

**European Union Programme for Peace and  
Reconciliation (PEACE III) 2007 – 2013 for Northern  
Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment Article 9  
Statement**

August 2007

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background

- 1.1 The Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) is the Managing Authority for the European Union Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE III) for Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.
- 1.2 The PEACE III programme is a European Union structural funds programme aimed at reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society in areas formerly affected by conflict. PEACE III follows on from the preceding PEACE I and PEACE II programmes.
- 1.3 SEUPB decided that in the interests of transparency and for consistency with other European structural fund programmes in Northern Ireland, it would carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the PEACE III Programme. ADAS UK Ltd was commissioned to complete the SEA on SEUPB's behalf.
- 1.4 The SEA was carried out under the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC, '*Assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment*' (hereafter referred to as 'the SEA Directive').
- 1.5 SEA is intended to identify and assess any potentially significant environmental impacts that may be associated with the implementation of the programme. Where significant environmental impacts are identified then the SEA must propose mitigation measures that can be adopted to avoid, reduce or offset the impact.
- 1.6 The Environmental Report, which forms the main output of the SEA process was submitted to the European Commission along with the draft PEACE III Operational Programme (OP) in July 2007. As required by the Directive, this was preceded by a public consultation period where interested parties were invited to give their views on the SEA. This included a consultation workshop held in Belfast on June 20<sup>th</sup> 2007.
- 1.7 The Environmental Report, Consultation Responses and other key documents relating to the SEA and the OP are available at SEUPB's website, [www.seupb.org](http://www.seupb.org), or on enquiry to SEUPB, EU House, 6 Cromac Place, Belfast, BT7 2JB.

## **Article 9 Statement**

- 1.8 Following the adoption of the OP, an SEA (or Article 9) Statement should be produced in compliance with the SEA Directive.
- 1.9 This document forms the Article 9 Statement for the PEACE III OP, and has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Directive.

## **2. HOW ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS HAVE BEEN INCORPORATED INTO THE PROGRAMME**

### **2.1. Introduction**

- 2.1.1 This section summarises how environmental considerations have been incorporated into the OP, and how the findings of the SEA have been taken into account.
- 2.1.2 Some environmental considerations were already incorporated into the programme, and others were introduced as a result of the SEA.

### **2.2. The OP and the Environment**

- 2.2.1 The OP is primarily based on support for community related measures and greater co-operation in the delivery of cross border services, with little provision for major infrastructure developments. There is therefore limited scope for environmental impact to be caused.
- 2.2.2 The OP nevertheless recognises the need for the programme to be consistent with the environmental aims of other structural fund programmes in Northern Ireland and Ireland and to accord with the principles of sustainable development.
- 2.2.3 It is a requirement of the OP that all projects applying for funding will have to demonstrate compliance with environmental legislation. Evidence of the applicant's consideration of potential environmental impacts, and where relevant mitigation, will be requested through the funding application forms.

### **2.3. How the SEA has been taken into account**

#### **Mitigation**

- 2.3.1 There is no statutory requirement for mitigation as the OP is not anticipated to have significant adverse environmental effects.

## **Environmental Enhancement**

2.3.2 It was decided to take a 'compliance plus' approach to the preparation of the SEA, in that a number of other mitigation and enhancement measures were recommended as a means of improving the environmental performance of the OP even if no significant impacts were predicted.

2.3.3 Full details are included in the Environmental Report, in outline these cover:

- Prioritisation of funds to areas experiencing particular environmental or social issues.
- Incorporation of basic environmental standards into the design of projects funded under the OP.

2.3.4 The Developmental Path Analysis (DPA), a tool adopted during the 2000-2006 programme to monitor environmental impact, will be expanded and used to inform all project funding decisions of the programme selection panels.

2.3.5 Sustainable development issues will form part of programme evaluations to ensure any unforeseen effects are identified at an early stage.

## **3. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES RECEIVED & HOW CONSULTATION HAS BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT**

### **3.1. Introduction**

3.1.1 In accordance with the standard approach to SEA, two stages of consultation were carried out; at the scoping stage and the Environmental Report stage.

