

# Bordering On Peace?: *Learning from the Cross-Border experience of Peace II*

Vol 4


Learning from Peace II





**Community Relations Council**

This publication is the fourth in a six volume series of reflections on the contribution of the EU Peace II Programme to the development of Peace & Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland. Each volume in the series will focus on a specific aspect of Peace Building.

 All publications in the series have three sections. In the first section (colour coded green) you will find the thoughts of a selection of the guest speakers at the seminar which was held to discuss the theme. In the second section (colour coded light blue) there is a record of the ideas and issues that emerged during the seminar. The third section (colour coded dark blue) is devoted to an overall reflection on the theme under consideration.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Community Relations Council (CRC) or the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).



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# Preface



**Jim Dennison**  
Director – European Programme, CRC

Cross-border cooperation lies at the heart of how the European Union conducts its business. It does this for a number of reasons: to advance the 'European public good' i.e. the needs of EU citizens at local, national and international levels; to help member states increasingly affected by economic globalisation to work in more effective ways; to facilitate increased contact in areas where the pooling of expertise and resources are needed; to try to overcome existing legal and administrative barriers which can create difficulties in transnational work; and to act as a benchmark of good practice.

Whilst not all transnational work is without particular difficulties (partly because of Member States wanting to get the best deal for their own residents), it appears to be easier to develop and deliver cross-border projects in mainland Europe than it is on the island of Ireland. History, culture, politics, religion and other factors provide us with some broad reasons as to why cross-border co-operation here is viewed with notably more suspicion than abroad, but does it justify it? Another factor is that, arguably, European co-operation has more of an emphasis on economic prosperity rather than on reconciliation across member states. But is it really that simple? Is it acceptable to use this excuse not to engage on the multi-level basis as outlined above? If we accept European Union funding is there not an onus placed upon us not only to subscribe to the values of the Union which provides the money but also to make very real, sustained and concerted efforts to co-operate with those divided from us by land and other borders?

This publication will try to tease out these and other issues and it is based upon an event titled 'Bordering on Peace?: Learning from the Cross-Border Experience of Peace II' which was held on Wednesday 25 January, 2006 at the Fairways Hotel, Dundalk and is part of an ongoing series of events critically assessing various contributions to peace-building and reconciliation work in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of the Republic of Ireland. It is not a written regurgitation of the day, rather a document encompassing key inputs, underlying themes, salient issues and topics for debate, and will try to analyse what contribution cross border cooperation has made to peace and reconciliation on this island, what practical co-operation may look like and how we can learn from wider Europe co-operation (and indeed reconciliation efforts). It is not meant to be a definitive guide to all cross border work, but rather act as a catalyst for further consideration, work and hopefully progress.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of those involved in the staging of this event: Katy Hayward (UCD); Paul McCormack (Border Vision); Kate O'Dubhchair (An Teach Bán); Tony Kennedy (Co-operation Ireland); Pat Colgan (SEUPB); Ruth Tailon (Border Action); and Mary Bunting (NSMC). Additionally, I would like to thank the members of the advisory panel who helped plan the event: Patricia Clarke; Paddy Logue; Maria Curran; Katy Hayward; Adrian McNamee; Shaun Henry; and Jacqueline Irwin. Without their help and support this event would not have been possible. Thanks should also go to Sean Pettis, Events and Seminars Manager for the untiring work and to the all of CRC's EU Programme team for their ongoing help and assistance.



# Introduction



**Duncan Morrow**  
Chief Executive Officer of CRC

## Beyond the Emerald Curtain? Cross-border Peace-Building in Ireland

Among the publications circulating at this seminar, was an interesting reflection on the impact of the border on social and economic development in Ireland, called 'The Emerald Curtain'. If ever there was a demonstration that violence and poverty are linked, it is the Irish border. And the causality flows in two directions. Not only does poverty promote violence, but violence embeds poverty, by driving away people, investment and hope in a vicious cycle which it is very difficult to break. In effect, the geographic centre of a small island became the economic outer edge as the rest of Ireland tried to insulate itself from the infection of violence which was dominating Northern Ireland. What may look like a simple line on the map has left serious scars on the heart and a large hole in the pocket.

In the course of the seminar someone remarked that 'if we dreamed together, it can become a reality'. The tragedy may be that we did indeed dream similar dreams over the last thirty years, but that they were dreams of escaping one another or of victory over and against one another, not dreams of working together. The question underpinning this seminar was ultimately; 'have we, in the light of ten years of the PEACE programme, found a way of dreaming a different dream together, and of putting in place new steps towards a different reality?'

What all of this underlines, is that social and economic issues cannot be simply divided and pursued separately. There is no doubt that repairing the hole in the pocket depends also on healing some of the scars on the heart. What the PEACE programme demonstrates is that there is no such thing as a simple social or economic programme, but that change in one can have profound impact on the other. Both involve people and relationships, and neither has a tidy edge where one begins and the other ends.

All of this opens up important avenues of discussion, extending beyond Ireland, about the best ways to invest in sustainable peace. Both this seminar and some of the ones before it, have shown both that commercial benefit is not necessarily the enemy of peace and that a reliance on economic prosperity alone does not in itself unpick hostility. A sustainable economy makes a huge contribution to the quality of life of any community, trading involves the recognition of mutual interests, the building of trust and reciprocity and market sharing is negotiated through real agreements. The outstanding question which this raises of course is how all of these values read across into political life: are we willing to generate economic and social inter-dependence and live with the complex patterns which emerge? Or must

there be a simple answer to the questions of allegiance and sovereignty, even on an island as small as ours? Because the whole experience of the PEACE programme is that ways forward need to accommodate a complex legacy, requiring us to bring together sometimes contradictory impulses to find unique Irish, Irish-British, Unionist-Nationalist answers for our time and place, but that these complexities are not easily translated into a political world which measures success on an older test of whether Britishness or Irishness is dominant. The key test of the viability of a shared future will be the ability to put

Ultimately, nations do not express and cannot express, the totality of human experience, and how they cope with that reality at the margins and at the borders determines the quality of life for all. Democracy has a lot to do with decision-making mechanisms, but it is a decision-making mechanism rooted in a respect for the value of each person, where some things do not depend on majorities within identified groups. Instead, democracy adds value by presenting a different and less violent way of accommodating and dealing with difference, which recognises complexity in human affairs and carves out space for difference and inter-relationship.

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**“New pragmatic approaches to cross-border co-operation have become normal, so that the over-arching theme is mutual benefit, not uniform design or practice.”**

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exploration, complexity and a commitment to a shared and peaceful future as the new measures of success. Once the commitment to sharing the future is seen as the primary objective, the rest is all about finding workable, practical and mutually beneficial ways to move forward, including, ultimately, the challenge of taking tough decisions against vested interests in order to promote the greater long term gain.

None of this makes peace-building in Ireland easy in practice. And while we can certainly assert that the successful negotiation of a peace deal creates benefit for all, there are hard choices to be made along the way. We may be able to point to an easy theory win-win where the mutual benefits are painless and everyone ends up without regrets, but even the most worthwhile journey in reality inevitably implies hard choices and trading difficulties in one area for gains in another.

Political simplicity on an island with the divisions of Ireland will not be possible without brutal and unpredictable violence. The pure national story, which demands the primacy of a single integrated nation-state, is that human relations have to be ordered by the competition and borders of armed and separated nations. In Ireland, it can only be achieved by unscrambling the eggs of our history, and expelling whole populations. It is the very story that the European Union, founded as it is on the ruins of World Wars, exists to contradict, or at least to develop beyond. It is certainly the story that the Eastern European accession states seek to leave behind after the experience of the Cold War.

Ireland can no more be easily separated than united. The cross-border element of the PEACE programme has produced real and tangible benefits for communities of interest and local communities: Networks have become normalised across borders where they were once sporadic or non-existent. Markets have been re-established adding more value than the sum of the parts. Fears have eased as trading and co-operation have become easier. New pragmatic approaches to cross-border co-operation have become normal, so that the over-arching theme is mutual benefit, not uniform design or practice. And all of this amounts to the real product of peace programmes: practical change that is evidence for trust. Alongside the improvement of specifically cross-border relationships, chairs have also been shifted within Northern Ireland and along the southern border counties in healthy ways. What is normal now was often unthinkable twenty years ago.

The peace story, the reconciliation story, is of states, nations, communities and even people coming to acknowledge complexity and ambiguity, and sometimes even contradiction.

Of course, the pre-eminent difficulty in measuring success is the continuing uncertainty in the political realm, particularly since the collapse of the Northern institutions

in 2002. PEACE II has been in a position of compensating for the lack of political leadership. Instead of supporting fragile but shared political development towards co-operation and peace in Ireland it has very often been leading and sustaining that vision against a more polarised political landscape. All of which suggests that the benefits of peace programmes are different when there is already existing agreement on the importance of a shared future together, and when that agreement is not yet cemented. Both may have their place, but measurement and evaluation necessarily have to change.

