

Consultation on the 2014-2020 Ireland Wales Cooperation Programme

Consultation

Response Form

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The responses to the consultation questions set out below will play an important part in the preparation of the final text of the 2014-2020 Ireland Wales Cooperation Programme, which we will be submitting to the European Commission later this year. Views are sought from all those with an interest.

Contact details

Please send responses to the consultation to:

European Territorial Cooperation Unit
Welsh European Funding Office
Welsh Government
Rhydycar
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1UZ

Or by email to: IrelandWalesCrossBorderProgramme@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK

If you have any queries, please contact the team on the above email address.

Responses are sought by **31 July 2014**.

The following questions are designed to help structure the responses to this Consultation Document:

Section 1: Programme Strategy

1) Do you agree that we have identified the right challenges for the Ireland Wales Programme?

	x			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

1. The document addresses some of the challenges relevant to the programme areas. However, in order to express a comprehensive view, it would be useful to have sight of the mentioned documents: full socio-economic analysis, SWOT analysis, and the ex-ante evaluation.
2. The challenges are fairly broad and generally they cover adequately the needs and issues of the programme area. Here below more details on some of the challenges.
3. Challenge 1: “Utilising the potential of the Irish Sea” focuses rightly on the production of renewable energy which could contribute to a number of objectives. Although it is presented more as an opportunity than a challenge, it should be the cornerstone of the cross-border co-operation programme.
4. Challenge 2: “Improving Knowledge flow” is relevant to the programme. However it is unclear what is the direct causal link between a “higher critical mass” of research and the facilitation of the “flow of knowledge”. We believe that the “flow of knowledge” should be actively stimulated and facilitated by projects supported under the programme, through the involvement of the wide spectrum of stakeholders, including local government.
5. We welcome the focus on the potential of marine and environmental innovation. We would advocate for a wide engagement in the knowledge transfer that could also include the public sector. Local authorities can be involved in the testing and implementing solutions that can benefit the coastal environment, especially on coastal protection and planning issues.
6. We wholly agree with challenge 3: “Improving SMEs innovative capabilities” as a key element of the programme. It should be regarded as a mean to also improve productivity and confidence of SMEs that in turn can lead to sustainable growth.
7. Challenge 4 links with challenge 1, again we would welcome a wide engagement of partners including public sector organisations that have a key role especially on flood protection and planning.

8. Although we welcome the focus on the natural and cultural assets these seems to be treated more as a potential for growth rather than a challenge. The programmes should focus on the risk of the loss of these assets, as well as exploiting their potential.
9. We agree that social cohesion plays a vital role in the preservation of cultural assets; the programmes should encourage even more activities that support and build strong communities.

2) Do you agree that the identified challenges are sufficiently focused to address the needs of the cross-border region?

		x		
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

10. As expressed above, some of the challenges need clearer focus.
11. The specific cross border needs for challenge 1 are fairly general and concentrate on the opportunities available to the programme area. We would welcome more emphasis and a clearer focus on the needs for regeneration and development of coastal communities. Moreover, we would suggest including also rural communities which are an important element of the programme area.
12. As for challenge 2 we would welcome more emphasis and clarity on the social innovation elements as they could provide strong linkages to Priority Axis 3, by ensuring social innovation can be applied to regeneration of communities and exploitation of cultural heritage.
13. Economic and social cohesion, challenge 6, is a wide encompassing challenge and we welcome the emphasis on rural-urban links. We would urge to consider also social cohesion issues within communities themselves, whether urban or rural.

Section 2: Thematic priorities

Priority Axis 1 - Innovation

3) Do you agree that the specific challenges which this Priority Axis aims to address are the right ones to focus on for the Ireland Wales Programme?

		x		
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

14. As there is no explicit mention of specific challenges in this section of the document it is assumed that they link with the challenges outlined in Section 1. This applies for all the questions below about “specific challenges”.

15. As expressed above in Q2 the social innovation aspects and its potential for implementation from the public sector need to be more prominent in the strategic approach of the programme. We believe that sustainability of communities does not necessarily mean preservation of status quo, rather social innovation can provide the tools to adapt to changing situations and to address emerging challenges, whether they are demographic, social, economic or environmental.

