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Evaluation of the PEACE III Programme

1 Introduction

The EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland 2007-2013 (PEACE III) is drawing to a close¹, with prospects of a PEACE IV programme under discussion².

This paper gives a brief overview of evaluations of the PEACE III Programme.

2 The Evaluation Frameworks

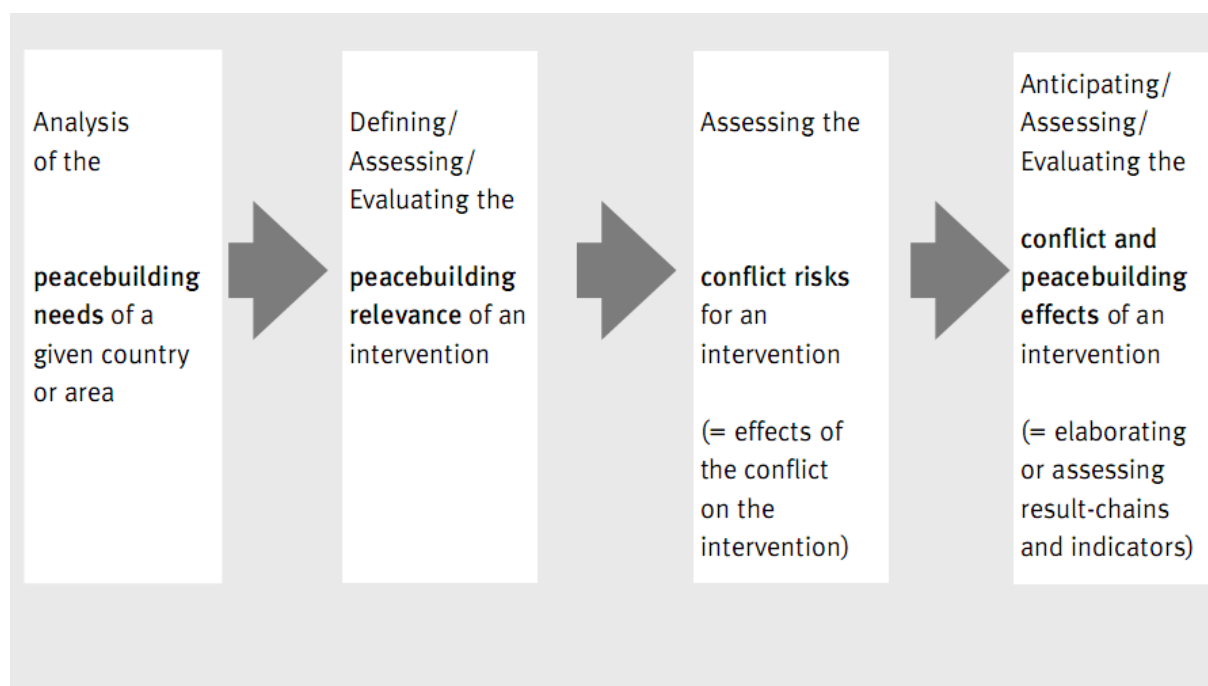
Measuring the impact of peace and reconciliation is not an exact science and a range of models exists. Acknowledging difficulties experienced in evaluation of Peace I and Peace II, PricewaterhouseCoopers was commissioned to review models with a view to

¹ For a background to the PEACE III Programme, see Research and Information Service Briefing Paper 126/11 *The EU PEACE and INTERREG Programmes in Northern Ireland* 14 October 2011:
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2011/OFMdfm/12611.pdf>.

² For a recent update on the PEACE IV proposals, see Research and Information Service Briefing Paper 10/13 *Update on the PEACE IV Programme* 18 January 2013:
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2013/ofmdfm/1013.pdf>.

recommending a framework for Peace III³. Nine models were considered, of which five were considered applicable to the Peace Programme (Logical Framework Analysis, Peace and Conflict Impact assessment, Conflict Sensitivity Analysis, Aid for Peace and Social Dialogue). Of the five, the authors recommended the use of the Aid for Peace approach for the programme overall, however the Social Dialogue approach can be used to evaluate individual projects. A summary table of the assessment of the strengths, weaknesses and applicability of the nine models is at Appendix 1.

