

CONCORDIA

**NI SOCIAL PARTNER RESEARCH
PROJECT**

REPORT

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

Deloitte was commissioned in April 2005 by Concordia to undertake research into the impact and experience of the Social Partners (that is the agri-rural, business, community and voluntary and trade union sectors) in relation to the Peace II programme within Northern Ireland.

1.2 Project Requirements

The key requirements of the research are to:

- examine the contribution made by NI social partners to the Peace II programme;
- identify the major achievements and outputs of social partner participation in the Peace II programme;
- evaluate the processes involved and how they have evolved from the onset of Peace II;
- examine the relationships and degree of partnership
- examine social partner changes in attitudes from the onset of Peace II to date and comment on possible implications for the future;
- identify the lessons learned and highlight recommendations for social partnership in general in NI.

The scope for the assignment was also broadened to include an assessment of:

- social partner involvement relating to the BSP and CSF Monitoring Committees and the Economic Development Forum.

1.3 Methodology

The various stages undertaken in this assignment were as follows:

- project launch;
- a total of 20 consultations with social partners and stakeholder organisations;
- four case studies (Derry LSP, Larne LSP, Northern Ireland Regional Partnership Board and Economic Development Forum);
- focus groups with LSP Board members;
- a questionnaire distributed to LSP Chairs and officers, LSP focus group attendees, Northern Ireland Regional Partnership Board members, Peace II, BSP, CSF Monitoring Committee Members and Economic Development Forum members; and

- analysis and reporting.

1.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

This section draws upon the findings of research and presents an analysis of key conclusions and recommendations for the future.

1.5 Strategic Context – Looking Forward

The two key strategic drivers affecting the position of the social partners in Northern Ireland in the coming years are the RPA and the shrinking EU programmes:

- **Future of European funding in Northern Ireland:**-The present cycle of European funding is coming to an end in 2006. It is not clear how Northern Ireland will benefit from the future cycle. It is clear that due to the steps taken towards normalisation and prosperity coupled with the influx of net recipient accession states, Northern Ireland will move out of the highest funding bracket, most likely resulting in a substantial decrease in EU funding; and
- **Review of Public Administration:** - a key issue for social partners with regard to the scope of the RPA is the proposed rationalisation of councils and the relationship of the new structures to the LSP structures. The new council structures are to be in place for 2009. Whilst there are no recommendations within the RPA as to how Councils would meet revised responsibilities there is potential for development of a process which includes social partners.

1.6 Major Achievements and Outputs of Social Partners in Peace II Programme

On the basis of our analysis we conclude that in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and tailoring of interventions the positive impact of social partners has been:

- participation and commitment, often in a voluntary capacity, not just on the main body but also in working groups and sub-committees;
- the provision of realism. In particular their understanding of their sector or local area provides the body with an insight as to what is achievable and what is not;
- the provision of a challenge function, asking questions and ensuring there is clarity and justification at an early stage in the decision making process; and
- additional transparency and credibility of the process and the programme, facilitating access to, and buy-in from difficult to reach groups (see Larne District Partnership case study).

Whilst the feedback from the surveys has been largely positive, a few respondents highlighted negative feedback. In particular it was suggested that:

- the value added by social partners is not consistent. It was suggested the social partner value is partly due to the competency of the individual members and their commitment. The qualitative feedback indicated this was most variable at LSP level. It was noted that it was also variable amongst elected members and statutory members.

1.7 Processes Involved

The key issues regarding social partner processes have been how they are selected onto partnerships, and how the social partner members feedback to their constituencies. On the basis of our analysis we conclude that:

- there are varying degrees of uncertainty regarding the processes of selection. This uncertainty can simply arise from not knowing what the processes are (even when they exist), which was particularly true for statutory sector survey respondents;
- in more severe instances concern regarding perceived “mandate” can lead to a level of suspicion, which has the effect of undermining the status of the social partner member and limiting partnership working. Others noted that councillors, although elected onto council, were subsequently nominated or selected onto LSPs, NIRPB and MCs in a similar manner to social partners, countering the “mandate” division; and
- the Derry LSP case study provided an example of selection and feedback processes based on formal procedures that were agreed upfront. This provided a degree of transparency that was important for their constituencies and for the other members of the partnership. It is noted that Derry LSP is a body with significant size and resources compared to other bodies however if these issues are to be resolved it is important that there is proportionate effort given to ensuring transparency regarding these processes. It is also noted that the future environment might include a rationalisation of LSP structures bringing them to a similar size.

An additional discussion issue in consultations was clarity regarding who social partners represent:

- it was noted for example at the RPB that a voluntary and community member said they could represent their LSP and the community sector in their local area but could not represent anything wider. Whilst this is quite reasonable there is a concern that others may think the member is there to represent the voluntary and community sector across NI. Therefore it was noted that social partners on the RPB, whilst members of particular sectors, are not necessarily fully representative of those sectors; and
- it was also noted in consultations that it was difficult to assess how effectively other non-social partner members of various partnerships were representing and feeding back to their respective “constituencies”.

