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NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE BORDER REGION OF IRELAND
EU PROGRAMME FOR PEACE & RECONCILIATION

(2014 - 2020)

CCI No: 2014TC16RFPC001

MINUTES MONITORING COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday 20th May 2021

Remote Meeting via MS Teams

Attendance

A list of attendees and apologies is attached at Annex II.

1. Welcome and introduction by Chairperson

The Chair welcomed attendees to the eleventh meeting of the PEACE IV Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) 2014-2020; the second to be held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

The Chair welcomed all Members, including **EU Commission Desk Officers Joanne Knight** and **Kris Magnus**, and introduced **Paul Beattie** as the **new Managing Authority Director**.

Changes to the PEACE IV PMC membership were outlined, and newly appointed Members were asked to extend a thank you on behalf of SEUPB to the departing representatives they replaced.

The Chair provided an update on developments in Programme implementation since the previous PMC meeting on 17 November 2020, as follows;

- The impact of Covid has been evident across all themes in the Peace IV Programme, and the SEUPB has been working closely with projects on achievement of their outputs.

As a result of Covid restrictions, a significant number of extension requests have been received, which will be detailed in the JS Director's presentation;

- Despite challenges, the SEUPB has prepared and concluded public consultation on the PEACE PLUS Programme; a detailed update will be provided later in the agenda;
- The PEACE IV Programme is fully committed, and SEUPB staff across three offices continue working remotely from home, ensuring projects are fully supported, and;
- **The Chair** welcomed the recent easing of Covid restrictions and the potential that the next PEACE IV PMC may be able to meet in person, subject to Covid guidance at the time.

2. Agree Agenda

The Agenda was agreed.

3. Conflict of Interest

The Chair thanked those Members and Advisors who have returned Conflicts of Interest and Code of Conduct forms to the Secretariat in the mandatory annual exercise.

No further Conflicts of Interest were declared.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting – 17 November 2020

The Committee agreed the minutes as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

The approved minutes will be uploaded to the SEUPB website.

AP 1: Minutes of previous meeting to be uploaded to SEUPB website
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5. Matters Arising

The Chair outlined three matters arising from the previous meeting, all of which have been actioned.

6. Video presentation of Launch of the Shared Education Impact Evaluation

The Chair introduced a short informative video, detailing the findings of the impact evaluation for Specific Objective 1: Shared Education, undertaken by consultants SJ Cartmin. The aim of the Shared Education objective is to provide curriculum-based contact between pupils and teachers from various backgrounds, through collaboration between schools from different sectors, across Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland.

Following the video, **the Communications Manager** signposted Members to the video and further case studies and participant interviews on the SEUPB website.

The Chair summarised the positive findings of the evaluation and the successes of the intervention.

7. Update on Programme Implementation

The Chair directed Members' attention to the Implementation paper provided in advance of the meeting, and asked **MA Director Paul Beattie** to provide a presentation from the Managing Authority perspective. The presentation consisted of the following main points;

- The Peace IV Programme is beginning the process of closure for some projects; twelve Local Action Plans (4 Councils) have completed and 4 Regional projects. However, the SEUPB is in receipt of a growing number of requests for extensions to project deadlines as a result of Covid;
- The extensions will delay closure of a significant number of projects into 2022 and early 2023;
- The SEUPB continues ongoing engagement with all projects, working with partners on adaptations to activity, extensions and budget modifications within the value of the Letter of Offer, to support implementation and achievement of targets;
- Temporary flexibilities have been agreed around the output indicators for;
 - Children and Young People 14-24;
 - Children and Young People 0 -24, and;
 - Building Positive Relations (Local)
- The Programme is committed to the value of €277.8 million, or 103%, with a further €8.1m sourced from public and private sources;

