

European Priorities 2012-13



Winning in Europe



**Northern Ireland
Executive**

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EUROPEAN PRIORITIES 2012-13

OVERVIEW

We want to build a shared and better future for all. This means a safe, peaceful, fair and prosperous society where everyone can enjoy a better quality of life now and in the years to come. We need a strong economy to deliver this goal. Growing a dynamic and innovative economy is our top priority.

This is a challenging time worldwide. The economic recession and resulting financial constraints are difficult for us all, but have a particular impact on some of our most vulnerable people and communities. We need to make the most of our assets: peace; political stability; a young, skilled and increasingly diverse population; increased tourism potential; a growing creative industry and a strong entrepreneurial tradition. Given the opportunity, we can all make a tremendous contribution to creating a better future.

A strong, modern economy is built upon a healthy, well-educated population and a commitment to use prosperity as a means of tackling disadvantage. This, in turn, will lead to a tolerant, stable and inclusive society that has the skills necessary to attract investment and promote growth.

We cannot simply grow the economy while disregarding our endeavours to transform society and enhance our environment. We are committed to building an economy that provides opportunities for the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is imperative that economic growth and wealth creation is achieved in a way that is both fair and sustainable if we are to meet the needs of today as well as those of the future.

Key aims

We will use EU policies, networks and programmes to realise our goals. We will work to strengthen our European engagement, to realise fully the opportunities which the European Union presents, to influence and shape future policy and build our positive profile. We will also look for opportunities to share our own experience with others and learn from working with other regions and Member States.

Key European policies and programmes

The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, has personally demonstrated his commitment to assist us by renewing a unique Commission Task Force to help us make the most of EU policies, funding programmes and networks.

The European Commission's *Legislative and Work Programme 2012* and the *Europe 2020 Strategy* provide a strategic framework to help shape and focus our work. The European Union's current priority to foster a sustainable and job-rich economic recovery fits well with our own aims and objectives.

The *Europe 2020 Strategy* for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth recognises the interdependence of Member States and sets out how we can work together to deliver agreed goals and to return the economy to growth and job creation, while laying foundations for a sustainable future.

Smart growth means strengthening knowledge and innovation as drivers of our economy and future growth. Sustainable growth means building a resource efficient, sustainable and competitive economy, exploiting new processes, technologies and EU networks. Inclusive growth means empowering people through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, training and social protection systems, so as to help people anticipate and manage change and build a cohesive society.

We must continue to be involved in the debate around the *Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-20*, which determines the EU Budget. We are committed to increasing our uptake of European funding by twenty percent over the period to 2015.

The new generation of cohesion policies target tomorrow's jobs and growth. *Horizon 2020*, the next framework programme for research and innovation, will carry the EU's knowledge base into business growth, while action on competitiveness will be targeted to support SMEs. *Erasmus for All*, the new programme on education, training and youth will boost work to ensure that Europe's young people have the skills and aptitudes they need to compete in the global economy. The *Connecting Europe Facility* leverages funding to projects with the greatest pay-off for the European economy and underpins infrastructure as a tool for growth. We must prioritise growth-friendly expenditure, such as education, research, innovation and energy, which sustain future economic growth.

Our European policy priorities

There is a need to focus on fewer priorities to concentrate limited resources and maximise impact. The priority policy areas we will focus on reflect the Commission's Work Programme for 2012 and more generally the European Union's Europe 2020 Strategy. Our four European thematic priorities are:

- Competitiveness and Employment;
- Innovation and Technology;
- Climate Change and Energy; and
- Social Cohesion.

COMPETITIVENESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Our most immediate challenge lies in economic recovery and, in particular, the need for more and better jobs. We will focus primarily on job creation, improving employability and skills levels.

In this time of rising unemployment, our top commitment is to promote employment and labour market participation. Addressing wider barriers to employment, especially those facing the economically inactive, is essential. In particular, we must focus on maximising employment opportunities for young persons and other identifiable groups who are at most risk of entering prolonged periods of inactivity. We need to support people, in particular our young persons as well as those who are long-term, difficult to reach and benefit-dependant unemployed, into employment by providing skills, work experience and training.

