



Special EU Programmes Body
Comhlacht na gClár Speisialta AE
Special EU Skemes Boadie

PEACE PLUS PROGRAMME 2021 – 2027

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW



Northern Ireland
Executive

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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The overall objective of the PEACE PLUS Programme will be to build Peace and Prosperity and ensure that this Programme will leave a lasting and tangible legacy across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. The Programme’s strategy is to continue to take the opportunities and address the needs arising from the peace process in order to boost economic growth and stimulate social and economic regeneration and secondly, to promote social inclusion, particularly for those at the margins of economic and social life.

The Programme will help to address many long-standing social and economic challenges which have, and continue to impact on communities, particularly those in rural border areas, as well as ongoing challenges that exist in urban settings.

This document presents an Overview of the Themes and Investment Areas that have been approved by the NI Executive, Irish Government and North South Ministerial Council. This is not yet approved by the European Commission and is therefore subject to change. The Overview is intended to provide information to potential applicants to enable project development to continue. Further detailed guidance will be made available following Commission approval. The SEUPB will continue to keep all our stakeholders updated.

Please follow our social media channels for further updates or email us to be included within our contacts database at communications@seupb.eu

PEACE PLUS Programme – Programme Overview

Themes and Investment Areas

There are **SIX KEY THEMATIC AREAS** of the **PEACE PLUS** Programme.



Figure 1

Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities



Budget allocation €250,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland are experiencing a period of relative post conflict stability. Often, peace building is thought of in a negative sense, i.e. the absence of fighting or violence, rather than the positive aspects of peace, which are the presence of relationships, institutions and other factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive in a post-conflict transformational society. Peace and reconciliation are essential for ongoing socio-economic development and prosperity. As such, actions to improve community and social cohesion are a priority for the governments of both jurisdictions.

Continued and considered investment in proven pathways to reconciliation is required to build peaceful and thriving communities. Such investments should result in a legacy of change, achieved through physical and social improvements, which facilitate increased social inclusion and improved cross-community and cross-border relations.

Everyone in the Programme Area has the potential to contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous society. Therefore, individual Investment Areas have been designed to optimise engagement and participation across all ages, communities and sectors and thus, ensure the maximum contribution to peace and reconciliation in the Programme Area.



THEME 1: BUILDING PEACEFUL AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Co-designed Local Community Peace Action Plans

Budget allocation: €110,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Investment Area 1.1: To enable and empower local community partnerships, led by the local authorities, to select and deliver priority projects on a cross-community basis, which will result in shared and inclusive local services, facilities and spaces and will make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation.

PEACE PLUS Local Community Action

Plans: Action Plans will be produced for each of the 17 local authority areas across the Programme Area. These will be designed to complement the community planning structures introduced across the Programme Area. The overarching plans will comprise component localised plans for defined local areas, which collectively extend to all parts of the individual local authority district. The Co-designed Local Community Action Plans will enable diverse partnerships, led by the local authorities, to establish priority actions for their local areas and collectively address these, in a manner which will make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation at the local Programme Area level.

The PEACE PLUS Programme will invest in the establishment of Local Community Peace Partnerships in each of the District Electoral Areas (DEAs) which comprise the 11 local authority areas in Northern Ireland; and each of the Local Electoral Areas (LEAs), which comprise each county council area in the border counties in Ireland. Or, local authorities may wish to adopt an alternative approach to clustering areas, whilst ensuring the PEACE PLUS Action Plans produced for their district incorporate all local areas therein. Membership of the Local Community PEACE PLUS Partnerships will reflect the diverse nature of our communities

(including newcomers) and be managed to ensure the desired levels of representation and inclusivity.

Each Local Community Peace Partnership will be resourced to work with communities to develop a priority action plan for their individual area; which combined will form an overall PEACE PLUS Action Plan for each of the 17 local authority areas in the Programme Area. Actions within the localised plans will span the range of social, environmental and economic interventions included within the PEACE PLUS Programme. However, principally, the plans will be centred around three core themes:

1. **Local community regeneration and transformation;**
2. **Thriving and peaceful communities; and**
3. **Building respect for all cultural identities.**

It will be important that the process to identify priority actions and the interventions subsequently supported, demonstrate significant peace and reconciliation progress. Projects supported by the Co-designed Local Community Action Plans should result in increased levels of social inclusion and cross-community integration. By design, related actions should incorporate the level of sustained contact between those from different community, cultural and political backgrounds, required to achieve significant attitudinal and behavioural change. Support will be provided to help quality assure the plans from a peace and reconciliation perspective.

This **area of the Programme** will enable and empower local community partnerships to self-determine and deliver priority projects on a cross-community basis; which will result in improved, shared and inclusive local services, facilities and spaces; and make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation.



THEME 1: BUILDING PEACEFUL AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

It will **result** in the development of PEACE PLUS Action Plans which benefit the Programme Area as follows:

- The creation of sustainable, inclusive and cross-community partnerships, which will make a significant contribution to the community planning process and peacebuilding in the Programme Area;
- Community ownership of the PEACE PLUS Action Plans and ongoing engagement throughout their delivery;
- The management of significant and sustained cross-community collaboration at the local level to deliver established development priorities; and
- The inclusion of all local areas across the Programme Area, including those who may not previously have participated within PEACE Programme activities.

Actions to be supported

The PEACE PLUS Programme will invest in the creation of a Local Authority Action Plan for each local authority area in the Programme Area. These plans will comprise component Co-designed Local Community Action Plans prepared for defined local areas, which collectively extend to all parts of each individual local authority district.

To enable this process, the types of actions to be supported will include the preparation of 17 overarching PEACE PLUS Action Plans (one for each local authority area in the Programme Area), each comprising an agreed number of Co-designed Local Community Action Plans which collectively incorporate all local areas within each individual district.

The Co-designed Local Community Peace Action Plans will centre around three established themes (i) Community regeneration and transformation; (ii) Thriving and peaceful communities; and (iii) Building respect for all cultural identities.

The proposed plans will span the range of activities included within the PEACE PLUS Programme, for example: youth development programmes; health and wellbeing initiatives; community regeneration projects; redevelopment and reimagining of existing community facilities for shared usage; initiatives to build positive relations; social innovation; social enterprise and education and skills development programmes; all designed to address issues of racism and sectarianism, increase social inclusion and promote civil leadership.



THEME 1: BUILDING PEACEFUL AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Empowering Communities

**Budget allocation: €30,000,000
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 1.2: To empower community, voluntary and statutory organisations at all levels across the Programme Area to contribute to the creation of a more peaceful and prosperous society.

Empowering Communities Programme: All citizens, communities and organisations across the Programme Area have a role in creating a more peaceful and prosperous society and should be empowered to fulfil this potential. The Empowering Communities Programme will enable organisations of all sizes to engage in peacebuilding activities and contribute to the creation of a more cohesive society. There are three strands within this programme, which are distinct and yet are interlinked.

Strand 1: The Empowering Communities to Embed Peace Small Grants Programme will support the delivery of people to people projects by local community organisations, through the provision of a small grants programme. It will enable a bottom-up approach, designed to empower people and organisations at a grass roots level, to make a direct contribution to peace and reconciliation within their community. It will incorporate measures to encourage participation by smaller organisations with limited administrative resources and will be streamlined in nature, with simplified bureaucracy and access.

Supported projects will enable community groups to work on shared challenges, on a cross-community and or cross-border basis. The thematic approaches will vary but central to all projects will be significant and sustained contact between culturally diverse communities.

This is in addition to the incorporation of outcomes clearly linked to embedding peace and reconciliation. Where appropriate, this will incorporate activities designed to address and transform sectarian attitudes and behaviours. Related actions will build respect and a mutual appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusivity. If necessary, investment will be made in single identity work, where this will lead to initial and sustained contact with individuals and groups from different community, cultural and political backgrounds. Participation will be encouraged by those from minority and marginalised groups.

Strand 2: The Institutional Capacity Development Programme will ensure issues related to Trust and Leadership are supported through collaborative actions between key voluntary, statutory and political institutions across multiple levels. The objective of these actions will be to build the capacity of such organisations to develop new models of service delivery, which contribute to peace and reconciliation. These may include key services, including those related to transport, health, education, media and housing, which have significant potential to contribute to increased peace and reconciliation.



THEME 1: BUILDING PEACEFUL AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Strand 3: The Community-Based Safety Interventions Programme will support projects with the potential to improve peace and reconciliation within local communities. It will facilitate collaborative approaches by the statutory, community and voluntary sectors, designed to address anti-social behaviours which undermine peace and reconciliation. In this way, the programme will contribute to the creation of strengthened and more cohesive local communities.

This **area of the Programme** will promote positive relations characterised by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

It will **result** in communities and organisations at all levels across the Programme Area, empowered to fulfil their potential in the creation of a more peaceful and prosperous society.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Institutional capacity projects:** Projects designed to support the development of the institutional capacity of key voluntary, statutory and political institutions, including projects with an emphasis on trust and leadership; which will lead to the creation of new models of service delivery; and
- **Local community safety projects:** Interventions designed to contribute to increased levels of peace and reconciliation.
- **Peace and reconciliation projects:** Anti-sectarian initiatives (funded through a small grants programme) which incorporate significant and sustained contact between individuals and groups from different community, cultural and political backgrounds; the outcomes of which are clearly linked to improved community relations. The thematic focus of these programmes will span a broad range of areas and groups, including, but not exhaustive, children and young people; sport; arts and culture; history; victims and survivors; ex-prisoners; members of the security services; health and wellbeing; community education; community safety; community regeneration; and social innovation / enterprise;



THEME 1: BUILDING PEACEFUL AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Building Positive Relations

**Budget allocation: €35,000,000
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 1.3: To promote positive relations characterised by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

Building Positive Relations Programme:

This will provide support for projects which transcend local boundaries and have the potential to achieve significant peace and reconciliation across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. These projects should involve cross-border dimensions where possible and appropriate to the intervention.

The Programme will place particular emphasis on providing support to those most marginalised within our communities. These include, but this is not an exhaustive list, women; older people; minority communities (including migrants and refugees and those from the Traveller Community); those living with disabilities; those with issues arising from the legacy of the conflict including ex-prisoners and security service personnel; members of the Traveller Community; and those from the LGBT community.

Supported projects will enable individuals and communities to collaborate across a broad range of areas of mutual interest. These will include community development; parenting; arts and culture; sport; education; and social innovation / enterprise. Projects should be inclusive in nature and facilitate significant and sustained contact between those from different community, cultural and political backgrounds. Initiatives should evidence a commitment to tackling challenging and complex issues including sectarianism, which can limit peace and reconciliation progress.