- A number of measures have been implemented to improve claims processing times, with an initial focus on Local Authorities. Local Authorities have been provided with claims timelines, and the FCU are reporting a considerable reduction in claims over 100 days old, and projects are catching up with outstanding paperwork which came about through remote working;
- The N+3 2020 target was met and exceeded. The total forecast overachievement for 2021 is expected to be around €5.7 million;
- Member States have approved 105% in terms of overcommitment; the PEACE IV Programme is currently committed to a value of 103%. The extension requests will delay the accurate assessment of slippage and underspend as projects close, therefore the situation is being closely monitored;
- Following extensive GDPR and legal work, the final round of Peace Platform testing will commence in the coming weeks, with a soft launch over Summer and transfer to the SEUPB in July 2021;
- An overview of the four ongoing impact evaluations was provided, conferences for which have been delayed until 2022 due to Covid restrictions. Final reports are available on the SEUPB website;
- In developing the Peace Plus Programme, the Managing Authority is responsible for preparation of the Cooperation Programme, and putting in place the administrative arrangements including designing a framework for development support. A Local Authority assistance plan has also been put in place.
- Initial consultation has taken place around the development of a Small Grants Programme. Research is also planned into thematic roadmaps on tourism, digital towns and villages and social economy, and;
- Work is ongoing to develop and adapt the JeMs system to replace the existing eMS system for Peace Plus.

The Chair thanked the MA Director and commended Peace project Lead Partners for adapting around significant challenges in the previous year.

The JS Director provided a presentation on implementation per thematic area from a JS perspective, which consisted of the following main points;

- Focus for the JS is shifting to project completion, while Covid remains a significant challenge to the operating environment;

- A high volume of change requests have been received, mainly project extensions, due to the effect of Covid restrictions. **The JS Director** thanked Steering Committee Members present for their support in this regard;
- The JS forecast around 50% of Peace projects will complete in 2022 and 2023, which unfortunately includes large Shared Spaces capital projects. The JS are carefully monitoring risks to implementation, the Programme, and financial targets;
- **Shared Education**; 2 projects, at a value of €33m. The impact of Covid has been acute in this objective. School closures led to a loss of a full term of activity in 2020, and schools are recovery-focused, therefore achievement against outputs has slowed considerably;
- A forecast underspend of €5m under the CASE project is under discussion and an extension to complete the 2022/23 academic year has been granted. The Sharing from the Start project has invested in IT provision and been granted a 6 month extension until December 2022;
- Together, the projects have declared engagement with 81,000 pupils or 57% achievement against the target.
- **Children and Young People: Peace for Youth.** **The JS Director** reported strong progress in this objective despite the challenge of Covid, with an additional 880 young people participating and a forecast 90% achievement;
- The JS Director extended her thanks to the Children and Young People Lead Partners and Youth Pact for their commitment to the young participants.
- **Shared Spaces and Services.** Of the nine Shared Spaces projects, three have formally requested extensions and a further five are pending, which leaves little room for slippage before Programme closure in December 2023;
- Construction costs have increased since application and a number of projects are predicting or evidencing that the actual cost of the project far exceeds the approved amounts and are currently taking responsibility for the difference, as per the conditions of their Letter of Offer;
- The Riverine project launched in March, and the Waterside Shared Village and Newforge projects have completed construction procurement and began working on-site.
- **Victims and Survivors.** The project has received a 6 month extension due to challenges linked to Covid and is on track to achieve both sets of targets. The launch of the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme will lead to an increased awareness of VSS and the support that can be offered.

- **Local Action Plans.** The seventeen councils have been adapting to alternative delivery methods and are utilising the flexibility introduced to the required contact hours. The JS have responded to over 60 formal change requests since March 2020;
- 7 Building Positive Relations Action Plans have completed, and final claims are being processed;
- 4 Local Authority Shared Spaces and Services Action Plans have also completed, and extensions between six and twelve months granted to Causeway Coast and Glens, Monaghan and Donegal Councils, pending necessary planning approvals;
- The JS Director highlighted that Belfast City Council began late and will continue activity into 2022;
- The Director reported positive progress against local level **Children and Young People** outputs, with 19,000 young people engaging with the Programmes by the end of March 2021. Seven councils have completed activity against their Children and Young People theme;
- **Regional** projects are reflective of others across the Programme in requesting extensions up to six months. Six projects have completed activity, and;
- **The JS Director** concluded by stating that risks are being closely monitored and the JS are working with Lead Partners to bring projects to timely closure.