### **3.2. Scoping Consultation**

3.2.1 At the outset of the SEA process, a SEA scoping report was prepared by ADAS. The statutory environmental bodies in Ireland and Northern Ireland were then invited to provide comments on the scoping report. The organisations consulted included those required to be consulted under Article 7 of the Directive in regard to Transboundary Consultations.

3.2.2 The SEA scoping report provided an overview of the SEA process and gave details of the methodologies to be used, the topics to be considered and the scope of assessment to be included in the Environmental Report.

3.2.3 By inviting statutory consultees to comment on this document it was ensured that any issues or requests for additional information could be raised sufficiently early in the process for them to be accounted for in the remainder of the SEA process. Scoping consultation responses were received from the following organisations:

- Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (Ireland)
- Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government (Ireland)
- Northern Ireland Department of Environment, Environment & Heritage Service

3.2.4 Scoping responses received are included at Appendix 1 of the SEA Environmental Report.

3.2.5 All consultation responses received were reviewed and where appropriate addressed in the preparation of the Environmental Report. Consultation responses received at the scoping stage were therefore crucial to the subsequent scope and content of the Environmental Report submitted to the European Commission.

### **3.3. Consultation on Environmental Report**

3.3.1 As required by the Directive, consultation responses were also invited on the Environmental Report following its completion. This was open to any interested party.

3.3.2 One consultation response was received from the Council for Nature Conservation and Countryside (Northern Ireland).

### **3.4. How Consultation was taken into account post Environmental Report.**

3.4.1 A document summarising the consultation response and SEUPB's comments on how these have been taken into account is included at Appendix A.

3.4.2 Many of the consultation responses required no further comment from SEUPB other than being acknowledged, or are addressed by the comments provided in Appendix A of this report.

3.4.3 The consultation response made comments on monitoring provisions, these are addressed in the monitoring section of this report.

3.4.4 Issues were also raised regarding the compatibility of mitigation and monitoring schedules between the PEACE III OP and other structural fund programmes.

3.4.5 The same approach has been taken in the SEA for each of these programmes and the mitigation and monitoring provisions are therefore common to each programme.

#### **4. REASON FOR CHOOSING PROGRAMME AS ADOPTED OVER OTHER REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES**

##### **4.1. Introduction**

4.1.1 Consideration of alternative means of delivering the programme, and the identification of potentially environmentally preferable options is a key feature of the SEA process. This was considered in full detail in the Environmental Report.

##### **4.2. Main Alternatives Considered**

4.2.1 In this case, the consideration of alternative options is restricted by the need for the programme to fit in with constraints already established at a European level, and for the PEACE III Programme to follow on consistently from the preceding PEACE I and PEACE II Programmes.

4.2.2 In this context, the main strategic alternatives considered by the programme makers were principally a question of the balance of funding between different types of project. The key funding streams of the PEACE III Programme can be broadly distinguished in two categories; community and social engagement related projects and through community related infrastructure projects such as shared public open space.

4.2.3 In identifying potential alternatives the emphasis was placed on how the balance of funding could be changed in favour of community engagement projects and community facilities/infrastructure projects. Details of the consideration of alternatives are available in the final SEA report.

##### **4.3. How Environmental Issues Influenced the Choice of Preferred Alternative**

4.3.1 It was concluded that the OP would have very limited environmental impacts, and this would not change if either of the identified alternatives were adopted. Both alternatives however were considered to score less strongly on socio-economic grounds, and it was therefore recommended that neither should be adopted.

## **5. MONITORING**

### **5.1. Monitoring Requirements**

- 5.1.1 The Directive requires that monitoring of the environmental effects of the programme should be carried out, with the purpose of identifying any unforeseen effects and enabling remedial action to be taken.
- 5.1.2 As agreed during the scoping consultation, it is a key requirement that any monitoring proposed by the SEA should aim to specifically monitor the impact of the programme rather than monitoring trends in the baseline environment that would have occurred regardless of the programme.

### **5.2. Future Monitoring of OP**

- 5.2.1 The OP requires that a Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) be established. This will be chaired by SEUPB and will include representatives of each of the member states covered by the programme.
- 5.2.2 The remit of the PMC will be to review progress towards the programme objectives, and to satisfy itself as to the effectiveness and quality of the implementation of the programme.
- 5.2.3 The PMC will accept responsibility for carrying out monitoring to comply with the requirements of the SEA Directive. As stated above this will be complimentary to other EU programmes (INTERREG IV, Competitiveness and Rural Development programmes).
- 5.2.4 The DPA tool will be utilised to allocate and monitor EU funding to all potential projects. On receipt of an application an environmental score will be awarded which will help inform project selection.
- 5.2.5 Programme evaluations will consider the impact of the programme sustainable development cross cutting theme.

### **5.3. Remedial Action**

- 5.3.1 As required by the Directive, a contingency procedure should be prepared for identifying and implementing remedial action in the event that monitoring detects any unforeseen environmental impacts.
- 5.3.2 This will involve the PMC taking advice on appropriate mitigation of these impacts, and making available funds for the implementation of mitigation as appropriate.

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**APPENDIX A - Comments to SEUPB on Responses to SEA Consultation**

Organisation	Consultee Response	SEUPB Comment
<p><b>Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside</b></p>	<p>1. CNCC notes that the screening exercise concluded that an SEA was not required, and welcomes the decision to undertake an SEA in the interests of transparency.</p>	<p><b>None required.</b></p>
	<p>2. CNCC is disappointed that the report does not recognise the cumulative impact of other EU programmes, including Competitiveness Co-Financed Programme 2007 – 2013 and the Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013. These programmes are designed to compliment one another, yet no attempt in the programme is made to ensure complementarities of mitigating environmental impacts environmental impacts nor of monitoring schedules. As a core requirement of SEA European Directive is the need for the Environmental Report to consider the programmes relationship with other plans and programmes, CNCC believes that the report should be amended to recognise mutual and cumulative impacts of other structural funds programmes.</p>	<p><b>The other structural funds programmes referred to are included in the plans, programmes and policies section of the Environmental Report. There are also a number of other issues in this respect:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>It is considered that a cumulative impact assessment of all structural funds programmes would not produce meaningful results, as there is considerable uncertainty involved in predicting the impacts of one such programme in isolation due to the lack of knowledge at this stage of the programme about the nature of projects that will be funded. It is considered that attempting a cumulative impact assessment of numerous such programmes will introduce more uncertainty, with limited added value to the SEA.</b></li> <li>- <b>Mitigation and monitoring requirements have been designed to be complimentary to the INTERREG IV, Competitiveness and Rural Development programmes. Monitoring will be applied consistently with other programmes.</b></li> </ul>
	<p>3. CNCC welcomes the intention to mitigate any non-significant impacts and to enhance neutral or positive impacts. Consequently CNCC recommends that project selection criteria should allow for the selection of projects that will minimise the impact on the environment and promote sustainable development.</p>	<p>The DPA tool will be utilised to allocate and monitor EU funding to all potential projects. On receipt of an application an environmental score will be awarded which will help inform project selection.</p>
	<p>4. CNCC would recommend that Development Path Analysis (DPA) is used both in the project selection criteria and in the monitoring programmes.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p>
	<p>5. CNCC notes the alternative delivery mechanisms and in general terms agrees with the conclusions regarding the adoption of each one.</p>	<p><b>None required</b></p>

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Organisation	Consultee Response	SEUPB Comment
	<p>6. CNCC raises concerns about the uncertainty within the programme which could also apply to the environmental consequences of accepting any alternative and redirecting funding to projects then becoming eligible under that alternative. To minimise this risk, CNCC would recommend that monitoring and selection criteria should be implemented.</p>	<p><b>Agree that risk of uncertainty over environmental impact is best addressed through monitoring and project selection criteria. The DPA tool will be utilised to allocate and monitor EU funding to all potential projects. On receipt of an application an environmental score will be awarded which will help inform project selection.</b></p>
	<p>7. CNCC also notes and in general terms accepts the conclusions and suggestions regarding Mitigation and Enhancement provided that there are due processes in train to ensure that any adverse environmental trends or impacts identified can be rectified. It will be vital that these arrangements are developed to allow for the identification at an early stage of 'unforeseen' adverse effects so as to make possible appropriate remedial action.</p>	<p><b>Agreed. The PMC will monitor potential adverse impacts using the DPA methodology.</b></p>