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Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

Report on Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

by Brian Harvey

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Foreword

The ceasefires declared by the Provisional IRA and the Combined Loyalist Military Command in the early autumn of 1994 brought elation and hope to Northern Ireland. These were emotions shared by all who had been working for a peaceful resolution of the conflict over the previous 25 years.

There was much discussion at the time of the ceasefires of the peace dividend that might follow. The European Commission was quick off the mark, and by December 1994 had announced an allocation of 300 MECU for the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

The changed environment in Northern Ireland caused the Trustees of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust to reflect on their role. Throughout most of the Troubles, JRCT had run a funding programme in Northern Ireland supporting work for peace, justice and reconciliation. The changed political situation, and changes in the funding environment caused Trustees to question whether they should adjust their priorities. We commissioned an independent consultant to review the context and the Trust's funding programme.

The consultant interviewed a cross-section of our grantees and many other leading figures in the government and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland, and reported back to the Trust in May 1995. This was just before the plans for the Peace and Reconciliation Programme were finalised. Whilst everyone welcomed the investment of new resources in the community, two questions came through very strongly. They were:-

- significant funds might be available in the short term, but what will happen when the special programme ends?
- large sums of money disbursed over a short period of time and requiring a visible 'return' could possibly damage rather than assist important work on the ground. Would it not be better to invest at least some of the funds in an endowment which could sustain work over a much longer period?

As a long term funder in Northern Ireland the Trust felt it had a responsibility to raise these matters with the European Commission officials responsible for the Programme. This resulted in a dialogue. The Commission officials encouraged the Trust to maintain its interest in the Programme and to make a contribution to the Programme's mid-term review. Accordingly, after further consultations with our partners in the voluntary sector, we commissioned Brian Harvey to prepare and write this report.

What is clear from the report is that many aspects of the programme have been a great success. These include the consultative way in which the Programme was set up, the creative use of innovative delivery mechanisms, and the tremendous amount of new activity which the funds have generated. There is a great deal of good practice here which should be disseminated widely. The report also raises some important questions

about the design of programmes for peace and reconciliation; how a focus for such programmes can be maintained; and about issues of openness and transparency, particularly within the government sector. These may be controversial issues and we do not expect that everyone will agree with Brian Harvey's analysis. He has arrived at his conclusions after a long and intensive period of research. We believe that the issues need to be discussed and debated. By publishing this report we hope we might stimulate such a debate.

Perhaps of greatest importance will be the discussion about the future direction of the Programme and the question of sustainability. This is the issue which the trust and others raised in 1995. The need for work to promote peace, justice and reconciliation will not end in 1999. The report puts forward the suggestion that an endowed trust might provide one way forward. Others may have different ideas. We hope the report will encourage new thinking about what should happen when the Programme ends at the turn of the millennium. This thinking needs to begin now.

I would like to thank Brian Harvey for producing such a comprehensive and thoughtful report within a very tight timeframe. We would very much welcome comments and feedback on the report. Please send these to the address below. Any enquiries about the research should be addressed to Brian Harvey whose address is also given below.

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Chair - Ireland Committee
May 1997

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Introduction

This research concerns the *European special support programme for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, 1994-9*, primarily financed by the European Union. The primary purpose of the report is to examine the way in which the programme has gone about promoting peace and reconciliation in Ireland. It is also designed to trace the origins and rationale for the programme; study its evolution and key characteristics; assess its impact on the voluntary and community sector; set the programme in a wider international context; and conclude by examining what may happen after the end of the programme.

This report was compiled in the course of January to May 1997. Information was sought from a wide range of individuals, organizations, groups, statutory and government agencies, both in Ireland and further afield. Notices asking for views and information were placed in *Scope* and *Fortnight* reviews. Besides desk research, a total of 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with those most intimately involved in the programme. A survey of a cross-section of 100 voluntary and community organizations funded by the programme was conducted. With a response rate of 69%, this provided much useful information.

Glossary

The *Special European support programme for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, 1994-9* will be referred to as either The Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, or, more simply, as 'the programme'. The two jurisdictions in which the programme operates will be referred to as Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland respectively. The term 'Ireland' is used here as a geographical term to refer to the island of Ireland. The currency used in this report is UK£, unless otherwise stated. Conversions to European Currency Units are based on an approximate conversion, 0.80. The use of technical terms and acronyms has been kept to a minimum, but a small number of forms particular to this programme may be encountered more frequently. The principal ones are the following.

