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routes to North-South cooperation
in a divided island**



**FUNDING SUPPORT FOR CROSS-BORDER AND
NORTH-SOUTH COOPERATION ON THE ISLAND OF
IRELAND, 1982-2005: AN OVERVIEW**

Eoin Magennis, Patricia Clarke and Joseph Shiels

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ABSTRACT

FUNDING SUPPORT FOR CROSS-BORDER AND NORTH-SOUTH COOPERATION ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND, 1982-2005: AN OVERVIEW

This paper provides a brief outline of the findings of the much larger mapping study of funding support for cross-border cooperation which is based on Border Ireland and has been written as part of the wider Mapping Frontiers, Plotting Pathways project. It details the scope of the mapping study, some elements of the funding programmes and ideas about future mapping of cross-border cooperation. The paper finishes with some conclusions about the end of one phase of funding support and where cross-border cooperation may get support from in future.

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FUNDING SUPPORT FOR CROSS-BORDER AND NORTH-SOUTH COOPERATION ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND, 1982-2005: AN OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

The object of this paper is to outline very briefly the findings of a mapping study of funding support for cross-border cooperation which is based on Border Ireland and written as part of the wider *Mapping frontiers, plotting pathways* project.¹

Border Ireland has been developed by the Centre for Cross Border Studies to describe the extent of cross-border activity over the past two decades. Before now information about North-South and cross-border cooperation has been largely uncoordinated, fragmented and inaccessible (Clarke, Shiels and Magennis, 2005). Border Ireland is now an online searchable database of cross-border information produced by EU-funded programmes, government departments, academic researchers and other key information providers in Ireland, North and South. This information covers cross-border projects, the publications emerging from these, and the details of the groups and individuals who have gained cross-border expertise through this work.

This mapping study aims to provide a descriptive rather than evaluative study of the extensive, but highly fragmented, programmes and projects aimed at promoting cross-border cooperation since the mid-1980s. It is known that most activities have been funded by the various EU programmes, government reconciliation funds and charitable sources. Therefore, our purpose was to gather together information on both these funding programmes and the activities they gave rise to, and to compile a picture of what was funded, when, and in which sectors or locations.

The mapping study places the funding programmes into a context which includes developments in inter-governmental cooperation, a halting process of partial decentralisation of power towards local government, a growth in the scale of the community and voluntary sector and the growing importance of the EU to both cross-border and regional development. These factors, as well as many other policy developments, provide the context for the evolution of funding programmes since the 1980s (Tannam, 2005; O'Dowd and McCall, 2005).

¹ The mapping study (Magennis, Clarke and Shiels, 2006), which has the same name as this discussion paper, can be seen at www.crossborder.ie

OVERVIEW OF CROSS-BORDER ACTIVITIES SINCE 1982

Scope of the mapping study

The main body of the mapping study is taken up by the funding programmes (covered in much greater detail in the full report). These are shown in table 1, and they have had a varying contribution to cross-border activities. They began in 1982 though the real beginnings come with the International Fund for Ireland in 1986. The supports for cross-border cooperation range from the Interreg programmes, which were to have cross-border cooperation at their core, to Peace I and II, which have had specific measures (or amounts of money) dedicated to supporting cross-border cooperation. Still others, like the International Fund for Ireland, have been open to applications for funding which included cross-border elements.

Overall pattern

Figure 1 provides a vivid depiction of the numbers of cross-border activities (or projects) since 1982.² The clearest feature in the pie-chart, in terms of the share of all activities, is just how dominant the funded activities have been. According to Border Ireland figures in 1982, 90% of all cross-border activities have been supported primarily by one of the funding programmes described in table 1. This percentage figure, alone, must give pause for thought when considering the future of cross-border cooperation.

Turning to the other 10% share of the total, this has arisen from one of the three following sources:

- Inter-government cooperation;
- Academic collaboration; or
- Cooperation by various voluntary professional, cultural and sporting organisations.