In the interim, change has to be driven from other places in the system. There is a critical role in any future development for governments and public bodies. Most of what has happened under PEACE II in cross-border relations has been driven by the private and voluntary sectors. But PEACE needs to be about changing the way we do business not only in the particular circumstances but in the institutions of governance. Sustainable peace in Ireland will require public servants on both sides of the border to think beyond their traditional jurisdictions about markets, social and economic benefit and partnership. The tax and grant regimes of different states do impact on the design and delivery of cross-border work, and agreements are part of the long-term work of easing cross-border relationships.

Inevitably, support for the additional work of peace building must come from sources closer to home. Sustainability, as we look into the future cannot depend entirely on endless grants from Europe. John Paul Lederach has suggested that, over time, the sustainability of peace work depends on a pragmatic approach to the delivery of services, which will require imagination and creativity. Instead of a single grant-giver, with all of the dangers of dependency and short termism that that entails, sustainability will require a much more varied mix of funding and support mechanisms. These include a commitment by government and social partners to mainstreaming the best of peace-practice into the new normality— where projects piloted by PEACE in the short run become part of the normal routine of sustainable institutions. Some projects should and can be ended, because they have done their work and are

sustainable by normal market forces or no longer required. Other projects which have received public support should now look to charging fees for developed and proven services, thereby generating value added on a long-term basis. Finally, volunteering may be the best route for sustaining community development as a community enterprise rather than a professional activity. As we look to PEACE II, it is important that grant-recipients and mainstream organisations take all of these options seriously, rather than simply drift on in the assumption that tomorrow will continue to look like today.

Because everything we know about current trends suggests that such a stable view is unrealistic. Crossing borders is the essence of peace work, in Ireland and beyond. In a global village, the borders which are emerging are often within states. Since 2004, over 200,000 (April 2006) people have arrived to work in the Irish Republic from the former eastern block. That is a population the size of several border counties. In Northern Ireland, more than 40,000 people have now arrived. Some may leave quickly, while others put down roots. What is clear is that diversity in Europe is taking on a new meaning, which will undoubtedly grow in coming years. And it is perhaps the primary result of economic success as Ireland becomes a land of arrival and wealth not departure and poverty. The

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PEACE programme, with its emphasis on integration, sharing, new networks and economic and social dimensions to life has much to contribute to new practice, provided we are willing to learn the lessons and integrate them into wider practice. It is important to recognise that, as new borders emerge, we do not rest on our laurels, but keep the imperative of a shared future in front of us as the goal which drives policy and ensures meeting, risk taking and learning long after PEACE II has been and gone.





**Katy Hayward**

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## PEACE and Cross-Border Reconciliation: A beginning not an end

### Abstract

The model of multi-level cooperation provides an ideal framework within which reconciliation processes can occur at every level in a conflictual society. A skeleton of such a framework has been built in Northern Ireland and the border counties through the PEACE programme. Thus, the success of PEACE will depend less on the integrity and ambition of recipient projects, than on the willingness of local and national political actors to develop the type of multi-level partnership that the programme has bolstered. The legacy of PEACE for cross-border reconciliation in Ireland, therefore, will be determined not by what happens once the special programme ends but by decisions made at every level regarding how to use opportunities for cross-border cooperation whilst it is still in place.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

All projects funded by the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE) are explicitly required to 'promote reconciliation'. This includes cross-border projects, some of which are funded specifically to 'develop cross-border reconciliation and understanding' (Measure 5.3). Yet the very notion of 'cross-border reconciliation' is highly problematic. So much so, in fact, we would be advised to drop it altogether as an explicit goal. This is not just

because of the inherent difficulties in applying the ideal of reconciliation on a cross-border basis. Reconciliation is necessarily a multi-level process; holding it as an aim for community level projects arguably misplaces the burden of responsibility for reconciliation onto the grassroots. The European Union itself, far from exemplifying cross-border reconciliation, embodies at best a model of multi-level cooperation. Moreover, the EU provides opportunities for developing such cooperation within and between member-states. In the context of the island of Ireland, the PEACE programme is the embodiment of the potential of this model. Through it, actors at all levels have gained experience of partnership across institutional and sectoral divides. Recognition and development of this particular dimension of the PEACE programme needs to occur at governmental levels now in order to better prepare cross-border cooperation for the future.

### The Process of Reconciliation

There is a growing literature on reconciliation theory within peace studies and, somewhat ironically, virulent disagreement among academics in this field as to its very definition. There is little dissension, however, from the belief that reconciliation is a process, specifically a process of redressing conflictual

relationships. Hamber and Kelly – whose model is used by the Special EU Programmes Body to define reconciliation – suggest that this process necessarily involves five interwoven strands:<sup>2</sup>

1. Developing a shared vision of an interdependent, just, equitable, open and diverse society. So, although they may remain distinctive, the sides involved fundamentally change by accommodating and taking on board the identity, ideas and concerns of the other.
2. Truth: Although acknowledging and dealing with the past may not necessarily require a dedicated truth commission, studies of these commissions (such as James Gibson on South Africa) have shown that truth and memory are essential for restitution and restoration of relationships.<sup>3</sup>
3. Behaviour: New relationships need to be built which embrace both commonalities and differences. The emphasis on relationship-building is in and of itself crucial.
4. Attitudes: There needs to be significant change in how people relate to one another and their attitudes towards one another. This requires opportunities to hear and be heard at all levels.
5. Structures: Substantial social, economic and political change must occur. People need to identify, reconstruct and transform the structures which give rise to conflict.

Now, when we apply this excellent model to a border conflict, two fundamental problems arise immediately.<sup>4</sup> First, put somewhat bluntly, the development of a common vision, interdependent community, transformed political structures, and shared identities on a cross-border basis would appear to be immediately more favourable to one side than the other in this case. To paraphrase Michael Cunningham: a postnationalist Ireland in a Europe in which borders don't matter any more is markedly close to the nationalist ideal of a united Ireland.<sup>5</sup> Concerns about this must be explicitly addressed in order to build trust and encourage non-partisan engagement in cross-border cooperation.

Secondly, there is the need for the process of reconciliation to be actively supported at all levels. In a 2003 study of cross-border projects at community level, ADM/CPA found that they never really went beyond the basic steps of contact and relationship-building, rarely raised conflict issues and certainly could not instigate structural change.<sup>6</sup> This is not, I would suggest, an indicator of the failure of the groups concerned or of the projects, etc. Rather, it is because they cannot be expected to go further without the necessary support and parallel change in the wider political and societal context. As John Paul Lederach acknowledges, a reconciliation process has to involve all levels of society, from the grassroots to the highest political decision makers.<sup>7</sup> Reconciliation is difficult enough within societies. When it concerns working across state borders this is made immeasurably more difficult, as the states have to work together to balance progress in reconciliation without undermining their own legitimacy. And when the border itself is contested, you could have a real mess on your hands. This is precisely where the real value of the EU PEACE model of cross-border cooperation comes in: facilitating the means of gradually building constructive relationships for substantial mutual benefit at all levels. The primary goal in such a case should not be reconciliation, then, but simply

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**“New relationships need to be built which embrace both commonalities and differences. The emphasis on relationship-building is in and of itself crucial.”**

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keeping these channels of communication and cooperation democratically legitimate.

### **Borders and Conflict**

To explain why cross-border cooperation can help contribute to a process of reconciliation but cannot be formally designed or intended to achieve reconciliation as such, it is necessary first to consider the constituent players in a border conflict. Nation-statehood involves three core parts; if we are lacking any one of these three things, we do not

have a nation-state. These three things are: polity (a form of governance), territory (within defined borders) and community (shared identity). It is not so much the nature or makeup of each of these three things, but rather the relationship between them that enables us to identify nation-statehood. It is widely believed that this model has given rise to conflict, as the delimitation of boundaries – political, territorial and communal – is bound to leave some outside who believe they should be inside, and some inside who believe they should be part of a different state.<sup>9</sup>

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### **“Ideals of Europeanness are pretty far from the grind of daily practice in the EU, which involves bureaucracy and multiple levels of it too.”**

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It may be said that there are four alternative ways of dealing with conflict that arises from the flaws/dominance of this triform model of nation-statehood:

- **Supranational:** You could replace it by, for example, building a political community that transcends the borders of states.
- **Postnational:** You could separate the three, so that political representation is not based on territory, say, but on ideological principle, or so that government is not defined on the basis of (majority) communal identity.
- **Multi-level:** You could complicate the three, so that there is a multiplicity of layers of governance, varieties of identities and different spheres of territorial polities.
- **Internal:** You could keep the status quo but try and make the definition of each of these things more inclusive, so for example, Irish identity is not twinned with Catholicism and British identity allows for multiethnic diversity.

