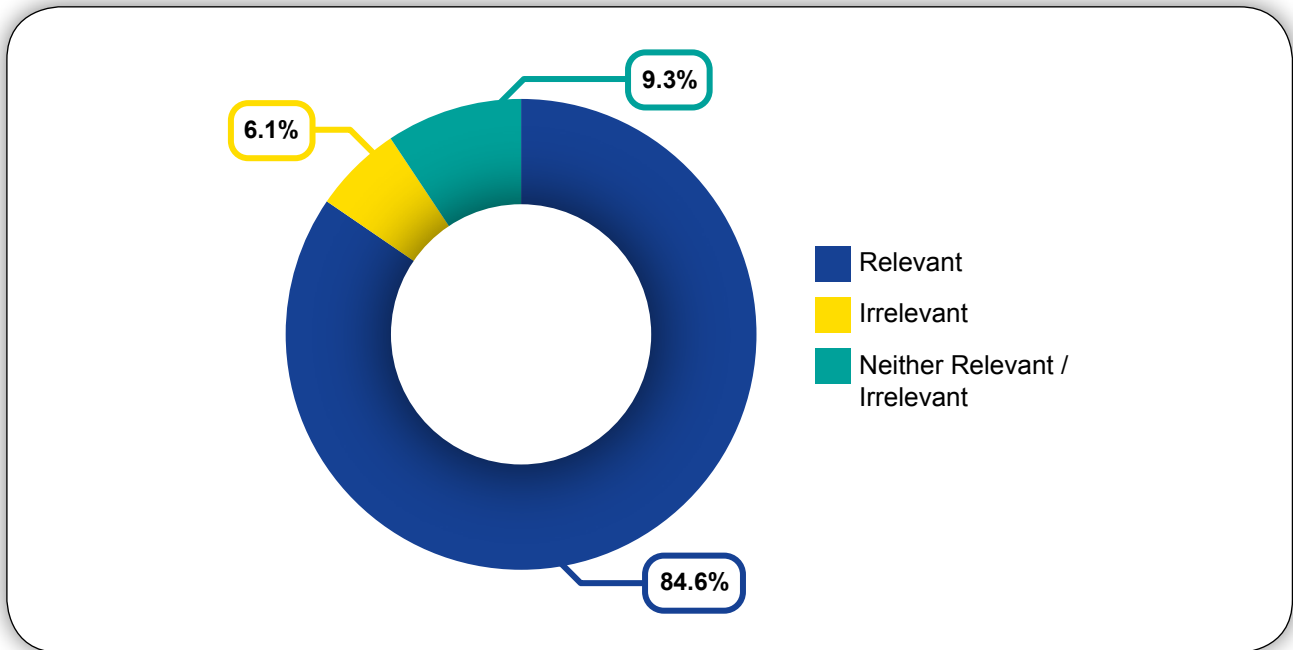

Rating	Frequency
1	6
2	8
3	6
4	20
5	30
6	45
7	140
Total	255
Missing*	65
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Relevant	215	84.3%
Irrelevant	20	7.8%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	20	7.8%
Total	255	100.0%
Missing*	65	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (15) and did not answer (50)

Over eight in ten of respondents (84.3%) felt this was relevant, 7.8% felt it wasn't relevant and 7.8% felt it was neither relevant nor irrelevant. Of those that considered it relevant, almost two-thirds (65.1%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 6.0 which suggests that respondents rated this policy objective as considerably relevant.

**Figure 9: Rate the Relevance of Policy Objective 3 - A More Connected Europe**

Rating	Frequency
1	3
2	2
3	10
4	23
5	41
6	65
7	102
Total	246
Missing*	74
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Relevant	208	84.6%
Irrelevant	15	6.1%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	23	9.3%
Total	246	100.0%
Missing*	74	
Total	320	

*Missing includes Don't Know (18) and did not answer (56)

Over eight in ten of respondents (84.6%) felt this was relevant, 6.1% felt it wasn't relevant and 9.3% felt it was neither relevant nor irrelevant. Of those that considered it relevant, almost half (49.0%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 5.9 which suggests that respondents rated this policy objective as considerably relevant.