Inter-governmental cooperation

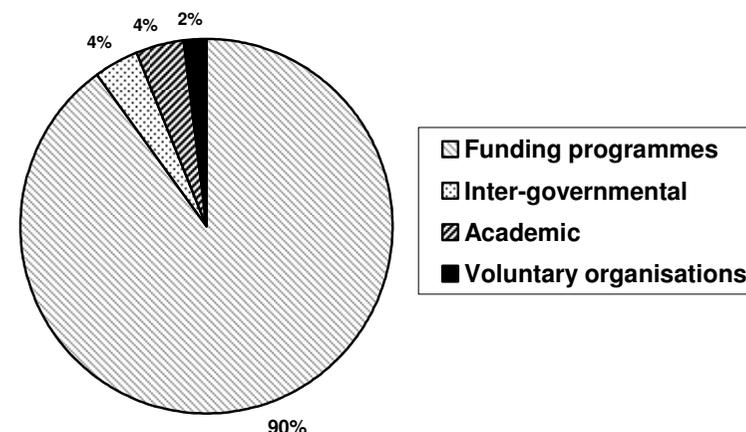
The range of these activities is quite varied and encompasses small exchanges of staff or seminars through to large and well-resourced programmes.³ The activities also involve the full range of state organisations, from central departments to local authorities to semi-state agencies to North-South implementation bodies.

² It should be clear that this overview is not complete as details of business cooperation over the same period have proved elusive. How far business cooperation has been curtailed by the Troubles or, indeed, the border has proved open to debate (Ó Gradá and Walsh, 2005). A recent survey of business links provides the first accurate picture of current North-South business cooperation and a benchmark against which progress can be measured (InterTradelreland and ESRI, 2005).

³ It is important to note that government organisations have also taken part in funded activities, especially under the Peace I and II supports for public sector cross-border cooperation.

Table 1. Details of the activity data from Border Ireland used in the mapping study

Name of programme	Source of data	Description of data
Reconciliation Fund (1982-2005)	Department of Foreign Affairs	1. Estimates of 1982-1998 funding committals and organisations involved. 2. Details of 1999-July 2005 funding committals, organisations involved and the details of activities.
International Fund for Ireland (1986-2005)	Department of Foreign Affairs / Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister	Details of 1986-September 2005 funding committals, programme headings, dates of approval, organisations involved and bare details of activities.
Interreg I (1991-1993)	Dáil Eireann written answer, 22 September 1996	Closure report of the funding allocated to individual activities under the measure headings and the organisations involved. No project descriptions available.
Interreg II (1994-1999)	SEUPB	Closure report from March 2003 including funding allocated under measure headings, organisations involved and occasional descriptions of activities.
Interreg IIIA	SEUPB and ICBAN	Details of funding committals, measure headings, date started, organisations involved and some project descriptions to April 2005.
Peace I	NISRA	Details from the Central Applications and Approval Database of funding committals from the cross-border measures (3.1 to 3.4) as well as dates started, organisations involved and bare descriptions of projects.
Peace II	NISRA	Details for the Central EU Programmes Database of funding committals from the cross-border measures (5.1 to 5.7), dates started, organisations involved and details of the projects including locations up to June 2005.
Leader II	DARD (NI) and Irish Leader Network	Closure reports from 2003 of the funding allocations, organisations involved and project names for the transnational measure.
Leader +	DARD (NI)	Bare details of the funding allocations and projects.
Equal	SEUPB	Details of the Development Partnerships involved in North-South cooperation.
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust	JRCT	Funding committals for the Ireland/Northern Ireland programme for 1995-2004 including organisations involved and project names.
Atlantic Philanthropies	www.atlanticphilanthropies.org	Funding committals for 2000-2005 with organisation involved.

**Figure 1: Overview of activities in Border Ireland**

At one end of the scale can be found the recent series of seminars organised jointly by the Northern Labour Relations Agency and the Southern Labour Relations Commission to explore similarities and differences in their legislation, responsibilities and approaches. With the Good Friday Agreement and the establishment of the North-South implementation bodies cooperation certainly moved into a new stage, and the scale of cooperation increased greatly (O'Connor, 2005). However, the forward momentum has faltered since the suspension of the northern institutions in October 2002 (Smyth, 2005; Coakley, Wilson and Ó Caoindealbháin, 2006). Three years on, there are some signs of the British and Irish governments wanting to provide some new momentum in "Strand Two" of the Agreement, although time will tell whether this is anything more than a device to prompt unionists into serious discussions about reviving the northern institutions. In spite of the stop-start nature of inter-government cooperation since 1999, the scale, in terms of resources invested in this source of North-South and cross-border cooperation, is striking when compared to funding available for cross-border activities elsewhere. At present, 700 staff work in the six North-South bodies and Tourism Ireland and a total budget of €712 million (for the period 2000-2005) has been provided for them.⁴ The international marketing programmes of Tourism Ireland or InterTradeIreland's new *Innova* programme (to encourage all-island business-to-business research and development cooperation) would dwarf the vast majority of other cross-border activities in terms of the targets, staff and budgets devoted to them.

