

To: Terry McKee  
Department of Finance & Personnel  
European Division  
Annexe F  
Health Estates  
Stoney Road  
Belfast, BT16 1US  
[eudconsultation.cfg@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:eudconsultation.cfg@dfpni.gov.uk)

From: The Community Relations Council  
6 Murray Street  
Belfast  
BT1 6DN

Date: March 2007

**Issue: EU Structural Funds: NI Competitiveness and Employment Programmes 2007 – 2013**

The Community Relations Council (CRC) is primarily concerned with promoting Community and Good Relations and the development of a shared and peaceful future. In recent years, CRC has actively sought to bring pressure to bear on all public agencies to take seriously the implications of 'A Shared Future', which has tasked government departments and agencies to develop and implement policies that establish ***'over time of a normal, civic society, in which all individuals are considered as equals, where differences are resolved through dialogue in the public sphere, and where all people are treated impartially. A society where there is equity, respect for diversity and a recognition of our interdependence'***.

Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation on the NI Competitiveness and Employment Programmes 2007 – 2013. We are mainly interested in how these two programmes can contribute to promoting good relations and fulfilling the obligations of DETI and DFP as set out in A Shared Future (ASF) (appendix 1). We are pleased that Good Relations and the government priority A Shared Future are stressed as important cross cutting themes which must be considered when implementing the various themes of the programmes. The programmes are committed to delivering Section 75 obligations but also recognise the challenge ahead. Council acknowledges good relations is a challenge but is one that cannot be ignored if we really want to achieve a shared future. Furthermore, in our recent response to the Equality Commission's Guidance on Good Relations we noted our concern that whilst some public authorities have embraced S75 (2) Council is also aware that some authorities do not see this duty as relevant to their organisation, or more importantly do not want to open the dreaded 'can of worms'. The competitiveness and employment programmes must focus on devising plans and actions that can be delivered cross community - there are many aspects of these programmes which can positively contribute to building a shared future and these cross cutting themes should be a reference point from a

planning point of view. Our response focuses on sectarianism and the growing problem of racism within our society and the need to ensure these twin evils are tackled together - A Shared Future is now a precondition of economic success, not the other way around.

The SWOT analysis carried out for both programmes registers the 'peace process' as an opportunity, and one that has to be maintained and nurtured. This 'opportunity' should not be taken for granted; the peace process has to be proactively approached and Council wants to underscore the need to approach good relations and ASF in a positive and practical manner. An ad-hoc approach is not sufficient.

Another important issue to consider within the SWOT analysis is the continued threat of racism. Northern Ireland is experiencing a growing labour market and many are migrant workers. A society steeped in two mutually antagonistic cultural 'traditions' which is hostile to newcomers will endanger its progression towards economic prosperity and the following points of information highlight the need to cement all policy with ASF and Good Relations.

- More than 2/3 of people believe there is more racial prejudice than there was 5 years ago (NILTS 2005)
- 1% of people are very prejudiced and 24% of people say they are a little prejudiced against people from minority ethnic communities (NILTS 2005).
- Racial offences increased from 322 in 2004/05 to 351 in 2005/06 (PSNI 2005/06).
- Only 17% of people agree they know quite a bit about the culture of some minority ethnic communities in NI (NILTS 2005).
- Half of the population believe minority ethnic communities are less respected than they once were (NILTS 2005).
- Fifty-four percent of students had witnessed some form of racism. This had mainly taken the form of verbal abuse (50%) or rudeness and hostility (33%), while 21% had witnessed property being damaged and a further 21% had witnessed physical violence. Of the 54% who had witnessed the acts of racism, the majority, 38% had ignored the incident, while 13% reported that they had challenged the behaviour. Only 2% had reported the incident to the PSNI and 1% had reported it to someone else. *New Migrant Communities in East Tyrone, A Report for East Tyrone College, July 2005.*
- Exploitation of the growing number of migrant workers in Northern Ireland was confirmed yesterday in a study by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). It also highlighted widespread racism and sectarianism experienced by those who have travelled to the province in search of work – suffered both in the work place and outside. It concluded that trade unions had both a duty and the capacity to organise and represent migrant workers.