**Figure 10: Rate the relevance of Policy Objective 4 - A More Social Europe**
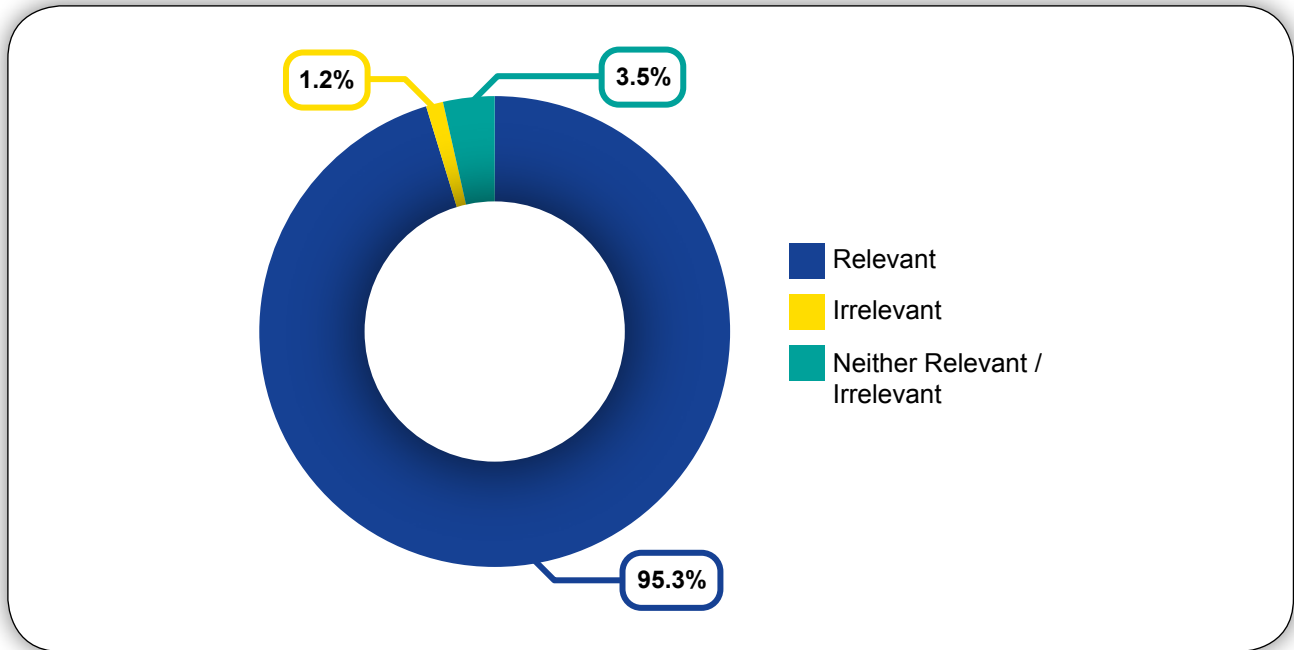
Rating	Frequency
3	3
4	9
5	17
6	42
7	184
Total	255
Missing*	65
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Relevant	243	95.3%
Irrelevant	3	1.2%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	9	3.5%
Total	255	100.0%
Missing*	65	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (9) and did not answer (56)

Almost all respondents (95.3%) felt this was relevant, of which three quarters (75.7%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 6.5 which suggests that respondents rated this policy objective as highly relevant.