The Chair thanked the Directors and extended sincere gratitude to Steering Committee Members for their work in approving the large volume of change requests.

The Chair commended projects for adapting over an unprecedented year, making particular reference to the Children and Young People projects and encouraging Members to engage with their social media. The Chair further discussed how work was continuing online and referred to a Waterside Shared Village online event, attended by Department for Communities Minister Harvey and DRCD Minister of State Joe O'Brien, and the significance of the project to the local community.

The Department of Finance representative acknowledged the work of the SEUPB in delivering the current Programme while developing PEACE PLUS, over a pandemic.

The representative discussed the risks to delivery, N+3 and closure which are weighed towards Programme end, and asked that the Committee be provided with a risk register among future meeting papers.

The Chair thanked the representative for his comments, and assured Members that the SEUPB are utilising all tools available to support projects, and balancing the need for output

achievement against the need for timely closure. A risk register will be provided for future meetings.

The DPER representative echoed the DoF representative's comments, commending the SEUPB for using innovative approaches to support current projects, while developing the next Programme. The representative assured the SEUPB of DPER's continuing support, and spoke of the use of online and virtual services as an unexpected positive outcome from restrictions, for future use.

The Irish Rural Link representative commented on the future of learning in blending digital skills with interpersonal contact, and commended the SEUPB for including third level institutions in project partnerships, as a way of maintaining the relevance of research and development.

The Monitoring Committee:

- Noted the progress that has been made in the Implementation of the Programme

AP 2: Risk register to be included in future PMC meeting papers
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8. Annual Implementation Report 2020

The Chair drew Members' attention to the draft 2020 Annual Implementation Report provided in the meeting papers, and explained the requirement to submit the report to the European Commission by 31st May each year, with PMC approval.

The DoF representative sought clarification on information provided on page 4 of the draft AIR against information supplied in the implementation report.

The Chair attributed the contrast to the fact that the timeframe for reporting in the AIR, and the amounts to report on are not always the same as those for PMC update papers. The data will be checked before submission to the EU Commission.

The Monitoring Committee:

- **Approved** the 2020 PEACE IV Annual Implementation report for submission to the EU Commission

9. Update on Implementation of the Communications Strategy

The Communications Manager provided a presentation which included the following;

- The Communications team have been involved in a number of virtual project closure events, collating virtual clips from Ministers in Northern Ireland and Ireland;
- The Manager highlighted Hilary Clinton's recent participation in the Peace and Conflict Transformation event held by Lead Partner Training for Women Network;
- The Communications Manager highlighted upcoming closure events over the summer, which may transition into physical events;
- Report on media coverage and tone, and engagement with the SEUPB website and social media accounts;
- Outlined the Shared Education Evaluation week in April 2021- a week long social media and PR campaign in conjunction with SJC Consultancy and the National Children's Bureau;
- Europe Day on 09 May 2021 was marked with a celebratory piece in the Sunday Independent, with a featured case study on the "Our Generation" project;
- An overview of the PEACE PLUS digital marketing strategy, social media and consultation engagement, and;
- Findings of the Annual Stakeholder and Perception survey.

The Chair congratulated **the Communications Manager** for transferring Communications work online in an efficient and coordinated response, and keeping the Programme alive by telling project stories in a time of isolation.

The Environmental Pillar representative made the following points;

- Stated that obviously online engagement lacks the impact of face-to-face interaction;

- Welcomed events to showcase cross-border and Shared Spaces projects throughout the region towards the end of 2021 in raising public awareness of the Programme's aims and activity, and;
- Requested sight of the Stakeholder and Perception survey in its entirety.

The Chair agreed with the representative and welcomed physical events as soon as safely and realistically possible.

The EU Commission Desk Officer commended the high quality of meeting papers provided, and informed Members that the EU Commission use the SEUPB's Communications materials and social media strategy in their own promotion of the PEACE Programme, and as examples of best practice.

The Chair thanked the Desk Officer and again welcomed future opportunities to meet in person.