Following the PricewaterhouseCoopers recommendation, the Aid for Peace approach was adopted by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) as the evaluation framework for Peace III⁴. This model comprises the four main components indicated below⁵.



Using the model from which this is derived, the International Conflict Research Institute produced a handbook for the monitoring and assessment of projects supported through Peace III. This handbook details how to assess conflict and peace impacts of an initiative in the following areas⁶:

- Conflict management capacities – how the initiative builds the capacity to management conflict

³ PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007), *A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Peace-Building*, Belfast: SEUPB: http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/PEACE_III_Reports_Pubs/A_Monitoring_and_Evaluation_Framework_for_Peace-building.sflb.ashx.

⁴ SEUPB (2008), *EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2007-13 – Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland: Monitoring and Evaluation Plan*, Belfast: SEUPB: http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/PEACE_III_Reports_Pubs/PEACE_III_Monitoring_and_Evaluation_Plan.sflb.ashx.

⁵ Thania Pappenhof (2005), *Third-generation PCIA: Introducing the Aid for Peace Approach*, Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, p.5: http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue4_pappenhof.pdf.

⁶ Kenneth Bush (2009), *“Aid for Peace”: A Handbook for Applying Peace and Conflict Impact assessment (PCIA) to PEACE III Projects*, Londonderry: INCORE, pp.38-42: http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/pdfs/Handbook-Aid_for_Peace-2009_Dec.pdf.

- Militarised violence and human security – how the initiative affects levels of violence or individuals' sense of safety
- Political structures and processes – how the initiative has an impact on formal and informal political arenas
- Economic structures and processes – how the initiative contributes to socio-economic stability and development
- Social empowerment – how the initiative makes a contribution to building a culture of peace and creating the capacity for all members of society to overcome obstacles to participation

In simplified form, project promoters in receipt of Peace funding will be expected to indicate an understanding of needs in an area for intervention, demonstrate how change is to be brought about at an individual level and in relationships between groups, assess the risks to the project arising from the legacy of the conflict and propose indicators which can be used to monitor and evaluate progress⁷.

3 The Impact of Previous Peace Programmes

In the developing literature on how the Peace Programme has had an effect on the process of peace building in Northern Ireland, two main themes have emerged. The first of these is that economic growth is assumed to contribute to the reduction of structural inequalities, which in turn affects policy making and fosters reconciliation between groups. Studies have suggested that economic development is a factor in building peace in Northern Ireland, but not a panacea⁸, and that there are both successes and failures in delivering cross-community contact through economic aid⁹.

The second major theme is the involvement of civil society in the delivery of peace and reconciliation projects in Northern Ireland. Core to this is the inclusion of community representation in local delivery mechanisms, such as in District Partnerships¹⁰, and the use of an innovative structure of Intermediary Funding Bodies (IFBs), where community-based sectoral partners take the lead in the distribution of funding¹¹.

⁷ SEUPB (undated), *Aid for Peace Approach – Information for Projects*, Belfast: SEUPB, pp.3-4:

http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/PEACE_III_Practical_Project_Guidelines/PIII_paper_practical_project_guidelines_090519_Aid_for_Peace_Approach.sflb.ashx.

⁸ Sean Byrne and Cynthia Irwin (2001), 'Economic Aid and Policy Making: Building the Peace Dividend in Northern Ireland' in *Policy and Politics* 29(4), 413-429.

⁹ Sean Byrne, Jobb Arnold, Eyob Fissuh, Katerina Standish, Cynthia Irwin and Pauline Tennet (2009), 'The EU Peace II Fund and the International Fund for Ireland: Nurturing Cross-Community Contact and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland' in *Geopolitics* 14, 630-652.

¹⁰ Arthur Williamson, Duncan Scott and Peter Halfpenny (2000), 'Rebuilding Civil Society in Northern Ireland: The Community and Voluntary Sector's Contribution to the European Peace and Reconciliation District Partnership Programme' in *Policy and Politics* 28(1), 49-66.