Additionality:	The way in which a programme provides truly additional resources above and beyond what a government or other bodies are already spending in a given area.
Baseline report:	A report at the start of a programme which outlines the context in which the programme is expected to operate.
Complementarity:	The ways in which a programme complements, but does not contradict, undermine, duplicate or take away from the work of other programmes.
Exit strategies:	Ways in which voluntary organizations plan to reduce their dependence on a specific source of funding, leave the programme in question and find financial support elsewhere.
Indicators:	Means of measuring whether a programme is achieving its objective.
Prior appraisal:	An assessment of the value of a programme before it gets under way.
Sectarian interface:	Areas of sharp separation between the two main communities in Northern Ireland. In Belfast, these take the form of the peace lines.
Sustainability:	The ability of projects to maintain themselves, make themselves independent of one given funding source and diversify their funding base.

This programme involves the government departments of both jurisdictions. Some have similar names and the two respective sets of departments are listed here.

Government departments in Northern Ireland and the Republic

Northern Ireland	Republic of Ireland
Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland (DANI)	Department of Agriculture Department of the Marine
Department of Economic Development (DED)	Department of Enterprise & Employment
Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI)	Department of Education
Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)	Department of Finance
Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)	Department of Health Department of Social Welfare
Department of the Environment (DoE)	Department of the Environment (DoE)
Northern Ireland Office (NIO)	

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1 Origins of the programme

Chapter 1 traces the historical origin of the programme (1.1). It examines the various proposals made, refined and adopted during its early evolution, noting the ways in which the programme was modified at key stages. The chapter then examines the consultative process and some of the key attempts to influence the programme (1.2). It then presents the main objectives of the programme, the financial allocations and priorities (1.3). Finally (1.4), the chapter draws conclusions on the origins and rationale of the programme, looking at the winners and losers in the negotiation process, the consequences of the consultative approach adopted, the speed of the programme design and some of the unresolved issues in its formulation.

1.1 History and evolution

The Programme for Peace and Reconciliation was an initiative of the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, in the weeks which followed the announcement of the IRA ceasefire (August 1994) and the subsequent loyalist ceasefire (October 1994). Shortly after the IRA ceasefire, on 14 September 1994, the European Parliament urged the Commission to respond to the new situation by increasing (EU) aid to Northern Ireland.

It is not known what specific perspectives, if any, were put forward by the Irish and British governments to inform Commission thinking on the programme. The Irish government urged the Commission to develop a long-term, planned pro-active policy rather than *ad hoc*, reactive, symbolic gestures, proposing a political core group to do so and a wider inter-service group under the Secretary General to work on the delivery of new initiatives.¹

The three Northern Ireland MEPs - John Hume, Ian Paisley and Jim Nicholson - met with President Delors on 13 October 1994 to see how the idea could best be progressed. The President stressed to them that the programme should be agreed in time to be presented to the heads of European government summit to be held in Essen, Germany that December. There was considerable pressure by the President to conclude the basic design of the programme by then. Such was the pressure of time that an internal Commission proposal to first examine the outcomes of programmes for peace and reconciliation in other parts of the world was not acted on.

The president established a task force led by Commission Deputy Secretary General Carlo Trojan. The task force comprised 23 members drawn from Commission *cabinets*, directorates general and offices in Dublin, London and Belfast.² Its brief was to develop 'highly visible projects which will promote peace and reconciliation while at the same time creating economic growth, jobs and reducing unemployment, both in Northern Ireland and in the border counties of the Republic. This programme should aim to reform and reinforce existing action as well as support completely new and fresh initiatives'.³ Each directorate general (DG)⁴ of the task force set to work to prepare a list of desirable projects to be considered for the programme. Such an initial list was promptly drawn up (annexe 3), though in the event, several DGs failed to present proposals.

The task force was guided and advised by three special advisors or 'three wise men' - Hugh Logue, Howard McNally and Robert Ramsay (sometimes, confusingly, they have also been referred to as 'the task force'). Their role was to act as a two-way channel between the task force and the MEPs and to help funnel ideas from local representatives to the task forces. They were to consult people suggested by the MEPs and furnish the task force with short reports.

The three advisors set up a series of consultations for the three MEPs and the task force in late October 1994. Meetings were held in Derry (organized by John Hume), Ballymoney (Ian Paisley), Armagh (Jim Nicholson) and Belfast (all three). About 900 people were consulted, covering a wide range of sectoral groups and interests, no less than 600 people attending the Belfast meeting.⁵

The three special advisors then made recommendations for the characteristics of the programme.⁶ These were that it should have the support of the people of the region; be immediate; have a high European profile; be weighted in favour of those communities suffering the most acute deprivation; be additional, accountable and value for money. All programmes should have reconciliation as their objective. The Commission should have an overall management role. There should be a steering group including the MEPs to manage the package and ensure the bottom-up approach was fostered.

The overall aim, said the three special advisors, must be to change social attitudes and lead to the two communities respecting one another. Social inclusion should be given particular emphasis, as should the victims of violence, redundant security staff, young people where the peace was most fragile, women and those formerly caught up in violence. Ten priority areas were proposed (see annexe 4). They stressed that the programme should combine fresh innovative ideas with established priorities. The programme should avoid funding 'more of the same'. The package must be additional, EU assistance being clearly identifiable, for reasons of transparency rather than public relations.