Northern Ireland's goal must be to become a dynamic region, one that tolerates and attracts cultural diversity, and one that will ultimately generate and support new business ideas that increase its competitiveness. Good Relations must be an essential component of public policy.

Council would like to focus on a number of other issues when considering the economic activity or inactivity of individuals and groups in Northern Ireland, and the opportunities available to reinforce Good Relations and ASF within both programmes:

#### *Barriers to employment*

A number of obstacles are identified in relation to why some groups experience difficulties engaging with the labour market or those that remain economically inactive despite employment opportunities. These hurdles included a skills deficit among certain groups, childcare, ill-health and mobility issues. It is important to put these issues within the context of Northern Ireland and the segregated nature of our community. Access to employment can be restricted because of where you live and where you have to travel to work i.e. if you rely on public transport to get to your place of work and this involves traveling within an area that you feel uncomfortable in e.g. paramilitary flags, painted kerbstones and other territorial markings – these will all have an impact on where you will consider seeking employment.

The University of Ulster's recent study on 'Breaking Down Barriers', examined issues around sectarianism, unemployment and the exclusion of disadvantaged young people. Council has attached the summary of the key findings and believes it is essential to take this research into consideration when devising ways to reduce social exclusion and improve economic and employment opportunities in areas of high deprivation. The researchers found evidence that:

- The main reason for not working in a politico-religious out-group area was fear.
- Neutrality in the workplace and in the local environment (i.e. no graffiti) were important in encouraging people to work in other areas.
- Sectarianism is the norm in these communities and this has been a major barrier to employment.

These are only a sample of the views held by many of the young people. Council wants DFP to further recognise the impact of the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland and acknowledge these issues as chill factors and how they present additional barriers e.g. feelings of safety and issues around traveling to/access to work. Acknowledgement will generate the opportunity to develop creative solutions to these hurdles.

#### *Opportunities*

Within the two programmes are a number of opportunities that could harness good relations and move ASF forward in real terms. Whilst ASF and Good Relations are identified as cross cutting themes, the real task is how they become practical out workings among the different priorities. One priority examines enterprise and entrepreneurship and Council believes this should be delivered with ASF in mind i.e. on a cross community basis. Current models of good practice include the Suffolk/Lenadoon Interface Group who have not only created shared spaces but have achieved this through a local social economy project e.g. a child care facility and local retails outlets. Similar groups in disadvantaged areas are beginning this process of discussing how they can develop business skills within their communities and ultimately

how this can result in local employment. It is important to acknowledge that these developments are part of a long term process and support must be available at the different and sometimes difficult stages of the project.

Another priority is protecting and enhancing the environment. Within this priority a number of actions are identified, one being the renovation of redundant military bases. This is an area that is being advanced through ASF lens e.g. the regeneration of the Crumlin Road Gaol. This is an example of strong partnership which involves representatives from the statutory and community sector as well as local political representatives. This approach is crucial to encouraging dialogue and ensuring ownership of the project at local level. The final project will deliver real benefits for the local community in terms of possible employment, but also developing a new space which the whole community can access. This will be area of huge development over the next few years and it is important that strategies such as the competitiveness and employment programmes acknowledge and recognise the work that is in progress to remove barriers and build working partnerships between our fractured communities.

There are issues around having equal access to services and facilities and how this can impact on the amount of income one community has to spend in order to purchase goods. The consultation notes that fuel, food and necessity goods are more expensive in NI relative to the UK. How you access cheaper goods etc. at a local level and where they are located can impact on your disposable income. Therefore it is important to examine what opportunities exist in terms of how communities who are currently segregated interact with each other, and to learn and build on these models. Where do people interact and engage on a cross community basis, where are these businesses located and how can you create more opportunities to expand current businesses, locate new enterprises and development training facilities in the area.

