

Foreword

The Special EU Programmes Body and the Distinctiveness Working Group welcome this research which clearly demonstrates the impact the PEACE II Programme is having on the ground in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

This Distinctiveness Working Group was set up to look at how the distinctiveness criteria were being implemented in the programme, and to try to bring together some of the learning from all the different approaches to peace building work. The group usually meets in community venues, and uses the opportunity to hear from people who are working 'on the ground'. By doing this, there is a chance to hear not only about the achievements, but also about some of the problems and dilemmas faced by those who are trying to build stronger and more peaceful communities. There is much to be learned by going out more in reception than transmission mode.

Much of the monitoring of the peace programme records the administration, or the facts and figures, but behind all this, there are many stories of how it is all being done, and there is now within this community a great deal of knowledge, skills and experience - within the projects and programmes, and within the many organizations and partnerships that are assessing, developing and supporting all the initiatives.

The thinking behind this piece of research was around how some of this story could be captured from three very different areas and contexts - East Belfast, Strabane and Cavan. The researchers spent many hours in interviews and meetings and the report records some of the concerns and frustrations, but also many examples of new opportunities - where things were made possible that weren't possible before. There are some common themes - the importance of building skills and capacity, the positive impact of small amounts of money, the supportive influence of umbrella bodies and networks. There are, too, common concerns - particularly around sustaining the work in the longer term.

The report also poses challenges to the PEACE II Programme as it asks the question of how we can ensure that reconciliation work is given a greater focus in the future. Changing the habits and patterns of division is not an easy task, nor is it a short-term one. The research highlights the limitations of a peace programme in trying to tackle deeply rooted problems in a short time-scale - but it is clear that people feel that it is a crucial start to a process that is long term, difficult to measure, and hard to do. The report also contains evidence that this programme has been successful in reaching out to all sections of the community. However, we have to be careful not to be complacent and there is evidence that the lack of capacity in some communities is constraining the extent to which can fully engage in peace building and reconciliation. It is important moving forward that all sections of the community feel that they have a full and equal opportunity to positively engage in peace and reconciliation work.

Pat Colgan, Chief Executive,

SEUPB

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The research was carried out by NICVA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action) and was overseen by the Research Studies Steering Group whose members are drawn from the Distinctiveness Working Group of the Peace II Programme Monitoring Committee. The Steering Group was chaired by Libby Keys (Rural Community Network). The other members of the group were:

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We would not, of course, have had the data on which the project is based without the many individuals throughout Strabane, East Belfast and Cavan who gave of their time so freely to participate in this research. Through their participation in the project, they have had a say in how PEACE II has impacted upon their area.

The Special European Union Programmes Body expresses its gratitude to all individuals and organisations that took part or assisted in any way with this important piece of research.

Executive Summary

This research provides an insight into the impact that PEACE II funding has had in Strabane, East Belfast and Cavan. This analysis is intended to supplement additional quantitative data that is available on PEACE II funding in Northern Ireland and the border counties. The research, commissioned by the Distinctiveness Working Group, was conducted by NICVA Research Unit (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action) between June and September 2004. A total of 84 interviews were carried out with PEACE II recipient organisations and other key actors from the media, political parties and other civil society organisations across each of the three study areas. This research is not intended to be an evaluation of monitoring forms or an audit of PEACE II funding projects but more of an attempt to garner opinion on the wider impact PEACE II funding has had in each of the areas. In relation to the level of funding received by each area, a total of £6.2 million went to 86 projects in the Strabane District Council area. East Belfast received £14 million under PEACE II across 74 different projects. Finally, a total of 58 projects in County Cavan received PEACE II funding amounting to 7.7 million.

This report has attempted to place the findings of the interviews in the wider socio-economic and political environments in each of the three areas. This analysis has taken account of a wide range of factors and has been an important element of the analysis in relation to how the funded projects have integrated into the wider environment. In essence this research attempts to measure the impact PEACE II is having on the ground, whilst also trying to examine the progress or otherwise of funded projects and to provide an assessment of learning from both a positive and negative perspective. Despite the very obvious differences in each of the areas - the socio-economic profile, the impact of the conflict, history of community development, etc – there are some very clear common messages to emerge in relation to the impact of PEACE II.