1.8 Relationships and Partnership Working

An underpinning rationale for social partner inclusion in EU programmes is to further develop relationships and partnership working. This assignment required identification and consideration of evidence of participation of social partners creating an impact on relationships and partnership working.

From our analysis we conclude the following:

■ **social partners and central government departments:**

- consultations highlighted that relationships between social partners and central government departments were being developed and consolidated largely through the MC structures, with only limited development through the RPB;
- whether the relationship was being developed or consolidated depended on what relationships had historically been in place;
- informal meetings and linkages are now taking place outside the confines of the MC meetings;
- one department official said that their department had been going through a process of relationship building with social partners, and that this relationship had developed from an element of wariness and suspicion to one of greater respect and trust. It was stated that the social partner presence on MCs had contributed to this;

■ **social partners and local government:**

- the strongest messages regarding concern for social partner representation and accountability processes emanated from the local government sector;
- there were reports of relationships developing into mutual respect, particularly within a number of LSP environments;
- the RPB provided an opportunity to link with local government officials “on the same side of the table”;

■ **social partners and statutory agencies:**

- relationships between social partners and statutory agencies were reported to be generally good in the LSP case studies. The exceptions to this occurred when statutory agencies representatives were perceived by social partners to have limited interest in the area and were infrequent attenders at meetings;

■ **between social partners:**

- social partners brought together in partnership structures are able to develop new networks between themselves. These can often lead to additional networks;

■ **elected representatives:**

- it was noted across the partnership structures, that the social and economic focus that social partners brought to the table facilitated a different operating environment to the competitive party politics found in other forums. This environment in turn largely assisted relationships and partnership working between elected representatives and other members and amongst elected representatives. The extent of this was difficult to

measure as some consultees noted that councillors already enjoyed good working relationships in certain council chambers;

- the relationships between councillors and social partners are not consistent. The sense from consultations was that in most LSPs the relationships between councillors and social partners are generally strong, however there are a number where there are significant degrees of friction. In one case this was explained to be due to concern over the mandate of particular social partners;

■ **need to invest in building relationships:**

- the need to invest in relationship building was highlighted by Departmental officials and social partners. In particular there remained significant scope for developing continuity of relationships, particularly given the size of meetings, their relative infrequency (MCs and RPB) and member turnover (certain LSPs).

1.9 Changes in Attitudes and Potential Implications for the Future

The key conclusions with regard to changes in attitudes toward social partner input are:

- a significant number of survey respondents felt that the attitude towards social partner input had grown more positive (n=31), as compared to a few (n=2) who felt it had become more negative; and
- as outlined in the previous section this positive inertia is in line with views from consultations which reported development and consolidation of relationships between all sectors and social partners.

Looking to the future role / influence of social partners it was concluded that:

- there is a moderate majority who would like to see the role and influence of social partners to increase within the partnership bodies. Non-social partners were evenly split on this;
- in consultations central department officials all spoke of engagement with social partners as something that was important and something that would continue in the future, in line with broader government policy. This included engagement outside the parameters of EU structures (for example Agri-Rural Forum and EDF);
- central and local Government officials largely took the view that appropriate access mechanisms would be in place, outside of EU structures for social partner engagement; and
- the reduction of EU structures remains a considerable concern for social partners with regard to how they perceive it will reduce their influence on the public policy process.

1.10 Lessons learned for Wider European Context

Our key conclusions here are as follows:

- Northern Ireland has suffered from a polarised society and a number of decades of inter-community and intra-community violence. The EU Peace programme has focussed on addressing peace and reconciliation through a range of support measures within NI. The inclusion of social partners within the implementing structures of this programme has helped bring economic and social focus to processes. This economic and social focus has allowed fuller engagement from political representatives from opposing sides of the political spectrum;
- it is widely accepted that there has been some degree of “democratic deficit” in Northern Ireland. The challenges and shortcomings of representative democracy within a conflict / post-conflict society created additional space and need for participative democracy provided by partnerships, such as those within this study;
- the inclusion of social partners within processes can provide access and relationships with target communities and sectors which government departments and agencies struggle to engage with, including communities that have suffered significantly from the conflict; and
- social partners need to present themselves to others in partnerships in a transparent manner with regard to their selection, feedback and accountability mechanisms.

1.11 Recommendations for Social Partnership in NI

Following from these conclusions there are a number of recommendations for social partners within Northern Ireland.