A sustained focus on skills and employability is critical. We have a relatively high number of people of working age with poor qualifications. Raising the skills level for the least skilled has been shown to help them move into employment and to progress within the work place. We must improve employability and the level, relevance and use of skills. We need to ensure that people can progress up the skills ladder, thereby delivering higher productivity and increased social inclusion. Investment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and management and leadership skills will also form a critical foundation for economic growth.

We must be able to compete in the global economy and be internationally regarded as a good place to live and do business. We want to become an economy where a greater number of firms compete in global markets and where there is growing employment and prosperity. We have a great many local firms who are already competing successfully overseas. We will continue to do all that we can to assist these companies and also work with new exporting businesses to increase and diversify our export base. We must focus on attracting foreign direct investment and growing and diversifying our exports. We will build on the work of MATRIX, the Northern Ireland Science Industry Panel, to identify unique opportunities for growth within the global economy.

We need to encourage business growth, increase the potential of our local companies and develop a modern and sustainable economic infrastructure that supports economic growth. Challenges remain in the continued uncertainty of global and national economies and their impact on our own regional economy, including the capacity for companies to access suitable finance, the impact of UK-wide budget cuts and the long standing structural issues which continue to hamper our economic growth.

We will look to Europe for assistance in meeting these challenges. Job creation remains one of the greatest challenges for Europe today. The Europe 2020 flagship initiatives *Youth on the Move*, the *Agenda for New Skills*

and Jobs and the *Platform against Poverty* have highlighted the need to direct European renewal to those most in need. The *European Social Fund* will support our efforts to increase workforce skills and reduce economic inactivity. *Erasmus* will support strategic partnerships between higher education and business to ensure that young students can acquire the mix of skills that the labour market demands. Engagement in these initiatives and other EU actions can help to tackle unemployment, as well as social exclusion and poverty.

We will also seek to develop new relationships with partners in other Member States, and actively participate in EU-wide networks and platforms to share knowledge, experience, innovation and learning so that there can be shared improvement and growth.

We recognise the importance of Regional Aid as a tool to grow and improve our economic competitiveness. We will continue to work to ensure that post-2013, when the new Regional Aid guidelines will be put in place, that we are able to provide the necessary support for economic development.

The targeting of our activities and resources in priority areas will ensure that we stimulate action and interventions to increase productivity and competitiveness, and enable local companies to grasp opportunities. These will, in turn, generate employment and wealth and also ensure that everyone, including the most vulnerable within our society, will have the opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, increased prosperity.

Key aims

We will work to:

- Promote growth, reduce economic inactivity and improve productivity within the local economy by enhancing the skills profile of the workforce, supporting our SME's and attracting foreign investment;
- Improve the inclusiveness of the labour market by addressing barriers to participation (particularly for young people);
- Improve access to the single market by investing in our economic infrastructure; and
- Maximise our contribution to EU policy and programme development and the benefits from programme participation.

Key EU policies

- EU Flagship Initiatives:
 - *Innovation Union*
 - *Agenda for New Skills and Jobs*
 - *Youth on the Move*
 - *European Platform against Poverty*
 - *Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era*
- European Commission White Paper 2011: Roadmap to a single European Transport Area – towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system

- Single Market Act
- State Aid

Participation in EU Networks/Consortia

- Empowerment and Inclusion Learning Network
- European Regional Skills Network
- Partnership between European Services Stakeholders (PARES)
- Public Employment Services Network (PES)
- Peer Learning Clusters

Targeted EU competitive funding streams

- *PROGRESS*
- *INTERREG*
- *Trans-European Networks* (Transport, Communication and Energy)
- *Framework 7 Programme*
- *Lifelong Learning Programme*
- *Youth in Action*

Other key EU Funding Programmes

- *European Social Fund*
- *European Regional Development Fund*

Key Objectives for 2012-13

Facilitate access to finance for SMEs.

Promote participation by our students in the *Erasmus* programme and other lifelong learning programmes.

Ensure the European Commission's proposed revisions to the state aid rules consider our needs.

Enhance our ability to assist indigenous companies and attract greater levels of Foreign Direct Investment.

Promote the region as a tourist destination to other Europeans.

