



BRITISH-IRISH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY
COMHILACHT IDIR-PHARLAIMINTEACH NA BREATAINE
AGUS NA hÉIREANN

31st PLENARY SESSION
CROSS-BORDER FUNDING
Report agreed at 30th plenary session

OBSERVATIONS BY THE IRISH DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Comments on the Report of the BIIPB

The following are the views of the Department of Finance

SEUPB

The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) is one of the North South Implementation Bodies set up under the Good Friday Agreement. It is, inter alia, the Managing and Paying Authority for the Ireland/Northern Ireland INTERREG IIIA Programme. It is surprising that there is no reference at all to the SEUPB in the Executive Summary or acknowledgement of their role in promoting cross border co-operation and in successfully managing the Programme.

Paragraph 19 points out that economic and other benefits are hard to quantify for these programmes. The Mid Term Update of the Ireland/North Ireland INTERREG programme has recently been finalised and shows the following Financial commitment (ERDF monies) stands at €103m (75%) and spend at €41m (30%)

Impacts and likely achievement of objectives

The Programme has delivered qualitative impacts in a number of areas

- **Developing new cross border linkages**, developing some new cross border linkages and for 9 out of the 65 promoters surveyed this was the first time they had been involved in a cross border project. In addition at implementation level there is evidence of Departments working together for the first time,
- **Real cross border projects**, the Programme has resulted in much more appreciation of the 'j' word in relation to the joint identification of need, project development and implementation arrangements. There is evidence from the interviews that projects are genuinely cross border and there are no parallel projects,
- **Range of cross border projects funded**, the types of projects supported include capital projects based in one location (e.g. Midas project, Respite Care Home, marine projects) but developed and implemented jointly, capital projects which span the border area (e.g. road and rail improvements) and projects which encourage cross border co-operation by operating in alternative locations on either side of the border (e.g. farmers market),
- **Innovative solutions to overcome cross border obstacles**, there is evidence that the INTERREG Programme is helping to address some of the barriers to cross border co-operation such as accessibility, information provision, transport, social and cultural factors which can impinge on cross border development,

- **Innovativeness of project ideas supported**, some of the projects funded to date have been innovative in nature such as the GP Out of Hours Service and the establishment of an Academy to train Renewable Energy Installers,
- **Improvements to quality of life in the border region**, the Programme is helping to improve the quality of life of residents in the eligible region through upgrades to major rail and road networks, rural roads, health services, community development capacity and through projects focusing on various sections of society such as the elderly, mentally ill, farming communities and young people, and
- **Geography of linkages made**, it is evident that the INTERREG Programme has strengthened the ability of those living adjacent to the border to work together and in addition has facilitated cross border linkages between those who live quite a distance from the border

Outputs, results and impacts

16 out of the 42 output indicators have been fully achieved, 7 of the 73 result indicators have been fully achieved and 4 of the 33 result indicators have been achieved. Overall at this Update stage, 27 out of the 148 indicators (18%) have been achieved.

Table 1 Proportion of indicators achieved across the Programme

Proportion of indicators achieved -	Outputs	Results	Impacts	Total
0%	9	35	19	67
1-49%	8	19	7	34
50-99%	9	12	3	24
100%	16	7	4	27
Total number of indicators	42	73	33	148

The €41m spent to date (end September) resulted in the following

- 188 FTE jobs created or safeguarded through cross border rural initiatives (M1.1),
- 161 businesses expanding in terms of increases in sales (M1.1),
- 947 participants in training and education initiatives, of which 258 gained qualifications (M1.2),
- 340 people trained in new skills (M1.3),
- 294 participants in sectoral initiatives gaining qualifications (M1.3),
- 23 people gaining new employment through sectoral initiatives (M1.3),
- 49 people progressing in employment (M1.3),

- 28,000 square feet of enterprise park developed and 285 gross jobs created (M2 1),
- Safety navigational improvements at 3 large ports (M2 1),
- 3 road re-alignment schemes (M2 1)
- 18km of rural road improvements (M2 1)
- 10 small harbour improvements (M2 1),
- 90%+ residents in region receiving advice on recycling (M2 2),
- 7 fishery management projects supported (M2 2)
- 5 904 individuals involved in capacity building projects (M3 1),
- 4 new community development approaches put into place (M3 1),
- 958 health care professionals trained (M3 2),
- 20 new jobs created as a result of health projects supported (M3 2), and
- 18 cross border health training events (M3 2)

The above gives a flavour of achievements to date

ICBAN

Paragraph 24 mentions ICBAN as one of the Implementation Bodies for the programme and recommends it as

- **“an example of effective working at the local level across the political parties north and south of the Ireland / Northern Ireland border (Para 31);”**

This Department is not satisfied with the prominence given to one of the Implementing Bodies for the Programme, especially given the absence of any reference to the SEUPB. ICBAN is one of a number of cross border Implementing Bodies for the Programme and as the report states ICBAN is one of three INTERREG partnerships, the other are the East Border Region and the North West Region all of which have a broadly similar representation and provide a valuable input to the Programme. In terms of financial performance, all three partnerships have made broadly the same contribution in terms of allocations and spend to date

Some more specific comments and suggested amendments on the text are outlined below

10 Interreg III programme (2000-2006)

Bullet 1 - Interreg IIIA

There are two programmes operating between regions within Britain the UK and Ireland: North of Ireland the Border Region and Northern Ireland.

As regards the Ireland/Wales Programme **and, the other between three regions in the East of Ireland and seven counties in West Wales (€70.0 million, with an EU contribution of €48.5 million).**

Bullet 4 - Interreg IIIB-AA

the Atlantic Area (similar to the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) Atlantic Area, which brings together Europe's coastal regions) including the whole of Ireland, the UK's western regions, the west of France, the north of Spain and Portugal.

12 This para sets out the original Commission proposals re territorial cooperation. Both the €13bn and the 50/50 split between cross-border and transnational are subject to change depending on the outcome of negotiations on the financial perspectives. In the last text on this (presented at the Luxembourg summit in June) a figure of €7.2bn was proposed.

14 There are not currently any proposals for a specific British-Irish transnational programme. The author may be referring to the possibility of a sub-programme within one of the existing transnational spaces.

18 Wales/Ireland Interreg IIIA programme should read "Ireland/Wales Interreg IIIA Programme" throughout the document (see also para 26).

Examples were also drawn from the greater geographic scale of the transnational Interreg IIIB programmes at the North West Europe and the Atlantic Area level.

20 This para sets out the original Commission proposals re territorial cooperation and is subject to change depending on the outcome of negotiations on the financial perspectives.

26 No NUTS-3 regions of England have a maritime border within 150km of Ireland so it is not certain that they could be involved in a maritime cross-border programme.

Annette Connolly
North-South EU Programmes