Strategic recommendations:

- at present a significant amount of social partner engagement takes place within partnership structures tied into EU programmes. With the future of EU programmes uncertain it is important that Concordia and the social partners use research such as this study to articulate the value they can add to public policy processes in non-EU arenas and particularly how they can add value to local processes, especially in community planning and community relations, in a post-RPA local government environment; and
- social partners need to be realistic that there is a desire to normalise local politics and a subsequent desire to involve local representative politics more fully in decision making. It is therefore important that Concordia and its social partners are prepared to articulate how participative democracy, for example through the partnership bodies covered in this research, complements representative democracy offered through fully elected bodies.

Operational recommendations:

- it is recognised that Concordia development activities are open to all partnership members, not just social partners. With evidence of variable contributions from both social partners and elected and statutory members of some partnerships, we recommend that this practice, of making such support open to all, is continued and is marketed clearly so that all members are aware of this;
- it is recommended that Concordia work on ensuring that processes regarding selection of social partners onto partnership bodies, and processes for feeding back to constituencies are in place for social partners, are understood by social partners and are made clear to all partnership members and secretariats including non-social partners; and
- whilst the longer term future of EU structures is uncertain, it is recommended that social partners bodies continue to make the most out of the current membership opportunities on EU structures, including the RPB, which provides an opportunity for engagement with senior civil servants and with the Minister. It is recommended that Concordia consider presenting the key issues raised in this study to social partners in the various bodies as recognition of their effort, but also to restate the role they are to play on their respective bodies, namely to:
 - provide sectoral expertise;
 - provide an independent challenge function;
 - provide connection and access to target groups and sectors; and
 - develop partnerships and relationships that can be continued outside the confines of the formal partnership.

EU Recommendation:

- Concordia engage with DG Regio to ensure that the story of social partner engagement in Northern Ireland is acknowledged, and also to offer the lessons of social partner engagement, especially to regions with programmes that are addressing comparable societal issues, for example a polarised political environment or a post-conflict situation.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Deloitte was commissioned in April 2005 by Concordia to undertake research into the impact and experience of the Social Partners (that is the agri-rural, business, community and voluntary and trade union sectors) in relation to the Peace II programme within Northern Ireland.

2.2 Project Requirements

The specific requirements of the research, as set out in the tender documents, are to:

- examine the contribution made by NI social partners to the Peace II programme;
- identify the major achievements and outputs of social partner participation in the Peace II programme;
- evaluate the processes involved and how they have evolved from the onset of Peace II;
- examine the relationships and degree of partnership working which has evolved between and within the following groups:
 - social partners;
 - statutory agencies;
 - local government;
 - central government;
- examine social partner changes in attitudes from the onset of Peace II to date and comment on possible implications for the future;
- identify the lessons learned and highlight recommendations for social partnership in general in NI; and
- through a number of case studies examine wider social partner networks /structures commenting on how they were established, their reporting mechanisms and relationships with government.

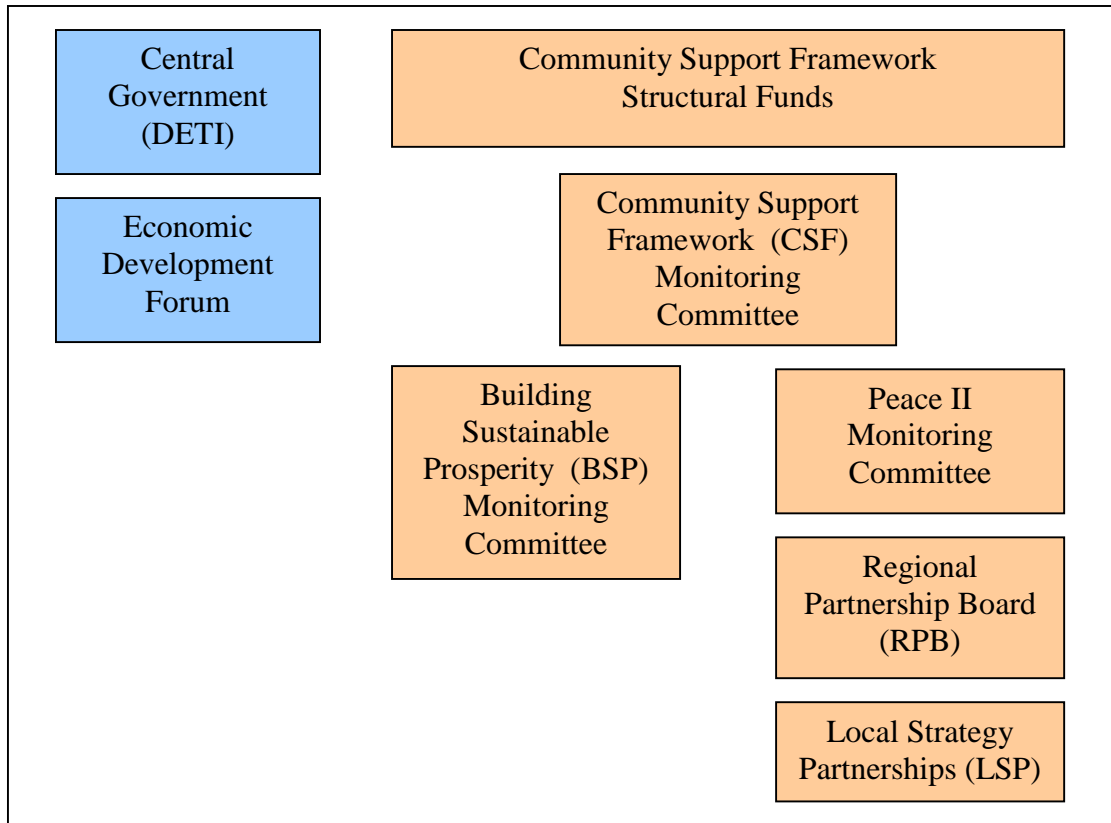
Discussion regarding the terms of reference in the project initiation meeting highlighted that the scope for the assignment should also include:

- social partner involvement relating to the BSP and CSF Monitoring Committees;
- social partner involvement relating to the Economic Development Forum; and
- how the lessons learned could apply in a European wide context.

2.3 Project Scope

In reference to the project requirements, Figure 1.1 illustrates the structures that are within the scope of this study (although lessons learned can be applied to the wider social partnership context).

Figure 1.1
Scope of Structures



2.4 Methodology

The various stages undertaken in this assignment are highlighted in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1
Methodology

Stage	Activities
Project Launch	Clarification and agreement of project requirements with the Steering Group.
Consultations	A total of 20 consultations with Social Partners and with stakeholder organisations were undertaken. The consultations undertaken in this element are listed in Appendix One.
Case Studies	Four case studies were undertaken of the following bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Derry LSP - Larne LSP - Northern Ireland Regional Partnership Board - Economic Development Forum <p>The case studies included consultations with chairs, social partner and non-social partner members and secretariat.</p>
Focus Groups	Focus groups with LSP members were undertaken. The Focus Groups were open to all LSP Board members.
Questionnaire Survey	A questionnaire was distributed to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BSP, Peace II and CSF Monitoring Committee members - LSP Chairs - LSP Officers - LSP Members attending Focus Groups <p>A copy of the questionnaire is attached at Appendix Two.</p>
Analysis and reporting	Analysis of findings and development of conclusions and recommendations.

2.5 Report Structure

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 3 – Strategic Context. This section gives an overview of the strategic context within which social partners are operating within Northern Ireland;
- Section 4 – High Level Analysis – This section provides a high level analysis of social partner participation and impact across all the bodies within scope, based upon survey results and consultation.
- Section 5 – This section looks specifically at social partner contribution and impact on Peace II, BSP and CSF Monitoring Committees;
- Section 6 – This section analyses social partner contribution and impact on Regional Partnership Board;
- Section 7 – This section looks specifically at social partner contribution and impact on Local Strategy Partnerships;
- Section 8 – This section considers social partner participation and impact on the Economic Development Forum, a body operating out of central government, unrelated to EU funding; and
- Section 9 – Conclusions and Recommendations – These will draw on all the findings and be arranged in line with the terms of reference and will include a section considering the strategic positioning of social partners going forward.

3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the key strategic issues that are most relevant to the experience of social partners in Northern Ireland. These are:

- social partnership and public policy - rationale;
- social partnership model in Northern Ireland;
- decline of European funding;
- Review of Public Administration; and,
- previous research – mid-term evaluation of LSPs.

3.2 Social Partnership and Public Policy - Rationale

The principle of social partner involvement in the public policy decision-making process dates back many years, with the earliest scholarly references relating to the Austrian *Sozialpartnerschaft* in the late 1940s. However the level of engagement, role and influence of social partners have varied greatly since that time.

The social partnership model adopted by Concordia in NI reflects that developed at an EU level over the course of the nineties. In the years running up to the 1997 agreement of the Amsterdam Treaty, a ‘European development model’ was conceptualised by the Commission, identifying strong employment levels as fundamental to combating social problems and suggesting that social partnership could assist in addressing employment issues. In this context the ‘social partners’ were defined as trade unions and employers’ organisations (and agricultural representatives as an important element of both) – providing for sectoral representation in addition to elected representation in the public decision-making process.

This recognition of the partnership principle led to the development of the EU Employment Strategy, the EU Social Protocol and the EU Social Action Plan, all of which bestow considerable power and responsibilities to social partners at the EU decision-making level and encourage Member States to also adopt the principle at a national level. The Treaty of Amsterdam then went on to firmly entrench social partnership in the European social development model.

Concordia was formed (on a more informal basis) in the mid-nineties, and opted to include the community and voluntary sector as an additional pillar within social partnership, building upon the EU model. The Concordia approach very clearly sought to use social partnership as a mechanism in bringing sectoral representation to the social development decision-making process in NI. Concordia's aim is therefore to:

“drive forward social and economic development for the benefit of the whole community by becoming more outward looking and by achieving long term sustainability.”