The interviews produced a wide range of comments relating to PEACE II and how it has influenced peace building, economic renewal and capacity building. Across all three areas there is almost unanimous agreement with the assessment that PEACE II has acted as a catalyst which has facilitated the development of services, infrastructure, training and engagement that would otherwise not have happened or at the very least not happened as quickly.

This particular point highlights two very different ways in which PEACE II funding has provided the impetus for change in each of the areas. First, the funding has provided the capital through which services and infrastructure have been developed and in some ways this has been a consolidation of the activities funded under PEACE I. This is a very important aspect of the impact PEACE II has had as this type of investment is seen as essential in terms of the social and economic reconstruction of a society emerging out of conflict. Peace building in this wider sense is only possible if traditional thinking and ultimately the legacy of the conflict can be explored in a safe environment. However, this holistic view of peace building is predicated on a stable political environment and as will be seen in a number of instances throughout this report, external factors have influenced and shaped how PEACE II programmes have rolled out on the ground. The second element, which is much more related to the existence of the distinctiveness criteria, is the creation of an environment where applicants have had to think about other communities and the needs that exist there.

This has made a lot of recipient organisations of PEACE II recognise the impact of the conflict and how that may be addressed in as inclusive a manner as possible. Many respondents who were in receipt of PEACE II funding claimed that they would not have otherwise considered quite as fully the needs of the other community and would not have necessarily pursued just as explicit a programme of peace building or cross-community work. Again, this report will attempt to show how relationships and new ways of working have developed under PEACE II funding. That is not to say that PEACE II funding has provided a solution to all inter and intra community tensions that exist and it is worth noting that a very distinct thread of realism ran through the respondents' comments concerning the challenge ahead. It was not uncommon to hear respondents discuss tokenism, facilitation of engagement but not reconciliation, the difficulties of getting the message further than committees and a focus on meeting the distinctiveness criteria at the expense of meeting real need.

There was also a sense amongst some of the respondents, particularly those in East Belfast, that activities to address the legacy of the conflict have been influenced by local conditions which have negatively impacted upon some PEACE II funded projects. A number of respondents (both recipients and non-recipients of PEACE II funding) felt that some elements of the PEACE II programme were inflexible to realities on the ground, for instance the interface violence and intra-community feuds

in East Belfast and what may have been appropriate in a rural setting was more difficult to translate into an urban one. There was also a feeling that the distinctiveness criteria had, in some cases, meant that some projects were not funded because of the adherence to ensuring a reconciliation element in all funded projects. This was particularly the case in relation to single identity work in areas. In relation to any economic renewal associated with PEACE II, it was difficult for respondents to attribute any direct impact to PEACE II because of the multifarious initiatives and policies that exist in each of the areas in terms of regeneration and renewal.

Through PEACE II projects individuals have developed their skills and confidence but it is difficult to state the exact number of jobs have been created directly or indirectly as a result of the funding. Of course improvements in the built and natural environment through PEACE II are self-evident but economic renewal is much more than improved footpaths and a refurbished community hall. There was a recognition by many respondents during this research that things had improved on the surface but to make a judgement on the longer-term impact these improvements are going to have on the economic renewal and regeneration of an area was too difficult. The issue of sustainability was a common theme throughout the interviews. The thrust of the discussions related to sustaining and maintaining the momentum that has been created through PEACE II in terms of building confidence and facilitating engagement within communities. In each of the areas there were a number of suggestions as to how future funding may be developed based on the experiences of organisations funded under PEACE II. A number of common areas arose during the interviews. For instance, how need is determined and the articulation of this need between the funder and organisations operating on the ground emerged as a common theme. This is not to say that current projects which are funded under PEACE II do not meet a genuine need on the ground but there is a feeling, particularly among non-recipients of PEACE II funding, that any future funding should attempt to take greater cognisance of local issues and priorities.

