



**NICVA Consultation Response:
EU PEACEPLUS Programme 2021-27**

28th February 2020

1. Background

NICVA is the umbrella body for the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in Northern Ireland with over 1000 members, who provide a wide range of services and activities for public benefit. These range from health, social care, and emergency services; advice and counselling, community development and peacebuilding; to environmental, arts, and sporting activities. We work to support and advance the interests of the people and communities that our members support. We offer a wide range of practical services and support to our members to help them do what they do best - find innovative solutions for social challenges.

2. Our Consultation Response

NICVA greatly welcome the opportunity to respond to this important consultation. To shape and inform our response we held a consultation event for representatives from across the VCSE to ascertain their views and ideas as to key priorities for the future PEACE PLUS programme and hear their suggestions with regard to how this programme might best be administrated and delivered. This seminar provided an opportunity to reflect on key questions posed within the Stakeholder Engagement Survey and Information documents.

The views and suggestions generated via this event form the basis of our comments and as such our response focuses on those key questions within the engagement survey document that where prioritised by event attendees. *This was namely those questions in Section B (1) and Section D of the Engagement Survey document.*

3. Details of the Consultation Event

As previously stated, organisations from across the VCSE sector were invited to participate in a consultation event held at NICVA on 18th February 2020 to discuss preparations for the future PEACE PLUS programme.

The purpose of the event was to draw together the sectors' views as to the delivery of the future programme so as to shape and inform NICVAs' response to the consultation. The emphasis of the event was on ascertaining the sectors views on the suggested policy objectives and actions outlined within the draft programme framework and to create opportunities for representatives to highlight what they considered any gaps etc regarding , alongside how VCSE sector organisations can best be supported to deliver against these. Key conclusions from these discussions form the basis of our response which we hope can help inform decision making regarding future priorities and delivery mechanisms for the PEACE PLUS programme.

A copy of the full programme for this event is attached at **Annex A**.

A copy of those organisations in attendance at the event is included in **Annex B**

In addition, to help stimulate Round Table Discussion participants were also asked to share their initial thoughts and views as to a number of key questions via audience participation in an online (Menti- meter) poll. The questions asked where:

- 1. What was most valuable about the previous EU Peace & Interreg Programmes to date?**
- 2. What do you think PEACE Plus needs to include to meet our needs in 2021-27?**

A copy of the audience responses to the questions posed via this poll are included at **Annex C**

Response to Question B .1 & B1i

Consider the list of indicative actions for achieving Peace and Reconciliation. Please rate the relevance (from 1-7) of each action as a means to achieve Peace and Reconciliation. *Please explain why you have given each this rating.*

<u>Action</u>	<u>Not at all Relevant</u> 1						<u>Extremely relevant</u> 7	<u>Why?</u> Participants Comments:
1. Actions to improve community and social cohesion							✓	<i>Participants felt that:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting community cohesion requires a much broader focus in our communities than is happening currently (<i>'must ensure is not just a focus on traditional communities of 'orange and green',</i>

								<p><i>'our communities are now much more culturally and ethnically diverse')</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for improved approaches to addressing issues of inclusion and exclusion/isolation for our black and minority ethnic communities – including tackling racism. • Requires opportunities for long term engagement to affect meaningful change • Is a need to celebrate the positives of all cultures to improve understanding. • Requires an all ages approach- for e.g. cross sectoral intergenerational programmes
2. Improving employment opportunities							✓	<p><i>Participants felt that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was essential in addressing social exclusion – for e.g. in tackling poverty, improving social mobility, addressing isolation, and building resilience etc • This can have much broader benefits including improved mental health, making positive contributions to community and economy and in creating opportunities for individuals to build relationships beyond own community. • Health and wellbeing including mental health are issues that can be addressed through creating access to meaningful employment