Increase the skills profile of the local population.

Support people, particularly young people, under the *European Social Fund* and other relevant programmes, into employment.

As lead Partner of the EU Empowerment and Inclusion Learning Network, produce a tool to help measure empowerment, for potential use by other Member States.

Explore *INTERREG* programme for interregional cooperation funding opportunities.

Explore *Trans-European Transport Network* funding opportunities.

Prepare for and influence EU decision making processes in respect of the 2014-20 *Structural Funds Programmes*, the *Trans-European Networks* and the *Connecting Europe Facility*.

Encourage greater participation of our universities and further education colleges in European funding programmes.

Longer Term Objectives

Use European assistance to help support our commitment to promote 25,000 new jobs by 2015.

Use the *European Social Fund Programme* as a building block in our work to upskill the working age population by delivering over 200,000 qualifications by 2015.

Use the *European Social Fund Programme* as a building block to help us meet our commitments to move 114,000 working age benefit clients into employment by March 2015.

Improve the strategic transport network by the advancement and completion of a range of major works projects.

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Encouraging greater investment in creativity, innovation and research and development is key to developing our economy.

In 2010, regional business expenditure on R&D (expressed as a percentage of GDP) was the highest on record and was close to the UK average. However, we recognise that we have historically trailed behind on this measure and, in turn, the United Kingdom itself significantly lags behind the most innovative economies, such as Finland and Sweden, on overall R&D spend. Furthermore, in terms of our wider innovation performance, regional firms have not engaged well in innovation activity in comparison to other UK regions. It is particularly difficult, yet vitally important, to promote and support investment in innovation and technology in today's challenging economic climate.

We should continue to direct significant expenditure towards creativity, innovation and R&D, with much of this aimed at improving research capability, increasing our capacity and promoting the commercialisation of research. The majority of research activities in advanced innovation economies take place on a collaborative basis between businesses, higher education and public research institutes.

Given the structure of our economy and the risk involved in undertaking high-level R&D, support for industry, particularly our SMEs, is vital to ensure that they continue to invest in innovation and technology to create economic growth.

In preparation for *Horizon 2020*, the Executive will play an active role in the UK's negotiations on *Horizon 2020*. Invest NI is represented on the UK's *Horizon 2020* Steering Group, as well as the *Horizon 2020* working group and various sub-groups including: Rules of participation, Synergies with Structural funds, Societal challenges and Review of support system for EU funding programmes.

Statistics indicate that we spend around the UK average supporting Science and Technology. However, much of this spend is in one sector – agriculture. While we will continue to invest in science and technology to support the development of the agri-food sector, there is a need to expand further into other areas including biotechnology, health research, engineering and other science-based activities.

In terms of supporting export growth, the focus needs to be as much on raising company productivity through investing in innovation, research and development and creativity, as well as encouraging local firms to enter new markets - this requires a stronger, more modern infrastructure. Increasing investment in areas such as telecommunications, improving capacity for digital and knowledge based companies, is critical to building the economy.

We will increasingly target our support to encourage the development of high value-added industry sectors and cross-sectoral collaborations that will introduce new technologies, processes and skills into our workplace, thereby helping to expand the export base, grow and strengthen the local supply chain and secure the long-term future of our economy. A strong science base is promoted by STEM expertise and by initiatives that fuel the emergence of a creative, innovative and entrepreneurial workforce.

The creative industries sector is an important driver of economic and social innovation. The global market outlook for agricultural commodities and foodstuffs also indicates a favourable market balance and a much higher priority for global food security over the coming decade and beyond. The agri-food industry is well-positioned to capitalise on these emerging opportunities, and the reform of the EU *Common Agricultural Policy* will create additional opportunities to enhance the competitiveness agenda for the sector, including through knowledge transfer and innovation. In addition to ongoing work to ensure that our interests are robustly represented in negotiations with the European Union, we will seek to ensure that we make full use of the opportunities presented by CAP and CFP reforms.

There is also scope for our health services to drive innovation by engaging more with high-technology companies. Given that the health sector typically has a highly skilled workforce, including many from STEM disciplines, enhanced opportunities for closer working will help the private sector to prosper through leveraging of public sector skills and expertise. We wish to continue to play an active role in the connected health sector in Europe. With strong links between academic, business and clinical partners throughout the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States, we are an ideal hub to explore international best practice in health care delivery.