Figure 11: Rate the Relevance of Policy Objective 5 - A Europe Closer to its Citizens
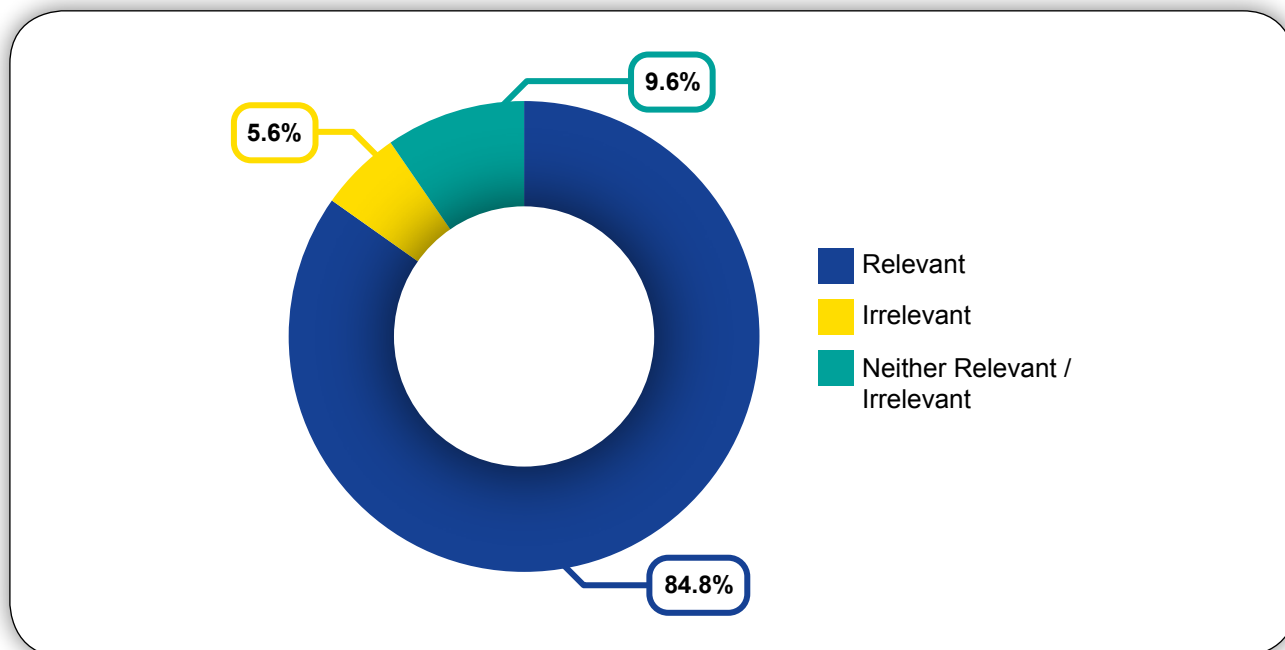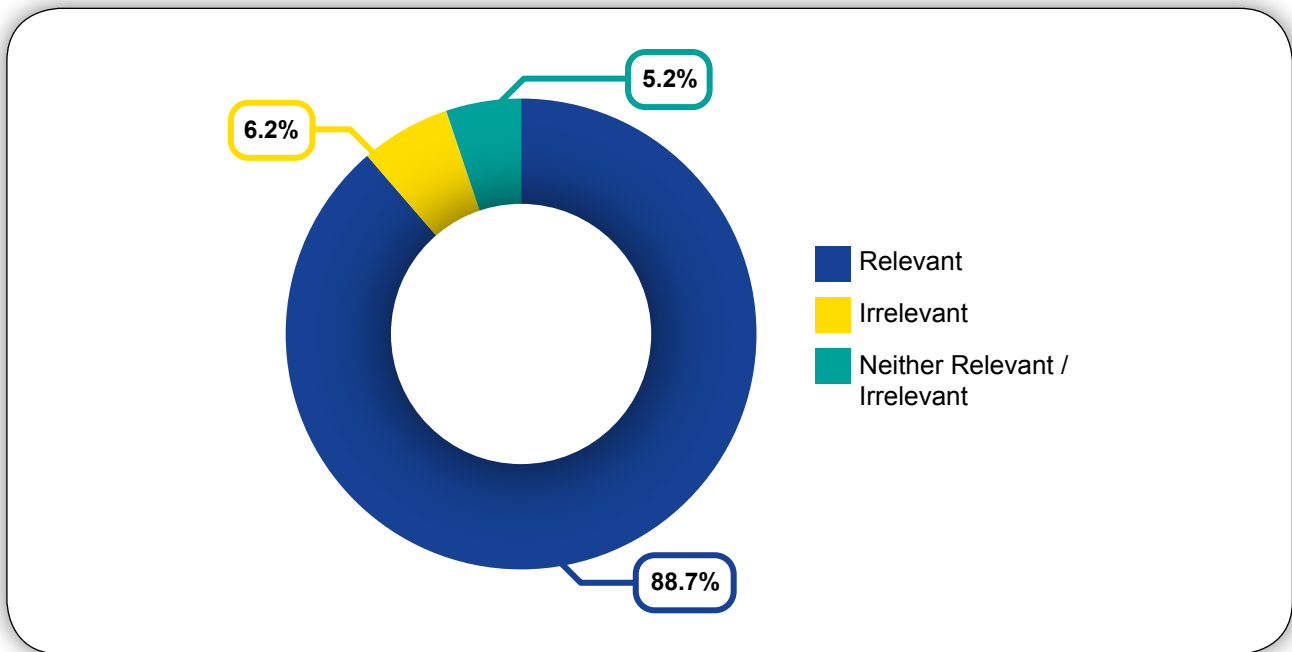

Rating	Frequency
1	1
2	3
3	10
4	24
5	40
6	52
7	120
Total	250
Missing*	70
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Relevant	212	84.8%
Irrelevant	14	5.6%
Neither Relevant/Irrelevant	24	9.6%
Total	250	100.0%
Missing*	70	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (10) and did not answer (60)

Over eight in ten of respondents (84.8%) felt this was relevant, 5.6% felt it wasn't relevant and 9.6% felt it was neither relevant nor irrelevant. Of those that considered it relevant, over half (56.6%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 5.9 which suggests that respondents rated this policy objective as considerably relevant.