¹¹ Linda Racioppi and Katherine O'Sullivan See (2007), 'Grassroots Peace-building and Third-party Intervention: The European Union's Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland' in *Peace and Change* 32(3), 361-390.

Consultation with 'Track III' actors and the use of decentralised delivery mechanisms are said to "enable the facilitation of transformation rather than its imposition"¹².

However, concerns have been raised with regard to the effectiveness of the Peace Programme in fostering peace and reconciliation. For example, one view is that, while the Programme has promoted positive relationships at the community and cross-border levels, gains at third sector level have been threatened by instability at the elite political level¹³. In addition, there has been some questioning of the influence of civil society at all in the processes of government decision making¹⁴.

Formal evaluations of Peace I and Peace II broadly confirm some of the themes raised above. In particular, the creation of a voluntary and community infrastructure and increased cross-community engagement, coupled with raised awareness of the impacts of the conflict, featured strongly. Community uptake was higher in the Catholic population, primarily as a consequence of targeting areas of socio-economic deprivation, a higher proportion of which are Catholic majority areas¹⁵.

Each programme was expected to build on the work of the last. The economic development and seeding of civil society groups under Peace I gave way to more focussed activities oriented towards reconciliation and cross-community contact in Peace II. Peace III was in turn a more strategic programme, with more streamlined delivery mechanisms.

4 Evaluating Peace III

EU programmes had previously required three forms of evaluation:

- Ex-ante – to demonstrate the need for a programme for the allocation of resources
- Mid-term – to review the operation of the programme once it is under way
- Ex-post – to assess the impacts of the programme

The mid-term evaluation was replaced with on-going evaluation for the 2007-2013 programme period, which is designed to be more flexible, be more aligned with specific programme indicators and to allow for reviewing progress towards indicators at more appropriate stages of the programme.

¹² Sandra Buchanan (2008), 'Transforming Conflict in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties: Some Lessons from the Peace Programmes on Valuing Participative Democracy' in *Irish Political Studies* 23(3), 387-409.

¹³ Cathal McCall and Liam O'Dowd (2008), 'Hanging Flower Baskets, Blowing in the Wind? Third-Sector Groups, Cross-Border Partnerships and the EU Peace Programmes in Ireland' in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 14, 29-54.

¹⁴ Nicholas Acheson and Carl Milofsky (2008), 'Peace Building and Participation in Northern Ireland: Local Social Movements and the Policy Process since the "Good Friday" Agreement' in *Ethnopolitics* 7(1), 63-80.

¹⁵ A fuller summary of evaluations of Peace I and Peace II is in Research and Information Service Briefing Paper 126/11 *The EU PEACE and INTERREG Programmes in Northern Ireland* 14 October 2011, pp.5-6.

According to the Operational Programme for Peace III¹⁶:

The overall objective of the Peace III Programme is to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region. Building on the successes and lessons of the PEACE I (1995-1999) and PEACE II (2000-2006) Programmes, the PEACE III Programme will have a continued and renewed emphasis on reconciliation and will specifically focus on reconciling communities and contributing towards a shared society.

To this end, the Programme had two priorities, each having two key themes¹⁷:

- Priority 1: Reconciling Communities:
 - 1.1 Building Positive Relations at the Local Level
 - 1.2 Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past
- Priority 2: Contributing to a Shared Society:
 - 2.1 Creating Shared Public Spaces
 - 2.2 Key Institutional Capacities are Developed for a Shared Society

In the light of these priorities, the available evaluations for Peace III are summarised below.

Implementation Analysis of Peace III¹⁸

The implantation analysis was undertaken early in the programme, so was limited in its scope. Analysis of 210 applications found that 88% were from Northern Ireland and 12% from the Border Region, of which 75 had been approved at the time of reporting, but the approval rate differed between regions, being 44% in Northern Ireland and 59% in the Border Region. Lead applicants were located in all but eight council areas, all of which were in Northern Ireland. The most common councils for lead applicants were Belfast, Derry City, Armagh, Dungannon and Donegal. In terms of approved projects, all council areas in both jurisdictions were represented through direct involvement or beneficiaries, reflecting the strategic nature of the Programme.