Key aims

We will work to:

- Promote greater private sector R&D investment;
- Promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and educational and creative industries that encourage young people to study STEM subjects;
- Encourage R&D, creativity and innovation;
- Promote translational research, knowledge transfer/exchange and STEM between firms and between the research base and firms;
- Promote cross-sectoral collaborations between the creative and cultural industries and with other business and research sectors to stimulate innovation, job creation and expert-focused growth;
- Nurture the development and exploitation of new technologies, ideas and ways of working in our companies, universities, the research base and elsewhere in the public sector;
- Make fuller use of information and communication technologies;
- Promote deployment and use of modern accessible online services; and

- Leverage our significant public investment in the health sector, including in skilled employees and clinical trials infrastructure, to realise economic outcomes.

Key EU Policies

- *Horizon 2020 Framework (2014-20)*
- *Europe 2020 Flagship: Innovation Union*, which will improve access to finance for research and innovation and boost levels of investment throughout the Union
- Competition Policy
- *Europe 2020 Flagship: A Digital Agenda for Europe*, which will speed up the roll-out of high-speed internet and promote the value of a digital single market for households and firms
- *Common Agricultural Policy and the Rural Development Programme 2014-20*

Participation in EU Networks/Consortia

- Agriculture, food security and climate change (FACCE) Joint Programming Initiative (JPI)
- European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on agricultural productivity and sustainability (ERANETs)
- Enterprise Europe Network
- European Regions of Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN)

Targeted EU competitive funding streams

- *Framework 7 Programme* (final call July 2012)
- *Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)*, which includes the *Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme* and the *Enterprise Europe Network*
- *Connecting Europe Facility*
- *INTERREG IVC Programme*
- *Horizon 2020*

Other Key EU Funding programmes

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development 2014-20

Key Objectives for 2012-13

Promote increased participation in EU research, technology and innovation programmes by companies, universities, research base and elsewhere in the public sector.

Engage in the policy debate around the *Connecting Europe Facility* to ensure that funding is available for the region.

Aid liquidity of SMEs.

Develop a more effective process to support the widespread adoption of research findings in the publicly-funded health sector.

Promote and enhance effective technology and knowledge transfer arrangements in the agri-food sector.

Explore the scope for involvement in the European Innovation Partnership, relevant Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) and European Research Area Networks (ERANETs).

Increase our role in the European connected health sector.

Harness the potential of the creative and cultural industries to support export-focused economic growth, job-creation and positive spill-over impacts into areas such as health, education and social cohesion.

Enhance STEM initiatives to fuel the emergence of creative people and innovative businesses.

Develop a draft smart specialisation strategy.

Longer Term Objectives

Use European resources to help us meet our commitments to support £300 million investment by businesses in research and development by 2015, with at least 20% coming from SMEs.

Increase NI drawdown from EU R&D and innovation funding programmes.

Increase uptake in economically relevant Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) places.

Support 200 projects through the *Creative Industries Innovation Fund* by 2015.

Increase business expenditure on research and development.

Facilitate peer learning in relation to participation in EU research and innovation programmes.

Influence and seek to optimise opportunities for promoting knowledge transfer and innovation within the *Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20* and the associated NI Rural Development Programme.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

It is imperative that economic growth and wealth creation is achieved in a way that is both fair and sustainable if we are to meet the needs of today as well as those of the future. We need to strike an appropriate balance between the responsible use of natural resources in support of a better quality of life and the protection of natural resources in order to maintain or enhance a high quality environment. This includes ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable energy provision and reducing our carbon footprint.

Climate change is a fundamental concern and is a high priority area across Europe. Mitigating actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the introduction of adaptation measures to deal with predicted climate change, as a result of historic emissions, are essential if we are to progress towards a low carbon sustainable society. Key to this will be ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable energy provision and reducing carbon footprint.