#### **Is the EU a model of reconciliation?**

If we look at where the EU currently stands in relation to those four alternatives to the nation-state, we see first and foremost that the EU is less than supranationalist or cosmopolitan. There is no overarching

European government or polity that replaces the nation-state. The EU is also less than postnationalist given that political representation is still based on the territory of the nation-state and citizenship is based on national citizenship. Nonetheless, the EU represents more than internal discursive change, as governments have devolved real sovereignty to the European institutions, and the EU exercises certain powers over the territory of its member states.

So the EU is a model of multi-level cooperation. As we all know, the EU is certainly complicated, and it has successfully complicated the straightforward triangular relationship between polity, territory and identity in the nation-state. It has initiated new modes of cooperation (for example, in the European Council between heads of state), new channels of communication/debate (for example, the European Parliament), and new means of addressing problems (for example, Structural Funding) as well as redefining problems in the first place, i.e. on a regional or Europe-wide as opposed to national basis.

Ideals of Europeanness are pretty far from the grind of daily practice in the EU, which involves bureaucracy and multiple levels of it too. It does not tend to forge European identities. Yet for many the straightforward experience of real cooperation on significant matters with a diverse range of interests and people can have the effect of altering one's own outlook, manner of working... even, perhaps, identity. So it is possible to conclude here that the European Union is a forum for reconciliation only at the lowest levels of interaction, and this is itself facilitated by the various networks and diverse institutions that constitute the EU as a working organisation. At a higher level, however, the EU is not a 'reconciled community'. Even if wording is found to define European ideals and identity, the meaning of these things within member-states is for the most part determined by national politicians. We must be careful, therefore, when referring to the EU as 'neutral' or as a bearer of rights and ideals transcendent above the nation-state. The success of the EU should be judged less on whether it is united or even reconciled but on the basis of the effectiveness and

accountability of these new channels in terms of moving us beyond the limitations of the nation-state for wider and deeper benefit. The same principle applies to the island of Ireland.

### **Is there room for reconciliation in Strand 2?**

The Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement in effect treats the conflict in Northern Ireland as a border conflict. This is unsurprising given that it is first and foremost an agreement between two states, both of whom have to attest their legitimacy in playing a direct hand regarding Northern Ireland in the first place. The way in which the border is brought centre stage is in the 2x2x2 model of the three strands of the Agreement, each of which serve to place Irish nationalists on the one hand and British unionists on the other.<sup>9</sup> Whilst some attempt is made to flag the complexity of Northern Ireland society – e.g. ‘diversity of traditions’, ‘human rights’, ‘equality of opportunity’, etc. – these are definite appendages to the core of this essentially consociational Agreement. The constitutional amendments allowing for majority consent to change the status of Northern Ireland suggests a vision not of reconciliation but of simple majoritarian rule.

Strand 2 offers hope as to ‘complicating’ this vision somewhat with its formalisation of multi-level cooperation. Thus, it caters for new modes of cooperation (e.g. Implementation Bodies), new channels for communication (e.g. North/South Ministerial Council), and new approach to problems (e.g. north-south not just ‘back to back’). The PEACE Programme, and EU funding more generally, has been a great success in filling out this multi-level cooperation. The top-down nature of the Strand 2 institutions has been complemented by the multi-level and multi-sectoral partnerships established to manage and distribute EU funds, e.g. the Intermediary Funding Bodies, Local Strategy Partnerships, community workers, networks, etc. Thus, social partners and political actors at a regional level now have new roles, new responsibilities and new relationships.

### **Multi-level model: Potential and limitations**

So what are the potential and the limitations of a model of multi-level cooperation for reconciliation? In principle, the multi-level model aids reconciliation progress in

numerous ways. It complicates the conflict binary, showing shared interests across the border, differences on either side of the border, and the significance of other ‘borders’, such as east-west within Ireland. It also enables the so-called ‘normalisation of politics’, which is best illustrated in the successes of the Border Corridor Groups which have multiplied in the context of the PEACE programme. There is, crucially, an ambiguous end-goal in such cooperation. All involved can seek differing goals from multi-level cooperation; this doesn’t make it less worthwhile. Secondly, in practice, multi-level cooperation meets real needs and impacts at all levels and across sectors. The linking of the voluntary, private and public sector in multi-level cooperation is a sketchy manifestation of Lederach’s three-level model for reconciliation.

There are major limitations for this model, however, with regards to building the conditions of reconciliation. These centre around three points, all of which relate to the particular character of cross-border cooperation. For a start, the absence of a concrete end-goal does not inevitably result in a lack of overall strategy, but it tends to do so in actual fact. This is in part because the number of shared goals in multi-level cooperation can be quite limited – not least

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**“The absence of a concrete end-goal does not inevitably result in a lack of overall strategy, but it tends to do so in actual fact.”**

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because the location of actors in different regions, levels or sectors can mean that their goals actually conflict with one another. The lack of cohesive strategy contributes to the second problem, namely the lack of accountability. For the most part, there is a reliance on national means of accountability to stretch to include these new instruments of policy making etc. This is largely because creating new forms of democratic accountability (such as a cross-border parliament) would in effect controversially

designate legitimacy to a new polity in the process. This is a problem that is similarly faced at the European level. Indeed, the rejection of the treaty on the European Constitution was due less to outright Euroscepticism than concerns about the accountability, openness and effectiveness of the European institutions. Such concerns rapidly undermine public confidence and engagement – both of which are key to a process of reconciliation. The third problem is the limited impact that cross-border cooperation has on public consciousness. Unfortunately, the fact that cross-border

whilst the EU cannot erase inter-community boundaries, it can strengthen bodies, structures and activities that cross these divides and in this way gradually transform the everyday significance of the conflict at all levels.

For such reasons, the outlook for the PEACE II Extension programme concentrates more directly on community action than on more easily quantifiable priorities such as economic development. Yet the question of sustainability remains just as pertinent for the legacy of PEACE. Would it be enough to have supported innovative and dynamic projects for a certain length of time, or would it want to have made a lasting impact on the ways in which policies and decisions are made in the future? If it is the latter, then the focus needs to be on improving the effectiveness and sustainability of the partnerships and networks for a changed context post-PEACE. The capacity of the EU to change the context for political and social activity at all levels, albeit to a limited degree, is yet to be fully realised as a means of addressing this quandary. Multi-level cooperation perhaps holds a key in this regard.

### Conclusions

There need to be certain core goals for multi-level cooperation that must be prioritised and implemented with immediate effect if the small but unique opportunity offered by the PEACE programme for the wider process of reconciliation is to be grasped. First, a priority of all cross-border cooperation must be tangible, practical benefit to all involved. The crux of practical benefit helps to develop a 'shared vision' for a locality and to reform the economic, social, cultural etc. structures within it on the basis of equality. Secondly, at the moment, the lack of scrutiny of cross-border bodies gives the impression that their primary function is merely symbolic. The whole process needs to be open to public scrutiny and for public representatives to engage willingly with this as a consequence of deepening democracy.

It is entirely unsatisfactory that tiny voluntary groups are suffering under enormous pressure to account for every cent spent from a small budget when the conduct of semi-state institutions operating in a politically

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### **“The outlook for the PEACE II Extension programme concentrates more directly on community action than on more easily quantifiable priorities such as economic development.”**

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cooperation (like the EU) is not generally in the public eye means it can become a political football according to the expediency of local and national politicians.

### **PEACE and Reconciliation**

The PEACE programme may be seen as a unique means of developing the multi-level model in such a way as to assist the process of reconciliation. For instance, the socio-economic logic of the PEACE programme adds a much-needed boost to cross-border work. People from all sides of borders can agree that there is a need for money in local areas, especially for community development. Related to this, the most exciting dimension of the PEACE programme is the way it has boosted the third sector, giving direct support at the community level and bolstering the actions of those who are motivated to become active at that level. On a wider basis, the EU can also encourage individuals' greater awareness and engagement with their local community and facilitate inclusive networks of partnership. In this way, EU monies have been able to 'punch above their weight' in terms of the difference they can make in society. The final point here is that, as well as doing this, it has motivated cooperation and coordination between sectors and across the border. The success of partnership around PEACE shows that,

sensitive area is open to criticisms of poor management and unaccountability. Finally, and related to an earlier point, the sustainability of cross-border cooperation needs to be an absolute goal. An essential part of this will be reinforcing and grounding the channels that the EU has already forged and connecting them to the mainstream. Building on local capacities will be vital to public engagement in this process, as will wider processes of decentralization within Ireland and the UK.

The assumption that the simple fact of cross-border cooperation is in and of itself a reconciling move has meant that the actual effectiveness and value of Strand 2 has been somewhat neglected at the highest levels. The fact is that the contribution that cross-border cooperation can make to reconciliation is one part of many. As a consequence, mistakes made in this area can become obstacles to reconciliation in other areas. The PEACE programme has already highlighted the potential of multi-level cooperation in contributing to reconciliation. Yet no amount of EU funding or motivated community activity can carry this process forward indefinitely. The time is long overdue for both governments to learn lessons from PEACE and take cross-border cooperation seriously.

