



Press Release

Date: 16 August 2018

LAUNCHING PEACE BYTES, HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND

A new initiative from the Bytes Project, working across communities to help empower young people in Northern Ireland.

Today marked the launch of Peace Bytes, an innovative new, four year programme of youth work in some of the most deprived communities in Northern Ireland. Regions including areas of Belfast, Derry/Strabane and Antrim & Newtonabbey where recent BBC investigation has shown some of the highest rates of avoidable deaths in the United Kingdom. Funding for this new project has been provided in the form of €3.8m from the PEACE IV Programme, which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

In light of events in Northern Ireland this summer, with disturbances involving significant numbers of young people in divided communities, our work to engage and build relationships between and with young people is needed more than ever.

Using the Bytes Project's unique Creative ICT approach, along with traditional youth work methodologies, Peace Bytes is working closely with long-standing community-based project partners in Rathcoole and the Merville area in order to target, recruit and retain young people aged between 14 and 24.

Participants will experience cultural interaction and exchange with members of different communities and have the opportunity to earn a minimum of 3 OCN qualifications. They will be supported throughout by dedicated youth workers, on a 1-to-1 basis if necessary, helping to provide better prospects and encouraging them to take a more active role in society



At an event held in new premises in the Diamond, Derry/Londonderry - made possible through the support of Inner City Trust - assembled guests saw examples of work from the first cohort of young people to go through the Peace Bytes programme, and heard from young people and youth workers about plans for the future, including live streamed video from Peace Bytes centres in Newtonabby and East Inishowen.

Roger Warnock, incoming Director of the Bytes Project, said: **“Peace Bytes is a vital initiative that will bring the Bytes Project’s two decades of experience to communities across Northern Ireland and the border. Through empowering and engaging with marginalised young people, we hope to foster new cross-community ties and help future leaders flourish. I personally am very excited about both taking on the role of Director and the opportunities that the work of Peace Bytes will bring about for communities we work with.”**

Welcoming the project Gina McIntyre, CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body said: **“This cross-border project will reach hundreds of vulnerable children and young people, who may be feeling excluded or marginalised, using a wide-range of innovative online tools and resources. It will take advantage of the latest communication technologies to develop their confidence, resilience and citizenship skills. The project will also meet the core objectives of the EU’s PEACE IV Programme as it will positively transform the lives of young people, on both sides of the community, in order to create a more cohesive and peaceful society.”**

Match-funding for the project has been provided by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in Ireland.

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For more information please contact John McCandless, Communications Manager with the SEUPB on Mob. 07834 778018 or via e-mail john.mccandless@seupb.eu



NOTES TO EDITORS:

SEUPB

- The Special EU Programmes Body is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland.
- It is responsible for managing two EU Structural Funds Programmes, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA which are designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society.
- The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and in the case of INTERREG VA, Western Scotland.
- The PEACE IV Programme has a value of €270 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders.
- For more information on the SEUPB please visit www.seupb.eu

Peace Bytes

- Peace Bytes is a cross-community initiative aimed at engaging marginalised young people aged 14 - 25. Based on the previous work of the Bytes Project, over 25 years of youth and community work experience has gone into developing our programme of training, mentoring and community engagement.
- Focusing on Newtownabbey, Derry/Londonderry and East Inishowen, the organisation aims to provide support and training for marginalised young people across community divides.
- For young people who complete the programme, a minimum of 3 OCN qualifications are guaranteed.