The literature surrounding social partnership suggests that the potential benefits of the approach are far reaching. However the most frequently cited rationales for social partnership within public decision-making relate to the value it can add in the following areas:

- provision of an independent challenge function;
- bringing decision making closer to the coal-face, making the process more inclusive and transparent;
- bringing sectoral expertise and knowledge, which government may not possess, to the process; and
- provision of connections and access to certain target groups and sectors.

Later sections consider the evidence as to whether the social partners have added value in these regards to the EU programmes in Northern Ireland.

3.3 Social Partnership in Northern Ireland

The position of social partners in Northern Ireland should be analysed within the historical and contemporary political environment.

Direct rule has been in operation since the suspension of the NI Assembly in 2002 and the apparent political “impasse” (heightened by the recent polarisation of political representation in the 2005 Westminster election), continues to limit the influence of locally elected representatives on local decision making, and this is frequently referred to as NI's continuing “democratic deficit”. However, the literature would suggest that across all democratic societies elected representatives often find it difficult to adequately represent their individual constituents' interests and sectoral interests simultaneously. Therefore although social partners are active in public policy processes elsewhere, it should be recognised that the political backdrop in Northern Ireland has arguably heightened the need and created additional space for the involvement of social partners in decision making processes.

It should also be noted that various other mechanisms, which could arguably be considered forms of social partnership, have been established in NI in order to increase the local accountability of public decision-making. These include:

- public representation on the Boards of “quangos”. It is debatable the extent to which this mechanism represented a form of social partnership as these individuals were usually selected as individuals rather than sectoral representatives;

- several commentators have highlighted that the government influence over the appointment process reduced the level of confidence in how representative and independent the membership of “quango” Boards could be; and
- the Civic Forum was set-up to offer advice to the devolved Executive on social, economic and cultural matters. The Forum included significant representation from the social pillars represented by Concordia as well as from other sectors¹. Whilst some argued that the Civic Forum was not provided with sufficient resources, was too distant from real policy making and didn’t impact at a local level, others maintained its suspension, simultaneous with the suspension of the Assembly, was a loss to the social partner model in Northern Ireland.

However, the formalised social partnership model that Concordia represents (built upon the wider European social partnership model) came into force in the mid-nineties and since then has been predominantly promulgated through the delivery of EU structural funding within NI and the border counties of Ireland. This assignment focuses purely upon the Concordia social partnership model.

The process of formalising this model has been assisted by the Peace II programme, both in terms of the significance attached to partnership in the programme’s delivery structure, and in terms of direct development funding. Concordia has received funding through the Peace II programme to deliver a project called “Partnership for Progress” which aims to develop the influence and capacity of social partners in NI. Concordia’s is made up of:

- Confederation of British Industry (CBI) – business pillar;
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) – community and voluntary pillar;
- Northern Ireland Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC/ICTU) – trade union pillar; and
- Ulster Farmers Union (UFU) – agri-rural pillar.

The highest level strategic document in Northern Ireland - the Programme for Government (currently entitled Priorities and Plans / Budgets post Assembly suspension) has to some degree articulated a view of the Social Partners with regard to central governance. This includes the following:

- the 2001-2004 Programme for Government stated the Executive will develop its links with the *social partners* and other organisations to improve both the process of policy development and of service delivery;
- the 2002-2005 Programme for Government stated “We also recognise that an exclusively top-down approach to administration is neither desirable nor effective. Working together with our social partners ...will help us tackle some of our greatest challenges. In particular the community and voluntary sector has a key role to play in working with Government in the social sphere

¹ “The Civic Forum membership consisted voluntary, business, agriculture, trade union, education, culture, community relations and fisheries sectors.” (Quoted from OFMDFM web site).

and the business sector in helping us shape economic policy.” It also highlighted working in partnership with social partners as a sub-priority for government;

- Priorities and Plans 2003-2006 restated the desire to build stronger partnerships with social partners, describing this as a cross-cutting theme rather than a sub-priority;
- Priorities and Budget 2004-2006 stated “the government was keen to build on progress made under devolution with *social partners*”; and
- most recently in Priorities and Budget 2005-2008 the Government state that they will develop a strategy document putting forward a framework for economic policy development “in cooperation with the *social partners*”.

These statements demonstrate that Northern Ireland’s devolved government and direct rule have shown commitment to engaging social partners within public decision making, and indeed to further develop this process. Perhaps the most notable commitment was made in the then NI Minister of Finance’s 2001 speech to the NI Assembly, introducing a role for LSPs in the 2001-06 period that went beyond EU structural funding:

“the partnership approach can, and I believe will, be extended with new dimensions to gain increasing influence on the way we do business, They will have a vision and purpose which will last well beyond the horizons of the Peace II programme....In the context of the new institutions, I see an opportunity for the partnership process to be widened and deepened at both regional and local level. We do not want the partnership approach to be confined to European funding, nor do we want it to wither away when that source of income has ceased. The whole purpose of our approach is to increase the scope and significance of decision-making at the local level.”