Figure 12: Extent to which greater use of flat rates would simplify the management and implementation of projects
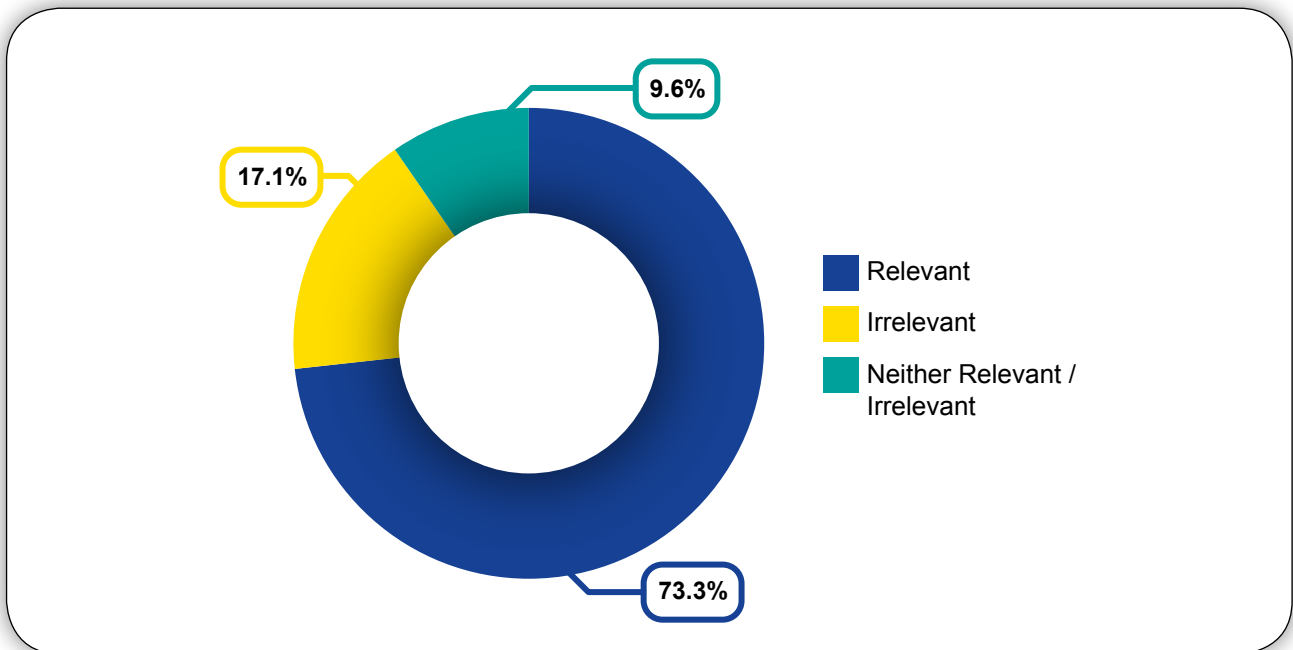

Rating	Frequency
1	4
2	1
3	7
4	10
5	18
6	47
7	107
Total	194
Missing*	126
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Beneficial	172	88.7%
Not Beneficial	12	6.2%
Neither Beneficial/Not Beneficial	10	5.2%
Total	194	100.0%
Missing*	126	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (51) and did not answer (75)

88.7% of respondents felt this would be beneficial, 6.2% felt it wasn't beneficial and 5.2% felt it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial. More than half (62.2%) of those that considered flat rate as beneficial rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 6.1 which suggests that respondents rated this measure as particularly beneficial.