This **area of the programme** will promote positive relations characterised by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

It will **result** in an increase in the percentage of the Programme Area population, which has relationships with and as such a greater understanding of those from different cultural backgrounds; and feels part of a wider, more diverse community.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Capacity building:** (1) Projects which help build the capacity of Programme Area and local organisations, through cross-community and cross-border collaboration; and (2) Projects which develop new community leaders and enhance the capacity of existing community leaders and volunteers to promote and facilitate peace and reconciliation;
- **Building positive relations:** (1) Support for conflict resolution interventions (including anti-sectarian initiatives) which contribute towards building positive relations; (2) Projects which build, improve and sustain relationships between and within communities by addressing issues of trust, prejudice and intolerance; (3) Projects which showcase the benefits of cross-community and cross-border contact to achieve greater community cohesion; (4) Community justice interventions that contribute to peace building and positive relations; and (5) Projects which engage those with opposing and dissenting views; which if not challenged will contribute to continued segregation and endanger the peace process;
- **Increasing participation:** (1) Projects which increase civic participation, including those by minority and newcomer communities (this may include the requirement for language



THEME 1: BUILDING PEACEFUL AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

support); and (2) Projects which increase minority groups and women's participation in public and political life – to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society through the promotion of reconciliation amongst all communities; and

- **Cultural expression:** (1) Projects which facilitate positive cultural expression within diverse communities, and will lead to mutual trust and respect for each other; and (2) Projects related to sensitive and inclusive cultural expression and celebration, leading to cross-community engagement and understanding.





THEME 1: BUILDING PEACEFUL AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Re-imagining Communities

Budget allocation: €75,000,000

Investment Area 1.4: To create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of transformative shared space and services, which will support and embed peace and reconciliation.

Reimagining Programme: This is a programme of transformative reimagining projects, which will create new shared spaces for use by all communities; or increase the shared usage of existing facilities. It will result in an increased number of individuals and groups utilising shared spaces and accessing shared services.

The PEACE Programme has helped to increase cross-community and cross-border integration across the Programme Area by investing in the creation of shared spaces and services. This has included iconic spaces which have created prominent physical symbols of a changing society, as well as shared spaces developed by interface communities on a cross-community basis. This has led to significant and sustained attitudinal change in key areas across the Programme Area. There is an opportunity to build upon this model to:

- Provide diverse communities with the support and resources to self-determine and co-design transformative shared, inclusive spaces and services on a cross-community basis within their areas; and
- Facilitate the reimagining of existing facilities (including those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic), with an emphasis on those areas which have been most impacted by the conflict, in a way which will deliver maximum social and economic benefits.

It will be important to develop innovative programmes of activity and service provision which maximise the cross-community and or

cross-border usage of the shared spaces. The programme should have an equal emphasis upon the creation of new and reimaged community spaces within urban and rural areas.

This **area of the programme** will create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared space and services, which will benefit and embed peace and reconciliation.

It will **result** in an increase in the number of individuals and groups regularly accessing new or reimaged shared spaces, which have been co-designed on a cross-community basis; and spending recreational time or accessing services therein.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Collaboration for reimagining projects:** Actions which will enable key representatives and leaders of different communities to collaborate and co-design reimagining projects on a cross-border and or cross-community basis, which will result in significant social and economic regeneration and transformation;
- **Reimagining projects:** Actions which will result in the (1) Reimagining of existing spaces, including the removal of sectarian symbols and emblems to encourage increased shared usage and deliver significant peace and reconciliation outcomes for the entire community; and (2) Development of reimaged and new facilities which will accommodate social enterprise and social innovation projects, which will benefit the entire surrounding community through cross-community usage, this should include facilities left vacant post the COVID-19 pandemic;
- **Shared spaces and shared facilities:** (1) The development of new and inclusive shared spaces which will have a transformative effect on local areas and enable shared usage by groups and individuals from different community, cultural and political

THEME 1: BUILDING PEACEFUL AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES



backgrounds; particularly within those communities which have been most impacted by the conflict and experience poverty, inequality and social exclusion as a direct result; and (2) The development of shared facilities and programmes which enable significant and sustained multi and inter-generational usage on a cross-border and or cross-community basis and include a focus on minority groups; and

- **Supporting usage of shared spaces and shared facilities:** (1) Programmes which address the levels of sectarianism and racism which prevent shared usage of spaces and access to shared services; and (2) Programmes which support the sustained cross-community usage of new and reimaged community spaces and facilitate access to shared services. These programmes may encompass a wide range of thematic areas including children and young people; health and wellbeing; social enterprise; tourism and heritage; education; arts and culture; and sport and recreation.

Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation



Budget allocation €170,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Peace and prosperity are synonymous with one and other, and peace is a necessary precondition for sustained economic growth. In turn, the prosperity arising from a stable and rising economy, can help foster and embed peace. Conflict and peace, both shape and are shaped by the economy. As such, economic development in post conflict regions must take account of this and, where possible, be designed to strengthen peace and reconciliation.

The Programme Area experiences low levels of entrepreneurship and innovation generally. This situation contributes to a high ratio of low to high paid jobs and comparatively higher levels of unemployment.

There is an opportunity to encourage SMEs to achieve scaling through clustering and facilitate innovation, in a manner which will garner performance in an ever changing and competitive marketplace, while increasing competitiveness, productivity and export levels.

A more innovative culture is being fostered across the Programme Area. There is an opportunity to build upon this positive cultural shift and invest in high level research and innovation initiatives. This will facilitate commercially driven partnerships involving the Programme Area's best researchers and companies of all scales, in a manner which will contribute to significant economic growth.

To secure our economic future, it will be essential to assess and address emerging skills gaps in high value sectors on a cross-border area basis, in a way which will future proof the Programme Area and encourage cross-border labour mobility.

The creation of Smart Towns and Villages will build upon a proven social innovation led approach, to maximise the potential of Information Communications Technology (ICT) to deliver improved social and economic outcomes across the Programme Area, particularly in rural areas.

This Theme offers the most potential for projects based on functional areas, i.e. including partners from outside the Programme Area.

THEME 2: DELIVERING ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSFORMATION



SME Development and Transition

Budget allocation: €25,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Investment Area 2.1: To enhance sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs, including by productive investments.

SME Development and Transition

Programme: This will build upon existing investment to support SMEs to operate at scale through cross-border collaboration; engage in commercially led innovation; effectively transition to engage in the low carbon, circular economy; support SMEs to deliver productivity improvements or transition to the latest digital tools; and strengthen the Programme Area SME base for maximum engagement in a post COVID-19 economic landscape.

There is a need to provide continued strategic and structured support to the Programme Area SME sector, particularly those entities with high growth and export potential. Businesses that innovate and collaborate are more productive and more likely to be engaged in exporting and employ highly skilled individuals. Investment will be directed towards the development of a cross-border SME development programme to encompass an increased focus on the following elements:

- Support for SMEs (including where appropriate micro-businesses and start-ups) to operate at scale through the development and management of collaborative networks operating on a local, national and international basis, including industry clusters;
- Support for SMEs to engage in commercially led innovation, which will result in the development of new products and or more efficient processes;
- Support for SMEs to transition to a low carbon and circular economy through the development and introduction of sustainable

- manufacturing practices through education awareness and incentive programmes;
- Support to help SMEs deliver LEAN / productivity improvements or transition to / utilise the latest digitisation and Industry 4.0 tools to enable increased levels of productivity and competitiveness, while driving continuous economic improvement and performance, and access to global markets; and
- Support for SMEs to meet challenges and thrive in a post COVID-19 economy.

The programme will include a focus upon those sectors most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including Tourism and Retail. It will ensure complementarity with other regional initiatives including existing statutory support programmes and cluster initiatives.

This **objective** will enhance growth and competitiveness of SMEs and increase job creation.

It will **result** in the development of a stronger, more innovative and collaborative Programme Area SME base, which is delivering higher levels of productivity, exports and sustainable employment. Therefore in order to be attractive and relevant for SMEs, the programmes offered must demonstrate co-design with SMEs and address real practical needs and requirements.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **SME support:** Detailed SME capability assessment and mentoring programming to increase capacity in target areas, including: sustainable development practices; new product and or process development; digitisation; and post COVID-19 recovery and adaption planning;

THEME 2: DELIVERING ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSFORMATION



- **R & I for product and/or process development:** Cross-border collaborative research and innovation projects centred around core areas, including sustainable / advanced manufacturing, to develop new products and or processes designed to increase competitiveness;
- **Clusters:** Creation and management of innovative focused collaborative, cross-border clusters;
- **Academic-industry collaboration:** Cross-border academic and industry collaborative projects; and
- **Scaling networks:** Creation and management of support for scaling networks in key growth sectors.

THEME 2: DELIVERING ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSFORMATION

**Innovation Challenge Fund**

**Budget allocation: €65,000,000
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 2.2: To develop and enhance research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies in a manner which delivers maximum economic regeneration and transformation.

The Innovation Challenge Fund: This will support high level, commercially focused research, development and innovation within key Programme Area growth sectors; resulting in increased productivity and higher export levels; and sustainable employment. It will deliver major change innovation projects, which result in lasting local and national economic and social benefits.

Investment in collaborative innovation is key to the economic development of the Programme Area and beyond. Innovation leads to increased levels of productivity, which in turn deliver higher export volumes and sustainable employment. It is important to support innovation at all levels but with a particular emphasis on Programme Area level, major change projects, which will deliver significant benefit to the Programme Area.

The Innovation Challenge Programme will invest in cross-border consortia groups comprising stakeholders who wish to collaborate on high level innovation projects, which will deliver local and national benefits. Investment will result in the development of strong and entrepreneurial, innovation-led eco-systems, which encompass partnerships within specific sectors, in which there is the potential for competitive advantage. The Programme will provide key complementary support for R&I elements of locally-led development plans and area-based strategies such as activities included within the Programme Area investment plans including the City and Growth Deals, and the National Planning

Framework, which can deliver cross-border economic co-operation. The programme will:

- Support collaborative projects / initiatives in key growth sectors, which will have a positive impact on entrepreneurial activity and/or productivity and the innovative capability of enterprise;
- Enhance the productivity and new product development opportunities of Programme Area enterprises to sustain and increase employment levels across the Programme Area;
- Increase the levels of automation and enable Programme Area enterprises to respond to new technological opportunities across a range of key sectors; and
- Increase the level of accessible innovation focused facilities across the Programme Area; including those which can be utilised by local start-ups and are tech and digital-focused.

This **objective** will enhance cross-border research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies in a manner which delivers economic regeneration and transformation.

It will **result** in higher levels of demonstrable commercially focused research, development and innovation in the Programme Area, which will deliver new products and or processes and a correlated increase in Programme Area productivity and export levels.