However, as highlighted in the 2004 mid-term evaluation of LSPs completed by Deloitte (see section 3.6), the extent of political support for the LSP model (and its significant social partner constituency) has become less clear with the suspension of the NI Assembly.

3.4 European Funding

The principle of involving Northern Ireland’s social partners in EU programmes dates back to the late 1980s. The basic tenet was to deliver EU funding through open and inclusive structures that drew in the local knowledge and expertise of relevant social partners alongside that of the legislative and executive arms of government.

The need to be transparent and inclusive was considered especially important in the case of the Peace programme given its desired impacts at grass roots level.

EU Regulation 1260 / 1999 in requiring the inclusion of social partners, stated in paragraph 27:

“in order to ensure significant added value, partnership should be strengthened; whereas this concerns the regional and local authorities, the other competent authorities, including those responsible for environment and

those responsible for the promotion of equality between men and women, the economic and social partners and other competent bodies; whereas the relevant partners shall be associated in the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of assistance.”

This placed a legislative requirement upon Member states to engage the social partners in EU funding delivery, ensuring that they were “associated in the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of assistance”.

Social partner influence within NI’s EU programme development and delivery has increased significantly since the late 1980s (far exceeding social partner influence in NI’s *domestic* policy-making). However, over recent years NI’s GDP per capita has continued to increase and the EU has expanded to include ten new [net beneficiary] Member States. Both these issues have significant implications regarding future EU funding levels within NI. Although the exact impact is as yet unknown, it is clear that when the current financial perspective expires in 2006, NI will move out of the highest funding bracket. It is also unclear if the Peace II programme will be replaced with a similar additional package (beyond the extension to 2006). It is therefore also unclear exactly how social partnership will be built into NI’s EU funding delivery mechanisms post-2006 or how significant EU funding’s influence will be in NI’s future socio-economic development.

3.5 Review of Public Administration

The Review of Public Administration (RPA) in Northern Ireland was launched in 2002, and was a key action from the Programme for Government, highlighting the need for a review of structures under devolution.

The scope of the review includes:

- councils;
- health boards and trusts;
- education boards; and
- seventy-nine other bodies including Tribunals, advisory public bodies and executive public bodies.

The most directly relevant issue for social partners with regard to the scope of this research is the proposed rationalisation of councils and the relationship of this to the LSP structures. The present RPA consultation (closing September 2005) includes options for 7, 11 and 15 local government bodies. As well as numerical rationalisation, there is likely to be a revision of role. In particular it is possible that the new council structures will have a remit for community planning, and also an enhanced community relations role (in line with the Shared Future strategy). Whilst there are no recommendations within the RPA as to how the re-organised bodies would meet these responsibilities there is potential for development of a process which includes social partnership.

With regard to timescale, former and current plans are to commence implementation in 2006 with the election for new council structures planned in 2009.

3.6 Previous Research – Mid-Term Evaluation of LSPs

During 2003 and 2004 Deloitte undertook a significant research study with relevance to social partners. The *Mid-Term Evaluation of Local Strategy Partnerships* considered all twenty-six LSPs and the NIRPB in its research. The key findings of note for social partners were the following:

- the vast majority of LSP boards felt that they had the right blend of people and balance in terms of background. The only significant representation issue related to young people;
- the majority of LSP boards suggested that there are simply too many local partnerships (LSPs and beyond) for parent organisations to send representation to, and this presented some recruitment/retention problems;
- the problem of vacancies was more pronounced for social partners relative to non-social partners. The issue of there being too many partnerships to resource applied to all social partner groups, and this was reflected in a notable failure of agri-rural and trade union organisations to nominate members for a significant number of LSPs. On the community/voluntary and business sides, nomination was not such a problem, but retention appeared to be more difficult, however, overall these vacancies were not deemed to be having a significant negative impact upon LSP activity;
- related to this resource issue, one of the report recommendations was a need to consolidate local partnerships (beyond the Peace II programme) in order to avoid ‘choking’ the approach;
- evidence suggested that the LSP boards are quite cohesive units and that the majority of sectoral opinions were being listened to. Two-thirds of board members did not feel that their LSP is dominated by any sector. In the other cases there was some evidence to suggest that it was the locally elected and/or community/voluntary sectors that were dominating;
- the views amongst social partners were that community/voluntary representatives were generally relatively happy with the level of influence which they had within their boards, and very few felt that they had been dominated by locally elected representatives. Other social partner representatives were more likely to feel that the Council dominated decision-making within the LSP. However a third of the locally elected representatives felt that the community/voluntary sector had too much influence over LSP decision-making;
- the slow establishment of the NIRPB caused significant opportunities to be missed in three main areas: strategic feedback, best practice and strategic influence. A significant need was still evident in relation to the latter two areas; and (as noted in previous section)
- the extent of political support for the LSP model (and its significant social partner constituency) has become less clear.