								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must prioritise those furthest removed from labour market • Must consider older groups and women –for eg those seeking to return to work or needing to retrain etc • Requires an assets-based approach – looking at positives rather than deficits within communities/individuals • Must embrace/encourage innovation and the opportunities of new technology (for eg, the digital divide) • Need to create employment opportunities linked to improving/addressing environmental issues.
3. Increasing access to quality education							✓	<p><i>Participants felt that should include a focus on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of ‘Soft’ outcomes for individuals. In particular with regard to young people, should include resilience building, confidence and self-esteem. • Lifelong learning - must consider older groups and women –for eg, those seeking return to work or needing to retrain etc • Informal education, including youth work approaches • Community education and mentoring • Rural areas
4. Reducing marginalisation through				✓				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants considered overall, these issues to be very relevant to the theme of achieving peace and reconciliation but where

improved housing and services								<p>unsure that funding for same should be prioritised within this particular programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those participants in attendance considered access to essential services including housing to be primarily a statutory/government responsibility and where concerned that could be in danger of appearing to subsidise statutory services – <i>‘government need to make this investment’</i>. • Felt that this programme should prioritise and target areas where is traditionally more difficult to attract statutory funding
5. Increasing access to quality health care in the region							✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants considered this theme to very relevant but felt that funding access to healthcare in broadest sense should be the focus and responsibility of government agencies for eg, the Department of Health etc. • Participants felt this theme should be more closely defined as ‘promoting or improving well- being’- with a focus on tackling loneliness and isolation; empowering and improving resilience within communities alongside initiatives to improve mental health - (<i>‘this is important given proven impact of conflict legacy on our communities mental health’</i>)

								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity should also include encouraging/growing local health networks across sectors, access to information, improved facilities. Participants felt that improved/better <i>health literacy</i> would enable people to access health services more quickly and with less fear, so should be included.
6. Other peace building activities. (please specify)							✓	<p><i>Participants felt that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be an increased focus on some of our most marginalised groups/communities –for example women, LGBTQ+, Traveller Communities and Asylum Seekers, Migrant Workers and Black and Minority Ethnic groups. There is a need for improved focus on understanding contemporary cultures and difference in our communities, celebrating community diversity in all its forms within our communities (<i>'broader than traditional orange/green'</i>) and should reflect the changing face of our communities. The importance of building upon the successes of EU funded programmes to date; of taking stock and ensuring any future funding priorities reflect the changing face of Northern Irelands communities and the challenges for modern day peace building and reconciliation was stressed.

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Response to Question B .1iii & B1i

iii. What are the main challenges or opportunities for promoting greater Peace and Reconciliation?

Participants comments:

Challenges

- Delivering the programme in the context of a post conflict environment.
- Ensuring longevity – long term investment creates long term change – need to ensure time that time frame for delivery, do not inhibit/negatively impact on outcomes.
- How can we impact societal structures to create meaningful and lasting change within our communities?
- To make a real difference in our communities, need to ensure is focus on addressing issues most relevant to those communities, such as poverty and disadvantage, mental health etc versus focus on peace and reconciliation.
- Difficulties and challenges of involving those often most excluded in our communities in programme design, development, and delivery– for example minority ethnic groups, those experiencing homelessness or those experiencing poor mental health.
- Ensuring the inclusion of less visible groups –for example those who are sensory impaired and older people.

- Ensuring rural inclusivity – need for greater focus on transport infrastructures, IT/Digital access.
- Delivering the Cross-Border element of any programme- accessing necessary finance, mechanisms, and opportunities, particularly post Brexit.
- The general impact of Brexit and leaving the EU on our society and economy.

Opportunities

- Approaches that recognise the importance of the ‘whole family’- to create effective and long lasting change within our communities /society, initiatives must be embedded in family (including where this support is in deficit)– *‘families are the core of our communities’* .
- Build positive community relations through creating opportunities around delivery of sports, hobby based and arts activities – activity based around common/shared interests between communities.
- Create opportunities for people from different cultural backgrounds to learn, work and socialise together in an environment that celebrates diversity and promotes positive relations.
- Using skills development /building as an opportunity to bring communities together.
- An increased focus on those often most removed/ least visible in our communities (is a need to move beyond traditional concept of Northern Irish communities).
- Whole community approaches - tackling loneliness, improving connectedness, and addressing mental health in our communities.
- Resilience building and empowerment opportunities, emphasis on building community capability and capacity.