The DRCD representative recorded the Department's appreciation of the Communications team's work on events, as well as their efficiency in coordinating events with Ministerial diaries.

AP 3: Full Annual Stakeholder and Awareness survey to be shared with Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee;

- **Noted** the communications activity since the last Programme Monitoring Committee meeting, and;
- **Noted** progress in implementation of the Communications Strategy.

10. PEACE PLUS Programme Update

Declan McGarrigle, MA Programme Manager, provided a presentation detailing progress in developing the Peace Plus Programme, which consisted of the following main points;

- The overall Programme budget has been confirmed at around €1 billion;
- Detail on the public consultation, which took place between 10th March and 12th May 2021;
- Detail on the engagement with potential stakeholders, interest groups, and sectors, who acted as communication multipliers to promote the consultation;
- Signposting Members to the consultation navigation papers available on the SEUPB website, which provided potential applicants and interested parties with an overview of the six thematic areas;
- Details of ongoing analysis of the 416 responses received. The initial quantitative analysis indicates strong support for each investment area – between 92% and 62% responses in “strong agreement”;
- Broad support for the investment budgets – between 76% and 63% “strongly agree” responses;
- Detailing support for the Programme’s equality screening and proposed new administrative arrangements, such as pre-application support and greater use of Simplified Cost Options;
- A full consultation report will be provided in the coming weeks, which will outline findings, analysis and recommendations on the content;
- The proposed Programme will be submitted to both Governments in June 2021, and to the EU Commission in July, dependent on adoption of the appropriate regulations. The SEUPB aims to release the first call in late 2021/early 2022, and;
- The first call released is likely to be the Local Action Plans, as these are non-competitive in nature. The SEUPB has been engaging with Local Authorities in a co-design process, written to Chief Executives regarding the Programme’s eligible expenditure, and have provided consultancy support for each LA.

The Chair stated that the positive survey responses represent an endorsement of the Programme content and the work of the Peace Plus team and Sponsor Departments.

The Chair continued, detailing the short timeframe now available to submit the Programme to the Executive Office NI, the Irish Government and the NSMC for approval, before submission to the EU Commission in early July.

The DPER representative discussed the importance of the investment provided by the Programme in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties at a time of great need. She complimented the Programme and its supporting materials, and reiterated the support of Ireland's Minister McGrath.

The Department of Education Ireland representative asked whether consideration has been given to continuing relationships beyond COVID and into Peace Plus, particularly for projects which may not reach their targets.

The Chair provided assurance that the JS team is working closely with projects at risk of non-achievement of their targets.

The Environmental Pillar representative made the following points;

- Encouraged the simplification of administration for projects applying to Peace Plus, and signposted the SEUPB to the Erasmus programme and the EU Solidarity Corps as examples of good practice;
- Encouraged inclusion of the PPN structure in the co-design process with community groups, and;
- Queried when Action Plans will conclude.

The Chair stated that PPNs have been included in the co-design process, in line with current practices for community planning and with existing structures, and the SEUPB is employing all tools at their disposal to reduce the administrative burden on potential applicants.

Regarding the Action Plans, **the JS Director** stated that there are 51 in place across 17 Local Authorities; 18 have completed, a further 16 will complete by the end of 2021, and the remainder in 2022.

The DoF representative discussed the challenges of the Peace Plus submission timeline and in submitting a new Programme for approval in Northern Ireland's current political environment.

The Chair echoed the fact that the SEUPB is fully aware of the challenges and will continue work in finalisation of the Programme against the initial timetable, with confidence in the ability to achieve what was set out.

The Monitoring Committee;

- Noted progress in designing and implementing the PEACE PLUS Programme

11. AOB

No further business was declared.

Date of next meeting

The Chair stated the next meeting will take place on **04 November 2021**, in a manner consistent with Covid guidance of the time. Guidance allowing, the next meeting may include a project showcase or exhibition.

