

AONTAS

Submission for the Public Consultation on the Peace Plus Programme (2021 – 2027)



Date: May 2021

Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities

1. To what extent you agree or disagree with the investment areas in Theme 1?

<p>Co-designed Local Community PEACE Action Plans Indicative Budget: €90,000,000</p>	Strongly Agree	<p>Empowering Communities Indicative Budget: €30,000,000</p>	Disagree
<p>Building Positive Relations Indicative Budget: € 30,000,000</p>	Agree	<p>Re-Imaging Communities Indicative Budget: €60,000,000</p>	Disagree

2. Please outline your reasons for your answers to Question 1

(In 500 characters or less)

a) Co-designed Local Community PEACE Action Plans: Strongly Agree

AONTAS welcomes the principles of this strand, and its investment. The focus on local partnerships is vital for building social cohesion and strong communities. A grassroots approach led by local people who understand the needs and experiences of local people is a meaningful and appropriate approach for this work. Recognising the value of a 'self-determined' focus in community-based programmes will empower and support local people in working together.

b) Empowering Communities: Agree

This strand acknowledges and supports the capacity of local communities to 'effect real change' and to 'embed peace at local level' which is a necessity in moving towards thriving communities and positive social change for all involved. AONTAS supports the topics outlined in addition to safety interventions and community safety as priority areas.

c) Building Positive Relations: Disagree

AONTAS recommends an increased budget due to the marginalised and vulnerable cohorts prioritised. For example, the Traveller community and LGBT people who face intersectional barriers due to their identities within the current polarisation of communities in NI. Building positive relationships is the most important priority and will need professional and experienced front-line staff, projects and communities' groups with adequate funding, and meaningful opportunities that foster trust over time.

d) Re-imagining Communities: Disagree

As noted in the previous points, building relationships and empowering communities is the most important step in supporting thriving and socially cohesive communities. AONTAS recommends moving €30,000,000 to 'Building Positive Relationships' as a long-term investment in people that can address fears, tensions and dissenting views. Improving amenities is needed but the most marginalised may frequent these shared spaces less often and community development work will embed trust while reaching the most in need.

Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the investment areas in Theme 2?

SME Development and Transition Indicative Budget: €20,000,000	Agree	Programme Area Skills Development Indicative Budget: €35,000,000	Strongly Disagree
Innovation Challenge Fund Indicative Budget: €58,000,000	Disagree	Smart Towns and Villages Indicative Budget: €30,000,000	Agree

4. Please outline your reasons for your answers to Question 3

(In 500 characters or less)

a) SME Development and Transition

AONTAS supports the inclusion of academic and industry collaborative projects in this funding stream. In addition, we recommend including local social-innovation based projects, community education and further education and training providers for the development of an interconnected system that reaches out to a diverse range of learners and employees at all levels in order to foster an innovative culture as outlined in this theme.

b) Innovation Challenge Fund

AONTAS recommends moving part of this fund to increase the 'Programme Area Skills Development' fund due to the needs and potential of adult learners and the adult learning sector. We welcome the 'STEM based initiatives that provide opportunities for young people from disadvantaged areas' and recommend investing and empowering communities and community education providers to lead this area of the programme. For more on our this, please [read](#).

c) Programme Area Skills Development

AONTAS calls for an increased budget in this programme to enable and foster a culture of lifelong learning and meet the needs of marginalised and vulnerable people in local communities. Adult learning is unique in its capacity to meet policy objectives across a broad range of areas including digitisation, health, climate action, and entrepreneurship. This stream can foster collaboration, empower communities and build the capacity of people with lower qualifications. NALAB is a collaborative network working on this front, for more see [here](#).

d) Smart Towns and Villages

AONTAS welcomes the focus on digital access for rural citizens, digital clusters and the introduction of a mentoring programme in this strand. However, it is suggested that an appropriate and meaningful approach would include community education and further education and training providers that will foster social cohesion across communities, address the skills and innovation needs of this strand, and engage a wide diversity of target groups including new communities across the island.

AONTAS did not respond to theme 3 as it focussed specifically on young people.