THEME 2: DELIVERING ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSFORMATION**Actions to be supported**

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Research, development and innovation projects:** High-level cross-border research, development and innovation projects, capable of demonstrating commerciality, which will contribute to Programme Area growth sectors including Life and Health Sciences; Renewable / Bio Energy; Advanced Manufacturing; Agri-food; Cyber Security; and Artificial Intelligence; and
- **Advanced technologies applications:** Initiatives that support the application of advanced technologies across other sectoral areas; including the development of advanced technology hubs, which assist enterprises of all scales to develop new products and or processes

These actions will be supported by a range of activities including:

- Programme Area scaled facilities incorporating incubation and research space, digital facilities which will accommodate innovation-led clustering in key sectors.

THEME 2: DELIVERING ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSFORMATION



Programme Area Skills Development

**Budget allocation: €50,000,000
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 2.3: To develop skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship.

Programme Area Skills Development

Programme: This will support area-based approaches, designed to address evidenced skills gaps, which will result in increased productivity and employment and higher levels of cross-border labour mobility. The programme will enable cross-community and cross-border collaboration between education and training-based collaborations that reduce duplication and maximise the capacity of the Programme Area to address existing and emerging skills gaps, and opportunities for reskilling. It will also encompass the opportunity for overseas training and job placement opportunities.

Strategic investment is required to collaboratively and thus more effectively address existing and emerging skills gaps at the local and Programme Area level. This will help to address economic inactivity through increased cross-border labour mobility, with a particular focus upon rural areas

The PEACE PLUS Programme will build on best practice area-based models of skills development.

The proposed programme will also incorporate community development skills, with an emphasis on those which will contribute to improved peace and reconciliation. These will include social economy / innovation enablers and supports. These programmes will target the more marginalised and under-represented groups in our society. Related programmes should seek to improve the working conditions and employment prospects of these target groups.

Building on the published research from both Departments and their agencies, the investment in Programme Area Skills Development will:

- Support the provision of strategic cross-border skills programmes in further education / higher education institutions (including joint programmes) in key disciplines such as ICT and digital, STEAM, the green economy, entrepreneurship and leadership and management amongst other areas;
- Promote the uptake of apprenticeships in key areas such as ICT;
- Support the establishment of cross-border structures modelled on best practice; and
- Support the delivery of cross-border schemes in re-engagement with employment / upskilling to reduce the percentage of economically inactive and those in employment sectors at risk of automation changes.

Recognising the need to balance area-based requirements and central Government objectives, it is envisaged appropriate governance arrangements will be developed to oversee the delivery of actions in this Investment Area.

This **objective** will develop skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship.

It will **result** in the development of a flourishing Programme Area workforce, with skills better aligned to existing and future growth sectors and in line with public policy.

THEME 2: DELIVERING ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSFORMATION

**Actions to be supported**

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Clusters for sub-area skill gaps:** Programmes that enable area-based cross-community and cross-border clusters to respond to the sub-area skill gaps and requirements (including reskilling and upskilling); and
- **Area-based skills strategies:** Development of cross-community and cross-border strategies, aimed at risk reduction to employment sectors, subject to job displacement through technological development, including the development of innovation and entrepreneurship in the Programme Area.

The above actions will be complemented by a range of activities as outlined below:

- Programmes which maximise the delivery of cross-border programmes by further and higher education providers to minimise duplication of resources;
- Development and delivery of joint educational awards administered by cross-border partnerships where possible, to minimise the duplication of education provision and ensure alignment with evidence-based education, which will address recognised skills gaps and requirements; and
- Supports that address the barriers to participation in skills development programmes, particularly by marginalised and disadvantaged groups. These barriers include: affordability; childcare and caring responsibilities; language skills; and disability access. Programmes should be designed to improve the working conditions and employment prospects of minority groups.

THEME 2: DELIVERING ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSFORMATION



Smart Towns and Villages

**Budget allocation: €30,000,000
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 2.4: To reap the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisation and public authorities.

Smart Towns and Villages Development

Programme: This will provide greater access to and awareness of telecommunications. An area-based approach will be adopted to the creation of Smart Towns and Villages. This proven model utilises a social innovation-led approach to maximise the potential of ICT to deliver improved social and economic outcomes in target areas; particularly those of a rural nature. The programme will also incorporate measures for the transformation of vacant spaces and facilities within towns / villages centres for communal recreational and social usage.

Connectivity is an essential requirement to support the economic and social development of every area. Telecommunications is viewed as a necessity to support the development of communications, innovation, social inclusion and competitiveness.

Increasing access to and awareness of telecommunications presents an opportunity to adopt an overarching approach to the creation of Smart Towns and Villages. These are urban and rural areas and communities, which combine their strengths with the creative use of ICT, to create more desirable places for people to live and work. In particular, this model can explore how local services such as health, social services, education, energy, transport and retail can be enhanced and sustained through the deployment of ICT tools and community-led actions and projects. Digitisation is key to the creation of a Smart area. However, social innovation is also paramount. The PEACE PLUS

Programme will support the development of Smart Towns and Villages on a cluster area basis, resulting in considerable cross-community and cross-border collaboration. This approach will broaden the impact and benefits of related social innovation-based technological solutions. It will also lead to increased integration and the creation of a more cohesive community.

The PEACE PLUS Smart Towns and Villages Development Programme will:

- Create a more competitive, inclusive and balanced economy in the Programme Area;
- Enable more rural people to access current and future broadband infrastructure;
- Enable people living in rural communities to compete for higher value employment;
- Introduce more innovative solutions to service delivery through the creative use of ICT, particularly within rural areas where access to core services can be reduced;
- Create opportunities for rural innovation-led businesses to establish a more creative society where people can fulfil their potential; and
- Create more citizen friendly towns / villages centres through the transformation of existing capital assets; and increase cross-community and cross-border collaboration within target areas, in a manner that contributes to enhanced peace and reconciliation the creation of a more cohesive society.

This **objective** will reap the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments.

It will **result** in more citizens and communities accessing and utilising ICT to enhance social service delivery and economic development; and as such contribute to the creation of more a resilient, vibrant and prosperous Programme Area.

THEME 2: DELIVERING ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSFORMATION

**Actions to be supported**

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Mobile digital hubs:** The design and development of advanced mobile digital hubs, to ensure the widest possible opportunities for digital access for rural citizens and enterprises in particular;
- **Digital services by transforming existing assets:** The development of projects which will help transform existing assets within towns / village centres for citizen recreational, social and enterprise usage;
- **Mentoring programmes:** The design and delivery of digital mentoring programmes to be delivered through the proposed mobile digital hubs in rural communities and businesses;
- **Digital clusters:** The development of digital clusters that can then develop opportunities to increase remote working and by so doing reduce the need for rural citizens to leave their communities and commute long distances to work; and
- **Social enterprise / innovation-led projects:** The development of social enterprise / innovation-led projects designed to apply advanced ICT to create new models of social service and economic development.

Theme 3: Empowering and Investing in Our Young People



Budget allocation €123,280,953 (ERDF and Match)

Investing in our young people is essential to ensure the long-term peace and prosperity of the Programme Area. Whilst the current generation of young people has not experienced direct conflict to the extent their parents and grandparents did, they live with the legacy of the conflict. This situation impacts upon many areas of their lives. Many have grown up in predominately single identity areas and attended single identity schools. Combined, these factors have resulted in limited, if any opportunity to develop relationships with those from different community, cultural and political backgrounds. This has often engendered feelings of fear and mistrust in our young people. A considerable number have grown up in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, which have experienced under investment as a direct result of the conflict. In many cases, this situation has contributed to lower levels of educational attainment and an inability to participate in the diverse labour market, which would improve their individual life circumstances, while enhancing peace and reconciliation. Building on existing experience and expertise in the Integrated Education Sector will enable peace and reconciliation work to be effectively progressed across pre-school, primary, post-primary and youth settings, and on a cross-border basis.

There is an opportunity to build upon the experience of delivering the current PEACE IV Shared Education Programme, to further develop current cross-community and cross-border school partnerships and meet demand from those schools and other settings not yet participating. To enable young people from all sectors to engage in shared learning, the opportunity to participate in shared education programmes should be extended to youth organisations, including on a cross-border basis.

There is a potential to build on the current PEACE4Youth Programme to build the capacity of marginalised and disadvantaged young people within the Programme Area. This will include young people from those areas most impacted by the conflict. Related investment should build upon the existing model, with an additional focus of addressing barriers to engagement, such as caring responsibilities, transport and language support.

There is an opportunity to build upon current models of mental health support that provide accessible, age appropriate, early prevention and recovery activities and are delivered on a cross-community and cross-border basis. This will result in an increased number of resilient young people with the level of capacity required to be in control of their own lives and make a positive contribution within their communities.

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Shared Learning Together Programme

**Budget allocation: €51,280,953
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 3.1: To provide direct, sustained contact between children from all backgrounds through collaboration between early childhood settings, schools and youth organisations, to promote good relations and enhance children's skills to contribute to a cohesive society.

Shared Learning Together Education

Programme: The education together of those from diverse communities, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Catholic children or young persons; including those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not; pupils and young people whose learning experience can be enhanced through additional supports, which is secured by the working together; and co-operation of two or more relevant education providers (formal and informal).

Informed by experience and evaluation, funding will be directed towards collaborative (including cross-border) education approaches within the formal and non-formal education sectors, which incorporate the following:

- Increased participation within the education system in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, across early years settings, primary schools, post-primary schools and special schools, including those in the integrated sector, which will enable more pupils to benefit from the positive experiences and outcomes that shared education brings and extend collaborative cross-community / cross-border engagement across youth work settings;
- Increased involvement of the wider school community including parents, grandparents, teachers, school managers; enabling the development of new and sustainable relationships, which contribute to a more cohesive society;
- Incorporation of cross-community / cross-border programmes which will develop empowered and confident learners through innovative shared teaching practices, based on the deployment of digital technologies in teaching and learning;
- Promotion of shared innovative cross-border / cross-community actions to address education underachievement and disadvantage, which will also seek to equip parents with the skills to make a fuller contribution to their children's educational and social development;
- Incorporation of support and facilitation from youth workers and youth sector organisations, where evidenced youth-based approaches can add value to the shared education process and support more adaptive pedagogical practices within the teaching workforce;
- The extension of geographical scope to include DEIS and other disadvantaged education settings in areas outside the border counties of Ireland, in addition to schools in Northern Ireland, which operate the Extended Schools Programme, where involvement will result in improved educational outcomes and increased social inclusion, which will contribute to improved community relations across the Programme Area;
- The development of diverse school collaborations through the exploration of wider social and civic issues of relevance to young persons (14 to 16 year olds), which can be sustained using digital platforms and other appropriate media;

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- Establishment of long-term, sustainable, mutually beneficial relationships between partner schools, including those between teachers and management staff; and
- Youth to youth Shared Learning Together programmes delivered by youth organisations, which are co-designed by young people and youth workers. Such non-formal programming should incorporate cultural awareness activities and opportunities for significant and sustained contact; including the development of cross-border exchange programmes.