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A very clear message to emerge from the research into how to take things forward related to the introduction of a degree of proportionality in the funding application process to ensure that smaller organisations can avail of funding. There is a general sense that PEACE II has had a positive impact across each of the three areas but if there is to be future funding, respondents of all types were concerned about how to sustain the work and level of engagement that has occurred already. This is not a one dimensional view of sustainability which only focuses on the financial side of things but one that is concerned about sustaining the involvement of individuals in order to take these initiatives forward. On more than one occasion the issue of finding people to become involved at an organisational level was seen to be becoming more and more difficult. This of course cannot be solely linked to the PEACE II funding programme but it is indicative of a wider societal problem which could potentially affect longer-term developments. As a consequence of the opinion that PEACE II has acted as a catalyst, trying to attribute tangible outcomes is difficult, particularly in terms of economic renewal or long-term attitudinal changes with respect to creating a stable and peaceful society which promotes reconciliation. There is a sense amongst the respondents to this research that it is a first step in developing the capacity and skills to attempt to address these issues from a more stable and sustainable position. The issue of additionality, in terms of other policies and funding programmes that exist in each of the areas, has made it all the more difficult to identify the impacts directly attributable to PEACE II. Allied to the impact that the wider economic, social and political environment has had in each of these

areas, an accurate and robust assessment of the impact of PEACE II is very difficult. It is widely recognised amongst individuals in PEACE II funded projects and other actors in the community that PEACE II has been a further step in a longer, more involved process that will require further investment and commitment. Indeed for many, PEACE II funding has been the manifestation, financially at least, of the peace process on the ground.

1: Introduction

This research provides an insight into the impact that PEACE II funding has had in Northern Ireland and the border counties. This analysis is supplemented by a series of case studies to provide additional information in the context of existing quantitative data. The research will take full account of the spectrum of PEACE II funding in a selection of geographic areas. The research will serve as a snapshot to assist the statistical and analytical data currently available in order to tell the story of the PEACE II Programme by highlighting any impacts produced by the funding. The three areas selected for this research were Strabane District Council area, East Belfast and County Cavan.

1.1 Background to PEACE II

The EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE II) is a unique EU funding programme covering Northern Ireland and the six border counties - Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo. The programme aims to help Northern Ireland become a more peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border region. Over the period 2000-2004, PEACE II will have provided 700 million (some £450 million) in assistance through a range of social and economic projects. The Programme Managing Authority is the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB), a cross-border body established under the Good Friday Agreement. Programme funding is administered by the following categories of implementing body:

- Government departments.
- Non-government bodies or Intermediary Funding Bodies (IFBs).
- Local Strategy Partnerships (Northern Ireland) and County Council led Task Forces (border region).

It is to these implementing bodies that project sponsors must apply for funding.

The PEACE II Programme promotes economic and social development with a special focus on those groups, sectors/activities and areas which have been most affected by the conflict. Two specific objectives, or distinctiveness criteria, can be identified in relation to the overall aim of the PEACE II Programme:

Objective 1: Addressing the Legacy of the Conflict

The Programme will address specific problems generated by the conflict in order to assist the return to a normal peaceful and stable society.

Objective 2: Taking Opportunities Arising from Peace

To encourage actions which have a stake in peace and which actively help promote

a stable and normal society where opportunities for development can be grasped.

The Programme Priorities under PEACE II are:

- Economic Renewal.
- Social Integration, Inclusion and Reconciliation.
- Locally Based Regeneration and Development Strategies.
- Outward and Forward Looking Region.
- Cross Border Co-Operation.

1.2 Key objectives of PEACE II

PEACE II is not a conventional regional development initiative. Its overall strategic aim is to “reinforce progress towards a more stable and peaceful society and to promote reconciliation.” Successful projects must:

- Promote economic and social development with a special focus on those groups, sectors and areas which have been most affected by the conflict.
- Develop reconciliation and mutual understanding and respect between and within traditions and communities in the eligible region.

The specific objectives of the programme are to enable the return to a normal society by addressing the legacy of the conflict or by taking opportunities arising from peace.

1.3 Research objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

- To identify any synergy between projects within a geographic location, their interaction, positive or otherwise, with actors in the community and factors within the community that facilitate or impede the development of PEACE II key objectives.
- To describe, through qualitative and quantitative analysis, the combined impact of all the PEACE II funded projects within the given geographic area.
- To identify practices and activities which have been particularly successful and to identify where there has been less progress than anticipated, with a view to learning from both success and difficulty.