Theme 4:

7. To what extent you agree or disagree with the investment areas in Theme 4?

Collaborative Health and Social Care Indicative Budget: €80,000,000	Neither Agree not Disagree
Victims and Survivors Indicative Budget €25,000,000	Neither Agree not Disagree
Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion Indicative Budget: €50,000,000	Agree

8. Please outline your reasons for your answers to Question 5

(In 500 characters or less)

a) Collaborative Health and Social Care

The development of a social equality approach, cross-border collaboration, and health and wellbeing programmes that support those most in-need and on the margins of society is vital for fostering peace in Northern Ireland. AONTAS recommends including adult learning as part of this cross-community approach in building health literacy and ensuring individuals are both informed and have the capacity to make informed decisions on their health and wellbeing needs.

b) Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion

Addressing social isolation and reduced access to key services is integral to meeting the wellbeing and health needs of those experiencing social and economic disadvantage. AONTAS welcomes this stream and urges the Commission to ensure local people are worked with in partnership. Developing regional hubs including cross border cooperation with community and voluntary organisations can support this progress utilising community education centres at the heart of this development.

c) Victims and Survivors

AONTAS welcomes this stream and its acknowledgment of the diverse and complex needs of victims and survivors. Community education as an inclusive holistic model of adult learning often provides wrap-around services such as those outlined. Funding local community education providers as part of this stream can not only provide this trauma informed response but also facilitate the advocacy support programme, sector training, research, and development of resources as required.

Theme 5: Supporting a Sustainable and Better-Connected Future

9. To what extent you agree or disagree with the investment areas in Theme 5?

<p>Biodiversity, Nature Recovery & Resilience</p> <p>Indicative Budget: €15,000,000</p>	Agree	<p>Marine and Coastal Management</p> <p>Indicative Budget: €12,000,000</p>	Neither Agree not Disagree
<p>Water Quality and Catchment Management</p> <p>Indicative Budget: €21,000,000</p>	Neither Agree not Disagree	<p>Water Quality Improvement Programme</p> <p>Indicative Budget: €32,000,000</p>	Neither Agree not Disagree
<p>Geothermal Energy Demonstration Programme</p> <p>Indicative Budget: €20,000,000</p>	Neither Agree not Disagree	<p>Enhanced Sustainable Travel Connectivity</p> <p>Indicative Budget: €165,000,000</p>	Neither Agree not Disagree

10. Please outline your reasons for your answers to Question 3

(In 500 characters or less)

a) AONTAS recommends working with local community education groups in meeting the strategic goals of this stream. These providers can build capacity, support citizen science projects, and help to raise awareness of climate action issues. Three examples of this include [Development Perspectives](#), [Roscommon Women's Network](#), and [Change Makers Donegal](#).

AONTAS did not respond to the other strands in this area as their focus is outside the remit of the organisations strategic plan and area of expertise.

Theme 6: Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration

11. To what extent you agree or disagree with the investment areas in Theme 9?

<p>Strategic Planning and Engagement</p> <p>Indicative Budget: €27,000,000</p>	Agree
<p>Maintaining and Forging Relationships between Citizens</p> <p>Indicative Budget: €20,000,000</p>	Agree

12. Please outline your reasons for your answers to Question 9

(In 500 characters or less)

a) Strategic Planning and Engagement

Recognising the structural and administrative barriers that are imposed and identifying solutions is an integral part of this work. AONTAS welcomes the new focus on collaborative projects and services including tourism, health and cross-border council strategies. For communities to emerge from their silos, the Governments and regional governance structures working together and presenting a

collaborative approach will provide clear leadership and improved governance. As National Coordinator for the EAAL, AONTAS recommends continued funding for the NI Impact Forum to continue a partnership approach on adult learning policy implementation across Ireland.

b) Maintaining Relationships between Citizens

AONTAS welcomes this focus and encourages long-term investment in communities through the community and voluntary sector organisations, such as community education. Empowering communities to work together, to express their identities and address tensions is needed for long-term peace. Example organisations include [Atlas Women's Centre](#), Lisburn and [Change Makers](#), Donegal

13. Administrative Arrangements:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with that the following proposals would help to reduce the administrative burden for applicants in the new programme?

- **Proposal to increase project development support:** Agree
- **Proposal to introduce more participation and flexibility in calls for applications:** Agree
- **Proposal to simplify the application process Proposal to increase training opportunities for project partners:** Strongly Agree
- **Proposal to make the monitoring system more user-friendly:** Agree
- **Proposal to increase the use of simplified cost options:** Agree
- **Proposal to increase flexibility in project management:** Agree
- **Proposal to make indicators and reporting more focused on quality:** Agree

12. Please outline your reasons why

(Max 500 characters)

Many community and voluntary groups are under resourced and deal with a myriad of social issues. This means that the time and focus needed for funding proposals can be a challenge. However, it is these groups who work directly with the most marginalised and vulnerable people in our society. AONTAS supports improved systems which will offer flexibility, accessibility, and wider participation.

This submission was developed by AONTAS Head of Advocacy and AONTAS CEO Niamh O'Reilly as an organisational response on behalf of AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation. Please contact dlawless@aontas.com



The Voice of Adult Learning

AONTAS, The National Adult Learning Organisation
2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street,
Ranelagh, Dublin 6, D06 E0H1
www.aontas.com
01 406 8220

RCN 20013042
Chy. Reg. 6719
Co. Reg. 80958