⁴ The figure for the implementation bodies and for Tourism Ireland come from written answers in the House of Lords, 7 April 2005 and 7 September 2004 respectively, downloaded from

Academic collaboration

As with inter-government cooperation the small number of academic activities encompasses a wide variety of shapes and sizes. At one end of the spectrum joint conferences and seminars have involved other academic bodies beyond the established all-island organisations such as the Irish Mathematics Society or the Irish History Students Association. The wider availability of funding in the past decade, including North-South programmes, has also encouraged large collaborative projects at the other end of the spectrum. In some research areas (including healthcare or new technologies) the funding amounts rise to hundreds of thousands of euro. Again, this means that, in resource terms, the vast majority of funded cross-border activities would be tiny in comparison to some of the academic projects.

Professional, cultural and sporting organisations

Until the 1990s the level of cross-border and North-South cooperation was low in this sector despite some all-island survivals from before 1921. The impact of Co-operation North's exchange programmes for schools, youth and community groups was important. The provision of funding resources, which is the subject of this mapping study, has been absolutely crucial to this process. In 1995 and 1998 the Limerick-based Centre for Peace and Development Studies estimated that there were 350 and 500 organisations respectively cooperating or linked on a North-South and cross-border basis (Murray, 1998). Most of these linkages were generated by the various funding programmes. However, others were generated by the ongoing and routine activity of churches, trades unions, professional organisations and cultural bodies organised on an all-island basis.

OVERVIEW OF FUNDING PROGRAMMES

The key findings of the mapping study include the following:

- €762.7m has been committed to *potential* cross-border activities since 1982
- 2,790 activities have been funded from this commitment of money
- 1,900 (or 68%) of these activities were actually cross-border in some element⁵
- These 1,900 cross-border activities involved over 1100 organisations as administering partners and many more as participants, perhaps into the tens of thousands.

⁵ Almost 32% of funded activities lacked any cross-border element at all, and are best described as "back-to-back". Three quarters of these "back-to-back" activities can be traced to the Interreg I or Interreg II programmes. Most of them operated on one side of the border alone, and dealt in particular with improvements in sewage, transport or tourism infrastructure in the border region of one or other of the jurisdictions.

The full report gives a detailed picture of the various funding programmes, their aims and achievements, in terms of support for cross-border cooperation. This paper will take up a few points which range across the funding programmes.

Definitions of cross-border cooperation

It was not until 10 years after the launch of the International Fund for Ireland that there began to be some agreement (across Europe) on what a cross-border programme or project might look like. The 1997 definition devised by the Association of European Border Regions began to address matters such as whether or not a project was jointly managed or whether there were impacts from the activity on both sides of the border. However, it was to take another six years—until 2003—before this definition was updated and incorporated into guidelines on how project proposals should be assessed. This has meant that the very elements which would make an activity cross-border or not have only recently been agreed upon by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). As to whether these cross-border elements are the same as understood by the International Fund for Ireland or the Department of Foreign Affairs (for its Reconciliation Fund) is another question.

Regional versus cross-border development. To add to the confusion over what made an activity cross-border or not, there were also problems in the 1990s over whether funding programmes were there to support regional development of the border region, cross-border development or both. In a funding programme run by the International Fund for Ireland, where cross-border cooperation was a lesser priority, this confusion probably caused few problems. However, for the early Interreg programmes the confusion appears to have led to a tug-of-war between two models: regional development as a prerequisite to cross-border cooperation, or cross-border cooperation as a precondition for regional development.