Therefore whilst not focussing on the role of social partners, findings from this research highlight a mixture of strengths (representation and influence) and challenges (vacant posts, resources, some perceived imbalance, role of NIRPB and future of LSP structure) with regard to two of the significant mechanisms facilitating social partner participation, namely LSPs and NIRPB, that are being considered within this study.

4. OVERARCHING ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This section presents high level results and analysis from the survey of members of the Monitoring Committees, the Regional Partnership Board, LSP Officers and LSP Chairpersons, and our qualitative consultations to provide an overarching picture of social partner contribution and impact. The high level analysis undertaken in this section is complemented by the more detailed analysis of the specific partnership bodies presented in subsequent sections.

4.2 Scale of Participation

Focussing on the Peace programme, Table 4.1 presents the number of social partner representatives who are members of the Peace II Monitoring Committee, the Regional Partnership Board and the LSPs.

Table 4.1
Contribution of NI Social Partners to the Peace II Programme

Peace II Body / Structure	Number of Social Partner Members	% of overall membership
Monitoring Committee	8	25%
Regional Partnership Board	16	50%
Local Strategy Partnerships (26)	329	50%

Overall there are over 350 social partner representatives involved across these bodies.

It is also noted that social partner inputs are not limited to basic membership of these bodies. Additionally social partners have participated as chairs, vice-chairs and members of sub-committees, working groups and assessment panels.

The following sections will provide greater detail on this varied participation. The section addressing Monitoring Committees will include participation on Peace II, BSP and CSF Monitoring Committees.

4.3 Role of Social Partners

Although consultees highlighted a wide range of roles fulfilled by social partners, the most frequently cited could be summarised as follows:

- independent challenge function;
- sectoral expertise and knowledge;
- giving a voice to sectors in decision-making;

- access to certain target groups and sectors;
- inclusion of sectors and groups in decision making; and
- buy-in of sectors and groups.

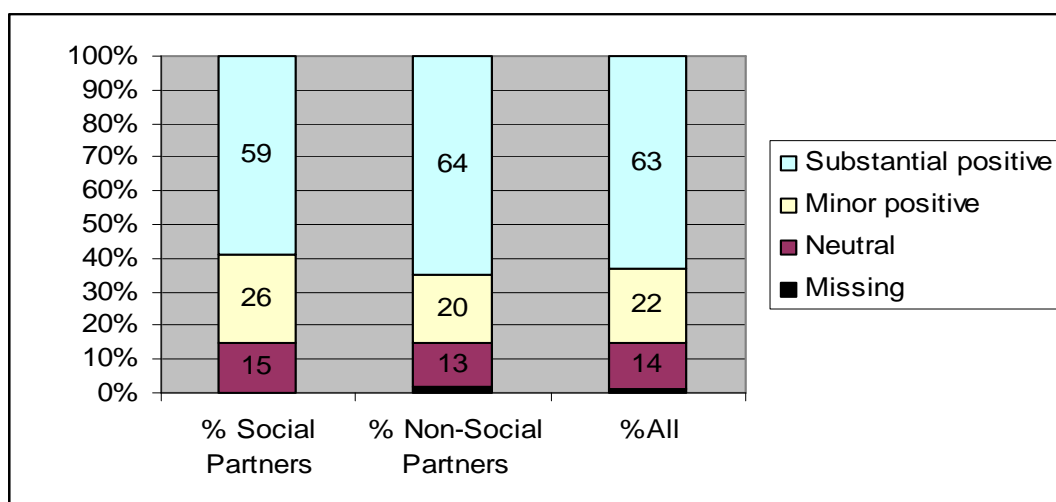
There was some variance in the importance of the issues listed above according to the EU body under consideration. For example, access to target groups was vital at the LSP level, but it was a less significant role within the RPB given its more strategic role. These issues are picked up in more detail in the following sections.

4.4 Impact on Effectiveness and Efficiency

Figure 4.1 illustrates views on social partner impact on effectiveness.

Figure 4.1

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon effectiveness overall?