All of the target areas for the Programme figured prominently and roughly equally in applications and approved projects, although target areas were more prevalent in Northern Ireland. These areas were:

- Sectarian interfaces

¹⁶ SEUPB (2007), *Peace III – EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2007-2013 – Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland: Operation Programme*, Belfast: SEUPB, p.52:
http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/PEACE_III_Reports_Pubs/PEACE_III_Operational_Programme.sflb.ashx.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp.53-61.

¹⁸ Trutz Haaze (2009), *Implementation Analysis of PEACE III and INTERREG IV Programmes*, Belfast: SEUPB:
http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/PEACE_III_Reports_Pubs/Implementation_Analysis_of_PEACE_III_and_INTERREG_IVA_Programmes.sflb.ashx.

- Disadvantaged areas
- Areas with high levels of sectarian/racial crime
- Communities in decline
- Areas where development has been inhibited by conflict

The target groups of the Programme were:

- Victims of conflict
- Displaced persons
- People excluded/marginalised from networks
- Former members of the security forces
- Ex-prisoners
- Public, private and voluntary organisations

Representation for groups was less even, with excluded people and victims of conflict most represented, but all groups were represented in at least some projects and all were represented in 20 of the 75 approved projects.

Both main communities were represented, but it was too early in the Programme to ascertain any detail of extent and nature of involvement or benefit.

Review of Implementation of Theme 1.1¹⁹

The Programme was assessed according to how the theme of building positive relationships at the local level was being implemented. However, the analysis was affected by the early stage in the Programme that the theme was reviewed and by the sheer diversity of outputs, none of which were considered to be SMART. There were successes in the areas of cross-border co-operation, equality of opportunity and partnership, but also deficiencies in terms of sustainable development and impact on poverty.

Factors that were impacting on the Programme, whether positively or negatively, included:

- the need to move from the development of pilot approaches to consolidation in the second phase of the Programme

¹⁹ ASM Horwath (2010), *Review of the Implementation to Date of Peace III Theme 1.1: Building Positive Relations at the Local Level*, Belfast: SEUPB:
http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/PEACE_III_Reports_Pubs/Review_of_the_Implementation_of_PEACE_III_Theme_1_1_Report_-_Building_Positive_Relations_at_the_Local_Level.sflb.ashx.

- the delay in the implementation of the Review of Public Administration when the Peace Clusters were formed on the assumption that it would be complete in the Programme's lifetime
- the effects of the recession across the whole island and the associated decisions regarding resource allocation
- setbacks in the peace process
- the need for greater integration of minority ethnic communities
- increased confidence of the small Protestant minority in the Republic of Ireland
- concerns about the sustainability of the voluntary and community sector

In terms of Action Plans, concerns were raised that assumptions about need were not sustained through research; when research was conducted, it was not collated and submitted in interim reports; there was no prioritisation of need; and there was little evidence of the use of models for decision-making, whether Aid for Peace or pre-existing models. However, there were examples of good practice in the composition of partnerships, partnership development and training, new delivery mechanisms, enhanced cross-border activities and the use of sub-partnership steering committees.

The key conclusions of the Programme were that significant progress had been made in embedding innovative approaches to peace and reconciliation, the Aid for Peace approach was being utilised, new working relationships between local authorities the voluntary, community and statutory sectors were being developed and cross-border working were being enabled. In terms of the theme itself²⁰:

Although it is difficult to estimate the impact to date, it is likely that the interventions presently being undertaken reflect the strategic ambition of the Theme 1.1 and if effectively delivered will have the anticipated impact as outlined in each Action Plan.

A range of mostly technical recommendations are included in the report.

Review of Implementation of Theme 1.2²¹

This assessment was taking place at a time of anticipated change, such as the expected agreement on the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) strategy, the Strategy for Victims and Survivors, a Commissioner for Victims and Survivors and the proposed Victims and Survivors Service, although some of the changes were not as substantial or imminent as anticipated by the report. Also, as with that of Theme 1.1, the review was taking place relatively early in the life of the programme.