This led to the first two Interreg programmes allocating extensive funding to stand-alone activities instead of cross-border ones. In these programmes only 20-25% of activities were actually cross-border in any shape or form. The problem could be seen most clearly in the infrastructural and tourism measures of these programmes. However, this can be contrasted with the progress made in those same areas under Interreg IIIA. Although this programme has mainly been praised for the management by local networks and the introduction of civil society organisations, it has been just as striking that road and environmental infrastructure or protection has been rolled out using cross-border approaches. The lesser-known North-South Share or Instant projects are good examples of this development.⁶

North-South versus cross-border cooperation. The debate over North-South, as opposed to cross-border, cooperation is one that never really goes away. Almost all the funding programmes, with the exception of the charitable trusts and the Reconciliation Fund, have a remit that spatially restricts almost all money to Northern Ire-

⁶ The first is a cross-border river catchment protection project (to enforce the EU water framework directive in "international" or cross-border catchments) and the second is a project to apply new technology in order to manage traffic loads and safety in the Belfast-Dublin corridor.

land and the six Southern Border Counties. This has resulted from the best intentions of programme designers to tackle problems, such as reconciliation and economic isolation, where they appear worst. It has also caused a number of difficulties and confusions. To give one example, Peace II has adopted the use of target groups who would be key recipients of funding. However, some of their spatial cores (for instance, in the case of displaced persons) actually lie outside the designated 12-county area. Another point that is regularly made is that the onus of reconciliation should not fall on the 12-county border region alone (Co-operation Ireland, 2003). There may be as much, or perhaps more, need for groups and individuals in Kerry or Wexford to become engaged in North-South reconciliation. Certainly it appears that when youth and school exchanges have been offered throughout the island, then some demand can be built for this sort of work (North/South Exchange Consortium, 2005).

Impact of cross-border cooperation

The impact question is one which haunts or should haunt everyone involved in cross-border cooperation, whether at the policy or practical level. Recent research about the difficulties of developing policy entrepreneurship in cross-border cooperation in the tourism sector provides much food for thought on impacts of activities (Henderson and Teague, 2006). These challenges are hardly unique to that sector but can be found in health, education and many other areas, including the relatively new area for cooperation, spatial planning. Some suggestions for measuring the impact of cross-border cooperation might include:

- Outputs of activities (captured by the efforts of programme evaluators);
- Policy alignment between the two jurisdictions; and
- Quality of services (which might show how hard it is to distinguish between national and transnational inputs).

FUTURE MAPPING OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

The mapping study provides an initial use of Border Ireland's dataset as it applies to the funding programmes and the activities these have given rise to. However, there is more research which can look not only at funded activities but can also incorporate these in the (slightly) larger number of cross-border activities. Such research can provide more detailed patterns and trends as benchmarks against which to measure progress in North-South and cross-border cooperation.

In our work on Border Ireland the research team has begun to produce some initial findings and pathways for future research into different trends. Some of the areas that ought to prove of interest to policy-makers, funders and others include the following:

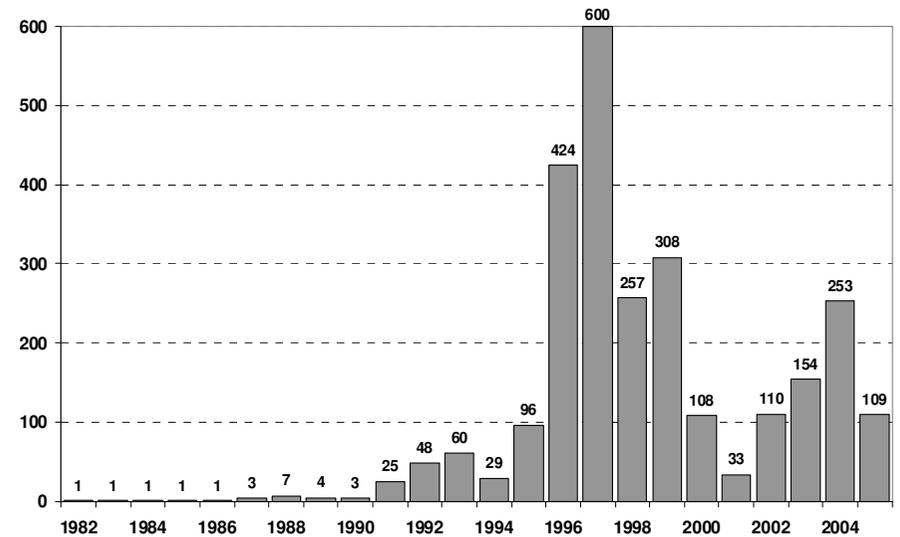


Figure 2: Activities by start year, 1982-2005

- Cross-border activity over time—each activity has been assigned a start date or year which allows timelines of numbers of activities and funding amounts to be displayed as in figure 2.
- Activities by sector and sub-sector—each activity has been given one of 10 sectors and one of 89 sub-sectors. From these can be seen the key areas of work that cross-border activities have focused on and how this has changed over time and between different funding programmes.
- Activities by location—the trends explored include both those of the organisation/s managing the activity and the counties in which the activity has taken place. Future developments to the dataset will include the assignment of council areas and, potentially, spatially-referenced data.
- The varying levels of cross-border cooperation—the “levels” can be assessed from the accounts of the projects and their outputs or outcomes. This needs further work in order to explore the dynamics of cooperation or how an activity which began as an initial contact could become one with a joint cross-border management committee.
- Activities and the organisations running them—each organisation has been given both a “type” and a sector which allows a truer picture of public sector vs NGO involvement in cooperation (both supported by funding programmes and not).

CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that this phase of funding support for cross-border cooperation is coming to an end. There has been no decision on a funding package for a future Interreg programme. However, with a growing number of both internal and external borders since 2000 the size of the Ireland/Northern Ireland programme is unlikely to increase. It has been reported that the Peace III programme will have an EU package of €200 million. At this time there has been no decision on the size of the share given to cross-border cooperation although this may remain at 15% (or roughly €30 million). At the same time pressure is growing to reduce the size of the US commitment to the International Fund of Ireland.

Therefore, there will be a downward trend in the amount of non-government funding available to cross-border cooperation. There is no sign, as yet, that the shortfall will be made up from government exchequers. The Irish government's Reconciliation Fund currently provides €2.65 million annually (2005 figures) and is not specifically a funding programme to support cross-border cooperation. As for other inter-government initiatives, the priority appears to be for better all-island planning and delivery of economic measures and infrastructure roll-out in the 2007-2013 period. All of this suggests that the picture portrayed in the mapping study—of often small scale cross-border projects—will not be repeated in the future.

If this is to be the case in this new context of less available funding, choices will have to be made about future support for cross-border activities. A key issue in the dispersal of funding is whether to continue the "bottom-up" process of applications, assessments and approvals or to take a more strategic approach, perhaps through calls for applications to meet particularly desired areas of cross-border cooperation.

Although this may provoke protests about less transparency in the division of funding, a version of this process has already been working since 2000. At one level it has become much harder for groups to apply for funding given the challenges posed by the fund-raising process. This is reflected in the shift away from a large number of small grants seen under Peace I. Indeed, the average Peace I cross-border activity received roughly €81,000 whereas under Peace II this has risen to roughly €314,000. What has been lost in excitement has, perhaps, been made up in substance. This trend is likely to continue in Peace III and Interreg IV with the further removal of a layer of applicants. At another level Interreg IIIA saw some allocation of funding to pre-prescribed approaches to cooperation or desired outputs. Under the aegis of the NSMC, in its agriculture and environment areas of cooperation, applications were put together by government officials to tackle both rural development and catchment protection in a more strategic manner. This may be a sign of things to come. Whether or not it is the best way to push cross-border cooperation forward is likely to be hotly debated.

These matters raise the question of the relative roles of government and non-government organisations within cross-border cooperation. The assumption is that funded activities have been the realm of civil society organisations, while government has tended to confine itself to inter-departmental or institutional cooperation.

On closer inspection this is far from the truth. Interreg, until the recent programme, has had little input from non-government organisations. Even since 2000 the local authorities and agencies of various kinds have been very active within the programme, particularly on the measures dealing with infrastructure, health and well-being, and inter-regional development. At the same time, in the Peace programmes, the government organisations have also played a strong role. In the first place there have been dedicated measures to encourage public sector cross-border cooperation. Secondly, the economic development and rural development measures of both peace programmes have proved attractive to local agencies of the state. The precise breakdown of organisational involvement and the extent of partnership between government and civil society is something that further research will shed light upon.

Finally, the role of the Special EU Programmes Body cannot be ignored in any mapping study of funding support for cross-border cooperation. It has marked an improvement on the management of the various programmes and seems to cooperate well with the various cross-border intermediary funding bodies (such as ICBAN or Co-operation Ireland). There have been complaints that the SEUPB has added to the bureaucracy and complexity of the funding context, claims which the body has strenuously denied or sought to deal with. Finally, the SEUPB seems, in the recent past, to be seeking a role that would be strategic as well as managerial. If it can do this, perhaps through making North-South cooperation more real than aspirational in the national development plans for 2007-13, then it will begin to prove its worth. It might also provide new funding streams for partnerships between government and non-government organisations through which to deliver North-South cooperation on a different scale than in the 1982-2005 period.

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