1 This paper is an expanded version of a presentation delivered to a conference on the Lessons from PEACE II for cross-border cooperation organised by the Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, Dundalk, 25 January 2006.

2 Hamber, B. and Kelly, G. (2004) 'Reconciliation: A working definition', Democratic Dialogue report, [http://www.democraticdialogue.org/documents/reconfef\\_00\\_0.doc](http://www.democraticdialogue.org/documents/reconfef_00_0.doc)

3 Gibson, J. (2004) 'Does Truth Lead to Reconciliation? Testing the Causal Assumptions of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Process', American Journal of Political Science 48(2), pp. 201-217.

4 It should be noted that this model was specifically designed for PEACE measure 2.1, i.e. within Northern Ireland. Yet it was developed through careful consideration of lessons from international cases of conflict and is used by the SEUPB as a guideline for all applicants of PEACE funding (e.g. SEUPB [2005] 'PEACE II Extension – a guide for applying for funding', <http://www.seupb.org/documents/PEACE%20II%20Extension/peaceextendsummm.pdf>)

5 Cunningham, M. (1997) 'The political language of John Hume', Irish Political Studies 12, pp. 13-22.

6 ADM/CPA (2003) 'Implementing Reconciliation intention and practice', Peace-building in the border counties, Leaflet 3.

7 Lederach, J. P. (1997) Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.

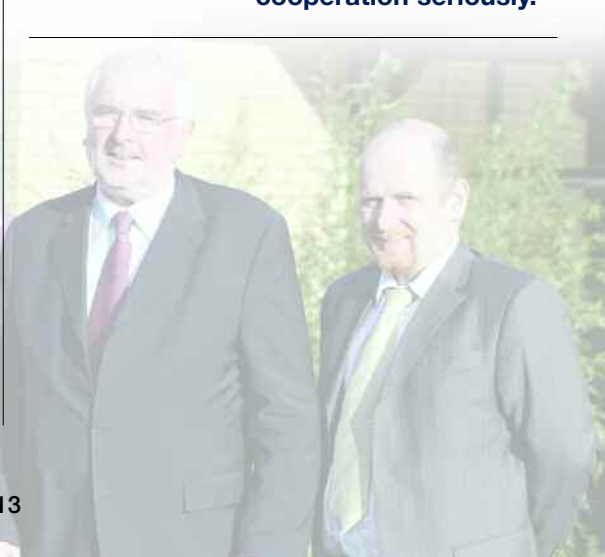
8 For example, see M. Albert, D. Jacobsen, and Y. Lapid (eds) (2001) Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory. University of Minnesota Press.

9 I.e. Ireland and the UK in Strand 3, Northern Ireland and Ireland in Strand 2, and unionists and nationalists in Strand 1.

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**“The time is long overdue for both governments to learn lessons from PEACE and take cross-border cooperation seriously.”**

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**Paul McCormack**  
Border Vision

## Cross-Border Peace Building: The Practical Experience

### Border Vision

#### **Opportunities Arising From Peace**

It has long been recognised that the border which separates Northern from Southern Ireland has directly contributed to socio-economic deprivation in the Newry & Mourne and Co. Louth regions.

Links which had existed between these communities for centuries were severed with the formation of this artificial barrier. In the physical sense roadblocks and checkpoints made it very difficult for these neighbouring communities to mix. In particular business between the regions suffered as entrepreneurs were forced to "play it safe" and avoid the risks associated with cross border collaboration. Also, ongoing politically motivated violence and instability resulted in a lack of inward investment in the region, lack of employment, social unrest and anything but normality.

In recent times a more peaceful environment has been cultivated in the North of Ireland and this has resulted in an increase of funding initiatives to further promote peace and cross border initiatives. Border Vision has been established, with funding from Co-Operation Ireland, to provide a catalyst for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to realise and avail of the opportunities afforded to them by peace.

The Border Vision Programme is a vehicle whereby SMEs on both sides of the border can work collaboratively for the good of all. Border Vision provides a platform for:

#### ● **Social Animation**

Border Vision has established a social platform allowing for complete social integration among participating companies which did not exist previously. Through Border Vision more than 27 companies with an excess of 400 people are linked, communicating and interacting in a completely new way.

#### ● **Community Cohesion**

Prior to participation in the programme 80% of the companies had no cross community linkages established. This can largely be attributed to the fact that SMEs operate in an extremely fast paced environment where the bottom line and the survival of the business are the most important factors. Border Vision has provided a conduit whereby participating companies can access new commercial opportunities whilst simultaneously realising the benefits of cross community linkages.

#### ● **Cross Border Partnerships**

Of the 27 companies on the programme

only 6 had engaged in any form of cross border trade before participation. The Border Vision programme actively fosters, encourages and supports cross border projects.

### ● All Island Partnerships

This is a 'real' opportunity where the Border Vision clusters can link with other networks, organisations and businesses on a national and international basis and provide a positive economic and social magnification of the region to external observers. Economic development is the cornerstone of the Peace Process, through the socio-economic process all opportunities can be grasped and developed for the benefit of the entire community.

### Addressing the Legacy of Conflict

The legacy of the conflict has resulted in a fractured society, the effects of this have been especially keen in the Border areas. Border Vision aims to combat this by providing and cultivating a framework for SME's to fully develop their potential.

Border Vision has had a positive influence on many aspects of business development in the Newry & Mourne, County Louth region. These influences can be seen in the following areas:

- Innovation and competitiveness
- Skill formation and information
- Growth and long-term business dynamics
- Social enhancement through economic growth
- Inter firm and interpersonal skills, relationships and development.

Border Vision, through the cluster concept, offers an alternative to the traditional SME targeted sectoral approach which concentrates on horizontal linkages and "competitive dependencies" at the same production or marketing stage. The cluster approach also includes vertical and lateral linkages between firms and service structures at different stages and thus fosters "symbiotic reciprocal relationships".

The Border Vision cluster approach thus integrates synergy potentials which emerge from the formation of cooperative strategies. This ensures that the projects undertaken produce enhanced social and cultural benefits to the community, including increased added value employment opportunities whilst allowing for comprehensive social participation.

It is recognised that there is no one intervention which can address the entire issue of social exclusion. However, it has to be acknowledged that initiatives such as Border Vision and their associated economic benefits can provide a pathway towards social inclusion.

### Reconciliation and the Border Vision Programme

Border Vision is proof that reconciliation can be delivered through economic programmes. This is achieved through building community development infrastructure and assisting the Peace Process for the future social and economic well being of the region. The Border Vision programme promotes reconciliation in a number of ways:

#### ● Building positive relationships

The programme brings together 27 companies from a myriad of social,

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**“Cross border economic activity is central to peace building. It has a definite lasting impact and provides sustainable growth.”**

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economic and geographic backgrounds all working towards one common goal. It also brings companies in contact with funding and state bodies, all of these linkages have a positive effect on the ability of a company to function.

#### ● Substantial social, economic and political change

Cross border economic activity is central to peace building. It has a definite lasting impact and provides sustainable growth.

Border Vision provides individual companies with competitive advantage through collective participation and enables executives to add resultant value to their organisations whilst also enhancing social awareness and appreciation.

● **Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society**

The programme helps pave the way to reconciliation by increasing the potential to attain a greater level of stability and prosperity within the community. It brings

- Impact beyond geographical footprint
- Prime funding
- Internationalisation

**Aims of the Border Vision programme**

The aims of the programme are to create the catalyst necessary to:

- Encourage and promote joint research collaboration
- Encourage and promote cross-border co-operation
- Foster all-island commercial links
- Create a more sophisticated critical mass within target sectors
- Build all-island collective strategies.

All of the above aims were developed through research with the participating companies to ascertain the needs of their businesses. Key stakeholders in the target area were also consulted, as well as regional/national support providers to ensure that Border Vision complements the structures already in place

**Focus of the Border Vision cluster networks**

The Border Vision model provides for a shared integrated framework, which can be delivered at different levels. These levels include: setting the strategic context to develop the necessary support infrastructure; structuring the networks to build trust; and extending and expanding the network horizons to build links and network connections whilst allowing for ancillary relationship, attitudinal and social development.

The Border Vision clusters aim to:

- Use the combined resources and capabilities of companies to win new work
- Recognise that traditional competitors can have mutual benefit for close working alliances.

A Cluster Focus is taken to:

- Meet demand for 'Turn-key' solutions requiring multi-disciplinary approach
- Overcome problems of scale
- Desire to grow business and access previously untapped markets

**“The programme promotes direct economic intervention which assists in the break down of traditional barriers and counteracts sectarian tension.”**

together people of diverse political, religious and cultural backgrounds from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. By focusing on the area as an outward and forward looking region, the programme promotes direct economic intervention which assists in the break down of traditional barriers and counteracts sectarian tension.

● **Significant cultural and attitudinal change**

Border Vision provides a Pathway to social inclusion. It gives people the opportunity to take control for themselves. Previously the region had a history of lack of cross border linkages - now two very active clusters are delivering on targets!