Individuals, organisations and communities must all be encouraged to contribute actions and activities that will deliver real change in both the short and long-term. Innovation will be key to helping minimise the harmful impacts of the changing climate while maximising the potential opportunities which change may bring. Businesses and organisations which decrease their emissions tend to be more efficient and hence more competitive while those who adapt can help ensure their position in the market.

Natural resources underpin our economy and our quality of life. Increasing resource efficiency is crucial to securing growth and jobs. It will bring major economic opportunities, improve productivity, drive down costs and boost competitiveness. In particular, an emphasis on resource efficiency, in areas such as energy efficiency and reducing waste, can not only improve competitiveness and create new jobs but also help the environment.

Balancing the needs of the economy with the environment is a key challenge. In acknowledging the benefits of an improved transport infrastructure, we recognise that road transport is now the single largest source of emissions, accounting for 32% of our CO₂ emissions. Meeting the future needs of the economy and facilitating higher levels of economic growth, particularly in export oriented sectors, will necessitate increased capacity on our transportation network and improved connectivity. While this requires continued investment to improve our infrastructure, we can also dramatically increase capacity by using infrastructure in a smarter way, improving our competitiveness and reducing the environmental impact of transport.

We need to ensure an integrated and accessible transport infrastructure that promotes competitive economic growth and social inclusion across all areas, while reducing emissions and adverse impacts. We will seek to minimise the environmental impact of the transport sector by developing a range of sustainable transport initiatives. The promotion of more efficient and

sustainable transport solutions and choices, in-line with *Europe 2020*, will require investment in new technologies and smart transport infrastructure.

It is not just transport which can benefit from using infrastructure in a smarter way, but also other infrastructure such as that associated with water and sewerage provision which have a high carbon footprint. The future regulation, planning and delivery of water and sewerage services have a major role to play in contributing to sustainable economic growth through: improved resource efficiency; protecting and enhancing the fresh water and marine environment; and reducing greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy. Sustainability will continue to be a common theme of future water and sewerage investment plans. The introduction of carbon costs in the planning of all significant water and sewerage projects will require more sustainable and innovative solutions to be employed.

We also have low levels of electricity generated from renewable sources, with gas, coal and oil accounting for 90% of power generation. This leaves the region vulnerable to fluctuations in supply and pricing, and it also presents important environmental considerations. We are committed to increase the amount of electricity consumption and heat from renewable sources to 40% and 10% respectively by 2020. In addition to addressing energy diversity and security of supply, higher levels of renewable energy, including bio-energy, will play a very positive role in climate change mitigation.

Our economy faces a major energy challenge over the next decade. We need to build competitive markets, ensure security of supply, enhance sustainability and develop our energy infrastructure. Meeting carbon budgets and emission targets can create job opportunities, for instance with the growth of the renewable energy market. We need to take advantage of the opportunities which are available.

The *Europe 2020* flagship initiative for a *Resource Efficient Europe* supports the shift towards a low-carbon economy to achieve sustainable growth, providing a long-term framework supporting policy agendas for climate change, energy, transport, industry, raw materials, agriculture, fisheries, biodiversity and regional development. In this context we should explore options for economic growth that are consistent with our commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Improving energy efficiency by investing in energy-efficient buildings and transport can make the biggest contribution to reducing emissions. Clean electricity – produced almost entirely without greenhouse emissions – will also have a major role to play, partly replacing fossil fuels for heating and transport.

We currently have very high levels of fuel poverty and need to ensure that increasing renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions is not cost prohibitive. Further extension of the natural gas network will reduce carbon

emissions and help alleviate fuel poverty. We also need to reduce our overall energy demand. Improving resource efficiency will help limit emissions while boosting economic growth. While pursuing a resource efficient and low carbon economy we must, however, remain competitive in international markets. We will look to prevent waste and to promote recycling, as well as increasing resource recovery and energy from waste.

The development of rural communities will be crucial in sustaining a thriving rural environment in which we can work and live, and protect our own natural heritage. In addition to being hugely important sectors in their own right, the agriculture, forestry, fisheries and food industries are, and will continue to be, key players in protecting our natural environment.