#### *Further Education Strategy and Skills development*

The ESF Programme identifies the FE Strategy as a playing an important role in 'enhancing social cohesion and in providing opportunities for lifelong learning'<sup>1</sup>. This also links into the low level of job related training in Northern Ireland and what opportunities can be generated on a cross community basis within the FE sector. The FE sector can and already does play an important role in the delivery of ASF and the promotion of Good Relations. Council has attached a case study on ANIC and the **A.G.R.E.E Programme** (Actioning Good relations, Equality and Equity) which was delivered over a four year period and sought to ensure that equity and respect for difference were placed at the heart of day-to-day life further Education Colleges in Northern Ireland.

#### *Trade Unions*

The work of trade unions is also particularly important in tackling sectarianism and racism within the workplace. Trade Unions are actively involved in finding practical ways to fight prejudice and are working to ensure the gains of the peace process do not

---

<sup>1</sup> Page 115

unravel. It is important to acknowledge and support these efforts and work towards an equitable, diverse and interdependent society in order to attract and retain new labour.

#### *Targets*

Priority one is *‘enhancing access to employment and the sustainable inclusion in the labour market of job seekers and inactive people, preventing unemployment, in particular long-term and youth unemployment, encouraging active ageing and prolonging working lives, and increasing participation in the labour market’*<sup>2</sup>. The outcomes for this priority include progressing towards labour market entry as well as identifying softer such as action plans and referrals to programmes. Council would like to see these outcomes strengthen with the inclusion of good relations indicators and attitudinal surveys.

CRC wants the EU Structural funds to examine the cross cutting themes of ASF and good relations in detail, and support projects that create new opportunities for sharing, that develop cross community ownership of spaces and employment and training opportunities? It should examine what incentives can be made available to target the hard to reach and discuss what positive actions need to happen to increase sharing and interaction between employers, employees and users? This work is already happening and the programmes should support similar projects in areas where it is most needed; the applications supported should proactively challenge the status quo and deliver real change for communities. It is important that government plan for the future. This round of financial support is due to end in 2013 and the pot of funding is increasingly shrinking. Consequently, subsidies are specifically targeted towards areas of public policy, and also used to compliment the work of strategic government policy – e.g. the Regional Economic Strategy currently out for consultation. It is essential Northern Ireland has contingency plans to survive reduced funding from Europe.

---

<sup>2</sup> Page 125

## Appendix I

### A Shared Future – Triennial Action Plan 2006

#### Headline Actions for DFP & DETI

##### The Department of Finance and Personnel will

- ensure that all proposals for public expenditure include an assessment of how they will contribute to the promotion of good relations as well as the New TSN and equality. Proposals will not be considered if this is not included;
- continue to ensure good and harmonious working places and relationships and that front line staff are fully trained and aware of the implications of the principles of A Shared Future for service delivery;
- identify and implement opportunities to reduce the costs of division across public spending, particularly in education and housing;
- support cross-departmental research to identify the costs of division, the baseline measure of the health of good relations and arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of A Shared Future and its impact on the health of good relations over time; and
- oversee, in collaboration with OFMDFM, the development of appropriate training support programmes and material to support good relations considerations at all levels of NICS.

##### The Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment will

- encourage the development of a high value added, innovative, enterprising and globally competitive economy leading to greater wealth creation and job opportunities for all. In support of A Shared Future it will:
    - reinforce the importance of stability in creating the environment necessary to enable indigenous businesses to trade, prosper and grow;
    - promote greater understanding and mutual respect among the Northern Ireland workforce regardless of religious/political background, race or level of ability; and
    - highlight the economic cost of a negative image of Northern Ireland created by community unrest in terms of lost investment, lost jobs and lost tourism.
- Specifically, DETI will,
- work with the business community to raise awareness and understanding of the negative impact of sectarianism and racism on the local economy and promote the economic benefits of greater community cohesion;
  - encourage recognition of, and respect for, the vital role played by migrant workers in the local economy;
  - encourage the shared use of industrial space, particularly at interface areas (where practicable); and
  - challenge the costs of division.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC)**