Five flagship projects were proposed (annexe 5). The three advisors also proposed that cultural heritage be an important part of the package. 'Many felt that potentially one of the most fruitful aspects of social inclusion could be developed was cultural inclusiveness. There was a strong sense that in the past the existence of different cultures had been a primary sense of community division, with cultural appreciation being largely introspective, exclusive and mutually hostile. The opportunity should now be taken to foster a new, open and welcoming approach to increase awareness of cultural heritage of both communities, strengthen self-esteem of each community, stimulate mutual respect and participation including the use of the Irish language'. The programme might fund community arts, creative arts, cross-community performing arts, arts coops, museums, drama and arts festivals, cross-community Irish language activity, access to the media including studios. At this stage of the Commission deliberations, the rate of EU aid was proposed at 70% of the project costs, but 90% for the social inclusion sub-programme.

The task force apparently dropped consideration of the flagship proposals around 8 November 1994. Also dropped at this stage were proposals for higher education in the package. The Springvale Peaceline University proposal collapsed, apparently following objections from other educational interests and the inability of the two governments to reach quick agreement on the idea and how to fund it.⁷ At this stage, the task force was giving consideration to the level of European Union aid (which was settled at 75%) and the shape of the monitoring committee. A number of formulæ for this committee, based on the approach of the INTERREG cross-border programme, came under consideration. The task force synthesized the ten priorities down to five priority areas. These five priority areas were urban and rural regeneration, employment, cross-border cooperation, social inclusion and innovation and industrial development. The task force strongly recommended the involvement of local and grass roots groups and a consultative platform for the programme.

The three special advisors met with some of Northern Ireland's 17 Westminster MPs on 22 November 1994. The group comprised James Kilfedder (Popular Unionist Party), John Taylor and Ken Maginnis (Ulster Unionist Party), Peter Robinson (Democratic Unionist Party), Eddie McGrady (Social Democratic and Labour Party) and Clive Soley (British Labour Party). The MPs made a number of points:

- They were disappointed that they had not been consulted;
- The package was not addressing the problems of Northern Ireland in a truly objective way. Rather, it was an attempt by the European Union to engage in its own social engineering agenda;
- The social inclusion and cross-community parts of the package, whilst important, should not overshadow the more fundamental aims of job creation and industrial regeneration;
- The programme should neither be passed to the Northern Ireland Office, nor 'creamed off' by paramilitaries, nor wasted by weakly administered voluntary organizations';
- The road-building part of the package should be based on real needs, traffic and trade patterns rather than ideological considerations.

The latter reference was probably an attempt to ensure that road building promoted traffic within Northern Ireland itself, rather than promoted links with the Republic. Reporting very early in December 1994, the task force proposed a special programme, to be implemented in the form of a Community Initiative Programme under the structural funds, to run for five years concurrently with the second round of the structural funds (1994-9), but to be reviewed after three.

The Commission then prepared proposals for a programme for the European Council end-of-year heads of government meeting in Essen, Germany (COM 94/607, 7 December 1994). The essence of the Commission communication was as follows:

The Commission bases its approach on the need to promote reconciliation, to encourage economic growth and to expand job opportunities. To this end, it proposes a special aid programme for Northern Ireland, in which it identifies priorities for action with a view to promoting urban and rural regeneration, combatting unemployment, encouraging cross-border development and facilitating social inclusion by encouraging cross-community cooperation. The Commission considers that these priorities can best be met by a special distinct multi-annual programme to support new measures in Northern Ireland and in the border counties of the Republic. It has budgeted 300 MECU in complementary aid for the period 1995-7 (*Bulletin* 12-1994, 1.2.150).

The Commission communication is a short document. In essence, it reproduces most of the elements of the task force report. Somewhat unusually for a proposed programme, it does not have an explanatory memorandum. Moreover, the communication goes straight from 'I: Introduction' to 'II: Priorities for Action' without either specified justification or rationale.

The European Council, meeting in Essen on 9-10 December, announced that:

[Council] has agreed on the principle of a multi annual programme and on the allocation of additional funding of 300 MECU which will provide support in the areas of urban and rural regeneration, employment, cross-border development, social inclusion and investment promotion.

The programme will apply to Northern Ireland and border counties of Ireland, be additional, pursue the central objective of reconciliation and benefit both communities in an equitable and balanced way and especially those areas and sections of the population suffering most acute deprivation (*Bulletin* 12-1994, I.10).

Carlo Trojan himself addressed the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin on 16 December 1994. He emphasized that the programme was distinct and not just a topping up of the structural funds; and that the programme was one devised not by eurocrats but by ground-up consultation.