This **objective** will provide direct, sustained contact between children from all backgrounds through collaboration between and within schools, early years settings and youth organisations, to promote good relations and enhance children's skills to contribute to a cohesive society.

It will **result** in an increase in the number of children (pre-school, primary and second level and those engaging with youth services), teachers, principals, practitioners and youth workers engaged in sustained partnerships with those from different community, socio-economic, cultural and political backgrounds in a manner which will contribute to the attitudinal and behavioural change within schools and the wider community required to build a more peaceful, prosperous and cohesive Programme Area.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Shared Learning Together Programmes:** (1) Shared Learning Together programmes in early years settings, incorporating the principles of the 'Sharing from the Start' model and a focus on the wider family; (2) Shared Learning Together programmes in the formal education sector, will seek to increase the number of schools participating in shared education, in addition to exploring ways to sustain support for some existing participating
 - **Youth work capacity building:** Programmes which develop youth work capacity on a cross-border basis that will include enhancing relationships between youth workers across the Programme Area.
- shared education schools. Mindful of the demonstrable educational benefits, increased social inclusion and contribution to improved community relations across the Programme Area; actions will also provide collaborative opportunities for DEIS and other disadvantaged education settings in areas outside the border counties of Ireland, in addition to schools in Northern Ireland which operate the Extended Schools Programme; (3) Programmes that will help end the cycle of educational disadvantage by supporting related initiatives which address the additional learning needs of pupils at risk of underachievement including upskilling parents to take a more active role in their children's development and education; including digital-based learning activities; and (4) Development and delivery of youth to youth Shared Learning Together Programmes in the non-formal education sector, delivered by youth organisations, which facilitate youth-based organisation partnerships on a cross-community and or cross-border basis. These youth-based, non-curricular approaches designed by young people and youth workers should incorporate cultural awareness activities and the opportunity for significant and sustained contact, including the development of cross-border exchange programmes; and

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These actions will be complemented by other activities including:

- Digital-based approaches will contribute to the development and sustainability of shared education partnerships, including those of a cross-border nature;
- Awareness-raising programmes outlining the benefits of shared and integrated education; and
- Collaborative initiatives which enable stakeholders from all education sectors to further develop approaches to shared learning, for the benefit of young people across the Programme Area.



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**PEACE PLUS Youth Programme**

**Budget allocation: €47,000,000
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 3.2: To enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background, develop their confidence and future potential and contribute towards the creation of a more cohesive society.

PEACE PLUS Youth Programme: This is a targeted capacity building programme for young people aged 14 to 24 years, who are disadvantaged, excluded or marginalised, have deep social and emotional needs and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, violence or paramilitary activity. The Programme is outcomes-focused across a number of key areas including **good relations, personal development, citizenship and employability**, and will bring about a positive change in the form of clear, meaningful and sustainable ‘distance travelled’ for participants. A primary aim will be to increase the capacity, confidence and achievement level of every young person participating.

Evidence suggests that many young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), particularly those from areas most impacted by the legacy of the Conflict in Northern Ireland require targeted support. These individuals can have deep emotional and social needs, can be at risk of violence or paramilitary activity and generally do not readily engage in support programmes.

The PEACE IV Peace4Youth Programme has delivered positive outcomes for many marginalised and disadvantaged young people across the Programme Area. An independent evaluation of the programme evidenced significant progress at programme level and provides a strong case for further investment in

this policy area. The investment will build upon the current model, which incorporates a central focus on building key capabilities and support for positive progression by participants beyond the programme. This targets young people (aged 14 to 24 years) and operates for a minimum of six months up to nine months (depending on the needs of the young person). This time frame allows for sufficient intensity to ensure the experience is transformative across the following outcome areas:

- **Good relations:** contributing to lower levels of community division, sectarianism and racism, and making a positive contribution to reconciliation;
- **Citizenship:** developing the capacity of the young person to participate in and make a positive contribution towards family, community and society;
- **Personal development:** developing the fundamental social and emotional ‘soft’ skills of the participant;
- Related **employability / skills** development: including certain qualifications and the ‘soft’ employability skills identified as essential by employers; and
- **Positive progression:** effectively supporting participants in their next steps following completion of the programme.

The PEACE PLUS Youth Programme will follow this model and will place even more specific emphasis on enhancing the employability of participants, alongside the other outcomes and the incorporation of activities to develop their entrepreneurial and or social enterprise potential. This is particularly important given the extent to which the youth population will be impacted by the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic. In many cases, this will involve addressing the principal personal barrier to the young person achieving enhanced social and economic mobility, including their perception of their own abilities and potential and their need for skills

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development to help them navigate a challenging economic environment. As such, a primary aim of the programme will be to increase the capacity, confidence and aspiration of every young person participating.

Experience indicates that the PEACE PLUS Youth Programme should also incorporate the following elements:

- Support to access to youth-focused, professional / statutory mental health support services, including addiction counselling;
- Access to counselling and other support services for front line youth workers supporting participants who have experienced trauma and who lead complex and challenging lives;
- Interventions designed to address the barriers to participation including childcare; transport (particularly for those based in rural areas); language support; and disability access; and incorporation of gender-specific approaches as appropriate; and
- Earlier intervention, i.e. 14 to 16 years, in instances where this could prevent early disengagement from education and is complementary to mainstream provision.

A central Quality and Impact Body is a key element of the model to support the delivery of projects and achievement of programme outcomes. All projects will be required to engage actively and positively with this Body. The Quality and Impact Body will be responsible for ensuring that the impact of the programme is maximised by developing and nurturing a strong change and outcomes focus by funded projects and supporting a high quality, youth work approach.

This **objective** will enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background, develop their confidence and future potential and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society.

It will **result** in marginalised and disadvantaged young people from across the Programme Area with enhanced capacity to form positive and effective relationships with others from a different background, develop their confidence and future potential, improve their individual life circumstances and make a positive contribution to a more peaceful, prosperous and cohesive society.

Actions to be supported

The action to be supported is a:

Youth Programme: Targeted programmes for young people, which use a range of mediums to deliver the PEACE PLUS Youth Programme intervention model.



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Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing

**Budget allocation: €25,000,000
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 3.3: To enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society.

Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing

Programme: This will support additional, non-formal provision activity involving cross-community and cross-border multi-partner collaborative approaches, which will lead to improved understanding of youth mental health and wellbeing issues and the sharing of best practice across the Programme Area to improve service delivery. The programme will make a considerable contribution to peace and reconciliation through the development of enhanced emotional resilience in our young people.

The legacy of the conflict has left an impact on many communities in Northern Ireland and Ireland, which is still evident across generations of adults and young people. Evidence indicates that children growing up in areas of conflict demonstrate higher levels of mental ill health and anti-social behaviours. The legacy of conflict through intergenerational transmission of trauma continues to impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing, affecting their ability to engage with education leading to underachievement and restricting their opportunities for employment; and as a consequence their ability to interact with young people from different community, cultural and political backgrounds. It also threatens their future and limits their potential future role within their communities and their contribution to peace and reconciliation.

The programme will be designed to incorporate the learning of a current PEACE IV pilot youth mental health programme, which incorporates non-formal mental health activities. It will result in the following:

- The development of cross-border, multi-agency collaborative approaches, which will lead to improved understanding and awareness of youth mental health and wellbeing issues and sharing of best practice across the Programme Area;
- Increased awareness poor mental health and its impact upon young people and available supports;
- The development of accessible, age appropriate, innovative and integrated youth mental health service delivery models;
- The development of models which focus on the social, emotional and environmental wellbeing of young people and building their capacity;
- The development of interventions which increase the capacity of young people across the Programme Area through participation in youth mental health-focused advisory and advocacy groups; and
- The development of youth-focused capacity building programmes which encompass a focus on: building internal reserves; improving social skills; developing coping and resilience strategies; increasing self-worth and purpose; fostering the ability to form and sustain positive relationships; improving self-confidence; and creating a greater sense of the positive role young people can play within their communities.

This **objective** will enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to the creation of a cohesive society.

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It will **result** in an increase in the percentage of the youth population in receipt of best practice mental health supports developed and delivered on a collaborative, cross-border basis; which enhance emotional resilience and make a contribution to peace and reconciliation across the Programme Area.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Youth worker capacity building initiatives:** Training for key youth workers, which builds their capacity to better support children and young people's emotional resilience and good relations; and
- **Mental health and wellbeing and youth leadership programmes:** (1) The expansion of successful additional, non-formal youth mental health and wellbeing models on a Programme Area and cross-community and border basis; (2) Peace and reconciliation focused youth leadership programmes; and (3) Programmes which instil young people with the confidence to improve wellbeing within their communities and act as agents of change, building peace for future generations.

These actions will be complemented by other activities including:

- Programmes which provide young people with opportunities to make a meaningful contribution to project design; including the creation of youth advisory groups;
- Programmes which incorporate innovative approaches to the proven mentor-led model and facilitate peer mentoring support;
- Programmes which incorporate the innovative use of digital resources including social media platforms; applications and podcasts; and
- Programmes which incorporate innovative approaches to youth mental health focused education and development.



Theme 4: Healthy and Inclusive Communities



Budget allocation €172,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

The provision of adequate levels of inclusive health and social care within economic constraints, is a challenge for all governments. Research has shown that social, economic and environmental factors can influence an individual's health outcomes. Health inequalities can therefore arise when the aforementioned factors result in unequal health outcomes for different social groups. COVID-19 has provided a spotlight on the negative impact of health inequalities. Considerable developments have been made in the provision of collaborative cross-border health care provision in recent years, much of it funded by the INTERREG Programme. There are now established arrangements for the provision of specific cross-border healthcare services between the Department of Health in Northern Ireland and the Department of Health in Dublin. The PEACE PLUS Programme provides an opportunity to build and expand upon this work within other areas, which are suitable for cross-community and cross-border collaboration.

Our rural communities have significant strengths but also face considerable challenges, which can result in inequalities, including access to healthcare provision. The PEACE PLUS Programme presents an opportunity to develop a strengths-based model, which will enable and empower rural communities to reach their full potential. Investment will contribute to the creation of thriving rural communities, delivering significant social, economic and environmental benefits.

It is important that victims and survivors of the Conflict are acknowledged and supported. The PEACE Programme has previously invested in programmes that have provided an evidence base for the most appropriate interventions and support. The PEACE PLUS Programme will build upon the provision of health and wellbeing supports and resilience-based capacity building programmes.



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Collaborative Health and Social Care

**Budget allocation: €97,000,000
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 4.1: To ensure equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care and promoting the transition from institutional to family and community-based care.

Collaborative Health and Social Care

Programme: This will build upon existing and new cross-border collaborative approaches to health and social care delivery models (within specified treatment areas), to deliver an increased number of episodes of care across the Programme Area. It will support the development of innovative community-based health care interventions, which complement statutory provision (including social enterprise models). It will result in a more resilient health and social care sector in the Programme Area, which contributes to improved population health and wellbeing and reduced health inequalities.

