

CVSNI RESPONSE TO THE SEUPB CONSULTATION ON EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL CO-OPERATION 2014-2020: PREPARING A NEW EU PROGRAMME FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION (PEACE IV) 2014-2020

The Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland (the Commission) was established in June 2008 under the *Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006*, as amended by the *Commissioner for Victims and Survivors Act (2008)*.

The Commission is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). The principle aim of the Commission is to promote awareness of the interests of victims and survivors of the conflict. It has a number of statutory duties that include:

- Promoting an awareness of matters relating to the interests of victims and survivors and of the need to safeguard those interests;
- Keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice affecting the interests of victims and survivors;
- Keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for the victims and survivors by bodies or persons;
- Advising the Secretary of State, the Executive Committee of the Assembly and any Body or person providing services for victims and survivors on matters concerning the interests of victims and survivors;
- Ensuring that the views of victims and survivors are sought concerning the exercise of the Commission's functions; and
- Making arrangements for a forum for consultation and discussion with victims and survivors.¹

The Commission is pleased to have the opportunity to provide a response to SEUPB's European Territorial Co-operation 2014-2020 Consultation. In order to inform the Commission's response, a consultation seminar was held on Friday 9th November in the Commission's offices at which a number of victim and survivors groups were represented. It became evident at this seminar, the central role in which the previous PEACE Programmes have played in helping both individual victims and survivors and the groups that provide services to them. The groups present at the Seminar were strongly of the opinion that this support needs to continue into a PEACE IV Programme.

Throughout PEACE I, II and III, victims and survivors have constituted a key target group for the Programmes. Indeed, in the PEACE II Programme, specific measures were designed for victim and survivor groups with specific budgets attached. Theme 1.2 in the PEACE III Programme again had initiatives specifically designed for victims and survivors. The Commission is of the opinion that this specific targeting should continue into a PEACE IV Programme for 2014-2020. The PEACE Programmes

¹ The functions of the Commission relate to those set out in the *Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006* as amended by the *Commission for Victims and Survivors Act (Northern Ireland) 2008*.

have been an important source of funding for victim and survivor groups and has enabled them to provide services and support to those who were most affected by the conflict.

The Commission is conscious, however, that the strategic environment for victims and survivors has changed quite significantly from the situation in 2006 when the PEACE III Programme was designed. In November 2009, OFMDFM introduced a ten year strategy for Victims and Survivors. This strategy identifies a new infrastructure for dealing with victim and survivor issues that includes the Commission, the Forum and the Service. These three bodies are now operational and work closely with the Department in meeting the needs of victims and survivors.

In addition, the Commission has recently completed a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) of victims and survivors in Northern Ireland. This assessment has been key in determining how and where the Department prioritises its expenditure in terms of meeting victim's needs. The CNA also provides a detailed picture of victim's needs and the services that are required to meet those needs. The Commission believes that a future PEACE Programme would have an important role to play in ensuring that all the needs identified within the CNA are addressed.

For example, the CNA identifies Health and Wellbeing as the number one need for victims and survivors. The Commission is of the opinion that PEACE IV could have a major impact in improving services to victims and survivors in this area in a number of ways. Firstly, PEACE IV could make a significant contribution to enabling Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland to address the psychological impact of the conflict. Recent research by the Commission² has found that:

- Conflict-related events have been '*a major traumatic stressor for the population*' with an estimated 39% of the adult population or 524,000 individuals having experienced one or more Troubles-related traumatic event;
- The report estimated that approximately 18,000 individuals who had experienced a conflict-related event met the criteria for 12-month posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD);
- Almost 44% of individuals who experienced a conflict-related traumatic event had a 'post-conflict' disorder following their first experience of conflict (i.e. had a disorder that first developed after their first experience of conflict); and
- Individuals who experienced any conflict-related traumatic event were more likely to have had any lifetime anxiety, mood, substance or impulse-control disorder compared to those who experienced a non conflict-related event and those who had not experienced a traumatic event.

It is evident from the findings of the report that the conflict has left an enduring legacy of need in this area. In order to address this need the Commission would recommend that a specific major project is developed as part of the PEACE IV Programme that contributes to addressing the following issues:

² Commission for Victims and Survivors (2011) *Troubled Consequences: A Report on the Mental Health impact on the civil conflict in Northern Ireland*, University of Ulster/NICCT/Compass, October 6

- The capacity to develop specialised services to treat chronic mental health conditions as a consequence of the conflict;
- Contributes to the development of a care pathway to deal with complex mental health issues in conjunction with DHSSPS and DOHC in Ireland;
- Contributes to the development of family therapy services;
- Funds and resources groups to meet the highest possible standards of Service delivery in relation to mental health needs;
- Funds further research and investigation of treatments in relation to dealing with trauma and complex grief with the Universities; and
- Contributes to the development of a world renown Regional Trauma Centre located in Northern Ireland and the Border Region.

The Commission believes that this proposal could be developed into a major flagship project for the PEACE IV Programme and are willing to work closely with SEUPB in developing these ideas further.

Secondly, the PEACE IV Programme should continue to make its significant contribution to Victims and Survivors groups in delivering services to individuals in relation to Social Support, Truth, Justice and Acknowledgement support and Trans-generational and young people's issues. These are areas that the previous three PEACE Programmes have contributed significantly to. The CNA has identified these as important areas of need for victims and survivors and the Commission would welcome further investment by PEACE IV in this ongoing work.

Thirdly, a PEACE IV Programme could make a significant contribution to ensuring that the level of services that are now available to victims and survivors in Northern Ireland is available to those victims and survivors that reside in the Border Region. The new Victims and Survivors Service offers assessments and packages of care to individuals that are resident in Northern Ireland. However, victims and survivors of the conflict are also resident in the Border Region of Ireland and these services are currently not available to them. The new PEACE IV Programme could play an instrumental role in extending some of these services into the Border Region and help to address needs in those counties.

The Commission welcomes the opportunity to be able to submit a consultation response in relation to the development of a new PEACE IV Programme. The Commission believes that a PEACE IV Programme has a very important role to play in the continued delivery of services to victims and survivors. The Commission is very interested in working closely with SEUPB to develop the ideas proposed within this submission as the PEACE IV Programme develops over the next twelve months.

NOVEMBER 2012