We will work to strengthen our agri-economy and its international competitiveness. Agriculture and food processing are much more important here than in other UK regions. *Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)* support is critically important to our rural areas. Single Farm Payments account for approximately 54% of our farmers' income while the *Rural Development Programme* provides some £500 million to support rural areas. The addition of climate change to CAP priorities for 2014-20 will encourage the agri-food sector to further reduce carbon intensity for the future, under pinned by research and development to enable the sector to contribute to greenhouse gas abatement targets.

Key Aims

We will work to:

- Tackle climate change by improving our evidence base and finding innovative ways to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop and implement adaptation proposals;
- Improve resource efficiency with an emphasis on energy efficiency, waste reduction and recycling;
- Develop energy infrastructure to support both EU and Strategic Energy Framework objectives;
- Increase the amount of energy and heat obtained from alternative and renewable sources;
- Develop smart transport infrastructure to reduce congestion and emissions and promote smarter, more sustainable transport choices;
- Strengthen the agri-food sector by supporting its efforts to further reduce the carbon intensity of its produce;
- Encourage R&D, creativity and innovation across sectors; and
- Build capacity to enable us to make use of opportunities to help influence key EU policies and funding mechanisms related to climate change and energy issues.

Key EU policies

- Europe 2020 Flagship: *Resource Efficient Europe*, which will support the move to a low-carbon economy, increased use of renewables, modernising our transport sector and increased energy efficiency
- Low-carbon Economy 2050 Road Map

- The European Commission White Paper 2011: Roadmap to a single European Transport Area
- The European Energy Efficiency Plan (until 2020)
- *Common Agricultural Policy and the Rural Development Programme*
- *Common Fisheries Policy*
- Innovating for Sustainable Growth: a Bio-economy for Europe, Strategy and Action plan

Participation in EU Networks/Consortia

- Environment Conference of the Regions of Europe (ENCORE).
- Agriculture, Food Security and Climate change (FACCE JPI).
- European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability.
- European Regions of Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN).

Targeted EU competitive funding streams

- *Framework Programme 7 for Research and Innovation*
 - *CONCERTO*
- *European Energy Programme for Recovery*
 - *EU Energy Efficiency Fund*
- *Horizon 2020*
- *Trans-European Networks Transport (TEN-T)*
- *Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme*
 - *Eco-Innovation*
- *Smart Cities and Communities Initiative*
- *LIFE+*
- *CIVITAS*
- *European Energy Efficiency Fund*
- *INTERREG IVB*
 - *Atlantic Area Programme*
 - *Northern Periphery Programme*
 - *North West Europe Programme*
- *NER 300*
- *Entrepreneurship and Innovative Programme*
- *Intelligent Energy Europe*
 - *ELENA*

Other key EU Funding programmes

- *European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development*
- *European Agricultural Guarantee Fund*
- *European Maritime and Fisheries Fund*
- *European Regional Development Fund*

Key Objectives for 2012-13

Engage with European Union on priorities for *Horizon 2020* and *LIFE+* Funding Programmes.

Identify opportunities to work with the European Union on proposals to develop and deliver climate change mitigation policies or projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Identify opportunities to work with the European Union on proposals to develop and deliver climate change adaptation policies or projects which will assist either the communication of the risks (and measures to deal with them) or which demonstrate how adaptation can be achieved.

Contribute to the Member State Working group on the TEN-T and CEF.

Identify opportunities to work with the European Union on proposals to develop and deliver policies or projects relating to congestion reduction and overall emissions reduction from transport.

Identify and develop potential project proposals to engage with domestic retrofit programmes where there is added value aligned to EU policy or funding opportunities.

Through NI Water, identify and develop potential project proposals aligned to EU policy or funding opportunities to support resource efficiency, energy efficiency, increased use of renewable energy or sustainability.

Identify key infrastructure projects which align with EU energy policy and funding opportunities and support the delivery of the Strategic Energy Framework.

Identify and develop potential project proposals which will draw down funding for waste or energy efficiency.

Work with the European Union to identify policies and project proposals which would help to develop and support research and demonstration projects to promote greater use of renewable energy technologies.

Encourage greater participation in research funded through EU sources (such as the *Framework Programme*) by universities, other research-based institutions and particularly SMEs.

Provide input to the *Common Agricultural Policy*, the *Rural Development Programme* and the *Common Fisheries Policy*.