The Border Vision programme offers many more additional benefits such as:

- Second order non-obvious benefits
- Positive externalities e.g. the positive promotion and development of a locally available labour force with specific qualifications
- Collaboration milieu not bottom up or top down approach

## Key Cluster Network Features

Cluster network features include:

- Benefits to cluster members of increased
  - Opportunities to create new business on top of existing turnover
  - Developing mutually beneficial partnerships
  - Promoting cross bordered partnerships
- Benefits to clients
  - Reduced red tape- pre-established bid team for tenders will exist within cluster
  - Retaining investment locally- improved quality of products and services
- The Clusters are more than the sum of their individual parts.

The establishment of collaborative networks (or virtual factories) such as Border Vision can deliver real benefits of scale to smaller organisations. This helps them to survive and grow in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

## Cluster Communication

Members from both clusters communicate online sharing ideas and collaborating to gain contracts. Members also receive daily updates via email notifying them of developments. A text messaging service has also been developed in conjunction with the email service to remind business people who are always 'on the go' of meetings and other important information.

The benefits of this constant communication are

- Collaboration
- Increased trust and understanding
- Reconciliation
- Better relationships
- A community.

## Collective Capabilities

The Border Vision clusters consist of:

- ETC -15 core member companies- collective employment in excess of 300 personnel

- NETC- 12 core member companies- Collective employment in excess of 110 personnel
- Public Procurement opportunities
- Collective tendering
- Collective capabilities
  - taking up the opportunities
  - R&D
  - Spin out companies
  - New technologies
  - lobbying
  - Information exchange

Rather than follow the traditional but tired paths of either bottom up or top down implementation of economic development, the clustering approach of Border Vision delivers both with engagement and delivery at the centre. This process creates a 'collaboration milieu' and as such promotes participative involvement and importantly provides the social capital, which breeds and develops the culture required for successful collaboration and relationship development.

## Major Challenges and Successes

The initial stages of the Border Vision programme presented some interesting challenges both of the companies involved and the programme management team. These included:

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**“The establishment of collaborative networks (or virtual factories) such as Border Vision can deliver real benefits of scale to smaller organisations.”**

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- Getting the companies to talk
- Building trust & commitment
- Breaking down the barriers, not just commercial but also social
- Getting the project to 'fit the box'
- Changing funding perceptions.

The Border Vision Programme has now been operative for over 18 months. During that time these challenges have been addressed and overcome. There have been real and

tangible successes. These include:

- People communicating
- Trust
- Cross border clustering
- Cross border networking
- Cross border strategic goals.

This success can only be delivered where trust, openness, clear communication and a shared vision exist! These values are constantly reinforced through the Border Vision Programme.

### **Conclusion**

The Border Vision programme could not have been implemented without funding support. Continued support to initiatives such as Border Vision is vital for the further development of the region in both social and economic terms and the further achievement of the cluster network goals.

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**“Success can only be delivered where trust, openness, clear communication and a shared vision exist!”**

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**Kate O'Dubhchair**  
An Teach Bán

# Cross-Border Peace Building: The Practical Experience

An Teach Bán / Centre for Peace Building

This article chronicles development of the Centre for Peace Building / An Teach Bán, Downings, Co. Donegal. The Centre provides residential facilities for groups of twelve to eighteen people and is set in a truly scenic location overlooking Sheephaven Bay and on the edge of the Atlantic Drive.

An Teach Bán was acquired for the community in 1988 by a group of trustees who had the foresight to invest in it as a place of respite for the people of the North West. It is constituted as a charitable trust, limited by guarantee.

Over the next twelve to fifteen years the use of An Teach Bán both grew and changed, reflecting perhaps the move from the immediacy of daily conflict to the ongoing process of building a more peaceful society. A number of community organisations became regular users of the centre. When Peace II funding became available, they put together a proposal to commit An Teach Bán to the primary purpose of peace building and to run an ambitious programme of cross border, cross community workshops offering formal and informal opportunities to groups (those identified as Targeting Social Need (TSN) and those defined through the National Anti Poverty Strategy Programme [NAPS]). There was a firm conviction that there was a

real need for a place in the N. W. Region to bring people together, to focus, and to support the community peace building effort.

### The Vision

Underpinning the proposal and fundamental to the way in which we would operate were the following beliefs in:

- Partnership, Progression and Sustainability - an acknowledgement that

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**“There was a firm conviction that there was a real need for a place in the N.W. Region to bring people together, to focus, and to support the community peace building effort.”**

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peace building and reconciliation are a process and that there needs to be a commitment to the 'long haul', respect for the organic nature of development, for the work of others and our role in adding value and not duplicating or competing;

- Experiential learning - a belief that we can best learn from experience through story telling and dialogue , breaking silence and inculcating deep listening skills and the practice of listening respectfully to each other;

- Empowerment - a belief that building a peaceful society requires strengthening capacities for peaceful being and indirectly contributes to economic and social recovery;
- Inclusivity - An acceptance that peace building is everybody's responsibility and should involve as many people and sectors as possible, should engage people with enthusiasm, and should be a transparent process;
- Conflict Transformation - a belief that the course of conflict can be transformed

**“Our challenge was to do the work we wanted to do, sensitively and non-judgementally, believing that it would ultimately contribute to economic and social improvements.”**

by understanding which gives new hope, creates new possibilities and new alternatives.

### **The Challenges**

Putting our plans into action posed various challenges.

The first was to decide exactly where we fitted in the overall picture and what our particular contribution might be. In business terms we needed to define our unique selling point and see where we sat with regards to other centres such as Glencree and Corrymeela. We drew our approach from the work of John Paul Lederach and were fortunate in that he was willing to be our patron and to help steer our course. We made some definite decisions. We felt strongly that peace building starts within the individual who becomes engaged and finds his/ her own peace and then feels able to become an agent for peace within the community. We emphasise storytelling as an integral part of our methodology. And we recognise that one of our strengths lies in the intimacy of the surroundings of An Teach Bán as a 'safe place'. Therefore, we took a decision that we would only ever have one group there at a time. We also felt it important that we met people where they were at and so, whilst our long term aim is to encourage cross border and cross community working,

we acknowledged that our starting point in most cases would be single identity work.

The second challenge came from having to work within the particular measure under which we had been funded. This was Measure 5.4 and meant that we had a small amount of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) monies but were mainly funded from the European Social Fund (ESF). We originally applied to 5.3 but were moved to 5.4 as the former was oversubscribed. ESF funding primarily focuses on training for employment and is distinctly outcomes driven. Our challenge was to do the work we wanted to do, sensitively and non-judgementally, believing that it would ultimately contribute to economic and social improvements but accepting that for most participants this would not be a direct or immediate outcome. All of this being done whilst at the same time meeting the outcomes necessary to satisfy funders. Other commentators have noted that this approach is unsuitable for peace building and that it had the added disadvantage of labelling the Troubles as a working class phenomenon. We found the best solution for us was to have two tiered objectives and to invest in really good systems to collect the necessary information for monitoring returns, making it as painless as possible for participants.

Starting from scratch is difficult. We were fortunate that our founding organisations had a strong network of contacts and we were able to tap into that. But we were targeting groups who were vulnerable, protective of their privacy and in some cases beginning to feel exploited. They were in many cases threatened by strangers and by invitations to go beyond their comfort zone. If we were advising someone else on start up we would emphasise patience, absolute transparency and a willingness to do whatever is necessary to build trust. Much of this work of community peace building is very much behind the scenes and it is only by respecting confidentiality and privacy that trust in the process is built.

Knowing that we were making a difference and being able to demonstrate it proved to be two different things. Heads other than

ours have wrestled and continue to wrestle with the question of how to measure success in peace building. We had some choices to make regarding evaluation. We felt we wanted to be reflective practitioners and we wanted any external evaluator to feel part of the team. We were fortunate that we found the right organisation, SMTK Ltd., to work with us and were able to work out a process of evaluation that was both quantitative as required and qualitative as we felt we needed. This has been invaluable and has stood us in good stead as we planned the current phase of activity. It is however an area we still seek to improve upon. We believe we are not alone in needing to take time to distil out the lessons we are learning and contribute to the building of models of best practice.

Being conscious of our first principle, recognising peace building as long term, has given us a parallel consciousness of the need for sustainability both of the work and of the centre in which to carry out the work. So we have looked to put in place structures within participating communities to promote the work and carry it forward potentially beyond our involvement. And on the practical side we have sought to leverage additional funding. For long term sustainability of the centre we need to upgrade our facilities to the highest quality we can afford and expand use to include revenue generating activities that can then feed back into the organisation and underpin community work. We are grateful for the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Anglo-Irish Reconciliation Fund, and the Ireland Funds for seed capital. And particularly grateful to the International Fund for Ireland who have supported us both in a capital grant for refurbishment and extension and in our community work with a major grant under the Community Bridges Programme which will enable us to work in depth in four communities in Derry over the next three years.