Draft guidelines for the programme were issued for the initiative in February 1995, inviting the two member States to draw up operational programmes.⁸ The three special advisors were not happy with the draft guidelines, commenting that they were top-down, did not give community groups the chance to influence the next stage of the programme and included a range of training measures already funded under the structural funds. The guidelines had dropped several important areas of work for the programme, such as support for the victims of violence and trauma centres; work with those caught up in the violence; culture, the arts, leisure and sport; joint north/south company ventures, fisheries, tourism and horticulture.⁹ Concern was also expressed about the dropping of measures to clear the physical barriers arising from the troubles, environmental improvement schemes such as children's play areas, cross-border research and science.¹⁰ DG XII specifically proposed the universities be made part of the programme, with outreach work done in disadvantaged areas.¹¹

The programme was sent to the European Parliament for approval on 6 April 1995.¹² The proposal received a warm response in the European Parliament where it was approved by 324 votes to nil. Members welcomed the commitment to addressing social disadvantage, commended the consultation process, pressed for the programme to be made accountable and urged that projects get under way as soon as possible. Most of the contributors to the debate came from Ireland and Britain. The Parliament took the decision to appoint two observers to monitor the programme, though it is unclear if they were finally appointed. It does not appear if any reports have been issued and enquiries about the role of the monitors have been inconclusive. The resolution welcomed the programme, supported its emphases, applauded the consultation which had taken place, insisted it must be special, distinct and additional and called on the Commission to provide technical assistance for community groups.¹³

More critical comments were made on the programme by the European Union's Economic and Social Committee which sent a study group to Northern Ireland (20-22 April 1995).¹⁴ The committee's main comments on the initiative were as follows:

- The initiative should not consist exclusively of high-profile, short-term actions, but should also comprise measures aimed at long-term structural improvements. Activities should not be spread too thinly;
- Priorities for the programme should be productive investment, industrial development and social integration. In the social field, measures should concentrate on unemployed people, youth and giving the younger generation a better start;
- The economic and social interest groups should be fully consulted and involved in the establishment and implementation of the programme;
- Urban and rural renewal are quite distinct problems and should be dealt with under different programmes;
- The principle of additionality must be strictly applied. The initiative should be vetted for compatibility and complementarity with existing EU aid programmes;
- The 15% earmarked for cross-border activities should be regarded as a minimum. There should be flexibility in extending operations beyond the six southern border counties.

Further changes were proposed to the programme at a late stage. In May 1995, the Commission considered proposals from the Regional Affairs Commissioner to add support for fisheries and aquaculture; reconciliation in the workplace; the twinning of towns and communities, with the possibility of a third project partner outside Ireland.¹⁵ DG V continued to press for the notion of a broad-based consultative platform around the programme.¹⁶

The final shape of the programme was settled by the Commission in June-July 1995 and the definitive guidelines were issued in July. Attempts were made to influence the package at a very late stage. An interservice group of the Commission¹⁷ met on 30 June 1995 in the hope of wrapping up the programme, but was frustrated by the failure of the Irish government to submit its operational programme and proposed indicators, even though the deadline had passed; and by the opposition of the Northern Ireland authorities to the idea of intermediary funding bodies. In early July, John Hume MEP asked why higher education no longer featured in the package. He specifically asked that integrated education and education through Irish be included. He argued that technical assistance be made available to help disadvantaged groups, rather than simply a management technique used by the funding bodies.¹⁸

The programme was finally approved by the Commission on 28 July 1995. Further details of the programme and the funding bodies involved were approved on 8 December 1995. The first projects were approved for funding in early 1996. A timetable is provided (over). In May 1997, Commission President Jacques Santer proposed a two-year renewal of the programme.

1.2 Key influences on the programme

Many groups and organizations attempted to influence the shape, nature and priorities of the programme. Some of the key commentaries are noted here. The task force received a total of 194 submissions in the consultations which took place *before* the publication of the guidelines. The district councils made a strong pitch to the task force,

Programme timetable

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997
January		Guidelines issued	End IRA ceasefire	Start of evaluation
February			Baseline report	
March		Consultation process	First projects funded	
April		European Parliament approval		First draft evaluation submitted
May		Final approval		Mid-term review
June			Consultative forum	Commission proposal on continuation of programme
July				
August	IRA cease-fire Delors announces initiative	IFBs appointed		
September	Task force appointed			
October				
November	Task force reports Commission outline			
December	Proposals adopted, Essen			

arguing that they had the organization, management capacity and human resources to manage part of the package.

