

Special EU's Programme Body (SEUPB)  
2 Clarence Street West  
Belfast  
BT2 7GP

6 May 2021

**Re: Consultation – European Territorial Co-Operation 2021 – 2027:  
Preparing for the EU PEACE PLUS Programme for the 2021 – 2027 period**

1. The Equality Commission welcomes the opportunity to respond to SEUPB's consultation on 'Preparing for the EU PEACE PLUS Programme for the 2021-2027 period'. We acknowledge SEUPB's statutory responsibility of implementation of the PEACE PLUS programme.
2. The programme states that funding 'will be disbursed to departments and agencies in line with Programme for Government priorities'. For information, you can read the Commission's priorities for the PfG and Budget to address key inequalities and promote equality of opportunity in our response to the Executive's consultation on the Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework<sup>1</sup>.
3. Please note that the response to this consultation is limited to areas relevant to the Commission's statutory remit.

**Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities**

4. The Commission **recommends** advancing the active and meaningful participation of women in peace building and post conflict reconstruction. The 'Building Positive Relations Programme' proposes projects, which increase minority groups and women's participation in public and political life; to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society through the promotion of reconciliation amongst all communities.
5. Recommended steps<sup>2</sup> include temporary special measures, to increase the representation of women in peace building and post conflict reconstruction in Northern Ireland and to overcome key barriers to women's participation<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> ECNI (2021) [Response to the Executive's consultation on a Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework](#)

<sup>2</sup> ECNI (2015) Gender equality policy priorities and recommendations

<sup>3</sup> ECNI (2019) [CEDAW shadow report](#)

6. We have welcomed initiatives designed to ensure greater involvement of women in peace building, including the 2014 publication<sup>4</sup> of a strategic guide and toolkit<sup>5</sup>. The guide recommended greater support for women, women's groups and networks to manage the mental health challenges resulting from the conflict and civil unrest and the continuing challenges of paramilitarism and gender-based violence, abuse and threat.

## **Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation**

7. Within the 'SME Development and Transition' and 'Area Skills Development', acknowledgement is given to 'encompass specific recovery and rebuilding supports, for those sectors most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic'.
8. The Commission continues to **recommend** targeted and co-ordinated action to reduce the proportion of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NNET) and reduce long-term unemployment amongst older people.
9. Targeted action is required, particularly for those who may face additional barriers due to Section 75 identities. Mentoring, targeted careers advice and wider support could help match career aspirations and skills to job prospects. Alongside life-long learning and education, training and development opportunities and pathways to work<sup>6</sup>.
10. While data from Northern Ireland regarding the equality impacts of COVID-19 remains limited, information from elsewhere suggests that the COVID-19 crisis is deepening known inequalities and likely lead to the emergence of new inequalities for people now and over their lifecycle. A focus on advancing equality of opportunity must include identifying and mitigating any negative equality impacts, now and in the future, arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Theme 3: Empowering and Investing in Our Young People**

11. The Commission welcomes the 'Shared Learning Together' programme, which 'seeks to increase the number of schools participating in shared education'. We continue to **recommend** a move towards a system of education, which routinely teaches all pupils together via a shared curriculum in shared classes, in support of better advancing a shared society<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> Hinds B, Donnelly D (2014) [WPS Toolkit](#) 'Women, Peace and Security: Women's Rights and Gender Equality, developing and applying women, peace and security practice in Northern Ireland'.

<sup>5</sup> The toolkit was developed following a Women and Peacebuilding Project to put forward the imperative for involving women and to set out good practice models from across the public sector for involving women in peace building.

<sup>6</sup> ECNI (2017) [Age Equality: Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#). Key point briefing

<sup>7</sup> ECNI (2018) [Equality in Education: Policy Recommendations](#). Key point briefing

## Theme 4: Healthy and Inclusive Communities

12. To ensure effective care in the community the Commission continues to **recommend** addressing any issues with direct payments; homecare visits; and transport to community care services. Effective care in the community arrangements must ensure a sufficient quality of care to support individuals to live at home, where it is their wish and it is appropriate to do so<sup>8</sup>.

### Data Collection

13. In order to ensure that Section 75 groups benefit from funding of programmes and promotion of equality and good relations is embedded across the themes, we **recommend** equality data collection and disaggregation.
14. We consider that such an approach is essential to shape, refine and evaluate the impact and potential impact of funding, as regards Section 75 grounds, across all programmes. Enabling the gathering of equality data will better monitor for impact and potential impact on equality.
15. We hope that this response is of assistance. Please feel free to contact me if a discussion of any of the points raised would be of use.

Yours sincerely



**Deborah Howe**  
**Senior Policy Officer**

02890 500599  
[dhowe@equalityni.org](mailto:dhowe@equalityni.org)

---

<sup>8</sup> ECNI (2017) [Age Equality: Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#). Key point briefing

