

The €1bn PEACE PLUS Programme and SMEs

PEACE PLUS is a €1bn social, economic and environmental investment Programme

It comprises **six themes**, which encompass **21 individual investment areas**.



PEACE PLUS and cross border economic development

Peace and prosperity are intrinsically linked and **the PEACE PLUS Programme will support cross border economic development by SMEs**.

The Programme will be managed by the Special EU Programmes Body, a cross border body established within the Good Friday Agreement.

PEACE PLUS will support SMEs in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland to tackle specific challenges and opportunities along with facilitating the involvement of partners outside of the programme area.

How PEACE PLUS will benefit SMEs

Theme 2: Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation has an indicative budget of **€143m** to support SME **cross border economic development** by investing in:

INVESTMENT AREA	OPPORTUNITIES FOR SME INVOLVEMENT
2.1 SME Development and Transition €20m	Will enable SMEs from all sectors to enhance their productivity and competitiveness by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) operating at scale through cross border collaboration; (ii) increasing productivity through digitisation; and (iii) transitioning to the circular economy
2.2 Innovation Challenge Fund €58m	Will support SMEs and education institutions to engage in commercially focused research, development and innovation within key growth sectors including: Life & Health Sciences; Renewable / Bio Energy; Advanced Manufacturing; Agri-food; Cyber Security; and Artificial Intelligence.
2.3 Programme Area Skills Development €35m	Will support education and training organisations to lead partnerships with SMEs to provide skilling and upskilling opportunities in sectors with existing and emerging skills requirements

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2.4 Smart Towns and Villages €30m	This will support the development of economic focused digital hubs in towns and villages designed to enable SME clustering and networking and facilitate remote working within rural areas.
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How can SMEs communicate needs and opportunities and get involved?

The PEACE PLUS Public Consultation started on March 10th and will end on May 12th. Its purpose is to provide citizens and other stakeholders, with an opportunity to share their views on the content and administrative arrangements regarding the proposed PEACE PLUS Programme.

Now is an opportune time for SMEs to communicate the following to trade associations, enterprise agencies and chambers of commerce, training organisations and education institutions:

- (i) specific areas in which they require developmental support (2.1 SME Development and Transition);
- (ii) potential concepts for commercially driven research, development and innovation to increase productivity and profitability (2.2 Innovation Challenge Fund);
- (iii) existing and emerging skills requirements within their sector (2.3 Programme Area Skills Development); and
- (iv) ways in which digital developments will improve their business (2.4 Smart Towns and Villages)

All of the above should be considered within the context of what has been proposed by the SEUPB within the Consultation Information Document <https://www.seupb.eu/PEACEPLUS>. This will inform the development of PEACE PLUS projects to benefit SMEs across the Programme area and beyond.

PEACE PLUS presents new opportunities for SMEs in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland to partner with those located elsewhere on the island of Ireland, where this will contribute to commercial advantage and increased competitiveness. Now is the time to consider such natural and beneficial linkages, so these relationships and projects can be supported by PEACE PLUS.