- Growing opportunities for the development of community influencers/champions – especially from those less recognised groups (for eg, young people, BME, older people’s champions, disabled etc).
- Addressing/tackling gender inequality and promoting opportunities for empowerment.
- Digital skills building, growing entrepreneurship, supporting innovation – with particular focus on young people and rural communities.

iv. Please list any ideas for initiatives or projects that might address the challenges or opportunities identified

Participant responses:

In considering Programme development and delivery:

- Ensure a robust geographical spread of projects.
- Addressing transport, infrastructure, IT/Digital access challenges for project delivery and development.
- Ensure the most appropriate resource allocation- there is a real need to target those areas of work and/or those ‘communities’ where is most need – central importance of tackling poverty and disadvantage (including educational disadvantage).
- Must ensure is an assets-based approach to programme delivery – with an emphasis on building community capability and capacity and encouraging community led initiatives.
- Must ensure any programme creates opportunities for all age’s approaches (not just youth work activity) including development of intergenerational programmes.
- Encourage and support partnership approaches.
- Assets based models and approaches – building on community strengths.

- Support and encourage innovative practice and approaches at community level.
- Support and encourage upskilling of project staff in new and developing areas – (diversity training, Digital technologies, resilience building etc).

Suggested Programme Areas:

- Supporting/growing whole/shared society approaches to health and wellbeing, including Mental Health and Well Being initiatives.
- Community connectedness initiatives to build resilience, address loneliness and social isolation and help tackle mental health issues/prevention.
- Whole family models and approaches.
- Delivery of activities/programmes built around common interests such as the arts, music, hobbies, sports to promote positive community and cultural relations.
- Models to promote better coordination across community services and support development of improved community infrastructure.
- Delivery of /growing the development of social economy and enterprise models in most deprived areas and amongst those individuals/communities most excluded/marginalised.
- Community leadership interventions – in particular developing community representatives/champions within and across those groups most vulnerable or excluded.
- Encouraging and supporting female led approaches

- Addressing the impact of Brexit – (myths v reality, community concerns, stereotyping etc)
- Cross sectoral intergenerational programmes.
- Projects/programmes to support the needs and interests of young people for eg;
 - Addressing Mental health and trauma;
 - Resilience building and empowerment;
 - Supporting coordination between schools and health agencies/services;
 - Tackling pupil underachievement and educational disadvantage;
 - Targeting those young people who are most/at risk of being disengaged socially and economically;
 - Social cohesion, self-efficacy, economy and social enterprise models focussing on young people ;
 - Peer Advocacy and Support and Promoting community cohesion, respect and understanding via delivery of sport, art and cultural activities.

Responses to Questions under Section B2

Rate the relevance of the following Policy Objectives (1-5)

Participants provided the following feedback:

Policy Objective	Not at all Relevant 1						Extremely relevant 7	Comments?
1. A Smarter Europe							✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be a focus on how the VSCE sector can maximise and build its Digital capacity. There is a

								<p>need for sector organisations to develop strong digital understanding across leaders to access trusted digital skills and expertise; upskill its workforce; develop new initiatives that respond to the changing needs of its service users and harness digital campaigning techniques.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital skills building, growing entrepreneurship, supporting innovation – with particular focus on young people and rural communities.
2. A Greener Lower Carbon Europe							✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for initiatives that can support and encourage greater environmental sustainability across VCSE sector. The VCSE sector requires investment and leadership to support community led innovation in problem solving, service and product developments which can protect and promote the natural environment and environmental awareness. • Opportunities regarding social enterprise models. • Support for development of green/environmental initiatives across VCSE – including training, education and awareness, and community engagement activities.

3. A More Connected Europe							✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to affordable and suitable transport infrastructure important to help reduce isolation; improve wellness; support social and economic mobility; and tackle/reduce disadvantage and exclusion. These are key issues across rural communities and /or smaller towns.
4. A More Social Europe							✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health: importance of early interventions; whole society approaches to health; improving community connectedness by addressing mental health issues and combating loneliness/isolation; addressing health inequalities; improving health literacy and access/connectedness across services/supports. • Capacity building and support for community networks. • Can help build positive community relations through creating opportunities around delivery of sports, hobby based and arts activities – activity based around common/shared interests between communities.
5. A Europe closer to Its Citizens							✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore training, development, and employment opportunities for young people, those marginalised from employment opportunities, or re-entering work/training in the areas of community heritage, tourism and culture (for e.g. training as local guides).

