

The first results are out from NICVA's Viewfinder survey and they paint an illuminating and thoughtful insight into the views of the sector on issues as diverse as devolution to the introduction of the euro.

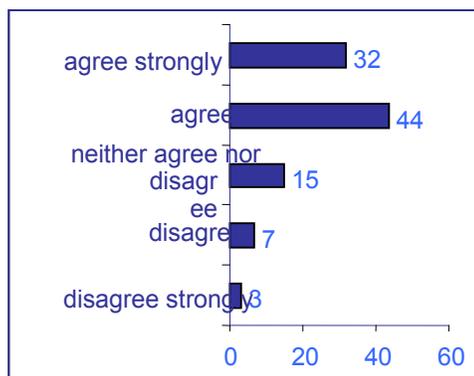
The main findings of this survey are presented below but if you want to read the results in full go to [www.nicva.org](http://www.nicva.org) and click on the appropriate heading.

## The Current Political Situation

The sector has some very stark messages for the politicians in terms of not having a repetition of what has been a very difficult year. Of the 275 responses to *Viewfinder*, over two thirds of organisations believed that the suspension of devolution was having a negative effect on the voluntary and community sector.

Even more telling was that almost three quarters of respondents (of which 31% agreed strongly with this statement) believed that since the re-introduction of direct rule there has been a lack of political drive to further initiatives within the voluntary and community sector, as seen in Graph 1.

**Graph 1 Since the reintroduction of direct rule there has been a lack of political drive to further initiatives within the voluntary and community sector %**



The message of marginalisation and isolation of the voluntary and community sector in terms of the political process during suspension is one that is strongly articulated by the respondents to this survey. The Civic Forum as a means by which the sector can articulate its views to government was seen as a big loss with 57% of respondents believing that the suspension of the Civic Forum has had a negative effect.

But what of the longer term impacts this year of political uncertainty will have on the voluntary and community sector. Again the message is clear, with almost half of the respondents (47%) believing that the suspension of devolution will result in irreparable damage to the voluntary and community sector. Clearly we will have to wait and see if such pessimistic predictions for the sector come true but what this survey has shown is that opinion is strongly in favour of the return of the devolved administration.

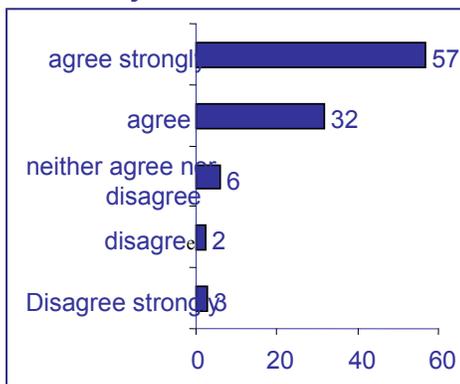
## Peace III

As the sector still comes to terms with Peace II (a whopping 91% believed that the administrative arrangements for Peace II were unnecessarily complicated), it was necessary to test opinion on the possible introduction of Peace III. Graph 2 shows 89% of respondents felt that the failure to

introduce a Peace III programme would have a negative impact on the sustainable development of the voluntary and community sector.

In terms of what the focus of Peace III should be, 87% believed that it should have less of an economic focus than Peace II and instead should concentrate specifically on reconciliation issues.

**Graph 2 Failure to introduce a Peace III programme will have a negative impact on the sustainable development of the voluntary and community sector%**



## Business involvement

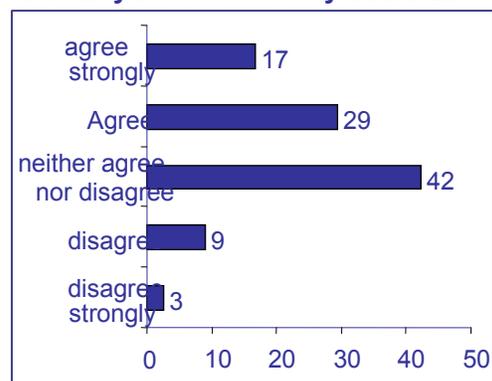
Management committees are the backbone of the voluntary and community sector and for organisations attempting to ensure a representative and effective committee is always a problem. In this section of the survey we focused on the level of engagement by business on committees. In total 47% of organisations stated they have business representation on their committees with 80% believing that business involvement provides a degree of specialist knowledge that is otherwise lacking on their committees. Other benefits are credibility (69%) and the ability to access additional funding (56%).

## The euro

Until such times as the Treasury decides that the UK is ready to have a referendum on whether the euro should replace Sterling, the voluntary and community sector, Like the rest of the UK is in a state of limbo. In order to assess the level of preparedness of the sector in terms of the introduction of the euro we asked a number of questions to assess how big an issue the euro really is.

Perhaps unsurprisingly just over four out of every ten organisations were not sure about the impact of the introduction of the euro on the voluntary and community sector. However, Graph 3 shows 45% of organisations responding to *Viewfinder* did feel that the impact would be significant.

**Graph 3 If the euro is introduced it will have a big impact on the voluntary and community sector%**



Across the board in terms of preparing to convert stored financial information to training of cash-handling staff and volunteers, approximately half of all organisations have said that they will do some preparation if the euro becomes a certainty. Only a very small percentage of organisations have done some preparation and although the survey didn't ask, the

likelihood is that these organisations work on a crossborder basis.

The *Viewfinder* survey was circulated to 906 NICVA members during November 2003- 30% responded.

The results of Viewfinder 1 have provided vital information relating to the voluntary and community sector's views. The business involvement questions asked were included in a paper written for Business Eye. The Peace III results were used to inform a seminar held at NICVA in December 2003 relating to the future of Peace III.

If you would like further information about the survey or how to include questions in future *Viewfinders* contact Siobhan O'Hagan at NICVA.

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