### **Participants and Programmes**

Our contract committed us to working across all the groups identified through TSN and NAPS: women; youth; ex-combatants; victims/survivors; displaced persons. We also aimed to service all six border counties and the six counties of Northern Ireland. Over the

three years from 2002 to 2005 over two thousand people engaged with us in some form or another. We became an accredited Northern Ireland Open College Network (NIOCN) site and as a result some four hundred and fifty participants took accredited courses in peace building and self development. We also offered informal opportunities for story telling and dialoguing. Most of our programmes were residential but we also delivered programmes in reconciliation and peace building to other Peace II projects, particularly those whose primary focus was not explicit peace building. We found clear evidence of a desire for progression in our empowerment programmes in content and movement to mix with those from other communities or in a cross border setting. And in story telling and dialogue we found a willingness to progress to more challenging encounters in the confidence that this would be in an ethos of respect.

Our objectives required that we also work in an international context and we did this both by encouraging visitors to An Teach Bán and through an annual international peace building conference. This has proved extremely successful and will be continued throughout this phase of Peace II + funding.

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**“We found clear evidence of a desire for progression in our empowerment programmes in content and movement to mix with those from other communities or in a cross border setting.”**

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Like every other Peace II project we have weathered the vagaries of uncertain funding and the realities of differing systems administering funding on either side of the Border. The latter posed quite a problem for us as our partners and user groups were frequently from N. Ireland and so we found our levels of anxiety doubled rather than reduced. But we were one of the fortunate ones and received our Peace II + funding early in October 2005. In preparing the proposal for 2005 – 2008 we found our



experiences of the last three years had left us well placed and very focused on our role on contribution. We are now funded under Measure 5.3 and so have a specific reconciliation agenda. We see our work as contributing to both 'Addressing the Legacy of the Conflict' and 'Taking New Opportunities Arising from Peace'.

Under the former heading we will continue our Empowerment programmes but with an emphasis on cross border and cross community groupings. We have also formed a partnership with WAVE, the N. Ireland

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**“In bringing people across the border it enabled us to dispel myths. For groups such as ex-security forces personnel it was a huge step coming to Donegal and the Gaeltacht area.”**

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Trauma group, and with them will host a substantial number of Healing of Memories workshops using the methodology developed in S. Africa by Fr Michael Lappsley. And we are currently putting a new series of workshops in place dealing with Rebuilding Relationships with families and communities who experienced fracturing of relationships during the conflict.

Under the latter our new opportunities work includes dialoguing opportunities using the Peace Circle model, and providing training in new approaches to conflict management for those working in peace building. In addition we offer opportunities for community peace building workers to rest and renew energy, for their work is intense and often lonely and so there is a real need for peer support.

In our immediate geographical area we join our partners in investing time and effort at a regional level, by making An Teach Bán available as a hub for development and networking. Additionally, with partners we are promoting intercultural awareness recognising the changing face of the island of Ireland and the potential for new kinds and areas of conflict.

## Conclusions

In reflecting on the realities of cross border working as we have experienced it again highlights the obvious difficulties of different systems, different currencies and things as trivial as different public holidays! Yet balanced against that, are the many advantages of a broadened experience and resource. The benefits outweigh the difficulties.

Our Peace II funding enabled us to make An Teach Bán available as a resource to a wide swath of people. In bringing people across the border it enabled us to dispel myths. For groups such as ex-security forces personnel it was a huge step coming to Donegal and the Gaeltacht area. And for people from the Border counties and other parts of Ireland there was obvious learning in breaking the silence around the Troubles, challenging a 'nothing to do with us' mind set, and in a sharing of responsibility for our future on this island.

Undoubtedly, working in a cross border project managed by a cross border management board has enriched our work enormously. It has allowed us to think outside the confines of jurisdiction and encouraged us to go forward as part of a growing, regional, progressive community peace building / community relations movement.



**Sean Pettis**  
CRC's Project Manager – EU Events & Seminars

## Round Table Reflections: Highlighting the Key Issues

The event, 'Bordering on Peace?: Learning from the Cross Border Experience of Peace II' contained a number of opportunities for participants to critically engage with the topic through question & answer sessions, a chaired panel debate and round table discussions. There was a diverse range of experiences and opinions shared on this topic matter and what follows is a summary of the key themes that emanated from the round table discussions. They are not meant to be overly exhaustive, nor are they necessarily points of general consensus; rather it is an overview that encompasses the most recurring points. The participants were posed 3 questions:

### **1. What contribution has Cross-Border co-operation made to peace & reconciliation?**

- It was felt that it is difficult to widely measure the contribution of cross border co-operation to reconciliation within the context of the Peace Programme, as arguably money can cloud the issue. People can and will put entrenched differences aside in the interests of business and this can make it difficult to assess if significant cultural or attitudinal change has actually taken place.

- In a general sense, it was argued that cross-border co-operation has opened up channels of communication on political, business, economic and community levels, where arguably the 'Troubles', had acted as an impediment.

- It was felt that cross-border co-operation has provided a useful stepping stone for those within the unionist/loyalist

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**“Cross-border co-operation has opened up channels of communication on political, business, economic and community levels, where arguably the ‘Troubles’, had acted as an impediment.”**

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communities to move on to cross community work. Arguably it is easier for members of the unionist/loyalist community to engage with Catholics from the south as part of a process that will eventually lead to cross-community engagement. It was made clear however that it has be part of an overall process and that it can't become an excuse to not engage with one's own neighbours.

● For some, in the simplest sense, cross-border work contributed to peace & reconciliation through taking individuals out of their comfort zones, be it via an economically driven agenda or through a community group exchange. This forced people to engage with difference in ways which perhaps weren't possible before.

● Some participants felt a substantial benefit of cross-border co-operation lay not in cultural exchange, or projects based on identity, but in co-operation on practical issues such as the access of

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**“Many of the barriers emanate from cultural and legal differences in areas such as bureaucracy, legislation and policy on key issues such as taxation.”**

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essential services to those who live in isolated border areas.

**2) What are the barriers to cross-border co-operation? How can they be overcome?**

● Many of the barriers discussed are arguably inevitable consequences of working across two political jurisdictions. It was argued many of the barriers emanate from cultural and legal differences in areas such as bureaucracy, legislation and policy on key issues such as taxation. It was argued that the North-South Ministerial Council was supposed to be pro-active in addressing these constraints and that the stalled political situation in Northern Ireland has therefore acted as a barrier in terms of not promoting cross-border co-operation at the meso-political level. It was felt by some that whilst government has made commitments to promoting cross-border co-operation, this is mostly rhetoric and behind this lies little commitment to providing strident policy or budget lines that support such activity.

● Some felt that there is a prevailing cultural belief that cross-border work is primarily about getting Northern Ireland to

co-operate with the Republic of Ireland. It was felt that cross-border co-operation is very much a two way process and that one of the biggest barriers to overcome was encouraging those in the south to come into the north on an ongoing, sustained basis.

● Some felt that the reach of the Peace Programme had acted as a barrier to widespread cross-border co-operation, as the programme only included the six border counties of the Irish Republic. One participant felt this acted as a quasi re-partitioning of Ireland, as it prevented those who had little or no experience of the north from more southern areas from engaging. It was argued that future programmes should be on an all Ireland basis.

● Some argued that the economic focus to cross-border co-operation was a barrier, as it did not encourage true reconciliation. It was therefore felt that a lot of the burden to carry out structured and focussed peace building work was left to the community / voluntary sector. In the context of a lack of political progress, it is doubly difficult for community groups to create a lasting legacy with potentially only two years funding. As ever in discussions around the Peace Programme, the issue of the high levels of administration (especially the infamous N+2 spend requirements) were seen as a huge barrier. As one participant put it, "...who would take on the stress of it?"

● There were concerns around how the review of public administration might affect continued or enhanced cross-border co-operation. It was felt that the RPA would either be grabbed as an opportunity to mainstream and develop this, or it would cause procrastination.

**3) Does Cross-Border co-operation support inter-community work within Northern Ireland or does it inhibit it?**

● Many felt that this was not an "either, or" question in the sense that there is the

possibility that it can both support and inhibit inter-community relations in Northern Ireland. As mentioned previously, if it is used as a stepping stone to cross community work, then it can be supportive. If it is used as an excuse to not engage with the "other" community in Northern Ireland, or if it is only used as a means of accessing funding, then inevitably it will inhibit it.

- It was argued that investing in cross-community work is essentially about investing in what are in overall terms small differences. From an "all Ireland" perspective the experience of mass immigration has the potential to diminish the perceived differences between the communities in Northern Ireland. It was felt therefore that cross-border work could be a supporting factor in transforming the context in which the Northern Ireland conflict operates.