A number of consultations took place regarding the shape, nature and priorities of the programme *after* the publication of the guidelines. These took place in Newcastle, Ballyconnell, Letterkenny and Belfast in the course of March - April 1995. 150 written submissions were also received. These consultations had the effect of refining the Commission's approach to the programme. In particular, as a result of the consultation process, the Commission decided to prioritize grass-roots community involvement and innovative means to deliver the programme.

The Ballyconnell conference was important in elaborating details of the programme. The conference workshop reports focused on the importance of government matching funding, the need for a funding perspective of more than three years at a time and that activities funded should be localized and on a small scale. The Ballyconnell conference also made it clear what it did *not* want the programme to fund:

The social inclusion workshop did not want money spent on physical infrastructure, such as roads; large flagship, cash-hungry projects; or large-scale agriculture or afforestation projects; The employment workshop stressed that no new agency should be established to administer the initiative. It should be done through existing agencies, not through central government (Department of Finance: *Report on proceedings*, unpublished document, August 1995, p 27).

The Commission subsequently noted that there was a division of opinion at the Newcastle conference on the relative priority which should be given to productive investment and industrial development on the one hand and social inclusion on the other. It concluded:

The overwhelming consensus of those consulted endorsed the view that the prospect of lasting peace requires particular efforts to overcome the effects of the disruption of normal economic and social relations (*Outline*, 24).

The Community Workers Cooperative and **Combat Poverty Agency** published the outcome of the Letterkenny conference in *Planning for peace* (1995). This document welcomed the programme, commended the commitment to social inclusion and the involvement of the voluntary and community sector, and commented positively on the bottom-up approach, targeting and the proposal to use decentralized agencies to administer the programme. The principal points put forward were:

- The programme must not be adapted or modified to do things which existing cross-border programmes already did, especially in the areas of industrial development and physical infrastructure (e.g. roads and bridges);
- Cross-border operation should be a minimum of 15% of all sub-programmes. In the Republic, they should apply to all counties, not just the border counties;
- The focus of the programme should be on smaller community groups and organizations;
- Groups applying must state the connection between their application and the process of peace and reconciliation; and
- The programme should be expected to raise policy issues. 'It should be a programme about policies and agendas not just about funding worthy projects'.

Three important sets of proposals were flagged at this stage which later had an important bearing on the evolution of the programme. The **Combat Poverty Agency** issued a report on the development of the peace process in late 1994 (*Tackling poverty - a priority for peace*. Submission to the Forum for Peace & Reconciliation, 1994). Although directed to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, then sitting in Dublin, rather than the European Union, the submission raised many issues of importance for the development of this European programme. The agency proposed what it described as 'a radical programme of measures that would contribute to consolidating and developing the peace process'. The main points from the agency's submission were as follows:

- Areas with a high level of violence have a strong geographical correlation with the areas of greatest disadvantage and with working class areas. It is reasonable to conclude that poverty and social exclusion are important contributory factors which exacerbate and perpetuate violence;
- A purely political and constitutional solution will not be sufficient. As long as widespread poverty and social exclusion persist, they will undermine the building of a stable, pluralistic society;
- Priority must be given to measures to tackle poverty and unemployment, to promote social integration and to promote reconciliation within Northern Ireland and between both parts of the island;
- The broadening of democratic structures to bring those living at the margins of society into the democratic process. This could involve the creation of a body broadly similar to the National Economic and Social Forum in the Republic;
- Community activists and those who have stood aside from politics must be involved in the dialogue about the way forward. Support, training and resources should be made available to develop the skills of political dialogue;
- Special initiatives were needed for interface areas and to counter housing segregation. 'There is a need to start work urgently on addressing the economic, social and intercommunity problems of interface areas and to work toward dismantling the peace walls. There is a need to challenge the role of planning in addressing issues of housing segregation. It will take a long time to reverse the trend toward segregation in class and religion. It is important that this work starts as soon as possible' (9);
- Community involvement in justice, policing and key public services, involving local communities as well as elected representatives, the police service being representative, accountable and pluralist;
- New institutions are needed: a north-south institute for social integration; a north-south centre for community development; a border development agency; and
- In the Republic, the educational curricula should promote understanding, tolerance and cultural diversity.

The agency criticized what traditional models of development: 'The agency is concerned that an over-concentration on infrastructural projects and on conventional investment priorities, for example by the International Fund for Ireland, has resulted in the most needy communities being largely by-passed and excluded. It is increasingly clear across Europe that this elite model of development, which depends on the benefits of economic growth trickling down to the most needy individuals and communities, does not work. In fact, it often reinforces social exclusion. The middle class and those who are already affluent must not be allowed to carve up the peace dividend for their own benefit' (5).

The concept of a border development agency was put forward by Combat Poverty Agency in 1994 in *Tackling poverty - a priority for peace*. The agency presented the concept of a Border Development Agency 'to which the national governments would devolve considerable powers and resources for developing an integrated socio-economic development strategy for these most peripheral and marginal areas. Such a body should have strong local representation, especially from local voluntary and community groups'.