To this end, rather than reiterating the data from monitoring reports and previous evaluations, this research attempts to tell the story of PEACE II on the ground and to get at the information that is not always collected on monitoring forms. As a consequence of this, the research is not intended to be an audit of all PEACE II funded organisations but rather it reflects as widely as possible the range of organisations funded under each Measure. As a result any detailed analysis or commentary of individual projects is confined to the case study sections, while in the main body of the report, there is a summation of the general opinions and attitudes towards PEACE II amongst PEACE II organisations and other key community actors.

2: Methodology

In order to fully assess the impact of PEACE II funding in each of the study areas, a three stage methodology was developed.

2.1 Area selection

In the first instance an exercise was undertaken to select the three study areas - one urban, one rural and one from the border region. A number of variables were taken into consideration during the selection process. The variables included information relating to the relative deprivation in the area, socio-demographic statistics, the effects of the Troubles and the level of European funding that was accessed by

organisations in each of the areas. A list of potential areas was presented to the Research Studies Steering Group and a decision was reached on each study area. The three areas selected by the Research Steering Group were:

- Rural **Strabane District Council area**
- Urban **East Belfast**
- Border region **County Cavan**

2.2 Interviews

Within each of the selected study areas a number of key individuals from PEACE II recipient organisations were interviewed to assess the impact and awareness of PEACE II funded projects in the area. These individuals were selected from a list of funded organisations sourced from the CSF Central Database¹. As highlighted in the objectives for this research it was necessary to examine how funded projects integrated into the community and therefore it was deemed necessary to speak to other key informants such as local politicians, the media, churches, public sector representatives, community leaders and other civil society representatives. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and followed a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 1). The interviews were conducted between June and September 2004. A total of 84 interviews were conducted across all of the three study areas (30 in both Strabane and East Belfast and 24 in Cavan). A list of all the organisations interviewed during this research can be found in Appendix 2.

¹ The Central Database is a live and dynamic system which depends on various funding bodies to provide and update information on European funding. The data from the CSF Central Database is correct as of 3 June 2004. PEACE II Geographical Survey **Special EU Programmes Body** 13

2.3 Case Studies

The final stage in the methodology focused on developing short case studies on projects that had been funded under PEACE II. These case studies provide further insight into the impact the funding has had on the organisation and the role it plays in the local community. Particular attention was paid to the effect of the distinctiveness criteria upon peace building and ultimately addressing the legacy of the conflict. **Special EU Programmes Body** PEACE II Geographical Survey 14 This report is divided into three distinct sections which aim to examine the impact and integration of PEACE II funding in each of the three study areas. Each section examines the overall funding each area received under the PEACE II funding programme by Priority area. To set these findings in context, a number of background statistics are provided, setting a fuller picture of the environment into which the funding was distributed.

The substantive proportion of each area section focuses on the impact the funding has had and how that relates to the wider socio-economic and political environment that defines each area. The analysis articulating the impact the funding has had is, by its very nature, a relatively broad brush assessment. However the inclusion of a number of short case studies at the end of each chapter shows how particular projects funded through PEACE II have impacted directly upon a specific community. Within the area specific chapters, the analysis has been structured in such a way as to reflect the impact it has had under the two objectives which form the distinctiveness criteria:

- Addressing the Legacy of the Conflict
- Taking Opportunities Arising from Peace

After each of the three area specific sections there will an overview provided on how PEACE II has impacted on the area and what contribution PEACE II funding has made to that area in relation to the distinctiveness criteria as listed above. The report

will conclude with a discussion of the other pertinent issues in relation to PEACE II that were raised during this research. Quotations have not been directly attributed to any individual or organisation. Where direct quotations have been used they will be followed by a (R) or (NR) which signifies whether respondents were speaking on behalf of an organisation which received funding (R) or did not receive funding (NR).

3.1 Terminology

The formal title for the second peace programme is the 'European Union Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland, 2000-2004'. For the sake of convenience and brevity, the programme will be referred to as 'PEACE II' and the preceding peace programme will be referred to as 'PEACE I'. When Strabane and Cavan are referred to in this report it relates to the District Council area and the County as opposed to the respective towns in each area. When discussing East Belfast we are referring to the Parliamentary Constituency. For projects funded in Northern Ireland sterling is referred to when discussing the level of funding. For projects funded in the Republic of Ireland all funding amounts are referred to in euro. No direct comparison is made between the two currencies.

3: Structure of the Report