Figure 13: Extent to which greater use of unit costs would simplify the management and implementation of project
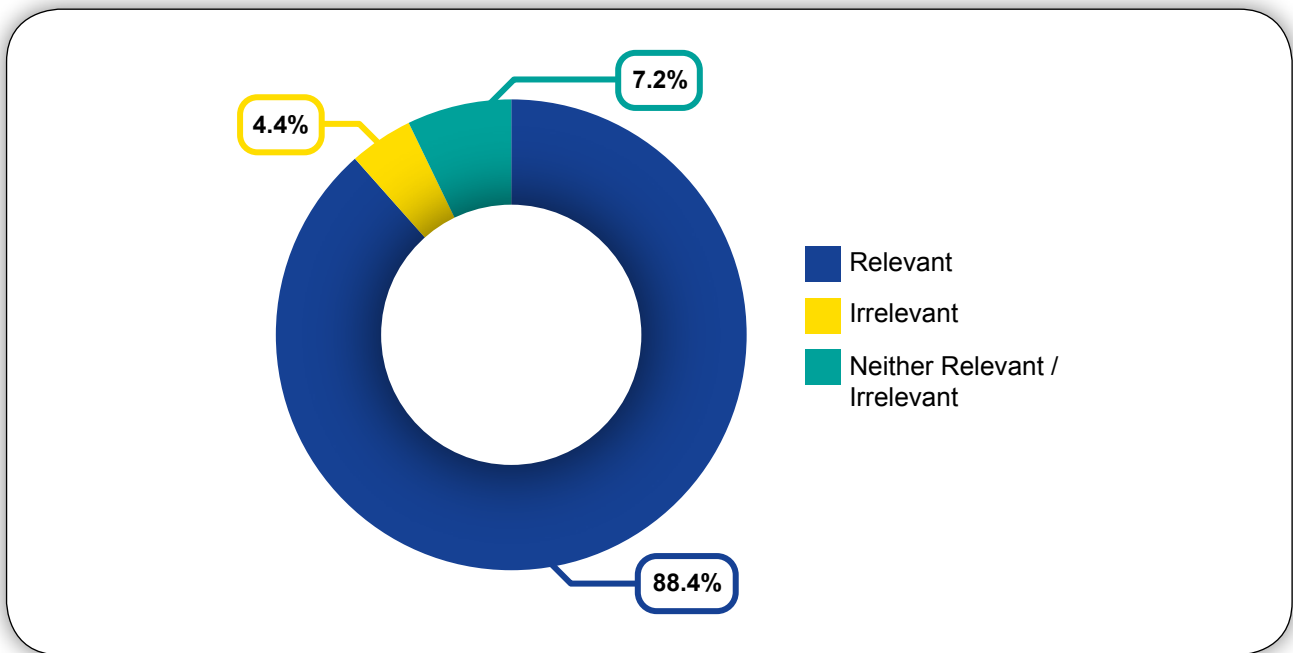

Rating	Frequency
1	14
2	12
3	6
4	18
5	23
6	41
7	73
Total	187
Missing*	133
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Beneficial	137	73.3%
Not Beneficial	32	17.1%
Neither Beneficial/Not Beneficial	18	9.6%
Total	187	100.0%
Missing*	133	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (59) and did not answer (74)

Almost three quarters (73.3%) of respondents felt this would be beneficial, 17.1% felt it wasn't beneficial and 9.6% felt it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial. Of those that considered it beneficial, just over half (53.3%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 5.3 which suggests that respondents rated unit costs as somewhat beneficial.

Figure 14: Rate how beneficial expert assistance supporting project development would be while applying for funding
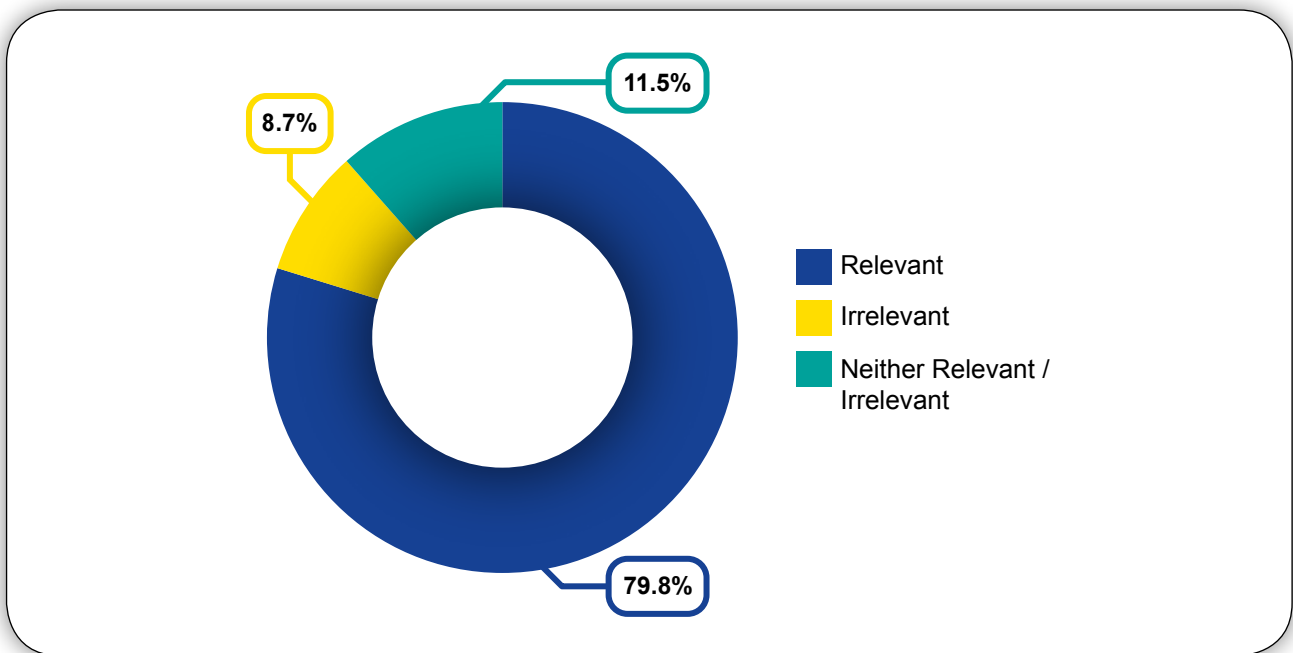