The **Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)** put forward a range of proposals for the development of the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. *Developing the peace process - building the long-term future in Northern Ireland* (NICVA, 1994) stressed that what Northern Ireland needed was a targeted plan of social inclusion - one which created employment and was flanked by initiatives in the areas of childcare support, a new start for children and young people, community development, 'training for democracy', the development of women's groups, help for especially marginalized communities (e.g. people with disabilities), recovery and respite for victims and carers and the reintegration of politically motivated offenders. NICVA emphasized the importance of allocating resources to combat social exclusion and the need for new, inclusive structures to deliver the programme (several possibilities were outlined).¹⁹ NICVA stressed that the programme should support those outside the traditional community relations field and that exit strategies must be prepared for voluntary organizations in advance. NICVA put forward the idea of 'an open-ended endowment fund which would enable the work of the initiative to continue after the initial 3-5 year period into the indefinite future. The targets of peace and reconciliation are not quickly achieved. This endowment fund strategy will enable the work of the European Union to make a continuing, lasting impact' (Voluntary sector response, 14).

The **Community Relations Council** submission²⁰ stressed that the programme must be used to further reconciliation in a strategic way. It emphasized that economic development and new employment would not of themselves create peace. A segregated, rather than cross-community approach to economic development would create the suspicion that 'the other side' benefited more from the programme and would, as a result, create more division. Most projects should have joint programmes and sustained contact between communities, with single identity work being the exception rather than the rule. Interface areas should be targeted for community and economic development. The unique nature of the fund should be identified in every measure and the programme should not be used as substitute funding. All the funding bodies should agree indices which would measure the progress of the programme in achieving reconciliation.

1.3 The programme presented

The key document which presents the programme is called the *Special support programme for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, 1995-9: European structural funds*, undated, no place or identification of author), henceforth referred to as *Outline*, sometimes popularly referred to as 'the blue book' on account of its colour.

The *Outline* of the programme includes a chapter entitled 'Rationale [for the programme]'. In reality, most of the chapter is a description of the consultation process and the actual discussion of the rationale is limited to less than two pages, stating that it lies in the 'overwhelming need to maintain the momentum for peace, the prevailing economic and social conditions in the eligible areas...' (13).

Further light is shed on the Commission's thinking in chapter 3, *Aims of the programme*. The chapter emphasises how the ceasefire provides an opportunity to improve economic performance and social situation in the eligible areas. It proposes the growth of the private sector (in particular, small and medium-sized enterprises), restoration of cross-border roads, increased employment, improvement in the physical environment, rapprochement between communities on both sides of the border, the bringing of marginalized social groups into the economic and social mainstream, increased inward investment and growth in tourism. The chapter states the strategic aim of the initiative as 'to reinforce progress toward a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation by increasing economic development and employment, promoting urban and rural regeneration, developing cross-border cooperation and extending social inclusion' (31).

The Commission then articulates two strategic objectives for the programme. These are:

1. To promote the social inclusion of those who are at the margins of social and economic life;
2. To exploit the opportunities and address the needs arising from the peace process in order to boost economic growth and advance social and economic regeneration.

The Commission states that 'raising Northern Ireland's economic growth rate provides the most effective means of delivering the employment needed to alleviate the region's chief economic problem - a persistently high rate of unemployment. In essence, more growth means more jobs. In addition, having a job reduces dependency, promotes social inclusion and fosters more conciliatory attitudes' (33). The aims and objectives of the programme will, the Commission says, be focused on 'those areas and sections of the population most adversely affected by the violence and suffering the most acute deprivation... Priority will be given to wide-ranging, locally-based community development initiatives, including those which involve a cross-community and or cross-border dimension'.

Table 1 outlines the priority areas and the amount of allocations in absolute amounts.

Table 1: allocation to sub-programmes

Sub-programme	Amount MECU, NI	%	Amount MECU, NI	%
1. Employment	37.39	15	4.38	}20
2. Urban regeneration	18.95	8	}12	
2. Rural regeneration	18.95	8		
3. Cross border development	22.5	9	22.5	37
4. Social inclusion	57.33	24	13.13	22
5. Productive investment and industrial development	36.89	16	7.06	12
6. Partnerships	44.21	18	-	-
7. Technical assistance	3.79	2	0.93	2
Total	240	(100)	60	(100)

Examining the programme by heading, social inclusion is the largest overall priority (30%), followed by urban and rural regeneration (19.4%) and productive investment and industrial development (17.4%). Details of the measures under each sub-programme are provided in annexes 1 and 2.

The programme is implemented by central government (41.8%), intermediary funding bodies (43.5%) and local partnerships (14.7%). Table 2 lists which type of implementation body has responsibility for each of the priority areas of the programme.