									<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring access to community facilities for all those in our society in particular marginalised or new/emerging communities.
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Responses to Questions under Q C1i -1ii

What practical measures could be taken to simplify the management and implementation of any future programme? (for e.g. through payment of flat rates such as 15% of eligible staff costs rather than against the actual costs OR use of Unit costs such as payment per organisation that attends a workshop rather than actual costs)

The following points were highlighted by participants:

- The importance of hands on support and advice for organisations (in particular smaller organisations) in developing projects at the earliest stage.
- Access to finance and resources to support cash flow in earliest stages of project development and delivery is very important.
- The importance to projects/organisations of meeting full cost recovery, based costs and appropriate percentage uplifts also emphasised.
- Ensuring accessibility; adopting an assets-based approach and meaningfully involving communities in the programme design and implementation process was emphasised.

- Ensuring access to multiyear funding, creating opportunities for longer term projects and investment to help yield meaningful results/lasting outcomes and support for innovation.
- The opportunity to reprofile budgets and adapt projects in accordance with changing need where also highlighted as important regarding administration and delivery of any future programme.
- The importance of simplification measures, the need to minimise bureaucracy and ensure a focus on evidencing impact rather than number-based targets was emphasised.
- Devolving more responsibility to the Lead Partners agency to help minimise/reduce bureaucracy
- The National Lottery Community Fund and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation where highlighted as exemplars in terms of funding structure and relationship building and where considered to be useful models for any future Peace programme.
- The vital importance of effectively managing the transition between current and future EU funding programmes to ensure the impact and expertise created via EU investment to date is not lost was also stressed.

Response to Question D 1 i – 1iii

D 1i What practical measures could improve the administration and delivery of any future funding programme? Discuss and agree each measure, rating from 1- 7, with 7 being most beneficial. *Please explain your reasons for each rating.*

MEASURE	Not at all beneficial 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely beneficial 7	Why?
7. Expert assistance supporting project development						✓	✓	Participants felt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This support was especially important to smaller, less well-resourced organisations. • Should utilise experience and experience built up via delivery of Peace programmes to date – including community, VCSE experience/expertise. • Should consider/encompass the sharing of expertise and experience across funder programmes (for eg The National Lottery Community Fund) • Should be available throughout life of any programme.
8. Events including networking events and project				✓			✓	(Rating 7 ✓) These participants felt this could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support/help development of partnerships

development workshops								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and enable sharing of good practice and resources • Help avoid or tackle duplication • Identify and address gaps in provision etc • Promote equality of opportunity/inclusivity <p><i>(Rating 4 ✓)</i></p> <p>These participants noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events would need to be purposeful and well structured • Any approach would need to ensure protection of intellectual property (i.e. around ownership of any ideas shared via events etc)
9. Additional materials published online, including manuals and instruction videos to support the development of projects			✓			✓		<p><i>(Rating 7 ✓)</i></p> <p>These participants felt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such materials could be very helpful - opportunity to utilise practical resources and ideas in a way/time appropriate/convenient to organisations and groups. • Any resources/materials need to be accessible and relevant to all communities (Section 75 groups in particular), contemporary and in simplified straightforward format.

								<p>(Rating 4 ✓)</p> <p>These participants felt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources if highly practical can be useful but not always relevant to all.
10. Lump sum payments for preparation costs.							✓	<p>Participants considered this important as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives the necessary time and resources to projects/organisations to develop robust project plans. • This stage was felt critical to any successful project delivery and in helping SEUPB attract projects that can demonstrate real impact etc. • Can help remove barriers to making application – allows sufficient time/opportunity for critical thinking and development phases.

4. Concluding Comments

NICVA and its members welcome the developments towards delivery of a PEACE PLUS programme for Northern Ireland

As the SEUPB continues in its development and delivery of the PEACE PLUS programme, we would welcome continued opportunities to support and inform this work. In addition, we look forward to further clarity and information regarding priorities for the programme, the scale of funding being made available and the likely timescale/timeframe for delivery.

For more information on any aspect of our response please contact:

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