Health and social care is an area in which collaborative cross-border approaches are proven to deliver considerable benefits to the citizen and the Programme Area. Cross-border co-operation will contribute towards the more efficient delivery of health and social care services across the Programme Area. This will be achieved through building upon existing collaborative relationships and services on a cross-border basis. This will improve the health and wellbeing of people living in the Programme Area, by enabling them to access quality health and social care services in the most appropriate setting to their needs.

Previous investment in the development and delivery of collaborative cross-community and cross-border health and social service provision supported by the INTERREG Programme, has contributed to the following learning:

The Importance of an Integrated Approach:

There are great opportunities for health and social care systems to realise the full potential of working with other agencies and unlock the potential of cross-border collaboration. This involves signing up to work differently with partners, in a shared process of planning, management and delivery of large scale, strategic cross-border projects, which create a solid infrastructure and build a lasting legacy for future collaboration.

The Adoption of New Technologies to Improve Access to Services:

The potential for ICT to transform healthcare services has been distinctly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite progress in some areas, keeping abreast with new technologies and adoption of innovation within healthcare, remain a challenge. Meanwhile demand for services are rising, outstripping the capacity to deliver. Increased levels of digitalisation are required to address this situation, which can be more effectively developed and implemented on a cross-border basis;

The Need to Tackle Health Inequalities:

Based upon the population profile of the Programme Area, reports in recent years have indicated that communities along the border, both north and south, are lagging behind economically, in stark contrast to strong economic growth and employment in other parts of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The continued existence of high levels of poverty and deprivation in border counties is linked with poor health outcomes. The extent of health inequalities has been further highlighted by the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. There is a need to provide increased episodes of care, within more peripheral and remote parts of the Programme Area, to maximise the health and wellbeing of all citizens, regardless of what part of the Programme Area, they are resident.



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The Opportunity to Develop and Deliver Cross-Border Health and Social Care

Research Initiatives: INTERREG VA has illustrated the benefits of managing cross-border intervention trials to advance important areas of health and social care. The PEACE PLUS Programme provides an opportunity to build upon this investment in cross-border research capacity, networks and infrastructure by supporting new innovative health and social care intervention trials across the Programme Area. This should include those areas of importance highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Requirement for Specific Mental Health Interventions:

There is a need to support specific mental health interventions, especially within those areas where there are benefits to collaborative, cross-border management approaches. Suitable areas identified include addiction services and suicide prevention initiatives. Such areas lend themselves to gender specific, whole family, community-based approaches, which will contribute to many of our most vulnerable citizens leading healthier and more hopeful lives.

It is essential that the lessons learned from the innovative and collaborative response to the COVID-19 pandemic are fully considered. The full impact of COVID-19 upon future health and social care provision is not yet known. PEACE PLUS Programme investment may be directed towards addressing such challenges on a cross-border basis.

Informed by current experience, an assessment of those healthcare areas which are most suitable to a collaborative, cross-border 'whole system approach' to service delivery has been undertaken. On this basis, PEACE PLUS funding may be directed towards a number of key areas including:

- Obesity management;
- Renal services;
- Addiction and suicide prevention;
- Medicine management;
- Respiratory services;
- Coronary care / heart failure;
- Geriatric medicine (complex needs of older people);
- Mental health (resilience);
- Children's mental health; and
- Social inclusion for those with disabilities and carers.

This **objective** will ensure equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems.

It will **result** in an increase in the number of 'episodes of care' delivered on a cross-border basis. This will support positive health and wellbeing and the prevention of ill health, through an integrated approach designed to reduce health inequalities within the Programme Area.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Collaborative health and social care initiatives:** (1) Initiatives designed to deliver cross-community and cross-border collaborative approaches to health and social care service delivery, in those clinical areas identified as being most suitable to a cross-border service delivery models; (2) Development and implementation of support and co-operation services on a cross-border basis, for community and voluntary organisations involved in the provision of health and social care services within their own communities; and (3) Development of cross-border healthcare intervention trials; and



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- **Community-based initiatives addressing the legacy of the Troubles / Conflict:**

Development and delivery of initiatives designed to address the trauma of the Troubles on the health and mental wellbeing of citizens and communities, by adopting a strengths-based, cross-community and cross-border mental and emotional resilience and recovery model; to include the development of addiction treatment facilities and programmes.

Other activities complementing these actions include:

- Development of a social equality approach to promote social inclusion, citizenship and better life outcomes for disabled people and those with complex needs;
- Development and delivery of primary care and older people services, supporting caring communities and independent living;
- Initiatives to enable early authoritative intervention within vulnerable families;
- Development and delivery of new models of working, both in scheduled and unscheduled care streams, by better utilising scarce physical, financial and human resources; and
- Cross-border training and development interventions for healthcare professionals, social care professionals and personnel in community and voluntary organisations involved in the provision of cross-border health and social care support services.



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Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion

Budget allocation: €50,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Investment Area 4.2: To create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of community spaces, key services and supports in rural areas.

The Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion Programme: This will support social, economic and environmental projects which contribute to the creation of healthy communities in rural areas.

By adopting a strengths-based approach, the programme will contribute to the creation of a more balanced Programme Area, in which our rural communities thrive and reach their full potential through health and wellbeing focused solutions.

A number of specific investment areas to support rural development and sustainable regeneration and social inclusion have been identified as follows:

- **Community Development Resources:** Deployment of Human Resources to coordinate collaborative (cross-community and cross-border) approaches; progress key strategic projects; and deliver core community services across designated rural area boundaries;
- **Family Support Hubs:** Development of centralised facilities to support the provision of key family support services, ranging from early years to older people, in a setting which will facilitate increased levels of cross-community contact;
- **Social Enterprise:** Development and delivery of rural specific social enterprise support programmes, incorporating support for: volunteer recruitment and development;

product and or service development; awareness, promotion and sectoral marketing; funding mechanisms; and capital assets required for service delivery and expansion;

- **Green Infrastructure:** Development of green infrastructure to promote active lifestyles and support rural enterprise and tourism within rural areas (including those on a cross-border basis) and the interconnection of rural and urban areas; and
- **Social Farming:** Deployment of resources to support diversification in the agricultural sector and the development of social farms (including collaborative approaches) for social and economic benefit.

Supported projects across all these investment areas will be designed to deliver significant and sustained contact between diverse rural communities and as such make a substantial contribution to more **peaceful and prosperous** rural areas.

This **objective** will create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared space and services in rural areas.

It will **result** in strategic investment designed to allow rural communities to thrive and reach their full economic, social and environmental potential.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Collaborative community development initiatives and services, including those related to health and wellbeing:** (1) Deployment of human resources to coordinate collaborative (cross-community and cross-border) approaches; progress key strategic projects; and deliver core community services, including those related to health and wellbeing, across designated rural area boundaries; (2) Development of centralised facilities to support the provision of key family

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support services, ranging from early years to older people, in a setting which will facilitate increased levels of cross-community contact; and (3) Development of green infrastructure to promote active lifestyles and support enterprise and tourism within rural areas (including those on a cross-border basis) and the interconnection of rural and urban areas;

- **Agricultural diversification support programmes:** Deployment of resources to support diversification in the agricultural sector and the development of social farms (including collaborative approaches) for social and economic benefit; and
- **Social enterprise support programmes:** Development and delivery of rural specific social enterprise support programmes including those focused on increasing health and wellbeing. This will incorporate support for: volunteer recruitment and development; product and or service development; awareness, promotion and sectoral marketing; funding mechanisms; and capital assets required for service delivery and expansion.





THEME 4: HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Victims and Survivors

Budget allocation: €25,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Investment Area 4.3: To create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of services.

Victims and Survivors Programme: In recognition of the needs of those who have suffered from the trauma of the troubles / conflict, the programme will develop the capacity for services to meet the needs of **victims and survivors**.

The PEACE IV Programme currently supports an integrated, outcomes-based, community-led support programme for victims and survivors. This has improved the lives of many victims and survivors across the Programme Area. The PEACE PLUS Programme provides an opportunity to learn from and build upon this work, to provide additional supports to victims and survivors. The proposed areas to be supported are as follows:

- **Further Development of the Health and Wellbeing Case Worker Network Model:**

Experience has shown that building resilience is central to improving the lives of victims and survivors. The expanded programme will incorporate transgenerational support (including family therapy) informed by related pilots and research. The programme will reflect the needs of an aging demographic and incorporate issues of gender. Related training opportunities will incorporate literacy and numeracy; trauma-focused physical activity; volunteering; and social isolation activities. Consideration will be given to addressing any barriers to engagement with services and support (e.g. concerns related to welfare payments, medication, etc.);

- **Advocacy Support Programme (Truth, Justice and Acknowledgement):** The existing Advocacy Support Programme enables victims and survivors to access advocacy support to effectively engage with existing legacy institutions relating to truth, justice and acknowledgement e.g. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Legacy Inquests, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and other institutions in Ireland, the UK and beyond. Experience has illustrated the benefits of providing parallel health and wellbeing supports. From a mental health perspective, there is evidence that acknowledgement and healing through oral history can be very effective. This requires the sensitive exploration of narratives and facilitates constructive dialogue within and between individuals, groups and communities. It will be important to continue research and evaluation activities related to health and wellbeing approaches to develop an evidence base for future intervention;
- **Research including new co-designed and action-based approaches;** and
- **Further development of the resilience programmes.**

The benefits of the proposed interventions will be as follows:

- Improved health and wellbeing of victims and survivors; including increased function; fewer symptoms; and a sense of acknowledgement and recognition;
- Provision of a whole family approach, which addresses transgenerational trauma issues;
- Increased access to support services by victims and survivors; and
- Increased levels of resilience within victims and survivors.



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This **objective** will contribute to the creation of a more cohesive society.

It will **result** in improved access to services by victims and survivors and enhanced understanding of the effects of the past troubles / conflict upon the present, in a manner which contributes to peace and reconciliation.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Support and services for victims and survivors** - Health and Wellbeing, Resilience and Social Prescribing: (1) Access to trauma-informed integrated support and services including a resilience programme to address the long term and changing needs of victims and survivors; and (2) Further development of the Health and Wellbeing Casework Network to improve support and services for victims and survivors at an individual, family and community level and to improve equity of services at a geographical level;
- **Advocacy Programme:** Continuation and further development of the Advocacy Network to increase recognition and acknowledgement of the experiences of victims and survivors;
- **Training Programmes:** (1) Development of bespoke training programmes to address current and emerging needs; (2) Continued development of a trauma-based education and training programme for staff, practitioners and volunteers to include online training models to extend geographical reach; and (3) Extension of the current trauma education qualifications supported to include Masters level trauma-specific programme (building on the progression of qualification levels supported by previous PEACE Programmes);and
- **Research for support and services for victims and survivors:** (1) The development and implementation of strategies to address barriers to engagement in support and services by victims and survivors; and (2) A co-designed research programme integrating academic research with practice and experiential-based learning, training, monitoring, evaluation and policy development to improve support and services and provide an evidence base for further understanding and investment in this area.

