

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC SEU 1 (15) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

11 DECEMBER 2015

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The eighteenth North South Ministerial Council Special EU Programmes meeting was held at the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh, on 11 December 2015. The meeting was attended by Richard Bruton TD, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Arlene Foster MLA, Minister for Finance and Personnel, and OFMDFM Junior Minister Jennifer McCann MLA. Minister Bruton chaired the meeting.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

2. The Council noted that the two Sponsor Departments will consider the current governance structures and reporting arrangements in place for the Special EU Programmes Body and that an update will be provided at a future Special EU Programmes meeting.

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES PROGRESS REPORT

3. The Council received a detailed progress report from the Chief Executive of the SEUPB, Ms Gina McIntyre, who reported on the various activities of the Body including the following:

PEACE III Programme

- (i) the Programme is now committed to 215 projects totalling €329.67m which represents a 99% commitment level. €311.5m of cumulative expenditure has been incurred to date which represents 94% of the Programme value. Remaining expenditure to process by the end of 2015 is €21.4m. All previous years expenditure targets have been met;
- (ii) Key Programme targets are being achieved and surpassed, some of these are listed below with the targets in brackets:
- 25,194 participants have attended conflict resolution workshops, with almost 6,000 (target of 5,000) events organised that address sectarianism and racism, or deal with conflict resolution;
 - In excess of 7,000 (target of 5,600) individuals have received trauma counselling; and
 - 40,300 (target of 25,000) individuals have participated at events assisting victims and survivors.

INTERREG IVA Programme

- (iii) the Programme is now fully committed with 88 projects issued letters of offer at a combined value of €263.35m (103% commitment). €233.95m of cumulative expenditure has been incurred to date which represents 91% of the Programme value. Remaining expenditure to process by the end of 2015, to meet EU expenditure targets, is €22.05m. All previous years N+2 targets have been met;
- (iv) Key Programme targets are being achieved and surpassed, some of these are listed below with the targets in brackets:
- Over 2,700 (target 3,065) businesses have been assisted to date, with the Programme target expected to be surpassed;
 - 29 networking projects supported which has surpassed both the project and the Programme targets (Programme target 15, project target 26);
 - Almost 89,000 beneficiaries of supported cross-border services; and
 - 314 conferences held and close to 13,000 attendees at those conferences.

Closure of 2007-2013 Programmes

- (v) The SEUPB confirmed that it is monitoring the rate of individual project closure to facilitate the challenging timetable for closure.

Transnational and Interregional

- (vi) The SEUPB continues to facilitate North/South participation in the INTERREG IV Transnational and Inter-regional Programmes. During the 2007-13 Programme period 69 project partners were secured across the four relevant programmes and these projects leveraged in an additional ERDF contribution to Northern Ireland of approximately €11.3m (£8.9m);

2014-2020 EU PROGRAMMES

4. The Council noted that the INTERREG VA Cooperation Programme was officially adopted by the European Commission on 13 February 2015 and the SEUPB have issued five funding calls under the INTERREG VA Programme to date.
5. Ministers noted that the PEACE IV Co-Operation Programme was submitted to the EC on 13 November 2015 and was officially adopted by the European Commission on 30 November 2015. Ministers approved the agreed PEACE IV Cooperation Programme and noted that the SEUPB will stage a public launch event for the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Programmes during January 2016.

SEUPB BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET 2016

6. Ministers noted the key priorities for the SEUPB for 2016 which include:
 - the closure of the 2007-13 PEACE III and INTERREG IVA Programmes ensuring all targets are achieved to maximise EU receipts;
 - the management and implementation of the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Co-operation Programmes;
 - ensuring that SEUPB services are delivered efficiently and effectively meeting all accountability requirements; and
 - supporting North/South engagement with the EU funded Transnational and Interregional programmes to maximise North/South participation.
7. Ministers also noted that the SEUPB has applied the required efficiency savings to the 2016 budget in accordance with agreed guidance issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and that that Finance and Sponsor Department Ministers have approved the Business Plan and Budget/Grant.

8. The Council approved the SEUPB 2016 Business Plan and recommended the 2016 budget/grant provision of:-

- Administration Costs: £1.820m (€2.600m)
- EU Programme Expenditure £2.905m (€4.150m)

SEUPB ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2014

9. Ministers noted the Special EU Programmes Body Annual Report and Accounts for 2014 have been certified by Comptrollers and Auditors General in both jurisdictions and will be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas shortly.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS

North/South Pension Scheme

10. The Council approved an amendment to the North/South Pension Scheme and noted a protocol on the handling of future amendments to the Scheme.

Business Plans and Budgets for Waterways Ireland, Tourism Ireland and safeFood

11. Ministers noted that Waterways Ireland, Tourism Ireland and safeFood have applied the required efficiency savings to 2016 budgets in accordance with agreed guidance issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and that that Finance and Sponsor Department Ministers have approved the Business Plans and Budget/Grants for the three bodies.

12. Ministers approved the Business Plan and recommended the budget/grant provisions as follows:

- (i) Waterways Ireland €26.41m (£18.49m)
- (ii) Tourism Ireland Ltd €52.671m
- (iii) safeFood €7.480m (£5.236m)

NEXT MEETING

13. The Council agreed to hold its next Special EU Programmes meeting in spring 2016.

Joint Secretariat

11 December 2015

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