Rating	Frequency
1	3
2	4
3	4
4	18
5	28
6	41
7	153
Total	251
Missing*	69
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Beneficial	222	88.4%
Not Beneficial	11	4.4%
Neither Beneficial/not beneficial	18	7.2%
Total	251	100.0%
Missing*	69	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (5) and did not answer (64)

Almost nine in ten respondents (88.4%) felt this was beneficial, 4.4% felt it wasn't beneficial and 7.2% felt it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial. Of those that considered it beneficial, more than two thirds (68.9%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 6.2 which suggests that respondents rated this measure as particularly beneficial.

Figure 15: Rate how beneficial events, including networking events and project development workshops would be while applying for funding
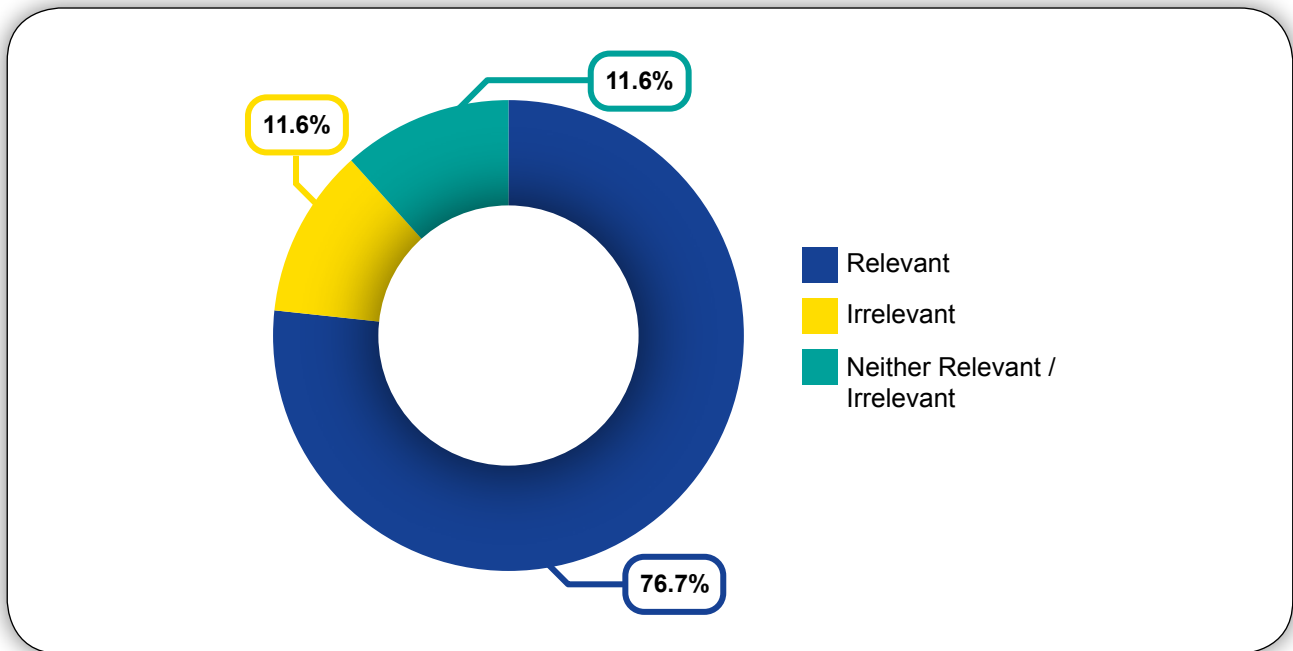