To ensure coordination of services for victims and survivors, the Victims and Survivors Service will be the lead partner in a consortium which will take ensure coverage within Ireland.

Theme 5: Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future



Budget allocation €302,786,522 (ERDF and Match)

Our natural environment is one of our most important assets and its enhancement and protection is critical to future economic and social development. In recovering from COVID-19, there is an opportunity to deliver a sustainable thriving environment, where businesses can flourish. A clean, green and accessible environment makes a major contribution to people having long, healthy and active lives, as well as creating a place where people want to live, visit and invest. Strategic cross-border investment will enhance and protect our environment while strengthening the economy in the Programme Area.

Community awareness and education are essential to ensure that everyone can play their part in protecting our environment. Community and citizen participation initiatives and education and awareness training programmes will therefore be a feature of activity across this Theme.

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth and is crucial to human life. Healthy ecosystems produce vital services, including fresh water, food and fuel sources as well as carbon storage and flood alleviation to help combat climate change. It also provides strong links to human health and wellbeing. Threats to biodiversity include loss of habitats, nutrient enrichment and invasive alien species, which all reduce the resilience of our nature rendering it more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, so must be addressed. Good air quality is essential for the natural environment and biodiversity in particular, which given the transboundary nature of air pollution, can be more effectively managed on a cross-border basis.

The marine area comprises all marine waters, including seabed, sub soil, sea loughs and tidal rivers. The marine environment is an important economic asset to the Programme Area and is considered a growth sector. In addition to economic benefits, the marine and coastal environment provide important societal benefits through ecosystem services. These include waste assimilation; coastal defence; carbon absorption; recreational; heritage; fisheries; and aquaculture.

Water is a resource that is vital for all life forms. Catchments and their water resources are a key environmental and economic asset within the Programme Area and deliver significant benefits to society through ecosystem services. These include wastewater assimilation, angling, tourism and culture / heritage amenities. The main pressures upon the cross-border water environment are related to excess nutrients and runoff. Investment in nature-based solutions is fundamental to sustainable catchment management, including facilities for wastewater and water treatment.

Cross-border collaboration to progress the replacement of fossil fuels by indigenous renewable energy in the heat sector will render the economies of Ireland and Northern Ireland less dependent on imports. This will enhance the security of energy supply, in line with EU, Irish and UK policies. This will also make a significant contribution to the achievement of local, national and EU CO2 emission reduction targets.

Transport is essential for our economic and social development. It is a crucial economic driver as it connects businesses with markets and facilitates employee mobility. From a social perspective, transport provides access to education, health and leisure services. Therefore, it is essential to invest in transport infrastructure and connectivity. From a peace and reconciliation perspective, investment in transport is important to build upon current levels of cross-border mobility in a sustainable manner. Hence, building connections and facilitating sustainable cross-border mobility, is a key component of peace and reconciliation on this Island.

THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE



Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Resilience

Budget allocation: €40,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Investment Area 5.1: To enhance protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution.

Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Resilience Programme: This will promote cross-border co-operation to facilitate the recovery of selected habitats and species across the Programme Area. It presents an opportunity to build upon current INTERREG VA Programme by continuing to promote cross-border co-operation and facilitating the recovery of additional protected habitats and priority species. Investment will be directed towards further delivery of conservation actions proven to redress biodiversity loss and preserve these important environmental, social and economic assets.

Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland as a single biogeographic area hosts a wide range of habitats and species of international significance. Such biodiversity assets have high potential to deliver ecosystem services such as carbon storage and water regulation. However, due to the poor or fragmented condition of many of these habitats, they are no longer contributing ecosystem services to their full potential.

The PEACE PLUS Programme presents an opportunity to invest in the environment through the identification of additional conservation interventions. The programme will direct investment towards conservation action plans and other conservation measures which are required to redress biodiversity loss and sustain these important environmental, social and economic assets.

A cross-border approach to biodiversity management will result in the following benefits to the Programme Area;

- Improved and restored habitats and species within protected sites and more resilient ecosystems in the wider landscape;
- Significant contribution to meeting legally-binding requirements and programme for Government targets to put in place the necessary conservation measures and achieve favourable conservation status for selected habitats and species;
- Enhanced resilience to the effects of climate change and ability to deliver vital nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- The restoration of peatland / wetland sites to become net carbon sinks to contribute to achieving net-zero emission targets;
- Improvements in water quality and water regulation, and management of wildfire risk; improved flooding protection measures; increased carbon storage; and enhancement of habitat and species in areas managed as natural climate buffers;
- The creation of better ecological connections through the establishment of Nature Recovery Networks; resulting in improved nature engagement and access by the public; and
- Increased defence against the threats posed by invasive alien species.

This **objective** will enhance nature protection and biodiversity and reduce pollution.

It will **result** in an increase in the surface area of selected habitats and habitats for species in improving condition.

THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE

**Actions to be supported**

The programme will encompass four individual thematic areas. The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Protected site restoration:** Delivery of further necessary conservation measures in areas supporting the selected habitats and species to improve conservation condition and increase ecological and climate resilience. This comprises: development of wildfire resilience plans; and the development of nature-based solutions to improve the capacity of habitats to store carbon (including sustainable grazing solutions, positive adjustments to hydrological flow and reductive strategies for encroaching scrub species); and monitoring to demonstrate conservation outcomes;
 - **Development and management of nature recovery networks and nature-based projects:** The identification of key areas for nature recovery and the development and implementation of ecological recovery networks, encompassing green infrastructure; monitoring of species to determine necessary conservation action; and the identification and implementation of nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation, including restoration of habitats to increase carbon storage and/or attenuate flooding risks; and
 - **Initiatives to address invasive alien species (IAS):** Development of an all-island strategy on invasive alien species; establishment of an all-island biosecurity group; commissioning of baseline awareness surveys; and development of systems to capture and centralise all-island invasive species data.
- Additional activities in support of the above actions include:
 - Measures which increase appropriate recreation within, and appreciation of, important areas for nature recovery areas;
 - Innovative solutions and rural enterprise activities linked to nature recovery areas, which promote nature conservation; and
 - Localised biodiversity action, citizen science projects, and education activities that increase awareness and appreciation.

* Selected habitats and species to be specified.



THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE



Marine and Coastal Management

**Budget allocation: €24,786,522
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 5.2: To promote climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches.

Marine and Coastal Management

Programme: This will enable a cross-border approach to the protection of the marine and coastal environment from potentially damaging human activities, and support the development of climate change adaptation plans which will increase the resilience of ecosystems, coastal communities, infrastructure and the marine economy.

The marine and coastal environment in the Programme Area is under pressure from both human activities and climate change which already pose a threat to Ireland and Northern Ireland's cultural and natural resources, coastal infrastructure, and public assets and must be addressed.

Across the Programme Area, climate change is accelerating coastal erosion. Coastlines are affected by storms and other extreme weather, which contribute to coastal erosion.

Climate change and human activities are impacting on habitats and species, and there is particular concern around the impact on marine birds which includes both wintering water birds that spend the autumn and winter around our shores, and seabirds that come to breed in the spring and summer. There is increasing concern about the impacts that human activities, ocean acidification and rising temperatures are having on food webs and pelagic ecosystems. Climate change is a threat to Marine and coastal

heritage and there is an increasing need for the development of mitigation and adaptation plans for heritage assets.

Marine litter is an issue across the Programme Area and poses a significant threat to the biodiversity of our marine environment if not addressed. Plans are required that encompass removal, education and awareness strands.

The marine and coastal environment plays an important role in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Coastal habitats such as sand dunes, salt marsh, seagrass, kelp and shellfish beds provide nature-based solutions that include coastal protection and carbon storage. There is increasing recognition of the need to protect and restore these habitats. Marine renewable energy provides opportunities to transition towards the net zero emissions target and decision support tools are needed to ensure the development proposals consider potential impacts to marine environment.

The marine environment is transboundary in nature and is well suited for cross-border collaboration. The extent and severity of the situations to be addressed differs across the Programme Area. On this basis, area-based studies will be required to develop bespoke, place-based solutions. This collaboration will result in an improved performance in achieving related targets set at national and European levels.

Such interventions will result in the following benefits:

- **Coastal change:** Improved evidence-based knowledge and understanding of the rate of coastal change and coastal vulnerability to inform policy and practices, which will result in more resilient coastal areas.

THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE



- **Climate and pelagic systems:** Improved evidence-based knowledge and understanding of coastal, oceanographic and sediment transport dynamics in the changing climate context; improved knowledge of current impacts and impact of potential climate change scenarios on seabirds and other key species and habitats; and improved understanding of the risks to and impacts upon the pelagic ecosystem and human activities reliant upon it, including fisheries and conservation.
- **Natural capital, habitats and humans:** Improved understanding of coastal and marine habitats and their role as nature-based solutions to climate change adaptation and mitigation; improved evidence-based knowledge to support decision-making in marine spatial planning, fisheries management, marine protected area identification and management, and support of the recovery and/or restoration of impacted habitat types; improved awareness of the impact of marine litter and the benefits of reducing inputs through a circular economy; and improved understanding of underwater cultural heritage resources to support marine planning, heritage asset management and improved public awareness and appreciation.
- **Local action to protect marine biodiversity and coastal and marine heritage:** Improved sense of local and transboundary responsibility regarding marine biodiversity and heritage; and better outcomes for communities and the marine environment.

This **objective** will promote climate change adaptation and sustainable marine and coastal management.

It will **result** in improved knowledge and management of the transboundary marine environment and a Programme Area which is more resilient and responsive to climate change and threats from human activities.

Actions to be supported

The programme will encompass four thematic areas. The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Marine protection and coastal change action plans:** Repeat surveys and mapping; sea-level wave and hydrodynamic modelling; coastal vulnerability assessments; coastal monitoring; habitat recovery and restoration; development of nature-based solutions; development of adaptation and resilience plans for key sites; site cultural asset development plans; teaching and awareness raising resources; decision support tools; and training programmes;
- **Climate and pelagic systems studies:** Instrumentation-based oceanographic and hydrodynamic modelling; enhancement of monitoring network and sampling activities; developing proven, high quality and cost-effective methods for pelagic habitat evaluation; integrated assessment of marine food webs; evidence based pelagic species protection methodologies; and evidence-based transboundary action plans;
- **Natural capital, habitats and human behaviour management plans:** Bird surveys, benthic habitat surveys and seabed mapping in areas for potential renewable energy; quantification of marine ecosystem services; transboundary action plans for selected benthic species; geohazard repeat mapping surveys; underwater cultural heritage surveys to support the further development

THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE



and refinement of national and regional historic environment records; and strategies or protocols reflecting principles of the circular economy that will reduce marine litter; and

- **Local action** to protect marine biodiversity and coastal and marine heritage action plans.