Table 2: allocation of sub-programmes by types of implementing bodies

Priority	Central government	Intermediary funding bodies	Partnerships	Total
1. Employment	8.8%	5.1%	2.7%	16.6%
2. Urban and rural regeneration	13.5%	3.1%	2.8%	19.4%
3. Cross border development	7.6%	7.4%	-	15%
4. Social inclusion	7%	16.5%	6.5%	30%
5. Productive investment and industrial development	3.4%	11.2%	2.7%	17.4%
6. Technical assistance	1.6%	-	-	1.6%
Total	41.8%	43.5%	14.7%	(100%)

1.4 Conclusions

This programme was pressed through at great speed. It was decided on, designed and approved in the space of less than three months, which must be a European record. Most European programmes go through a process of design and approval which ordinarily takes about 18 months. The period between the presentation of the task force report, the accompanying Commission document and approval by the Council of Ministers was less than nine days.

The role of elected representatives was striking in the formation of the programme. The three Northern Ireland MEPs played a key role in defining the programme and in leading the consultation process, to the extent that the Northern Ireland M.P.s felt side-lined. The fact that the three MEPs, two representing strands of unionist opinion, one the nationalist strand, were able to sink their differences and mobilize people around the programme gave it considerable momentum and credibility at European level.

Despite the short period of programme design, it is evident that a considerable amount of consultation took place. The use of a task force to spearhead the process of consultation was a new approach for the European Union. Consultation took place in two phases, one which determined the agenda, the other the priorities of the agenda. The level of consultation which in the first phase comprised four regional hearings and in the second four major conferences, and which together received 344 submissions, is also unusual for a European programme. European Union officials emphasized throughout that they did not want to be prescriptive and that they wanted the people of the area concerned to make a key contribution to the design of the programme.

The consultative process had winners and losers. In budgetary terms, social inclusion was the clear winner of this process, though productive investment (subsequently 17.4% of the programme) was a successful later entrant. The allocation of resources to social inclusion is higher than virtually any other comparable grouping of structural fund programmes. This almost certainly reflects the influence of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, Combat Poverty Agency and the level of mobilization of community and voluntary organizations concerned with social inclusion. In organizational and conceptual terms, the idea of the partnerships was a winner: although a role for the district councils had been foreseen, it was significantly developed during the programme design. There had been much scepticism of the ability of district partnerships to play a constructive role in the programme, but the Commission was persuaded that this was a risk worth taking. A small programme for fisheries was a successful late participant.

Several ideas, concepts and priorities which were prominent in the early design of the programme either disappeared or featured in a minor way in the final shape of the programme. Examples are the flagship projects; the universities; culture, heritage, arts, Irish; trauma centres; education; and peace line projects.

A set of ideas around peace-building articulated by the Combat Poverty Agency in its submission to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation did not become part of the

package. The agency proposed a series of measures to develop the skills of the community sector in political participation, concepts of community policing, educational reform, a cross-border institute for social integration and integrated housing planning. One could make the case that the programme adopted a set of traditional investment ideas while forsaking more ambitious and difficult proposals like these which may, arguably, have had more to do with peace-building.

The final shape of the programme may tell us much about the relative strength of the different lobbying groups in Northern Ireland. One wonders too whether the warning of the Economic and Social Committee that the programme 'not be spread too thinly' was heeded. A specific recommendation of the Economic and Social Committee that the programme not include measures for urban and rural regeneration was not heeded. Consultation may have led to a process which political scientists term colonization, namely that a programme proposed in one place is effectively assimilated by a representative range of local interests. To what degree the original aims of the programme - innovation, peace-building, reconciliation - survived this process of colonization is a theme which will be explored later. Although the programme design was certainly *consultative*, it is questionable as to whether it was *reflective* and explored sufficiently how this type of package could best incorporate concepts of innovative peace-building. The fact that proposals for a study of what works in other peace-building programmes were not acted on creates further doubt on this point. There was little or no appraisal of how the different options could best contribute to the objectives of the programme.

After social inclusion, the second priority area of the programme may be broadly termed industrial and economic investment. Arguments about the need for investment in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic are well founded. Using a wide range of indicators, Northern Ireland has a standard of living about 20% below the UK average (*Regional Trends*, 1996). Analysis of the border areas of the Republic in the baseline report and elsewhere²¹ demonstrates convincingly that the border counties are the most disadvantaged region in Ireland by level and nature of employment, class profile, level of educational attainment and demographic profile.