4) Does the Specific Objective address these challenges clearly enough?

		x		
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

16. The specific objective refers almost exclusively to Smart Specialisation strategies. This risks limiting the scope of actions that can be considered, especially for the elements of social innovation. We would welcome reference to a wider set of policy and strategy references.

5) Do you agree that the types of Actions identified are relevant and sufficiently focussed to achieve the Specific Objective?

		x		
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

17. Whilst we agree with ToA 1 and 2, we would suggest including “ageing population” in the scope of social innovation for ToA 3.

Priority Axis 2 – Climate Change

6) Do you agree that the specific challenges which this Priority Axis aims to address are the right ones to focus on for the Ireland Wales Programme?

	x			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

18. We agree that the specific challenge of climate change is an important one for the area and that it should focus on the adaptation. However adoption of soft measure for prevention, such as strategies that enables change in behaviours, should be included in the challenges as part of the programme.

19. Wales is in the forefront of combating climate change and supporting sustainability. A number of strategic initiatives could be considered in the programme as basis for climate change mitigation actions, including for instance strategies from the public sector in fields such as waste management. The inclusion and sharing of such strategies could lead to positive solutions at operational level as well improvements on governance models that can be piloted and adopted in the whole programme area.

7) Does the Specific Objective address these needs and challenges clearly enough?

	x			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

20. Although we agree with the specific challenge of climate change as it has dramatic consequences and impacts on the lives of communities and on the natural environment, we completely disagree with the mention in paragraph 76 that effects such as "warmer summers" could "benefit the programme area" - the reference should be eliminated from the text of the programme as it is against to the main aim and principles of combating climate change.

21. We strongly believe that climate change of the magnitude that the world has been experiencing in the last few decades is clearly a negative phenomenon; especially increased temperatures have a huge negative impact (even if to a limited portion of people or habitats may seem positive).

22. Furthermore, when warmer summers occur, they tend also to be wetter and have a very negative impact on the lives of communities and the economies they rely on. This is particularly true for rural and coastal communities and economies which are based on the natural cycle of seasons and natural assets.

8) Do you agree that the types of actions identified relevant and sufficiently focussed to achieve the Specific Objective?

	x		x	
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

23. We agree in general that the types of actions are relevant. However we reiterate that there are no opportunities to be derived from climate change. Any change needs to be considered as a negative one. Banking on what is wrongly perceived as an opportunity would lead to further actions that will worsen the impact of climate change and will work against activities of adaptation and mitigation that the programmes tries to implement. Therefore we urge that any reference to “positive” opportunity is deleted from the text of the programme.

24. We are in favour of actions such as stimulating awareness, and would suggest they can be included under the heading of “developing actions against climate change”. Under the “implementing actions” heading actions and activities derived from the awareness campaigns could be included.

25. Since the priority is said to have a focus on eco-innovation (par.76), we would welcome a more articulated definition of the term that clarifies what is intended in the IW programme specifically. Firstly, this could help applicants and practitioners in preparing projects. Secondly, as the term is widely used and it means different things, clarity on it would dissipate misunderstandings. Thirdly, it would be helpful to have an alignment (or comparison) with the term used in other EU funding programmes, such as Eco-Innovation (2007-2013) and Horizon 2020 (2014-2020). Finally, it would help to clarify how similar the eco-innovation concept is in IW compared to the same concept of the EU Eco-Innovation Action plan. This could help clarify synergies and perhaps mutually reinforce applications under individual programmes.

Priority Axis 3 – Natural and Cultural Resources and Heritage

9) Do you agree that the specific challenges which this Priority Axis aims to address are the right ones to focus on for the Ireland Wales Programme?

			x	
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

26. We welcome the inclusion of cultural and natural heritage, however the priority could benefit from more clarity on the actual challenges it seeks to address. It is in the interest of the programme area to ensure it is a more attractive place to work, live, etc., however clarifying why this is not the case currently, and what the specific aims are, would help to instigate the right types of actions and interventions.

10) Does the Specific Objective address these needs and challenges clearly enough

		x		
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

27. As mentioned in the paragraphs above the generic reference to cultural heritage as an asset does not clarify enough how this can be utilised at best, specifically for the programme area.

28. We welcome the aim to build and maintain strong communities, as this is an important basis to ensure that economic development is sustainable and rooted in the territory. Communities should be supported in their effort to maintain and prosper on the cultural heritage; the programme could utilise at best its cross border character to develop initiatives across public and community sectors to share and enhance the cultural heritage.