These actions will be complemented by a range of activities including:

- Local-level stewardship arrangements; Marine Protection Area climate change action plans; community and citizen participation initiatives; and education and awareness training programmes.



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Water Quality (Cross-Border Catchments and Water Bodies)
Budget allocation: Cross-Border Catchments €21,000,000 and Water Bodies €32,000,000

Investment Area 5.3 and 5.4: To promote access to water and sustainable water management.

Water Quality Improvement Programme:

This will enable a cross-border collaborative approach to the management and improvement of water quality to address the requirements of the Water Framework Directive in selected:

- Cross-border catchments (freshwater bodies in cross-border river basins) located within the Programme Area; and
- Water bodies.

Cross-Border Catchments

There is now a better understanding of the role of nature-based solutions and sustainable catchment management and how these should be incorporated as part of the restorative measures. The transboundary nature of water bodies across the Programme Area presents an opportunity for strategic collaboration. The proposed investment will facilitate the development and implementation of cross-border best practice and technical expertise to improve water quality across the Programme Area. It will result in the following benefits:

- Quantifiable improvements in water quality and quantity;
- A decrease in soluble reaction phosphorus (SRP) / nitrate / nutrient concentration in selected water bodies across the Programme Area;
- An improved understanding and knowledge of nutrient management and biodiversity through cross-border collaboration and the development of new solutions;

- Financial savings within the Programme Area agricultural sector;
- Decreased public expenditure arising from water treatment costs for public water supply utility; improvement of public health for rural private water supplies; and catchment-based flood-reduction measures;
- Improvement to designated sites through implementation of necessary conservation measures which may include nutrient management;
- A reduction in flooding risks within areas identified as vulnerable;
- The development of nature-based solutions (including a contribution to the conservation of boglands);
- The development of buffer strips to protect river basins (and incumbent ecosystems) from the threat of agricultural pollutants; and
- Better public engagement with nature facilitated through the development of nature recovery networks.

Water Bodies

The proposed investment in water quality in selected sites will provide the following benefits:

- Additional wastewater treatment in a cross-border area encompassing seven counties; Fermanagh and Tyrone in Northern Ireland; and Donegal, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Sligo in the border counties of Ireland;
- An improvement in water quality using new sustainable treatment technologies and innovative solutions, which can be used to inform future cross-border collaborative projects and will contribute to decarbonisation;
- A decrease in the threats to the natural habitats of Loughs Erne, Melvin and Donegal Bay;

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- The development of cross-border urban development management strategies, which ensure a best practice, consistent approach for the areas adjacent to the transition waters; and
- Increased levels of cross-border asset, resource, knowledge and experience exchange, which will contribute an improved ecosystem management approach within the Programme Area.

This **objective** will promote sustainable water management.

It will **result** in:

- The development and management of cross-border water quality and catchment management programmes, designed to enable freshwater bodies in cross-border river basins to achieve good or high quality; and
- An increased percentage of shared waters in the Programme Area with good or high quality status.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

Cross-Border Catchments:

- **Water quality and catchment management strategies:** An operational strategy for dealing with nutrients (e.g. soil, organic manures and chemical fertilisers, digestate, sewage sludge) and trans boundary movements in cross-border catchments to include elements such as flow of nutrients, tracking systems, innovative solutions for optimum use of nutrients for sustainable utilisation of all nutrients.

- **Pilots for nature-based solutions:** A pilot/ pilots for nature-based solutions or innovative nature-based solutions to restore catchments including implementation of the necessary conservation measures (e.g. peat restoration), water management measures to reduce runoff (e.g. sediment loss), nutrient loss and co-benefits relating to pesticide losses to waterways and to reduce impacts from flooding, e.g. green infrastructure.

These actions will be complemented by:

- Initiatives which result in a measurable change in behaviours / mindset of landowners;
- A project legacy initiative which will develop or enhance community-focused environmental learning resources to improve understanding of cross-border catchment from environmental, cultural, social or economic views; and/or improve amenity value through nature recovery networks.

Water Bodies:

- **Water quality improvement strategies:** (1) The development of a comprehensive cross-border catchment plan focused on the cross-border catchments of Loughs Melvin, Erne and Donegal Bay; (2) Projects which encourage improved pesticide practices and develop sustainable farm practices across catchments to minimise impact upon water quality; including the development of a holistic pesticide plan to reduce / eliminate pesticide use within cross-border catchments; (3) The development of a suite of integrated models that will act as tools for the management of shared inland freshwater bodies (Lough Erne, Lough Melvin and Donegal Bay) as a

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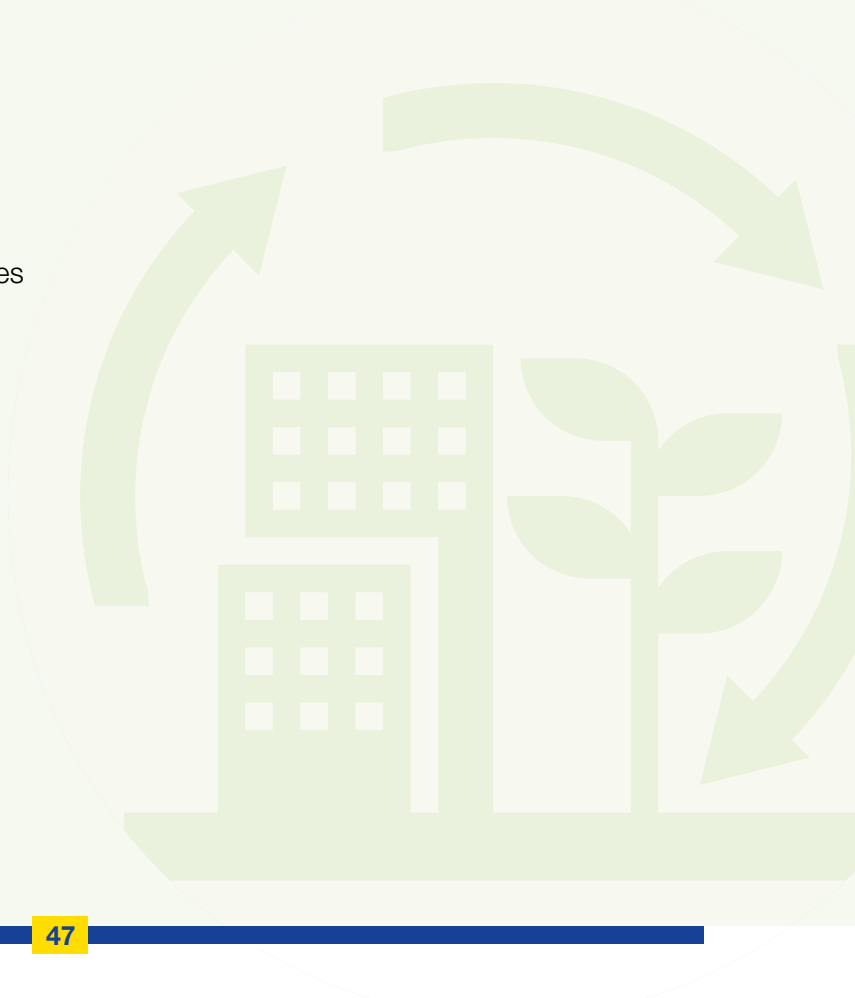
complete ecosystem; to incorporate sustainable treatment technologies and innovative solutions; and (3) The production of a comprehensive ecosystem model for the above catchments, coupled with an advanced network of instrumentation; and

- **Technologies and solutions for water quality and wastewater:** (1) Research and development in wastewater treatment technologies, including the use of sustainable technologies with direct relevance to shared waters; and (2) The development and delivery of innovative solutions for sewage-related pressures in rural areas in priority catchment(s), to be adopted by the local utility.

- The provision of alternative sustainable treatment systems such as reed beds, willows and wet lands;
- The provision of nature-based solutions and value-added green and blue infrastructure wherever possible; and
- The delivery of education and outreach events for locals, including citizen science and school visits.

These actions will be complemented by:

- Capital projects delivering decarbonisation during both the construction and operation;
- The production of enhanced fishery assessments for both Lough Erne and Lough Melvin;
- An assessment of ecosystem services within the target water bodies;
- Upstream catchment-based initiatives to encourage uptake of catchment measures that achieve multiple benefits for water quality, quantity and biodiversity



THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE



Geothermal Energy Demonstration Programme

Budget allocation: €20,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Investment Area 5.5: To promote energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Geothermal Energy Demonstration Programme:

This will build the knowledge, skills and capacity required to develop a policy framework and encourage Programme Area investment in the geothermal technology sector. Increased usage of this renewable energy source will result in many environmental, social and economic benefits for the Programme Area.

Heat production is a significant contributor to GHG emissions. Decarbonisation of heat is central to the EU, UK and Irish strategies to meet the 2050 net-zero GHG targets. Research indicates this will require renovation and retrofit of energy efficiency measures and renewable heating in buildings, and increased use of energy from renewable sources¹.

The deployment of district heating networks and the use of heat pumps for individual dwellings or in communal heating systems, are key to heat decarbonisation. In Ireland (including the border counties) and Northern Ireland, the housing stock is characterised by a larger percentage of ‘off-gas grid’ buildings than would be present in other parts of the UK. This type of housing stock is easier and more cost effective to retrofit than others.

Across the Programme Area, there is clear potential for the widespread use of geothermal heat sources. However, the expansion of the fledgling geothermal sector requires demonstration of its viability. This will necessitate cross-border collaborative measures to develop demonstration projects, which will build an awareness of the micro and macro benefits of adopting geothermal practices across residential, industrial and public buildings. Such interventions should build Programme Area capacity through a range of incentives and support mechanisms and effective regulation.

Cross-border collaboration to achieve the replacement of fossil fuels by indigenous renewable energy in the heat sector will result in a reduced reliance on fossil fuels and enhanced energy security. It will deliver economic, social and environmental benefits across the Programme Area including:

- Development of a Programme Area policy framework to support widespread uptake of geothermal energy in the residential, industrial and public sectors;
- Increased uptake of geothermal technologies in the target sectors within the Programme Area;
- Reduction in fuel poverty levels across the Programme Area;
- Increased attainment of local, national and EU decarbonisation GHG emission reduction targets; and
- A strengthened local geothermal industry.

This **objective** will promote energy efficiency measures and reducing green-house gas emissions.

¹ EC (2018) A Clean planet for all. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal->

THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE



It will **result** in an increased awareness and uptake of geothermal technologies for heat production across the Programme Area. This will result in improved energy efficiency, increased fuel security and a reduction in GHG emissions in accordance with Programme Area, national and EU targets.

