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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

Tuesday 17th November 2020

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 ninth meeting of the PEACE IV Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) 2014-2020; the previous meeting had to be postponed due to ongoing Covid restrictions, and a written update was provided to all members.

The Chair, welcoming all members, acknowledged the unusual method of meeting via MS Teams, and also welcomed **EU Commission Desk Officer, Kris Magnus**.

The Chair outlined changes in the PEACE IV PMC membership, as a number of long-standing Members have recently left the Committee. Newly appointed Members were asked to extend the SEUPB's thanks to the departing representatives they replaced. In particular, **the Chair** thanked **Frank Duffy of the Department of Finance** for years of service to the PEACE and INTERREG Programmes; he is replaced by **Dominic McCullough**.

The Chair provided an update on developments in Programme implementation since the previous PMC meeting on 14 November 2019, as follows;

- **The Chair** outlined the SEUPB's response to the Covid restrictions implemented since March 2020, with all staff working from home and JS Case Officers engaging with projects on a one-to-one basis to ensure continued implementation;

- The PEACE IV Programme is overcommitted, and there are no additional funds available to be redeployed to directly combat Covid however, to assist projects in continuing implementation as best as possible, emergency payments and flexibilities around deliverables have been implemented. Emergency payments were explained as automatic payments made on submission of a project claim, in advance of verification. These claims would subsequently be verified before being included in a claim submission to the EC.
- **The Chair** also referred to the end of the Brexit transition period on 31st December, the impact of which will be monitored and addressed with projects. The SEUPB eagerly anticipate the final quantification of the PEACE PLUS Programme, to be discussed later in the agenda.
- In a meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) on 30 October, Ministers were updated on project responses to Covid restrictions and any impact on activity and expenditure.
The NSMC had not met since November 2016 due to the suspension of the Northern Ireland Executive, therefore SEUPB's business plans and corporate plans were also formally approved during the meeting.
- For information, the Chair outlined that during summer 2020, the SEUPB was subject to a cyber-attack. Correct procedures and notifications were followed and internal systems were restored within weeks, and thanks are extended to the IT Department, DoF NI and DPER for their support during this time. **The Chair** provided assurance that project information is held separately and was uncompromised.

2. PEACE Platform presentation – SJC Consultancy and Primodi

The Chair introduced **Sarah McCarthy of SJC Consultancy** and **James Gheel of Primodi**, who were appointed in September 2019 to develop a Peace Learning Platform.

Sarah McCarthy provided a pre-recorded presentation, consisting of the following main points;

- The research base, involving an extensive consultation process and literary review, has been completed, and the project is on schedule to complete in the next two months;
- The end product, an accessible and interactive digital Peace library, reflects 25 years of Peace funding in the region; around 22,500 projects;

- The archiving and cataloguing process reviewed 1451 documents, 1853 press or promotional pieces, 280 media files and 190 case studies, and;
- The wide variety of content acts as a live platform, which can be added to and updated over time.

James Gheel shared his screen, providing a digital walk through of the Platform.

The Chair thanked Sarah and James for their presentations, as well as those PMC Members who came forward with case studies for inclusion.

The NILGA/UUP representative complimented the Platform and all involved in its development.

The EU Commission Desk Officer emphasised the importance in capturing the history of the Programmes, and of the Platform as a powerful communications tool for PEACE PLUS. The Desk Officer offered the use of the EU Commission's resources and communication channels, when reflecting on the Platform's communication and marketing strategy, which the Chair gratefully accepted .

The DPER representative commended the Platform as a legacy of best practice from a historical and academic perspective.

The CNCC representative also extended compliments, and asked whether the Platform is a realistic representation, including the issues faced by past projects, as an effective learning tool for those who access it.

Sarah McCarthy in response outlined that SJC Consultancy sought to write a true narrative around all phases of the Peace Programmes, and there are opportunities for opinion pieces and communication on the forum.

She emphasised that the Platform is live and can be added to and nuances built upon over time.

The Chair confirmed case studies were selected as a true representation of project design and implementation, rather than a perfect end product, to inform future projects.

The DoF representative echoed comments and compliments on the Platform, and emphasised the importance of communicating and publicising the Platform and its benefits, from a Northern Ireland perspective.

The Pobal representative queried the volume of data recovered which appeared not to be used in the Platform, and the timescale for a public launch.

Sarah McCarthy responded, detailing a focus on outcomes, project evaluations and monitoring reports. A number of VHS tapes and audio were discarded as they were indecipherable or could not be assigned to a specific project or phase.

James Gheel further added that the Platform is still in development, and user acceptance training will take place in early 2021. Responding to **the CNCC representative**, he explained the reports linked to each project, accessible from the project page.

The Programme Monitoring Committee noted progress in designing and implementing the PEACE Platform.

3. Agree Agenda

The Agenda was adopted.

4. Conflict of Interest

No Conflicts of Interest were declared.

The Chair asked new Members of the Committee to complete Conflict of Interest forms, available from the Secretariat.

AP 1: New Committee Members to be provided with Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct forms

5. Minutes of the previous meeting – 14 November 2019

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 2: Minutes to be uploaded to SEUPB website

6. Matters Arising

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

7. Update on Programme Implementation

The Chair directed Members' attention to the Implementation paper provided in advance of the meeting, and asked **MA Manager James Russell** to provide a presentation. The presentation consisted of the following main points;

- September 2020 saw the launch of both the new funding call under Objective 4.2, Building Positive Relations, and Action Mental Health's "Our Generation" project;
- Two Regional projects; the Next Chapter and the Theatre of Peacebuilding, as well as nine Local Action Plans, have completed.
- The main issue of 2020 has been the response to Covid 19 restrictions. The SEUPB has taken a number of actions, including;
 - Temporary flexibilities around the output indicators for Children and Young People 14-24 and Children and Young People 0-24;
 - Unit Cost Flexibility for two Shared Education projects, and;
 - Engagement with all projects to review implementation and confirm modifications to Letters of Offer, such as extensions.
- The PEACE IV Programme is committed to the value of €277.93 million, or 103%. The sponsor departments permit 5% over commitment, and approval of the Social Innovation call should increase commitment to this value. The real cost of Shared Spaces Capital projects will be kept under review as costs will only become clear when projects go out to tender.
- An N+3 overachievement of around €12 million is forecast. The N+3 target becomes more difficult to achieve towards the end of the Programmes; this overachievement provides a level of reassurance.
- The Implementation Evaluation is complete and available on the SEUPB website, and three second-phase impact evaluations are underway. These will be completed in early 2021.
- A virtual Shared Education conference will take place in January 2021, to which all PMC Members will be invited.

The CNCC representative queried why full costs were awarded under the Shared Education objective, when partial numbers of participants were captured, and how many hours of engagement were required.

The MA Manager stated that 30 hours of engagement was the standard set by the Department of Education NI. Full costs were awarded as some projects incurred sunk costs prior to COVID, which are eligible for reimbursement as the project could not proceed with the planned activity due to circumstances outside their control.

The Irish Rural Link representative welcomed the flexibilities introduced, and queried whether those flexibilities involve reduced beneficiary numbers, particularly around the Children and Young People objectives.

The Managing Authority Manager responded, explaining the numbers of beneficiaries have been maintained, and the flexibilities exist around the hours and format of engagement; therefore less hours and adaptation to online or virtual participation.

The EMRA representative asked why the Shared Spaces costs are difficult to calculate. **The Chair** and **MA Manager** responded, stating that costs may have risen in the year since the capital projects were approved. In addition, there is likely to be new unforeseen costs regarding Covid safety measures.

The JS Director provided a presentation on implementation by thematic area, which consisted of the following points;

- The onset of the Covid pandemic has led to some delays and temporary suspensions; seven projects took the decision to furlough staff during the original lockdown. The SEUPB has introduced a range of flexibilities whilst maintaining Programme integrity.
- As the Programme is overcommitted, there is no additional funding to assist projects however, changes to activities and timelines have been considered, and around forty extensions to Letters of Offer have been approved since May.
- Extended sincere thanks to SEUPB colleagues and project staff, who have continued to work during really challenging times.
- The Shared Education objective has lost an entire school term, and has been provided with emergency payment provision, adjusted unit costs and variations

on activities and budgets within the existing Letter of Offer, with the hope of face to face meetings resuming towards the end of the academic year.

- Recognition and thanks were recorded to the Youth4Peace staff involved in the Children and Young People projects, who have been managing Covid's impact on recruitment, engagement and implementation. The target of 249 hours of contact per participant has been reduced to 125, with cognisance of identified challenges for young people, such as digital access, digital poverty and burnout.
- 9 projects are committed under the Shared Spaces and Services objective at a value of around €53 million. Currently, timelines are broadly unaffected. With regards to the increased costs discussed, two projects are reporting increased costs and one reporting a decrease; projects are informing the JS of any additional costs to original budgets .
- The SEUPB is supporting 17 Local Authorities through Covid delays by introducing flexibility to deliverables under the Building Positive Relations and Children and Young People elements.
- The majority of Local Action Plans were due to complete in late 2020/ early 2021. Since May, 24 Action Plan extensions have been approved, 11 extension requests will be presented to Steering Committee in the coming weeks, and eight are in progress.
- Of the 20 projects committed under the Building Positive Relations Regional objective, 2 projects have furloughed staff, 2 projects have completed and closed and 13 have sought extensions of up to 6 months, primarily due to Covid delays.
- The Building Emotional Resilience Call closed on 16th November, with one application received.

The Chair thanked the **JS Director** for her presentation and for all her work in supporting projects through a difficult year

The NILGA/UUP representative discussed the challenges faced by Councils during the pandemic, and welcomed the SEUPB's actions in extending Letters of Offer.

Referring to the effect of Covid restrictions on young people's mental health and the challenge of maintaining their engagement, the representative also queried the impact of reducing the required hours of engagement. She also queried the scope to assist capital build projects at risk.

The JS Director provided the following responses;

- The engagement targets are set out in the Output Indicator Guidance, and were agreed to demonstrate sustainable and meaningful contact. The SEUPB are also learning in the new working environment created by Covid, and to date have not seen any negative impact of the flexibilities introduced, and;
- The SEUPB are working to maximise spend, and identify areas of underspend, to potentially assist projects at risk and avoid their withdrawal from the Programme.

The Chair informed Members that the European Commission website contains guidance on maintaining the eligibility of projects and where flexibility can be offered, which is being followed closely.

The Equality Commission NI representative complimented the work undertaken in a difficult year, and sought clarification on a statement in the paper regarding Antrim and Newtownabbey Council's withdrawal from activity due to match funding issues.

The JS Director explained Antrim and Newtownabbey's unique position as the only Local Authority to contribute their own funds to their Peace Action Plan. Covid challenges meant this was no longer possible, therefore they are working with the SEUPB to redevelop one of the Shared Spaces projects. This will extend the project length and hopefully ensure full spend against their allocation.

The NILGA/SDLP representative queried the timeline for the PEACE PLUS Programme in terms of pipeline projects.

The Chair explained that the development of a timeline is ongoing however, the SEUPB have received a number of queries and proposals such as eligibility of ideas, indicating organisations are beginning to plan and design projects and applications.

The EU Commission Desk Officer commended the SEUPB's work to mitigate the impact of Covid restrictions. The Officer noted the high number of extension requests, and asked how these will affect the already increased workload which appears around Programme closure.

In response, **the JS Director** stated the majority of six month extensions delayed project closures until early 2022, with a small number closing in 2023, which has been deemed reasonable and manageable.

The DPER representative congratulated the SEUPB on remarkable achievements in challenging circumstances, and reiterated the support and acknowledgement of Ministers Michael McGrath and Connor Murphy of the NSMC.

The DoF representative echoed these remarks and added further compliments to the SEUPB and on the versatility of treatment of the projects.

The EMRA representative welcomed the support shown to Local Authorities.

AP 3: PMC Members to be invited to the virtual Shared Education conference taking place in January 2021

The Monitoring Committee:

- Noted the progress that has been made in the implementation of the Programme.

8. Communications Update

The Communications Manager provided a presentation which included the following;

- The Communications Team's approach to ensuring Covid 19 guidance was accessible to projects and promoting project COVID-19 adaptation work on SEUPB's social media.
- Launching the 'Building Community Cohesion through Social Innovation' funding call remotely in September 2020.
- On 17th September 2020, the SEUPB provided a socially-distanced presentation on the PEACE IV Programme to the EU Ambassador to the UK, João Vale de Almeida, with project introductions at the Lanark Way peace wall.
- Implementing the Interreg@30 social media campaign.
- Reporting on media coverage and tone, and engagement with the SEUPB's website and social media accounts.

The Monitoring Committee;

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

9. PEACE PLUS Update

The Chair provided a presentation detailing progress in developing the PEACE PLUS Programme, which consisted of the following main points;

- Over the past year, the SEUPB have met with the most senior officials of Government Departments in Ireland and Northern Ireland, statutory agencies and the public, to consider Government priorities, the EU Framework and the EU Border Orientation report.
The Socio Economic study undertaken is currently being updated with Covid implications. In addition, there is a summary document on the SEUPB website of the responses received on the SEUPB survey (320 responses).
- A high level outline of the six thematic areas, which are being reviewed by Accountable Departments.
- An outline of key areas and challenges, including response and recovery from Covid and the UK's exit from the EU, with cognisance of incorporating flexibility to address future issues.
- An outline of the European Green Deal, which is addressed in each theme and in all European Programmes going forward.
- Explained that SEUPB had considered the UN Sustainable Development Goals in designing the content and also the principles of the Oxford 'Doughnut Economic Model', which helped to consider balance of interventions . **The Chair** demonstrated how the model has been adapted for the content of PEACEPLUS Programme, demonstrating the linkages. The principles of the model lends itself to a visual representation of the Programme themes and areas of intervention.
- An update on the PEACEPLUS Programme will be a standing item on the PMC agenda going forward. Development remains on schedule, and public consultation will commence when the budget is finalised.

The CNCC representative queried the next steps in presenting the PEACEPLUS Programme, with regards to statutory consultation.

The Chair replied that public consultation is dependent on confirmation of the final budget, which is subject to the ongoing UK-EU negotiations. All parties are currently working on an estimated budget of around €650 million.

The Monitoring Committee;

- Noted progress in designing and implementing the PEACE PLUS Programme

10. AOB

No further business was declared.

11. Date of next meeting

The Chair stated the next meeting will take place in spring 2021, in a format in keeping with Governmental guidance on Covid restrictions.

ANNEX I

**ACTION POINTS/ISSUES OF CLARIFICATION
ARISING FROM MONITORING COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 17 November 2020; Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

ACTION POINTS

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Action Point</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
4	1	New Committee Members to be provided with Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct forms	MA
5	2	Minutes to be uploaded to SEUPB website	MA
7	3	PMC Members to be invited to the virtual Shared Education conference taking place in January 2021	MA

ANNEX II

Attendance – PEACE IV Programme Monitoring Committee, 17 November 2020, held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Chair

Gina McIntyre SEUPB

Members

Wesley Aston	Ulster Farmers' Union
Anne Marie Caulfield	Department for Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) IRL
Ivan Cooper	The Wheel
Michael D'Arcy	IBEC
Gerry Doyle	NWRA
Damian Duffy	CBI
Hazel Francey	Equality Commission for NI
Cllr Conor Keelan	EMRA
Tom Lavin	Irish Rural Link
David Lynch	Department of Finance NI
Leanne Massey	Joint Secretariat, SEUPB
Paddy McGinn	Pobal
Cllr Jim McKeever	NILGA/ SDLP
Geoff Nuttall	NICVA
Cllr Jenny Palmer	NILGA/ UUP
James Russell	Managing Authority, SEUPB
Paul Sheridan	Finance and Corporate Services, SEUPB
Emily Smyth	CNCC

Advisors

Paul Boylan	Joint Secretariat, SEUPB
Julie Carson	The Executive Office NI
Frances Curran	Department for Education, NI
Glenn Hampton	Department for Communities, NI
Paula Keatley	Department of Children and Youth Affairs, IRL

Deirdre Maloney	DHPLG (IRL)
Marie Matthews	The Executive Office NI
John McCandless	Communications, SEUPB
Kathryn McCamley	Department for the Economy, NI
Tony McKibben	Department for Communities, NI
Michael Power	NISRA
Kris Magnus	European Commission

Presenters

James Gheel	Primodi Ltd
Sarah McCarthy	SJC Consultancy

Observers

Marianne Van De Vorle	European Commission
Joanne Breen	The Executive Office NI
Sinead Brown	The Executive Office NI
Jill Caldwell	Department of Education NI
Catherine Clynes	DPER (IRL)
Helen Donaldson	JS, SEUPB
Ryan Donaldson	Department of Finance NI
Margaret Downey	The Executive Office NI
Joanne Knight	EU Commission
Peter Molloy	DPER (IRL)
Emer McGeough	NSMC
Claire McMillan	IFI
Catherine Powell	Department for the Economy, NI

Secretariat (SEUPB)

Tara McCormick	Managing Authority (minutes)
Thomas McGarvey	Managing Authority (remote tech support)

Apologies

Cllr Frances Burton	NILGA/ DUP
Cllr Stevie Corr	NILGA/ SF
Pamela Dooley	Irish Congress of Trade Unions, NI

Jacqueline Healey	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
Dominic McCullough	Department of Finance, NI
Dr Aedin McLoughlin	The Environmental Pillar
Tim Smith	Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Ireland
Maura Young	Managing Authority, SEUPB

Departing Members

Sean Kelly of CNCC

Ruth Gallagher of IHREC

Gerry Lavelle of NWRA

Councillor Colm Markey, replaced by Councillor Conor Keelan

John Williamson of the Department of Education NI, replaced by Jill Caldwell

Carol Morrow of the Executive Office, replaced by Julie Carson

Andrew Johnston of the Department for Communities, replaced by Glenn Hampton

Rory Muldrew of the Department for the Economy NI, replaced by Kathryn McCamley.

Meadhbh Devilly of the Department for Education and Skills Ireland, replaced by Maria Cordero-Souto, and;

Donald Ewing of DCYA, replaced by Paula Keatley

ANNEX III

Glossary of acronyms used in the minutes:

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
CNCC	Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside
CPD	Central Procurement Directorate (Northern Ireland)
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DfE	Department for the Economy
DHPCLG	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
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
EC	European Commission
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