Where the programme is unclear, however, is how this pattern of investment in social inclusion, economic investment and cross-border activity necessarily promotes peace and reconciliation. It is *assumed* that investment in the one automatically benefits the other (indeed, the *Outline* endorses this axiom). This is by no means certain. Mari Fitzduff, Director of the Community Relations Council, put the conundrum succinctly as follows: 'The links between economic well-being and social conflict have been disputed by social scientists and theorists of reconciliation for many years and are by no means clear even at this stage. The conflict did not start because of lack of economic development or employment. In 1969, the economy was booming and unemployment was approximately 7% (although there were areas of endemic high unemployment which were mainly catholic). It was the divisions within the community, rather than poverty within the community and the way in which resources were seen to be distributed, that helped to create the conflict. Economic development of itself will not necessarily help to

create peace'. The intertwining - possibly the confusion - of the themes of investment, social inclusion, peace and reconciliation is evident at the very beginning of the programme.

Arguably, the intermingling of these themes was to be one of the core problems of the programme. The links between peace and reconciliation on the one hand and social inclusion and investment on the other were assumed, although they were never explored in the discussion on the programme and were disputed at the time and subsequently. The arguments put forward by the Community Relations Council were never fully addressed. Much of the language and rhetoric of the early stages of the programme emphasized its novelty, that it was not to be 'more of the same'. Despite this, many of the themes of the programme that was subsequently endorsed were themes of existing European Union programmes, like cross-border cooperation, social inclusion and productive investment (although the balance in favour of social inclusion was quite new). How these ambiguities, parallel aims and different objectives turned out in practice is the subject of chapter 4.

Finally, proposals for strategic guidance of the package did not materialize. Such proposals were never fleshed out in much detail. Although, subsequently, the programme leaders in DGs V, VI, XIV and XVI developed a pattern of meeting monthly to check on the progress of the programme, they did not fulfill a hands-on strategic planning role. The Commission's approach was to establish the programme and leave its guidance entirely to the large monitoring committee which was to meet infrequently. Whilst the Commission is content with the level and appropriateness of its oversight, these decisions (or non-decisions) meant that problems with the programme could not be raised at an effective strategic level. Nor, apparently, was there oversight by the European Parliament. Although the parliament decided to appoint observers to the programme, they do not seem to have been appointed or play a subsequent role in the programme.

In conclusion, this programme was developed at high speed. Its agenda and themes were built in an unusually consultative manner. The voluntary and community sector was influential in its design. However, the broadening of the programme, whilst satisfying a wide range of interests, may have led to a much less sharp focus than that originally intended.

2 Setting up the programme

Chapter 2, *Setting up the programme*, records key aspects of the development of the programme such as the prior appraisal (2.1) and the baseline study (2.2). The chapter notes one of the most important features of the programme, the appointment of intermediary funding bodies and district partnerships (2.3). There is a discussion on the indicators used for the programme (2.4) and the monitoring procedures established (2.5). There is a lengthier exploration of complementarity – the way in which this programme complements other structural fund programmes, a section which sheds light on innovation in this programme (2.6). Finally, conclusions are drawn (2.7).

2.1 Prior appraisal

The purpose of a prior appraisal is to provide a critical commentary on a programme before it gets under way. This is a standard procedure for structural fund programmes. The prior appraisal for this programme was carried out by Colin Stutt Consulting in 1995. The main points from the prior appraisal were as follows:

- The programme was an untidy one, reflecting many different elements and agendas;
- There was a lack of commonality in the approach of the programme in Northern Ireland and the Republic. In Northern Ireland, the emphasis of the programme was on the need for reconciliation between the two communities, for economic and social reconstruction, for developing cross-border links and to demonstrate the practical benefits to be derived from the end of violence. In the Republic, the focus was on the need for the border counties to repair economic damage done as a result of the conflict and to restore links with Northern Ireland which had weakened or disappeared;
- It recommended the consistent publication of information about the operation of the programme. The prior appraisal recommended consideration of the publication of an accessible annual report;
- It recommended additional work be done on the definition and quantification of the expected impact of the programme, and an indicator to assess the proportion of projects assisted which were cross-community in nature;
- It recommended there be a baseline study to provide starting point indicators for the programme, to define economic conditions; to map existing and proposed cross-border development and to set milestones for the programme's achievement of its objectives. There was need for a database of cross-border cooperation projects.

The prior appraisal concluded that the full scale of the peace dividend would not be realized until there was a progression from the cease-fire to stable and agreed political structures.

2.2 Baseline study

Shortly after the approval of the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, a baseline study was initiated. To be precise, three studies were commissioned, one for the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland, the other for the Department of Finance in the Republic, the two then being distilled into a third report (*Baseline study*, by Colin Stutt Consulting in association with KPMG, June 1996). This work was carried out in the period February – April 1996. It provides an important commentary on the context in which the programme was expected to operate.

The baseline study commented that the programme was 'very explicit about the aims and objectives [of the programme]. It is less explicit about the impacts and about the