

EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

The European Union's Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the six Border Counties of Ireland is a special EU structural funds programme. Known as the PEACE programme, it emerged in 1994 as a response by the EU to positive developments in the peace process and set out to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation.

PEACE I

The first PEACE programme was agreed by the European Heads of State and Government in December 1994 and formally established in July 1995. The programme was allocated a total amount of €500 million (approximately £340 million) by the EU for the period 1995 -1999. Some 80 per cent was spent in Northern Ireland and 20 per cent in the Border Counties of Ireland (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, and Sligo).

The PEACE programme was designed to involve people at the grass roots level and to focus on those areas and sections of the population most affected by the conflict. It was given wide scope for action, covering social inclusion, economic development and employment, urban and rural regeneration, and cross border co-operation.

PEACE I funded over 13,000 projects across Northern Ireland. A large part of the funding was delivered through local partnerships, voluntary and community groups.

PEACE II

Acknowledging the success of PEACE I and the continuing special needs associated with the peace process, the European Council in March 1999 decided to extend the programme for a further five years (2000-2004).

Total EU funding for PEACE II for the period 2000-2004 was €31 million with around 80% of the available funds allocated to projects in Northern Ireland (€25 million). The resources provided by the EU are additional to other public expenditure in Northern Ireland. Together with match funding provided by the Government the total value of the programme is worth around £370 million to Northern Ireland.

PEACE II is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), one of the six North/South Implementation Bodies set up under the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

The specific aims of PEACE II are to assist Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland to:

- Address the legacy of the conflict; and
- Take advantage of opportunities arising from the peace process.

Within the overarching priority of promoting peace and reconciliation, the PEACE II programme has five main themes:

- Economic renewal
- Social integration, inclusion and reconciliation
- Locally based regeneration and development
- Outward and forward-looking region
- Cross-border co-operation

There are a number of different organisations which provide funding under PEACE II, including government departments, non-governmental organisations and Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs). Some 15% of the programme is devoted to cross-border projects.

By 2005 the EU PEACE II programme had provided almost €707 million, including UK and Irish government contributions, for projects in Northern Ireland and the Border region of Ireland. So far, more than 5,300 projects have been supported by PEACE II.

PEACE II Extension

In June 2005, the European Commission announced an extension of PEACE II for a further two years until the end of 2006 with additional funding of €144 million. This followed a request from the UK and Irish governments and approval of the extension by the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament.

More information

- For further information on PEACE contact the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), 6 Cromac Place, Belfast BT7 1LB, Tel: 028 9026 6660, e-mail info@seupb.org, website: www.seupb.org
- Application details and a summary of the PEACE II operational programme can be found at www.eugrants.org
- Further information on the EU's support for peace and reconciliation http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/themes/peace_en.htm

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