- It was felt that cross-border work can have value above contributing to reconciliation between the two main communities in Northern Ireland. Some felt that the more tacit sectarianism that exists in the south needs to be addressed and cross-border work was a means of doing so,

- Arguably the full extent of the ability of cross-border work to support or inhibit cross-community work isn't known, as much of the 'cutting-edge' work that goes on is kept quiet in order for it to be done in a safe and productive environment. It may be some time before the full range and reach of such work is widely known, or the learning shared.

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**“From an ‘all Ireland’ perspective the experience of mass immigration has the potential to diminish the perceived differences between the communities in Northern Ireland.”**

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**Andy Pollak**  
Director – Centre for Cross Border Studies

## How does Cross-Border co-operation contribute to Peace Building in Ireland?

### Introduction

In a divided Northern Ireland and a divided island of Ireland, the use of the term peacebuilding is often a way of avoiding that other extremely difficult concept, reconciliation. Because reconciliation can mean many things. To many unionists it means moving towards the nationalist ideal of Irish unity, in the same way that Katy Hayward points out that "a post-nationalist Ireland in a Europe in which borders don't matter any more is markedly close to the nationalist ideal of a united Ireland." To many nationalists it means the same thing. To those of us who work in the field of practical, sensible North-South co-operation, it means people learning to work together so that they can gain both short-term mutual benefit and longer-term greater mutual understanding from such joint activity, without anybody giving up their cherished beliefs or identities.

To those who like their definitions clear, the admirable "working definition of reconciliation" put together for the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Peace II) by Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, makes reconciliation seem like a daunting mountain to climb. "A common vision of an interdependent, just, equitable, open and diverse society" in Northern Ireland and between North and South seems as unlikely

to be implemented in the foreseeable future as the Shared Future document lying on the shelf in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Similarly, "acknowledging and dealing with the past" is still waiting for a Truth Commission-style mechanism to begin happening in any real way. Justice, healing, redress and reparation, and individuals and institutions acknowledging their inter-related roles in past conflicts, are all in their infancy.

"Significant cultural and attitudinal change" and "substantial social, economic and political change" seem in the darker moments of the past eight years since the Good Friday Agreement to be as far away as ever.

"Building positive relationships" by addressing issues of trust, prejudice and intolerance, and accepting "commonalities and differences, and embracing and engaging with those who are different from us" are as difficult as ever in an even more deeply divided Northern Ireland, although some progress has been made on the North-South front.

So – here at the end of a litany of disappointments and tales of deepening division, is a small reason to hope. North-South relationships are almost certainly better

than at any time in the past 90 years, and this is because of the work both of governments and civil society organisations since the so-called 'peace process' began in earnest in the early 1990s.

As the former editor of the Irish Times, Conor Brady, said in an article last year, the "cold, denying silence" that fell upon the island in the 1920s has all but ended. "Right across public life – in public services, in business, in NGOs, in voluntary organisations – the deadly, deadening silences and the stopped-up channels of communication have been replaced by dialogue, co-operation and a realisation that everyone gains, and nobody loses, when people and organisations work together.

"Of course it does not all flow from the [Good Friday] Agreement. There have been decades of on-the-ground work, put in by clubs, volunteers, schools, organisations, churches and so on. But what the Agreement has done is to make it possible, acceptable and necessary for official Ireland, North and South, to get on with the everyday business of life – together."

### **The role of the Peace Programmes**

And what is the role of the EU Peace programmes in helping to bring about this improvement? Very significant, say most commentators. "Reconciliation is difficult within societies", writes Katy Hayward. "When it concerns working across state borders, this is made immeasurably more difficult, as the states have to work together to balance progress in reconciliation without undermining their own legitimacy. And when the border itself is contested, you could have a real mess on your hands. This is precisely where the real value of the EU Peace model of cross-border co-operation comes in – facilitating the means of gradually building constructive relationships for substantial mutual benefit at all levels." Dr Hayward explains the importance of "multi-level co-operation" as an ideal framework for reconciliation elsewhere in this publication.

The authors of the 2005 study on the impact of the Irish border, *The Emerald Curtain*, wrote that evaluations had suggested that the

Peace I programme had "done much to underpin the peace process by providing close co-operation between civil society organisations and political leaders at local level. The programme validated work between ex-combatants and promoted their social and political reintegration. Cross-border work won increasing acceptance, was seen to be a norm and became less threatening to the loyalist community."

Liam O'Dowd and Cathal McCall stress that the distinctiveness of the EU's contribution "lies in the extent to which it seeks to de-territorialise the [Northern Ireland] conflict, i.e. to build cross-border networks of co-operation around issues of common interest. In this sense, it seeks to move beyond bounded territory to the creation of a co-operative transnational space."

It is the creation of that "co-operative transnational space" beyond the mutually destructive 'winner takes all' ideologies of Irish nationalism and Ulster unionism that the cross-border reconciliation seekers aspire to. For it to be real, it has to be both an East-West space taking in England, Scotland and Wales and a genuine European space, as well as a North-South or all-Ireland space.

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**“Significant cultural and attitudinal change” and “substantial social, economic and political change” seem in the darker moments of the past eight years since the Good Friday Agreement to be as far away as ever.**

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A good example of such a space is the long-running European Schools Project, which brings teenagers together from both Irish jurisdictions and elsewhere to study history, geography, environmental studies and contemporary European issues. Started in the late 1980s, its website still shows 120 secondary schools from Northern Ireland and Ireland involved, along with schools from England and 17 other European countries. One of the ESP's strongest values is that it has allowed Northern Protestant schools to be involved in a North-South link alongside

East-West links with England and continental European countries – "it takes in the wider, safer environment," in the words of one senior Education and Library Board official. It has also provided a platform for schools to graduate to other cross-border and cross-community programmes, thus providing access to the much sought after holy grail of sustainability.

Amazingly, there are very few other East-West projects of this kind. In the educational field which I know best, there are almost none at all. A major study of school and youth

generation of young people had been given the experience of participating. The lesson for Ireland is clear: if cross-border youth, education or community programmes are to make a serious contribution towards reducing prejudice and sectarianism, then they must prepare for the long haul.

An example of a very well-funded, long-term Irish programme which appears to be doing this is the Wider Horizons training programme. This was started in 1987, and so far nearly 15,000 young people have passed through it at a significant cost of over £67 million in funding from the International Fund for Ireland. Both cross-community and cross-border, it sends religiously mixed groups of young people from both Irish jurisdictions to foreign countries to obtain relevant training and work experiences.

Its reconciliation elements are fourfold: all leaders have to take a formal training course that includes reconciliation; reconciliation is understood to include any issue that divides people, including racism, homophobia and gender discrimination as well as sectarianism; the reconciliation process works to build up the confidence and self-esteem of the individual participant, in the belief that prejudice is particularly difficult to combat where the individuals concerned are vulnerable, fearful and disadvantaged; and the programme also puts an emphasis on 'institutional reconciliation', conscious of the close connection between the reconciliation of individuals affected by the conflict and the reconciliation of the institutions – e.g. youth and community organisations – to which they belong.

The programme's main evaluator, Anton Trant, concludes: "The Wider Horizons formula has proved over the years to be a simple, practical and very powerful force for co-operation and integration. Its uniqueness lies in the way the programme integrates its twin aims of reconciliation and employability, so that vocational training and work placements are the vehicle through which people come to know and trust one another – it is because the vocational training element of Wider Horizons is perceived to have no ideological threat that it can be used as a bonding and

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**“Peacebuilding and reconciliation are slow, painstaking, often expensive trust-building exercises whose impact must be evaluated across decades.”**

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exchanges published last year indicated that only a tiny 1% of funding on such exchanges goes to East-West activities between schools and youth groups in Britain and Ireland.

**Preparing for the long haul**

It is also no coincidence that the European Studies Project is nearly 20 years old. Peacebuilding and reconciliation are slow, painstaking, often expensive trust-building exercises whose impact must be evaluated across decades rather than after the two or three year timespans of many EU-funded projects. This is perhaps why politicians, with their focus on the short-term electoral cycle, usually find it difficult to understand the importance of sustaining such programmes over the necessary longer term.

A good example in mainland Europe is the Franco-German Exchange, a youth exchange programme set up over 40 years ago and generously resourced by the French and German governments with the hugely ambitious aim of effecting a fundamental cultural change in the way the future citizens of those two formerly warring nations would view each other. Long-term evaluations have shown that this programme made a substantial contribution towards promoting good relations between the two countries, but this was only discernible after a

integrating activity." It remains to be seen how recent cutbacks in funding to the International Fund for Ireland by both the EU and US government will affect this important programme.

### **Practical co-operation**

This emphasis on people doing practical, mutually beneficial work together to remove any sense of ideological threat is also central to the ethos of the Centre for Cross Border Studies. We believe passionately that people coming together from the two jurisdictions in Ireland – as well as from the two communities in Northern Ireland – to work together on common projects, is a powerful way to start to remove the poison of centuries of fear, suspicion and misunderstanding from relationships on this island.