Theme 1.2 was divided into three strands:

²⁰ Ibid., p.63.

²¹ Deloitte (2010), *Theme 1.2: Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past – Review of Implementation*, Belfast: SEUPB: http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/PEACE_III_Reports_Pubs/Theme_1_2_Acknowledging_and_Dealing_with_the_Past_-_Review_of_Implementation.sflb.ashx.

1. Addressing the past in public memory
2. Support for participation
3. Securing the future

At the time of the review, a larger number of projects were being funded than would have been expected from a more strategic programme of fewer, larger projects, and the number of approved projects was unevenly distributed, roughly similar numbers coming under Strands 2 and 3, but none under Strand 1. Targets had been exceeded in terms of participation, but the quality of outcomes from this participation was less clear.

There was potential for the activities funded to address the needs of victims and survivors, but while there were quality standards in place, these were inconsistent, uneven and set by individual providers, rather than conforming to a standard set by the programme. Gaps were identified as follows:

- Activities under Strand 1
- Provision of services in the Southern Border Counties
- Efforts to mainstream service delivery
- PUL communities
- Other legacies of the past (such as peace walls and other barriers)

In general, while it was too early to assess value for money at the stage of the programme that the review was undertaken, the report states:

Our analysis is positive as we are confident of outcomes across each of the 'aid for peace' indicators.

A range of recommendations for the remainder of the programme are included in the report, including suggestions relating to procedure, standards, collaboration and evaluation.

Community Uptake Analysis²²

The analysis is prefaced with a range of caveats, which include the following:

- Data for spatial analysis is taken from the 2001 census, details of which may have been subject to change
- Assumptions are made about community representation in an area and community uptake

²² NISRA (2011), *Community Uptake Analysis of the PEACE III Programme - Northern Ireland*, Belfast: SEUPB.

- The locations of projects and sub-projects may not necessarily reflect the actual geographical distribution of participation, especially considering the strategic nature of the programme
- The programme had not been fully committed at the time of the analysis
- The analysis is valid for Northern Ireland only
- Data quality is variable, with some level of missing data or anomalies

With these limitations in mind, the analysis for community uptake is shown in the table below²³.

Geographical Remit	Catholic community background funding (€)	Protestant community background funding (€)	Total Funding (€)	Proportion of	
				of Catholic community background funding	Protestant community background funding
COA level	9,971,479.30	7,009,631.55	16,981,110.85	59	41
SOA level	16,087,553.28	14,969,610.23	31,057,163.52	52	48
LGD level	15,815,554.67	7,292,158.50	23,107,713.17 ⁹	68	32
Cluster	8,500,180.40	9,096,902.66	17,597,083.06	48	52
Regional	11,341,881.33	13,771,486.90	25,113,368.24	45	55
Total	61,716,648.98	52,139,789.85	113,856,438.83	54	46

Explanations for the higher level of Catholic community uptake (54% compared with 46% Protestant) are suggested as follows:

- As with Peace I and Peace II, there are more areas of deprivation with a Catholic majority community
- Geographic factors associated with Peace III, such as more emphasis on cross-border work and on the North West

However, in terms of applications, the analysis indicates a 48% Catholic to 52% Protestant split, which is suggested to be more reflective of the actual population.

Attitudinal Survey²⁴

The analysis of attitudes encompassed two dimensions of comparison: how participants in the Peace Programme responded in contrast to responses of the general population and how respondents in the 2010/11 survey responded compared with the survey of 2007. The survey set out to analyse progress on the following indicators:

²³ Ibid., p.16.

²⁴ NISRA (2011), *Attitudinal Survey (2010/2011) – PEACE III Programme (2007 – 2013)*, Belfast: SEUPB.