Engage with the European Union to identify and develop research projects to investigate how to improve resource efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions at product level in the agriculture primary production sector.

Identify and develop potential project proposals which would be seen as innovative and could be developed to access EU finance for research and innovation.

Build capacity by engaging with key sectors, disseminating information, working with Commission officials and staff seconded to Brussels.

Ensure regular Ministerial involvement in the work of the Climate Change and Energy Thematic Group and engagement with the European Commission.

Longer Term Objectives

Be in a position to be able to contribute to and influence discussions on key EU policies and the priorities of associated funding programmes.

Optimise EU funding to support delivery of a range of projects which are aligned to key EU and NI policy objectives in areas such as climate change, energy, transport, agriculture, renewables and innovation.

Through innovative research and demonstration projects, showcase the region as an exemplar and share our experience with other EU regions.

Maintain regular Ministerial contact with the Commission and ensure at least annual exchange visits.

SOCIAL COHESION

Our aim is to build a shared and better future for all. We will work to strengthen society so that it is more tolerant, inclusive and stable and permits positive progress in quality of life for everyone. We are determined that the wealth and prosperity that we are seeking will be used to help reduce poverty, create safer communities, promote equality, divert young people away from offending behaviour and tackle existing patterns of disadvantage and division. One of our key challenges is to deal with the legacy of division in our community – and we are determined to break down these barriers.

We are committed to delivering a vibrant economy which can transform our society while dealing with the deprivation and poverty which has affected some of our communities for generations. Actions to address poverty and tackle disadvantage are prerequisites for social progress and are intrinsic to the creation of a peaceful, fair and prosperous society.

Equality is an important issue for the Executive and society alike. Inequalities do exist and we will work hard to eliminate these. Our policies and programmes will be designed in ways that ensure we can address inequality and unfairness, reduce offending behaviour and create conditions that support inclusion and equality of opportunity.

We are working to tackle disadvantage and build communities that are confident, safer, vibrant and sustainable. We need to reduce deprivation and the incidence of social exclusion and poverty, especially child poverty, and increase opportunities for all children and young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, to reach their full potential.

Poverty has for too long blighted the lives of whole neighbourhoods and is one of the primary causes of disadvantage. Helping the people who live in the most deprived neighbourhoods to get jobs will be one of the best ways of tackling this malaise.

EU funding has played an important role in conflict management and conflict resolution. *PEACE* and *INTERREG* funds are seen as key EU programmes for promoting social cohesion, reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society by promoting reconciliation. The implementation of a unique *PEACE Programme* was the direct result of the European Union's desire to make a contribution to the opportunities presented by developments in the peace process.

We will continue to seek European assistance to solidify this peace and to address current barriers to reconciliation, including youth unemployment. We will also compete for assistance from elective funding streams, such as *INTERREG*.

Key aims

We will work to:

- Reduce poverty;
- Address inequality and disadvantage;
- Promote equality and human rights;
- Address the needs of groups at risk and protect the interests of children, older people and other socially excluded groups;
- Assist young people marginalised through poverty and unemployment;
- Promote cohesion, sharing and integration;
- Reduce anti-social behaviour;
- Reduce offending through early intervention - addressing the root cause of offending behaviour; and
- Provide early assessment for reintegration interventions with identified offenders.

Key EU policies

- Europe 2020 Flagship: *Youth on the Move*, which will enable our young people to gain the knowledge, skills and experience needed to make their first job a reality and encourage transnational mobility.
- Europe 2020 Flagship: *European platform against poverty*, which aims to ensure social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society.
- ‘European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity Amongst the Generations’, which will seek to: promote active ageing in employment, both paid employment and community service through volunteering and caring; promote healthy ageing and independent living; and to enhance solidarity between generations in order to create a society for all ages.

Participation in EU Networks/Consortia

We will seek to identify EU networks and consortia and, through these, gain partners in bidding for competitive European funding.

Targeted EU competitive funding streams

- North-West Europe – Atlantic Area (*INTERREG IVB & IVC*)
- *PROGRESS*
- *Youth in Action Programme*
- *Lifelong Learning Programme*
- *Erasmus for All*

Other key EU programmes

- *PEACE*
- *European Social Fund*

Key Objectives for 2012-13

Engage in the *European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity Amongst the Generations 2012*.