There are lots of examples of this. I have on my office notice-board in Armagh a letter from a primary school principal in Belfast's loyalist Shankill Road thanking the Centre for putting on a conference on North-South school links some years ago, and talking about the "real joy" she experienced in meeting school principals and teachers from the South and learning about the many issues they had in common.

The Centre also runs an EU Peace-funded project – Pride of Our Place – bringing together 9-11 year olds in primary schools (Catholic and Protestant) on both sides of the border to do environmental studies together. The project researcher, Mary Burke, has described the impact of this project on the participating children in the following terms: "They have used a very wide range of activities and methodologies – story, music, arts and crafts, drama, ICT, field trips, photographic work, video and animated film, surveys, interviews, studying documents and old artefacts – to tell the stories of 'their place'. At one of the most critical times in their lives, this project has given these pupils the ideal context to share their environment, their sense of place and their identity with others. In that sense it is a real 'crossing borders' experience: they have 'invited' others into their own place – 'inviting' is a key word – and through this have gained interpersonal and relationship-building skills that

will be critical to them for the rest of their lives."

At adult level, a good example of this coming together for practical, people-to-people purposes is the exchange, funded by the EU through Co-operation Ireland, between the Greater Shankill Community Council and the Drogheda Partnership. This is a project working on the stony ground of fearful, loyalist working class Belfast. Its reports are complete with references to people who don't yet have the self-esteem and confidence to participate in cross-border co-operation. Yet those same reports document real lines of communication opening between people in Belfast and Drogheda on issues of common importance to deprived, working class communities everywhere: poor housing and education, lack of services for elderly people, the tension between volunteering and professional community development, funding problems, even their portrayal by the media. Here is reconciliation at work: closed minds being opened under the leadership of far-sighted community leaders and with crucial financial support from the EU Peace Programme.

### **Learning from Europe**

O'Dowd and McCall make a distinction – particularly valuable in the narrow, territorial

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**“Here is reconciliation at work: closed minds being opened under the leadership of far-sighted community leaders and with crucial financial support from the EU Peace Programme.”**

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world of Northern Irish politics and society – between 'territory' and 'space'. Space, they say, is the space of networks, beyond "the ordered geography of both states and communities within Northern Ireland", and has elastic boundaries depending on their reach. Human rights, the global economy, environmental issues and new information and communications technologies are examples of human endeavour where it makes more sense to co-operate through spatial networks – British-Irish, European and

global – rather than through the extremely constraining institutions set up as part of the 19th and early 20th century nation state.

This will mean working harder to overcome the traditional insularity of Northern Ireland and, to a lesser extent, Ireland. It will mean learning from friends in mainland Europe, some of whom have been involved in this slow, painstaking work of peacebuilding for a lot longer than we have: from, for example, the first ever Euregio centred around Gronau on the Dutch-German border. I have listened to several speakers from that region

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**“When the people of that region started to work to heal the wounds caused by centuries of conflict, they started with a cultural and social programme.”**

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explaining the nearly 50 year process which has led to it becoming the prototype for cross-border co-operation in the European Union. They all emphasise that the first way peoples divided by recent war and bloodshed can start coming together is through ‘people-to-people’ social, sporting, cultural and artistic activities. According to Wim Schelberg, a former President of the Euregio : “Without the creation of awareness of the need for cross-border co-operation among the population, the authorities on both sides of the border would push through cross-border projects affecting the economy and infrastructure either not at all or only with considerable resistance.” This process of social and cultural co-operation must be both intensive and ongoing, Schelberg stressed, with each new generation being “made aware of its neighbour’s needs all over again” and taught how to overcome psychological barriers and prejudices.

We in Ireland would do well to remember what we often tend to forget: that our 30-year conflict in the north of this island has been a small affair compared to the massive bloodletting which took place in continental European borderlands during both world wars. When in 1958 the far-seeing and courageous people living between the Rhine, Jissel and Ems rivers on the Dutch-German

border started the process which led to the first Euregio region, their memories of war and occupation were very fresh and painful indeed. And it was not just the Second World War they remembered, for this was historically a poor region - with high unemployment and too much dependence on agriculture and textiles – which had been fought over by Holland and Germany for 350 years.

When the people of that region started to work to heal the wounds caused by centuries of conflict, they started with a cultural and social programme. With funding from both governments, 100 towns and cities on both sides of the border each appointed a ‘Euregio ambassador’ to oversee a rapidly growing series of exchanges in music, sport, the arts and education. By the early seventies an estimated 150,000 people a year were involved in cross-border activities in the region. This allowed mutual trust and knowledge to build up and contribute enormously to the success of the second phase of the cross-border process, the business and economic development programme. Every Dutch-German Euregio speaker I have heard in recent years has stressed they had been absolutely right to work in that order, since to do business with someone, you have to know and trust them, and the build-up of personal trust and mutual knowledge through artistic, sporting and educational activity proved invaluable in achieving this.

This is to a large extent what the EU Peace programmes have tried to do in Northern Ireland and the Southern Border Region, particularly in Peace I and now again in the Peace II extension (there was some criticism about the overly economic emphasis of some Peace II funding). In the Irish context it also makes eminent good sense: it was after all the myriad cross-border civil society organisations – the churches, the trade unions, the sporting bodies, the voluntary sector organisations – which kept the ‘bonding’ of people-to-people relations alive during the worst years of the ‘Troubles’, as John Whyte documented in his seminal 1983 study ‘The Permeability of the UK-Irish Border: A Preliminary Reconnaissance.’

## Need for a policy framework

However one key element that has been present in the German-Dutch drive for cross-border co-operation that is singularly absent in Ireland is some kind of over-arching policy framework at government level. All the key players have frequently expressed their concern about this lacuna. In the words of a 2004 Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action paper on a successor programme to Peace II : "There is no body, architecture or system in place to sustain or to drive north-south co-operation apart from ad hoc arrangements and the North/South bodies, which have important but specific and limited remits."

Co-operation Ireland, while welcoming the commitment by both the British and Irish governments to cross-border co-operation, urges the adoption of "a strategic and developmental approach to the building of a coherent policy for North-South co-operation across all government departments and agencies, alongside a partnership approach with civil society to policy-making." This would mean that "funding truly addresses need, duplication is avoided and models of best practice are developed. This approach could ensure that we genuinely use the space that structural changes have created to build peace on this island."

O'Dowd and McCall quote a Special EU Programmes Body official expressing concern that if the voluntary sector was to become the sole recipient of future peace and reconciliation funding, this would let the public sector 'off the hook', allowing government departments to shirk any responsibility for directly tackling the challenges of peacebuilding. He felt it was essential that government departments, North and South, should be involved in actively promoting peace and reconciliation.

All commentators agree that, with the exception of the North/South bodies, this lack of a policy framework and institutional support for cross-border co-operation by governments in Belfast, Dublin and London severely limits its impact as a tool for long-term peacebuilding. Without such a framework the kind of shorter-term, capacity-

building projects promoted by the Peace programmes will simply disappear into the sand, and much of the cross-border learning gained will go with them.

O'Dowd goes further, stressing that as EU funding declines, many cross-border projects face "a crisis of sustainability" . He continues: "The great contribution of cross-border co-operation is that it challenges the 'zero-sum' calculations which have bedevilled politics within Northern Ireland. It holds out the prospect of a 'positive-sum' politics which is outward-looking and capable of revealing existing and new areas of common interest which cross the internal and external borders of N.Ireland. Over the last two decades, a small but significant human resource has developed consisting of workers with a history and commitment and experience in cross-border working. As the current phase of cross-border co-operation comes to an end, one of the main dangers is that this resource will be dissipated by the inertia of state institutions, a process of re-nationalisation within the EU [by governments seeking to limit the policy-initiating powers of the European Commission], and the associated funding crises which face cross-border co-operation generally."

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**“The great contribution of cross-border co-operation is that it challenges the ‘zero-sum’ calculations which have bedevilled politics within Northern Ireland.”**

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## **Bordering on Peace?**

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## Learning from Peace II Project

Over the last ten years the European Union has made a tremendous commitment to N.I and the Border Region of Ireland. The Peace II Programme, through its support to over 5,000 projects, is delivering real benefits to local communities. Whilst the Programme has achieved much, both in economic and social terms, the reality is that the process of building a peaceful society is a long-term one. No matter what the political difficulties have been, the PEACE Programme has enabled local communities to remain engaged in the process of building a better future for themselves.

The Learning from Peace II Project has been initiated to critically evaluate the impact and implementation of the PEACE II Programme on peace-building and reconciliation in Ireland (north and south), to ensure that the lessons learnt can be disseminated to funded groups, funders, policy makers, Commission representatives, Government Departments and the general public.

This publication, 'Bordering on Peace?: Learning from the Cross-Border Experience of Peace II', seeks to critically evaluate the contribution of Cross-Border Peace Building work to reconciliation in Ireland, North and South. It is hoped that this learning will both support current initiatives and shape future funding programmes.