



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Peace III Programme
Date:	12 November 2008
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Relevant Background Information

PEACE III - Belfast City Council's Involvement to Date

Belfast City Council has been very proactive in seeking and securing funding across a range of areas from the PEACE III funding programme. An opportunity to further enhance this position now exists with the opening of the priority (2.2 Institutional Capacity and European and International Networking). While other parts of the organisation including Good Relations have focussed on the 'peace building' aspects of the programme. An opportunity now exists to focus on the more structural aspects of peace and in particular the issues around the economic rebuilding and restructuring. Belfast has over ten years achieved significant economic success. This process has provoked great interest across the world. Belfast provides a positive model which other cities could learn from. The OECD in undertaking its study of Belfast's future, pointed this out and suggested that Belfast should seek to distribute its lessons and story to a much wider audience. The proposed project would seek to make this happen.

Key Issues

The NI Peace Network

The SEUPB is spearheading a Peace network and programme it is spearheading, to transfer and disseminate learning from Belfast in relation to emerging from conflict and undergoing an economic and social transformation.

The Peace Network was announced at the annual Brussels Open Days at a workshop held on 8 October 2008 chaired by the SEUPB and attended by the European Commission and high level speakers from Cyprus and the Basque Country.

The network will be co-ordinated by the SEUPB as a Secretariat and will have a Steering Group made up of representatives from NI and the border counties, Cyprus and The Basque Country.

It will be launched in Belfast early in 2009 with two further events being held in the other two founding member states over the course of the year. Immediate themes of the network will be:

1. Use of structuring funds in conflict areas.
2. Contribution of local people to conflict resolution.
3. Role of youth and children in conflict areas.

Priority 2.2: The Power of Possibility

This network would allow Belfast to share its practice and also seek further learning. Based on the comments and encouragement given by the OECD the EU Unit has given much thought to developing a proposal under priority 2.2 of the Peace III Programme and has looked at the economic changes in Belfast over ten years and how this can be of interest to other cities and regions in Europe and throughout the world. Places such as Nicosia and the Balkans could learn from Belfast but equally Belfast could learn from cities which are further down the line of economic re-growth such as Berlin. Key themes which the project would explore include the 8 competitive factors that measure a city's success and how they interact with economic rebuilding and further exploration into:

- How economic growth can be achieved after periods of instability
- What assets are available within urban areas to reverse the economic impact of conflict and division
- How human components need to be adopted and supported in urban areas coming out of instability to assist economic growth e.g. educational and training opportunities
- Examining how public open space can be transformed in the post conflict era
- The population trends impact eg brain drains, depopulation of urban areas, integration of migrant populations upon stability
- Successful measures and tools to attract inward and foreign investment

In briefly exploring these early ideas the Unit has discussed further with the OECD political collaboration and they are keen to work alongside Belfast City Council on such a project of learning and exchange and ultimately document and publish findings under the gold standard OECD banner. They have also offered their own networks with cities in Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

During the course of a proposed 3 year programme, a model of good practice in economic restructuring would be identified and made transferable to other regions across the world who are on the verge of, or, emerging from conflict and division..

The unit has also been approached by potential partners in Nicosia, Berlin, the EU Association of Local Democracies, the European Commission and Eurocities as well as the eight Councils within the East Border Region. The idea has created a great deal of interest in the context of the global extent of conflict and division and the agreed importance of rebuilding economic strength to sustain stability and peace.

The Unit has tested the idea with senior colleagues at the EU Commission, SEUPB and importantly with DFP and ODMDFM, and have received a very positive reaction.

To this end the European Unit is now exploring opportunities for funding to resource a first phase project to develop ideas and substance for exchange in NI and the border area while working with EU cities and the OECD in the first instance to identify the key learning areas. The Unit aims to secure 100% Peace III 2.2 funding for the project concept and further pursue other EU programme funding to further develop the project - for example through the EU Instrument for Stability or the Seventh Framework Programme.

Members will receive a detailed report on the project once it has been fully developed and costed and are asked at this stage to agree that officers can proceed to develop the project with colleagues in the East Border Region and pursue funding opportunities.

Resource Implications

Should Peace funding be secured to develop and deliver the Project, costs will be covered at 100% by the Peace III Programme.

Recommendations

To note the contents of the report and agree to the development of the Power of Possibility project.

Abbreviations

SEUPB Special EU programmes Body
DFP – Department of Finance and Personnel
OFMDFM – Officer of the First and Deputy First Minister
OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

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