- Changes in attitudes towards cross-community and cross-border activities
- Increase in the proportion of beneficiaries who have contacts/recognised friends in the other community
- Improved levels of trust and tolerance among Programme beneficiaries and decreased levels of prejudice

There are limitations to the analysis, which are summarised as:

- Reconciliation is notoriously difficult to measure, relating to attitudes and feelings
- It was not practical to carry out an ideal longitudinal survey, interview the same cohort over time, so a cross-sectoral attitudinal survey is used as a proxy for this
- There are differences in approach between the 2007 and 2010/11 surveys

In addition to this, the programme was still under way at the time of the survey and analysis.

Findings from the analysis are summarised as follows:

- Contact – High levels of contact with members of the other community were reported for both participants and the general population, although most respondents tended to live amongst people from their own background. Participants had higher levels of contact. Participants were also more willing and had more opportunity for cross-border contact than the general population.
- Trust – The majority of respondents were positive with regard to trust, but in Northern Ireland, participants were more likely than the general population to be positive, in contrast to the Border Region, where there were no real differences. In Northern Ireland, responses compared with 2007 were more positive for participants while the general population remained the same. In the Border Region, participants in 2007 and 2010/11 responded similarly, whereas the general population had become more positive.
- Prejudice – Participants generally gave more positive responses to questions relating to prejudice in 2010/11 compared with 2007, but respondents from the general population were generally less positive. Participants were more likely than the general population to feel guilty about the negative things their community had done to the other community.
- Relations – Participants were more likely than the general population to give positive answers to questions about how relations between the two communities had changed over time.

- Ethnic diversity – Responses from all groups suggested general positivity towards minority ethnic groups, but participants were more positive than the general population.
- Culture and traditions – Participants were more likely than the general population to state they had more of an understanding of the other culture and traditions.

In general, more positive responses from participants in each of these areas suggest that Peace III has had a positive impact on those who had participated compared with those who had not.

Appendix 1: Key Strengths and Weaknesses and Transferability of Methodological Approaches to Evaluation²⁵

Methodological approach	Key strength	Key weakness	Level of application	Inclusion of a framework of indicators	Level of resources required
Local Capacities for Peace Project (L-CPP) - Do No Harm	Established an important principle in monitoring Peace-Building.	Can be viewed as overly simplistic.	Applicable to both macro- and micro- levels.	No	Low
Logical Framework (Log Frame) Analysis	Clarifies project objectives and highlights the need to link planned activities with desired outcomes.	Places much emphasis on quantifiable indicators and can focus Implementing Agents to think mechanistically rather than being innovative.	Largely focused on micro/ project level but can be transferred to programmes.	Yes	Medium
Action Evaluation	Sets more modest or realistic targets for micro- level projects.	Provides limited analysis of the linkage between the project and strategic level.	Largely focused on micro/ project level.	No	Medium/ High
Theories of Change	Makes explicit the underlying reasons for an intervention.	Can be too theoretical for some practitioners and is most useful as a planning tool to test assumptions during the programming stage.	Largely focused on macro- level.	No	Low
Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA)	Outlines a broad process for assessment and incorporates a strong analysis of context.	A broad and general framework which may restrict operationalisation. Little direction is also provided to examining the interaction between sectors and interventions.	Largely focused on macro- level.	Yes	High
Conflict Sensitivity Analysis	Provides an analysis of the conflict environment and assessment of the dynamics within a particular situation.	Provides a general framework which may restrict operationalisation.	Largely focused on macro- level.	Yes	High
Third generation PCIA; the Aid for Peace approach	Employs a range of other methodologies within one approach.	Getting agreement on the causes of the conflict and goals and visions of an area can prove difficult as it can raise political tensions.	Applicable to both macro- and micro- levels.	Yes	High
Comprehensive Visioning and Strategic Analysis; Conflict Transformation	Proposes a good balance between theory and practice.	More readily applicable for qualitative analysis.	Applicable to both macro- and micro- levels.	No	High
Social Dialogue approach	Provides a comprehensive assessment of interactions between participants involved in the conflict.	Analysis can be subjective which could lead to bias.	Applicable to both macro- and micro- levels.	Yes	High

²⁵ PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007), *A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Peace-Building*, Belfast: SEUPB, p.41.