Rating	Frequency
1	1
2	4
3	17
4	29
5	42
6	48
7	111
Total	252
Missing*	68
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Beneficial	201	79.8%
Not Beneficial	22	8.7%
Neither Beneficial/not beneficial	29	11.5%
Total	252	100.0%
Missing*	68	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (4) and did not answer (64)

Eight in ten respondents (79.8%) felt this was beneficial, 8.7% felt it wasn't beneficial and 11.5% felt it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial. Of those that considered it beneficial, more than half (55.2%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 5.8 which suggests that respondents rated this measure as somewhat beneficial.

Figure 16: Rate how beneficial additional materials published online, including manuals and instruction videos to support the development of projects would be
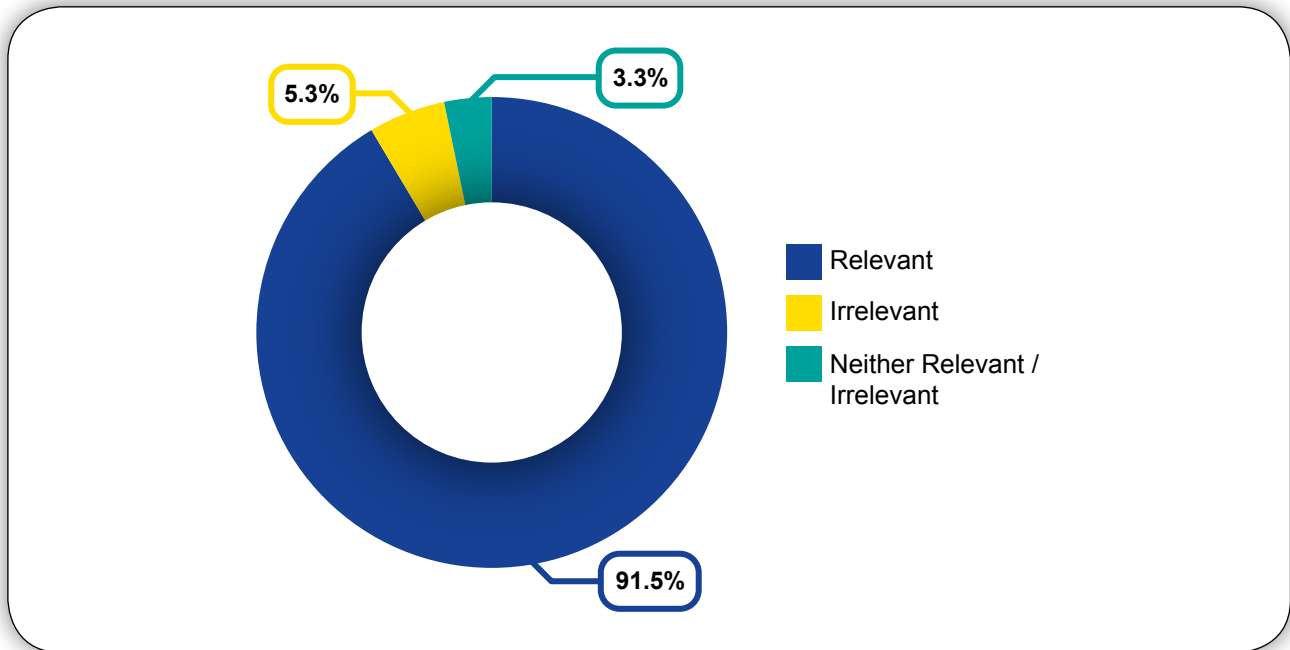

Rating	Frequency
1	2
2	10
3	17
4	29
5	47
6	52
7	92
Total	249
Missing*	71
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Beneficial	191	76.7%
Not Beneficial	29	11.6%
Neither Beneficial/not beneficial	29	11.6%
Total	249	100.0%
Missing*	71	
Total	320	

Missing includes Don't Know (4) and did not answer (67)

Over three quarters of respondents (76.7%) felt this was beneficial, 11.6% felt it wasn't beneficial and 11.6% felt it was neither beneficial nor not beneficial. Of those that considered it beneficial, less than half (48.2%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 5.5 which suggests that respondents rated this issue as somewhat beneficial.