ANNEX I

ACTION POINTS/ISSUES OF CLARIFICATION ARISING FROM MONITORING COMMITTEE

Thursday 20 May 2021; Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

ACTION POINTS

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Action Point</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
4	1	Minutes of previous meeting to be uploaded to SEUPB website	Secretariat, Managing Authority
7	2	Risk register to be included in future PMC meeting papers	Managing Authority
9	3	Full Annual Stakeholder and Awareness survey to be shared with Monitoring Committee	John McCandless, Communications

ANNEX II

Attendance – PEACE IV Programme Monitoring Committee, 20th May 2021, held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Chair

Gina McIntyre SEUPB

Members

John McCandless	Communications, the SEUPB
Leanne Massey	Joint Secretariat, the SEUPB
Declan McGarrigle	Managing Authority, the SEUPB
Paul Sheridan	Certifying Authority, the SEUPB
Jacqueline Healy	IHREC
Pamela Dooley	ICTU Northern Ireland
Hazel Francey	The Equality Commission NI
Anne Marie Caulfield	DPER
Tom Lavin	Irish Rural Link
Dominic McCullough	Department of Finance NI
Margaret Anne McKillop	NILGA
Paddy McGinn	Pobal
Damian Duffy	CBI
Aedin McLoughlin	The Environmental Pillar

Advisors

Kris Magnus	The EU Commission
Joanne Knight	The EU Commission
Catherine Powell	Department for the Economy NI
Julie Carson	The Executive Office NI
Marie Matthews	The Executive Office NI
Kathryn McCamley	Department for the Economy NI
Deirdre Kearney	DRCD
Tony McKibben	Department for Communities NI

Aoibhin O'Malley	Department of Education and Skills Ireland
Paula Keatley	DCEDIY
Shauna Markey	DCEDIY
Jill Caldwell	Department of Education NI

Observers

Joanne Breen	The Executive Office NI
Phil Heaton	Managing Authority, the SEUPB
Christina McCartney	Managing Authority, the SEUPB
Peter Molloy	DPER
Pamela Meekin	Office of the CEO, the SEUPB
Glenny Whitley	Joint Secretariat, the SEUPB
David Lynch	Department of Finance NI
Orla Dowling	Department of Education and Skills Ireland
Catherine Clynes	DPER
Ryan Donaldson	Department of Finance NI
Deirdre Bourke	North South Ministerial Council
John Barr	Department for Communities NI

Secretariat (SEUPB)

Tara McCormick	Managing Authority (minutes)
Nora Winder	Managing Authority (remote tech support)

Apologies

Cllr Stevie Corr	NILGA
Cllr Jim McKeever	NILGA
Cllr Jenny Palmer	NILGA
Cllr Frances Burton	NILGA
Gerry Doyle	NWRA
Cllr Frank McBrearty	NWRA
Cllr Conor Keelan	EMRA
Emily Smyth	CNCC
Seamus McAleavey	NICVA

Ivan Cooper	The Wheel
Tim Smith	ICTU Ireland
Michael D'Arcy	IBEC
Wesley Aston	Ulster Farmers Union

Departing Members

- Jean O'Mahoney of the IHREC, who replaces Ruth Gallagher;
- John Barr of the Department for Communities NI, who replaces Glenn Hampton;
- Paul Fay and Shauna Markey of DCEDIY, replacing Donald Ewing and Maria Cordero-Souto. DCEDIY (The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Ireland) is a name change, formally DCYA (The Department for Children and Youth Affairs), and;
- Deirdre Kearney of DRCD, who replaces Deirdre Maloney.

ANNEX III

Glossary of acronyms used in the minutes:

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
CBI	Confederation of British industry
CNCC	Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside
CPD	Central Procurement Directorate (Northern Ireland)
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DCEDIY	The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Ireland
DfE	Department for the Economy
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development
DoF	Department of Finance (Northern Ireland)
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DoH	Department of Health NI
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
EMRA	Eastern & Midland Regional Authority
eMS	Electronic Monitoring System
ESG	Evaluation Steering Group
EUC	European Commission
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Federation

ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
NICVA	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
NILGA	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NSMC	North South Ministerial Council
NWRA	Northern Western Regional Assembly
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development NI
SEUPB	Special European Union Programmes Body
JS	Joint Secretariat
MA	Managing Authority
VSS	Victims and Survivors Service