Actions to be supported

The main action will be a **Geothermal Energy Demonstration Programme** which will include:

- Demonstration projects which build awareness regarding the benefits of and support for increased uptake of geothermal technologies in the residential, industrial and public sectors;
- Initiatives that demonstrate the application of heat networks using shallow geothermal energy and Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) systems, including those within the SME sector;
- Initiatives that demonstrate the application of Deep Geothermal Energy (>400m), particularly for decarbonising District Heating Systems;
- Initiatives designed to increase market penetration of GSHPs;
- Initiatives that involve the design, build and operation of geothermal surface infrastructure within social housing sector in the Programme Area;
- Initiatives that support the growing geothermal technologies sector in the Programme Area;
- Initiatives that contribute to the development of a cross-border policy framework designed to promote and support cross-sectoral uptake of geothermal technologies across the Programme Area;
- Geothermal related energy efficiency studies focused on areas most affected by fuel poverty; and
- Programmes for citizens to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of Geothermal heating solutions.



THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE



Enhanced Sustainable Travel Connectivity

Budget allocation: €165,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Investment Area 5.6: Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility.

Enhanced Sustainable Travel Connectivity Programme: This programme will increase connectivity across the Programme Area in the form of sustainable transport. It will involve significant investment in sustainable rail stock to enable the introduction of an hourly cross-border rail service.

Increasing the level of cross-border mobility is essential for the economic and social and territorial cohesion across the Programme Area. This includes the further development and embedding of peace and reconciliation. Transportation facilitates connectivity and contact between people from Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. The PEACE PLUS Programme will increase connectivity in the form of sustainable public transport. It will invest in the cross-border rail services between Belfast and Dublin on the TEN-T Core Corridor for 2027, in the form of new rolling stock to facilitate the introduction of an hourly service and the reduction of emissions from rail and through encouraging a modal shift.

Investment in transport will be a catalyst for regeneration and economic growth, in particular on the economic corridor between Belfast and Dublin, including the border counties in both Northern Ireland and Ireland. The improvement of the rail service linking the two capital cities and the smaller adjacent urban centres of Portadown, Newry, Dundalk and Drogheda can exploit this dynamic to its full potential, providing

spin-off agglomeration and wider economic benefits. Other benefits include the following:

- An investment in modern, safe and sustainable rail infrastructure;
- Reduced emissions per passenger/km arising from reduced journey times, more environmentally friendly rolling stock and improved public transport connections;
- New rolling stock for the 'Enterprise' which will not only have significantly reduced emission but will be future-proofed to enable migration to net-zero carbon emissions by 2040;
- New rolling stock with improved accessibility and features for passengers of reduced mobility;
- Improved connectivity to key Programme Area, national and EU economic centres (thereby boosting the local economy);
- Improved rail connectivity between Belfast and Dublin for the *circa* 3.5m people living within a 40 mile radius of the corridor, with an increased speed and capacity, which will support the enhanced cross-border rail service planned by both *Iarnród Éireann* and *Northern Ireland Railways*. This will include a reduced journey time target on the Belfast to Dublin rail network (from current 2 hours 10 minutes); and a new hourly service on the Belfast to Dublin rail network. The current service is two hourly with eight departures daily in each direction; and
- Significantly increased passenger capacity on key services. Rail passenger forecasts developed illustrate the average daily forecast of passenger numbers benefitting from the investment to be in the range of 16,000-18,000 by 2030; and 19,000-21,000 by 2040. This will make a significant contribution to improved cross-community and cross-border relations and thus the creation of a more cohesive society across the Programme Area.

THEME 5: SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND BETTER CONNECTED FUTURE



This **objective** will develop a climate resilient, intelligent, secure, sustainable and intermodal TEN-T.

It will **result** in an increase in the sustainable rail stock across the Programme Area and an increase in cross-border mobility achieved through an increased and faster rail service.

Actions to be supported

The action to be supported will include:

- **New sustainable rail rolling stock** to facilitate the introduction of an hourly service between Dublin and Belfast. The investment will work towards the achievement of an increase in service levels and passenger numbers.

Theme 6: Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration



Budget allocation €52,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Whilst the INTERREG and PEACE Programmes have made a significant contribution within the Programme Area to cementing cross-border collaboration, challenges still persist, some of which have arisen in the last number of years. Most of the remaining obstacles arise from diverging national legislations on either side of the border (incompatible administrative processes, or simply lack of common territorial planning).

In 2016, the European Commission identified legal and administrative obstacles for the Northern Ireland-Ireland border (UK-IE).

Some of the sectors in which obstacles exist are: industry and trade (exportation of goods, cross-border commercial services, e-commerce, cross-border economic advice services and commuter flows); labour market education (mobility of trainees, students and teachers, and access to tertiary education); social security system (access to social insurance system); and access to health care services and medical treatment. These obstacles are particularly relevant to the challenges that may also arise in the future regarding the border following the UK's exit from the EU.

THEME 6: BUILDING AND EMBEDDING PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION



Strategic Planning and Engagement

**Budget allocation: €32,000,000
(ERDF and Match)**

Investment Area 6.1: To support a better co-operation governance.

The Strategic Planning and Engagement Programme: This will support the engagement of strategic stakeholders targeting legal and administrative obstacles to co-operation in relevant sectors. The funding will focus on enabling joint development and management of strategies; co-operation capacity building; and identification of solutions to reduce obstacles to cross-border co-operation.

The programme will operate in synergy with other policies (e.g. cross-border mobility), legal instruments (e.g. bilateral agreements, treaties, EGTCs) and other funding not limited to INTERREG (e.g. European Cross-Border Mechanism).

Investment will be directed towards enhancing cross-border co-operation to address obstacles that impact cross-border socio-economic fluidity and more generally, the reconciliation process throughout the Island. There will be an increased focus on the following elements:

- Support to identify key obstacles and unused potential (examples include cross-border labour market hindrances, health care, transport connections, tourism, energy, and issues related to the legacy of the conflict. There will also be challenges deriving from Brexit and the COVID-19 emergency);
- Support to bring the relevant actors together (e.g. authorities at national, regional and local levels, voluntary and community sectors,

- enterprises, stakeholder networks);
- Support for the process of finding solutions to reduce these obstacles or exploit the potential;
- Support for cross-border entities (e.g. Euroregions²) to enhance sharing experience, expertise and knowledge to further develop in the future. Partnership models will be promoted in order to reach common solutions for shared challenges in specific territories; and
- Support to identify areas where important cross-border data is missing and support projects to fill the gap in the context of its vital nature in future co-operation.

These support measures will contribute to the development and management of cross-border strategies that are necessary for sustainable and structural co-operation. Linkages between existing and new strategies will also be encouraged. The programme will also seek to align with the European Green Deal and other European initiatives such as the Atlantic Strategy.

This **objective** will reduce the legal and administrative barriers to cross-border co-operation through joint development and management of strategies; co-operation capacity building; and identification of solutions.

It will **result** in the improved capacity for co-operation at strategic level in relevant sectors.

² For example, Ireland Northwest have established a co-operation between local authorities of Derry/Londonderry & Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council or the East Border Region.

THEME 6: BUILDING AND EMBEDDING PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION



Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

- **Collaboration and dialogue incorporating:** Dialogue between different actors to establish the challenges and possible solutions to facilitate increased cross-border collaboration in key sectors including Business, Health Care, Tourism, Environment (including air quality) and Energy;
- **Feasibility studies and data collection:** Cross-border feasibility studies and data collection activities designed to develop solutions to address current obstacles to cross-border collaboration in key areas. For example, research related to the cross-border labour market and future skills mapping; and air quality modelling and analysis to establish emerging issues and increased levels of evidence;
- **Strategies:** Joint development of cross-border strategies, including, for example, a joint tourism marketing and branding initiative and cross-border council strategies;
- **Pilot project and demonstration initiatives:** (1) Pilot projects initiatives informed by the dialogue and feasibility work undertaken, designed to implement jointly developed solutions to strategic cross-border collaboration; and (2) Exchange of experience and demonstration initiatives to share solutions and increase their impact in key areas; and
- **Capacity building and skills research hub:** (1) Training, peer reviews and staff exchanges to enhance institutional capacity; and (2) Support the establishment of an all-island skills research hub, in co-operation with relevant agencies and stakeholders to commission and foster cross-border research and innovation, driven by the social and economic needs of the Programme Area.



THEME 6: BUILDING AND EMBEDDING PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION



Maintaining and Forging Relationships between Citizens

Budget allocation: €20,000,000 (ERDF and Match)

Investment Area 6.2: Building up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people to people actions.

Trust Building Measures between Citizens:

The Programme will put in place mechanisms to finance smaller projects or people to people projects that make a strong contribution to the social and civic cohesion of cross-border region. There will be a focus on joint actions to promote citizens' co-operation and trust-building, linking up small organisations cross-border that work directly with citizens, including community groups (for example, sports clubs, cultural organisations), schools, regional SMEs and organisations in the social economy sector.

This **objective** will strengthen trust-building activities among citizens as a founding pillar for cross-border co-operation.

It will **result** in increasing the level and diversity of co-operation between citizens.

Actions to be supported

The types of actions to be supported will include:

Citizens co-operation: Small projects to promote citizens' co-operation around specific shared challenges, e.g. climate change;

- **Joint events and activities:** North-South joint events and activities that develop mutual understanding and cement partnership; and
- **Trust building activities:** For example, linking up sports clubs, cultural organisations and community groups.

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Annex 1 - Eligibility of Applicants from Outside the Programme Area

The Programme area includes Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, namely Counties Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo. This is the core Programme area. However, cross border collaboration is not strictly limited to the administrative borders of the Programme but has a flexible geography depending on the topic concerned. This is called a **functional area** and allows for organisations and institutions not based in the core Programme area to get involved in projects by linking with partners within the core Programme area.

Indeed, for some interventions, the solution can only be found if partners outside the Programme area are involved. For example, to have a good research project, the involvement of a university with a particular research speciality may be necessary; a flood reduction project may require the reintroduction of wetlands or dams upstream in a section of a river body which is located outside the Programme area; and to facilitate cross border health care/services may require the development of a project with neighbouring regions and with national authorities. There are many examples in the current INTERREG IVA Programme of projects which involve partners outside the Programme area.

For some other interventions, the solution is purely local, corresponding to an area much smaller than the core Programme area.

This illustrates that problem-solving may be based on the functional areas rather than on the administrative boundaries defining the Programme. What matters is that the benefits of the project are significant for the Programme area. The location of the project or the location of the partners is not a defining matter.

The benefits of this new approach are:

- It enables the projects to be more effective as they can build on the experience of a wider range of relevant partners and can be located where the impact is bigger;
- It clearly shows that INTERREG is a policy tool supporting projects to improve the economic environment; and
- It avoids the creation of artificial new borders outside the Programme geography.