Figure 17: Rate how beneficial lump sum payments for preparation costs would be

Rating	Frequency
1	2
2	5
3	6
4	8
5	22
6	40
7	163
Total	246
Missing*	74
Total	320

Rating	Frequency	Valid %
Beneficial	225	91.5%
Not Beneficial	13	5.3%
Neither Beneficial/not beneficial	8	3.3%
Total	246	100.0%
Missing*	74	
Total	320	

*Missing includes Don't Know (8) and did not answer (66).

91.5% of respondents felt this was beneficial, of which almost three-quarters (72.4%) rated it at the highest possible level (grade 7). The average rating is 6.3 which suggests that respondents rated lump sum payments to assist with preparation as highly beneficial.

Appendix 3. Glossary of terms

Table 3. Glossary

BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.
Common provisions – Proposal for a Regulation COM(2018) 375 and annexes	This proposed regulation sets out common rules on planning of programmes, thematic objectives, financial management and monitoring and evaluation of programmes. These rules will apply to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).
Cooperation Programme	The Cooperation Programme is the document codifying programme objectives, results and the types of actions that will receive funding. It describes how these respond to identified challenges and needs of the region. It also sets out arrangements for the management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.
EMS	Electronic Monitoring System.
ESF	The European Social Fund is Europe's main financial tool for promoting employment and social inclusion.
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation, also known as INTERREG, is one of the two goals of cohesion policy and provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from different Member States.
EV	Electric vehicle.
ERDF	The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by reducing inequalities between its regions. A specific portion of the fund is dedicated to border regions. This is called European Territorial Cooperation or INTERREG.
ERDF and Cohesion Funds – Proposal for a Regulation COM(2018) 372 and annexes	This proposed regulation sets out the rules in relation to the overall goals of cohesion policy and the management and control systems for cohesion policy funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Funding for the PEACE PLUS Programme will come from ERDF and are therefore subject to the provisions of this Regulation.
Flat rates	Where costs are calculated through an automatic calculation. An example of a Flat Rate in the 2014-2020 programming period is the Flat Rate at which partners claim costs under the Budget Heading: "Office and Administration Costs". Projects do not claim actual costs related to Office and Administration (photocopying, electricity bills etc). Instead the value of these costs are automatically calculated as rate at which "Office and Administration Costs" are reimbursed (15% of eligible Staff Costs).
Green and blue infrastructure	Green and blue infrastructure is a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services such as water purification, air quality, space for recreation and climate mitigation and adaptation.

H2020	Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation Programme ever, with nearly €80 billion of funding available over seven years (2014 to 2020), in addition to the private investment that this money will attract.
ICT	Information and Communication Technology.
Intervention Rate	The percentage of the total project budget financed by ERDF.
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland.
Simplified Cost Options	The idea of payment via simplified cost options, as opposed payment of real costs, is to reduce the complexity of reimbursement processes by making payments on the basis of predefined rates.

The main kinds of simplified costs options used by the current programmes are: "flat rates" and "unit costs". |
| **SME** | Small and Medium Enterprises. SMEs are defined by the European Commission as having less than 250 persons employed. They should also have an annual turnover of up to EUR 50 million, or a balance sheet total of no more than EUR 43 million. |
| **Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)** | We are 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".

The SEUPB is responsible for the implementation of the EU's PEACE IV (€270m) and INTERREG VA (€283m) Programmes. The SEUPB also have a signposting role to promote involvement in the INTERREG VB Transnational and INTERREG VC Interregional Programmes. |
Specific provisions for territorial cooperation – Proposal for a Regulation COM(2018) 374	This proposed regulation sets out the specific programming and reporting arrangements for cross-border, transnational and interregional programmes. It sets out the Policy Objectives the ERDF, eligibility criteria, financial resources available and criteria for their allocation. It also sets the implementation arrangements, including plans for financial management and control. The PEACE PLUS Programme will be funded as European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and are therefore subject to the provisions of this Regulation.
STEM	Disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
TEN-T	The TEN-T programme consists of hundreds of projects – defined as studies or works – whose ultimate purpose is to ensure the cohesion, interconnection and interoperability of the trans-European transport network, as well as access to it.
Unit Costs	Where payments are tied to the delivery of pre-agreed outputs rather than based on the direct costs related to producing the output. An example of a Unit Cost in the 2014-2020 programming period is the Unit Cost for SMEs attending a project workshop. Under this Unit Cost, partners can claim a fee for each SME that attends a workshop, rather than the actual costs associated with the workshop.

Special EU Programmes Body
Foras Um Chláir Speisialta An AE
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