In their response to the requirements of Section 75, the 16 colleges of further and higher education have adopted a co-ordinated approach. One central body, the Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC) provided each college with a common approach to organizational change, a strategy and a training package as well as pro forma responses for the colleges' annual reports to the Equality Commission

#### **ANIC and the AGREE Programme**

The **A.G.R.E.E Programme** (Actioning Good relations, Equality and Equity) was a four year strategy; (2002 - 2006 funded by the Community Relations Council), developed by Trademark in partnership with ANIC which sought to ensure that equity and respect for difference are placed at the heart of day-to-day life further Education Colleges in Northern Ireland.

ANIC was established in 1998 following the incorporation of the Colleges of Further Education in Northern Ireland. It is a limited company with charitable status. The Board of Directors represents the Association's memberships and comprises Directors of Institutions and Chairs of Governors.

The ANIC Equality Unit was introduced in March 2002 to assist colleges in meeting the provisions of Section 75 legislation and in aiding colleges to comply with this process through a co-ordinated approach.

#### **PROJECT AIMS:**

The aims of the AGREE programme were as follows:-

- to ensure that equity and respect for difference are placed at the heart of the college's structures, systems and cultures;
- To go beyond complying with legislation by ensuring organisational commitment to mainstreaming the principles and practices of equity, diversity and interdependence through a process of organisational change;
- To develop/implement "an inclusive and innovative change programme" which will look at how the FE sector might more fully engage with S75 considerations; and to model approaches which will allow for the mainstreaming of same over time;

To assist colleges to implement the seven steps of organisational change:

- 1) Invitation
- 2) To Establish Critical Dialogue
- 3) To Growing Leadership Commitment and Understanding
- 4) To identify the issues
- 5) Growing Commitment and Understanding Across the Wider Organisation
- 6) Experimenting and Modelling of New Working Practices

## 7) Implementing New Models of Practice into Mainstream Structures and Relationships

### **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The AGREE programme had the following objectives which were met:-

#### **Step 1:**

- To establish a Project Working Group (who will agree a plan of work for Year 1);

#### **Step 2:**

- To establish a Development Group which is representative of all current college structures (x24 Members involved in real dialogue about issues of conflict and division);
- To establish a Community Education Forum (x16 Members involved in dialogue);

#### **Step 3:**

- To bring both the formal and informal leadership into new conversations around the principles of fairness and valuing difference (x24 Members of Development Group, x16 Members of Equality Forum, x16 Community Education Forum Members, x16 Board of Directors, x16 Governors, x16 Trade Union Members, x16 Student Executives, x4 Working Group Members);
- To recruit (over x6 days) and train a cohort of tutor/facilitators to undertake the preparation, strategic planning, deliver and evaluation of appropriate training course in relation to S75(1) & (2) (x16 College representatives);
- To develop and deliver an accredited OCN training course on “Equality & Good Relations” – suggested modules: Equality Legislation, Understanding Equity, Diversity and Interdependence, Anti-sectarianism, Anti-racism, Strategic Planning and Programme Design, Delivery and Evaluation;

#### **Step 4:**

- To carry out an audit of programmes and activities (relating to issues of community relations, peace building and ED & I across the FE & H sector over x5 days);
- To carry out a number of baseline scoping studies) and action research into ‘organisational culture’;
- To produce accompanying materials;

#### **Step 5:**

- To engage with the various inter-college groups and structures and deliver a programme of dialogue;
- To assist in the development of a training strategy for the colleges (senior staff, student representatives and others from the FE sector) to meet requirements under Section 75 NI Act 1998’;
- To develop plans to implement a framework of organisational change based on the inclusive principles of equity, diversity and interdependence;

#### **Step 6:**

- To experiment with, and model, new working practices, policies, structures and support mechanisms;

### **Step 7:**

- To implement new models of practice into mainstream structures and relationships
- A key objective was to provide mechanisms and methodologies which will allow community relations/considerations to become a self-renewing/sustaining feature of further education in NI.