11) Do you agree that the types of actions identified are relevant and sufficiently focussed to achieve the Specific Objective?

	x			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

29. The types of actions identified should enable the wide inclusion of relevant groups and communities that can actually build on the natural and cultural heritage.

30. We would suggest giving more prominence to the types of beneficiaries beyond the traditional private sector ones. This is an area of activity where the community can get fully involved through social enterprises, co-operatives and other similar economic models that are bottom-up, inclusive and sharing in character, to ensure a full exploitation of the assets and the retention of the benefits in the area for the community.

31. It would also give the chance of engagement to parts of the society that are normally not involved with economic development, including residents groups, cultural and art groups, etc. This sectoral focus would benefit from the cross-border character of the programme as it lends itself naturally to exchange and share of expertise which are typical programme's interventions.

32. Under the heading of "guiding principles for selection of operation" we would suggest to change the reference of "external coherence" from "EU research programme" to more appropriate EU funding programmes, such as Culture, Life, Citizens, etc.

Overall Questions

12) Does the Programme as a whole address the needs and challenges identified for the programme area?

		X		
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

33. See above answer to Q1 - In general the programme addresses the challenges identified. It could benefit from more clarity in some of the Priority Axis, especially in PA3.

34. It could be useful to highlight the linkages that run across of the Axis, such as eco-innovation and social innovation.

13) No formal decisions have been made about the division of the money across the priority axes, however it is envisaged that Priority Axis 1 (innovation) will receive the largest percentage share of the programme allocation followed by Priority Axis 2 and Priority Axis 3. How would you weight the relevant importance of these three Priority Axes given the needs and challenges of the programme area?

35. We broadly agree with the suggestion above. However we would advocate for adequate resources in each priority to allow operations to have a relevant impact.

14) We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed in the sections above, please use the space below to report them:

Please add in any reasons for your response in the box below:

36. The WLGA has played an active role in the current Ireland Wales Programme, through active participation in the Programme Monitoring Committee and Programme Steering Committees. We look forward to continuing our active involvement in the new programme.

37. The IW Programme does not operate in isolation from other EU and domestic programmes, and they all address similar challenges and allow for similar types of interventions. We believe that it is important that the alignment and integration of priorities and actions with other programmes operating in the area are made more explicit and articulated, either in the programme itself or in guidance and supporting documents.

38. Local government is ideally placed to ensure better linkages between and across different EU funding streams during the 2014-2020 EU Programming Period, to enable more integrated activity and

interventions to be developed and delivered that maximise the opportunities from a number of EU funding programmes for Wales.

39. The fact that the managing authority for IW is also the managing authority for ESI funds in Wales should enable a great integration of the programmes and enable beneficiaries to make the most of all the programmes available in a homogenous way.
40. The IW programme and its managing authority should also enable beneficiaries to interface with other transnational and interregional programmes that are available in the area, as they share similar aspects of partnership working, sharing of solutions and practices and are based on collaboration across administrative borders.
41. Local Government is keen to ensure that Wales maximises the opportunities from the number of different ETC and wider EU Themed Funding Programmes for the 2014-2020 programming period.
42. The WLGA has published an EU Funding Guide on our website as follows to guide potential beneficiaries through the number of funding opportunities available:
<http://www.wlga.gov.uk/wlga-eu-funding-guide-2014-2020/>
We also produce weekly EU partner searches for Welsh Local Authorities.
43. In light of the recommendations of the recent National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Business Committee Inquiry into EU funding opportunities 2014-2020 we are keen to work with all key partners and stakeholders to enable more joined up approaches to maximise the opportunities for Wales from all the EU funding programmes. We wish to explore, for example, establishing a cross sector working group to ensure that all sectors and partners raise our game in terms of making the most of the opportunities from all EU funding programmes for 2014-2020.
44. Further, we are currently working with WEFO, WCVA and some Welsh Government policy departments to explore the establishment of Regional ESI Support Teams to promote the opportunities from the Structural and Investment Funds and would like to see this widened to encompass opportunities to engage in ETC and themed EU funding programmes.
45. Finally, we would encourage the development of the programme to be mindful of projects and achievements under the previous programme, as well as of current projects and initiatives that, although not currently funded by IW, could nevertheless have synergies with future IW projects and add value to future operations.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: