

North South Ministerial Council  
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta  
Thuaidh Theas  
An Chomhrúnaíocht

# **NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES MEETING GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, DUBLIN**

## **15 MAY 2024**

### **JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The twenty second North South Ministerial Council Special EU Programmes meeting was held in Government Buildings, Dublin, on 15 May 2024. The meeting was attended by Paschal Donohoe TD, Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform, Caoimhe Archibald MLA, Minister for Finance, and Pam Cameron MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office. Minister Donohoe chaired the meeting.

#### **PROGRAMMES 2014-2020**

2. The NSMC received a report on the implementation of the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes. Ministers noted that EU expenditure targets to date for both programmes have been met and that both programmes are currently forecast to achieve full expenditure in line with total programme allocations.
3. The Council noted that the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) continues to work on the tasks necessary to facilitate closure of the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes.
4. The NSMC noted that 95 projects in the priority areas of Shared Education, Children and Young People, Shared Spaces & Services, and Building Positive Relations were approved for PEACE IV, representing full programme commitment, and that 88 PEACE IV projects have concluded activity, 1 has been withdrawn and 6 are due to complete in 2024.

5. Ministers noted that 32 INTERREG VA projects in the priority areas of Research & Innovation; Environment; Sustainable Transport; and Health and Social Care were approved, representing full programme commitment, and that 28 INTERREG VA projects have concluded activity, 1 has been withdrawn and 3 are due to complete in 2024.
6. Ministers welcomed the key programme achievements to date as well as the positive actions delivered specifically under the Environment and Sustainable Transport themes of INTERREG VA to address the challenges of climate change and loss of biodiversity.

### **PROGRAMME 2021-2027 (PEACE PLUS)**

7. The Council noted the Chief Executive Officer's progress report for the 2021-2027 PEACE PLUS programme, including that calls for funding applications opened in June 2023. Calls within 16 investment areas have opened to date and 19 projects to the value of €278 million have so far been approved for funding, representing 24.3% of total programme value.
8. The NSMC also noted that the Programme has a strong focus on actions to address climate change and loss of biodiversity, including an investment of €302.8 million in Theme 5 (Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future).
9. Ministers received a presentation on the PEACE PLUS Young Social Innovators project.
10. Ministers welcomed the achievements of the SEUPB from 2020 to date, including the valuable contribution of the PEACE IV, INTERREG VA and PEACE PLUS programmes in protecting and preserving peace and providing opportunities for building prosperity in Northern Ireland and the border counties.

### **BUSINESS AND CORPORATE PLANS**

11. Ministers noted that the key objectives for SEUPB in 2023-2025 are:
  - to ensure SEUPB operates with the highest standards of governance, providing accurate and timely information which meets regulatory requirements;
  - to work in partnership with its stakeholders to ensure that projects achieve the outputs and contribute to the results of the Programmes, by supporting projects to maximise their contribution to society;
  - to operate business processes which are effective, efficient and promote the organisation's ethos of innovative practice; and
  - to invest in its resources to ensure the organisation is adaptable, supportive and creates strong teams and networks.
12. The Council approved SEUPB's Corporate Plan 2023-25 and the Body's Business Plans for 2022, 2023 and 2024, which were drafted in line with guidance issued

by the Finance Departments. Ministers also noted the budget provisions for 2022 and for 2023, and recommended the draft budget provision for 2024.

## **ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS**

13. Ministers noted the SEUPB's Annual Reports and Accounts for 2019, 2020, 2021, and its draft Accounts for 2022 and 2023. The Council noted that the SEUPB Annual Reports and Accounts for 2019 and 2020, having been certified by the Comptrollers and Auditors General in both jurisdictions, have been laid before the Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas.
14. The NSMC noted that the 2021 SEUPB Annual Report and Accounts, having been certified by the Comptrollers and Auditors General in both jurisdictions, have been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and will also be laid before the NI Assembly in due course. Ministers also noted that the 2022 and 2023 SEUPB draft Annual Accounts are currently awaiting certification by the Comptrollers and Auditors General in both jurisdictions and that following their certification, the 2022 SEUPB Annual Report and Accounts will be laid before the Assembly and both Houses of the Oireachtas.

## **GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

15. Ministers noted that the governance structures of the Special EU Programmes Body, including the arrangements for oversight by sponsor Departments, oversight of programme implementation, including by the Programme Monitoring Committee, and the audit arrangements continue to operate effectively.

## **ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW OF SEUPB**

16. The Council noted that an independent organisational review of the Special EU Programmes Body, to identify an appropriate structure to meet the requirements of the organisation now and in the future, including the delivery of the €1.14bn PEACE PLUS Programme, has been completed and has made recommendations on staffing levels and grading.
17. Ministers agreed that the approved headcount for SEUPB will be revised to 86 with the potential to increase to 88, and agreed that 5 posts identified in the Review will be regraded.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

18. The Council agreed to hold its next Special EU Programmes meeting in Autumn 2024.

**Joint Secretariat**  
**15 May 2024**

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