Secure European recognition for the Maze/Long Kesh project.

Share our experience of conflict resolution to assist others.

Seek opportunities to contribute to the development of policies and practices that contribute to positive change.

Secure *INTERREG* funding.

Work with existing programmes covering the re-integration of offenders and ex-offenders.

Maximise resources to create accessible and universally available services for young people to reduce offending and improve outcomes.

Work with the Competitiveness and Employment thematic group on a project which uses European assistance, financial or otherwise, to address youth unemployment.

Promote the use of the *Youth in Action Programme* to organisations within the region who are working with disadvantaged, difficult to reach young people.

Use European funding to reduce poverty, support social inclusion and combat discrimination.

Identify *PROGRESS* funding and suitable delivery partners in the region and the other thematic groups to drawdown additional funds.

Use best practice in tackling disadvantage from other EU regions to our benefit, and work collaboratively across all government departments to improve the quality of life and life chances for individuals living in areas of multiple disadvantage.

Engage in the European *Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion*.

Promote the use of European funding programmes to organisations within the region who are working in the area of social cohesion.

Engage with the PSNI to deliver social cohesion projects funded through the European Union and share the experience of peace building and conflict resolution with other regions.

Engage with the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum (NIERF), led by Belfast City Council, to identify further funding partnerships and opportunities.

Build a Social Cohesion thematic communication network with the aim of developing funding partnerships to deliver services.

Longer Term Objectives

Develop sustainably active communities and individuals.

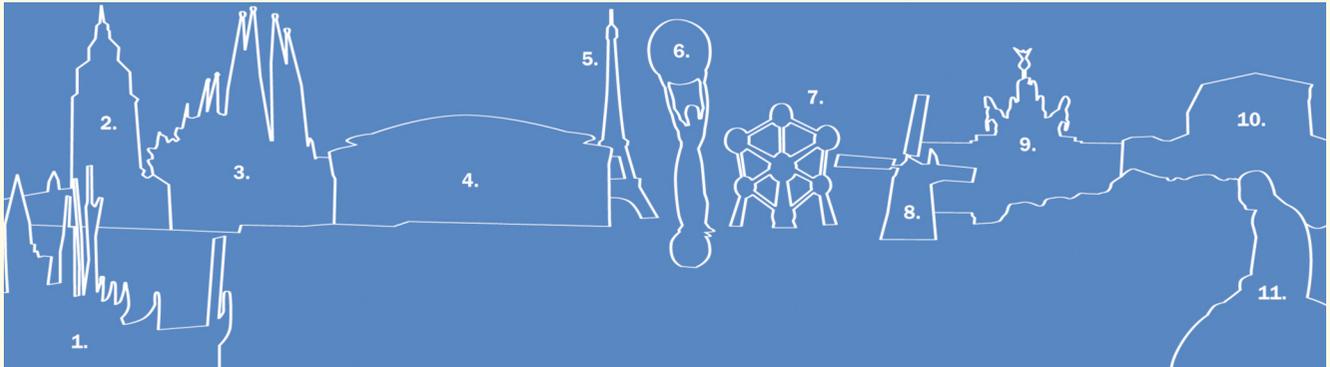
Influence and prepare for the next round of EU Funding Programmes (2014-20).

Reduce overall levels of poverty, especially child poverty.

Reduce levels of offending behaviour, with young people directed to more positive and socially constructive pathways.

Share our experience of peace building and conflict resolution with other regions worldwide as part of the wider European Peace Initiative.

Develop a pipeline of projects and applications which we can support.



Cover Key:

1. Gondolas, Venice; 2. Town Hall, Krakow; 3. Sagrada Famillia, Barcelona; 4. Waterfront Hall, Belfast;
5. Eiffel Tower, Paris; 6. Circle of Thanksgiving, Belfast; 7. Atomium, Heysel, Brussels; 8. Windmill, Netherlands;
9. Brandenburg Gate, Berlin; 10. The Parthenon, Athens; 11. The Little Mermaid, Copenhagen.

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