### **PROJECT OUTCOMES**

Outlined below are the outcomes of the programme:

- The establishment of new structures within colleges to deal with equality specifically, e.g. College Equality Working Groups
- The recruitment and development of Equality Trainers
- Development and delivery of OCN accredited programme “Equality and Good Relations Trainers Programme” to college staff. This programme was further developed by Trademark and delivered to other public sector bodies.
- The delivery of general awareness training
- The identification of equality issues within individual colleges
- The development of training materials
- Sharing and development of good practice and equality initiatives through the establishment of equality structures
- Cultural diversity and good relations are now included as elements of student induction and in some student curriculums.
- Growing confidence, knowledge and experience within Further Education to allow for the continuation of steps taken through the AGREE Programme

Throughout the life of the programme colleges, were provided with opportunities to build capacity and to challenge and overcome the politeness and denial that characterises individual and organisational approaches to the fundamental divisions that exist within this society and the increasing demands faced in dealing with an endemic and increasingly active racism.

Through the various strands of the programme this project has directly intervened in the political and cultural life of the colleges in an attempt to bring the development of positive community relationships from the periphery to the mainstream of organisational policy and practice.

There was a cumulative total of 2797 participants involved in the various activities during the 3 year programme. Activities included:

- Equality and Good relations Awareness Training
- Training & support for college Equality Working Groups
- Research Interviews
- Student Workshops/ training
- Residential

- Consultation regarding relevant college equality issues
- Anti-harassment training
- Staff surveys
- Policy development

### **Cultural Diversity Projects**

In addition to AGREE Programme in 2003, the Department for Employment and Learning provided financial support totaling £150,000 (£50,000 per pilot) for three Cultural Diversity pilot projects, which were completed in March 2005. The purpose of supporting three Cultural Diversity pilots was primarily to promote “Cultural Diversity / Good Relations” in the Northern Ireland Further Education (FE) sector, by providing opportunities for students and staff from differing identities, backgrounds and traditions to develop and enhance relationships of trust and understanding, and promote mutual respect in every aspect of college life. The four colleges involved were Armagh College, Belfast Institute, North West Institute and Upper Bann Institute.

### **Next Steps - Dissemination Programme**

Following completion of the pilots, the Department has decided to provide financial support to Colleges to facilitate the dissemination and roll out of Cultural Diversity/Good Relations best practice identified by:

- the Education and Training Inspectorate, in their report on the above Cultural Diversity Pilot Initiatives; and
- MORI Ireland/ Deloitte, in their “Chill Factor” FE research project, commissioned by ANIC.
- A total of £300,000 has been made available for this purpose between November 2006 -07.
- Whilst each dissemination programme is specific to the local context, generic activities include:
  - the collation and analysis of data on potential and actual learners from minority ethnic groups;
  - the development and introduction of codes of good practice for staff and students in relation to cultural diversity;
  - the engagement of students and representatives from groups reflecting a wide range of cultures and traditions in the development of whole-College policies on good relations;
  - the introduction of induction programmes for students and staff, focused on cultural diversity;
  - the completion of a full curriculum audit to identify where formal cultural diversity activities are integrated effectively into the curriculum, and to incorporate issues of cultural diversity and equal opportunity into quality assurance and course review processes;

- the review of marketing and promotional materials, including prospectuses, to ensure that they portray, and are effective in recruiting, a diverse group of students.

ANIC is also currently undertaking research, funded by the Department for Employment and Learning into racism in further education, findings are due in early March 2007. In addition ANIC are developing a race equality plan in partnership with colleges and in conjunction with ECNI.