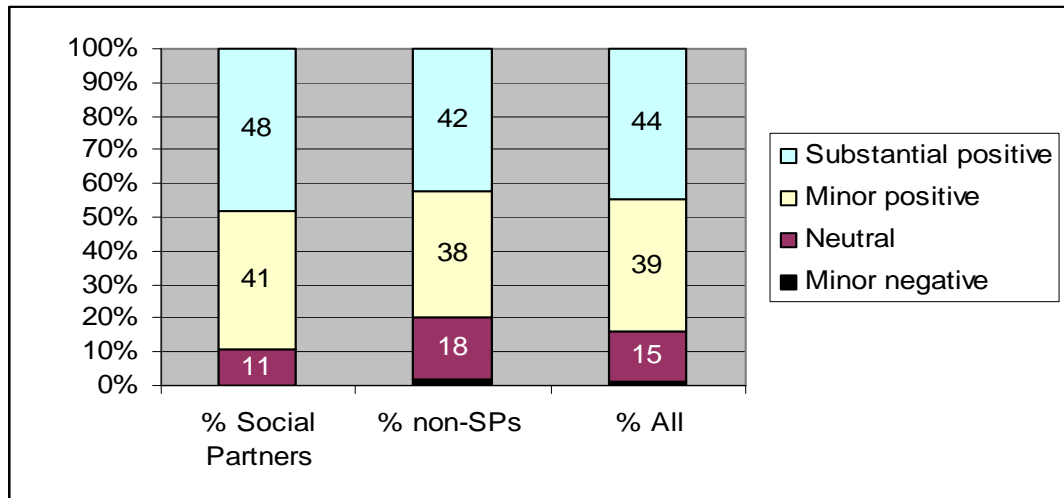
Source: Survey (SPs = 27, Non-SPs = 45, All = 72)

The majority of survey respondents (63 per cent) felt that social partner participation had resulted in a substantial positive impact on effectiveness, with a further 22 per cent stating social partners had had a minor positive impact. Interestingly, non-social partner² consultees were more likely to think that substantial positive impacts had been achieved than social partner consultees. No survey respondents felt that social partners had had a negative impact on effectiveness.

² Non-social partners - central government, local government, LSP officers and councillors

Figure 4.2

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon efficiency overall



Source: Survey (SPs = 27, Non-SPs = 45, All = 72)

Figure 4.2 illustrates that the most frequent response was that social partner participation has made a substantial positive impact (44 per cent), followed by a minor positive impact (39 per cent) with regard to the efficiency of the forum. Social partners were marginally more positive regarding impact on efficiency than non-social partners. Only one respondent, a non-social partner, felt there was a negative impact on efficiency.

Overall the impact on effectiveness and efficiency was considered to be positive, particularly so for effectiveness. This was reflected in qualitative feedback in consultations as well. The key reasons given included:

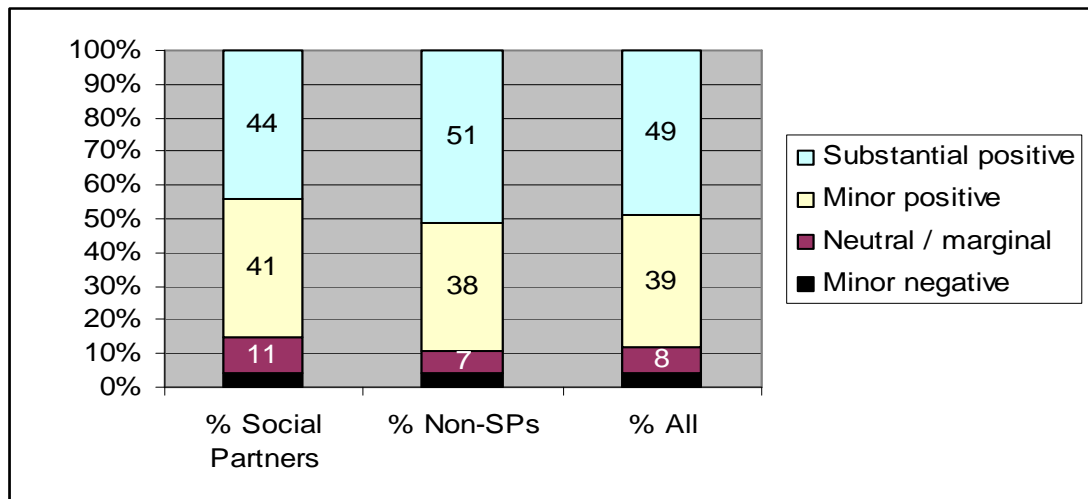
- provision of a “reality check” through their deeper knowledge of groups and sectors;
- provision of a challenge function at an early stage within the decision making process;
- social partners acting as “glue facilitating discussion, debate and information without being hamstrung by political agenda”;
- increased transparency to the process;
- credibility facilitating access to certain groups and sectors; and
- participation and commitment in a voluntary capacity.

4.5 Impact of Social Partners in Tailoring Decisions to meet Local or Sectoral Needs

Figure 4.3 shows views with regard to how social partners have impacted upon tailoring partnership interventions.

Figure 4.3

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon tailoring the partnerships interventions appropriately to meet local / sectoral needs



Source: Survey (SPs = 27, Non-SPs = 45, All = 72)

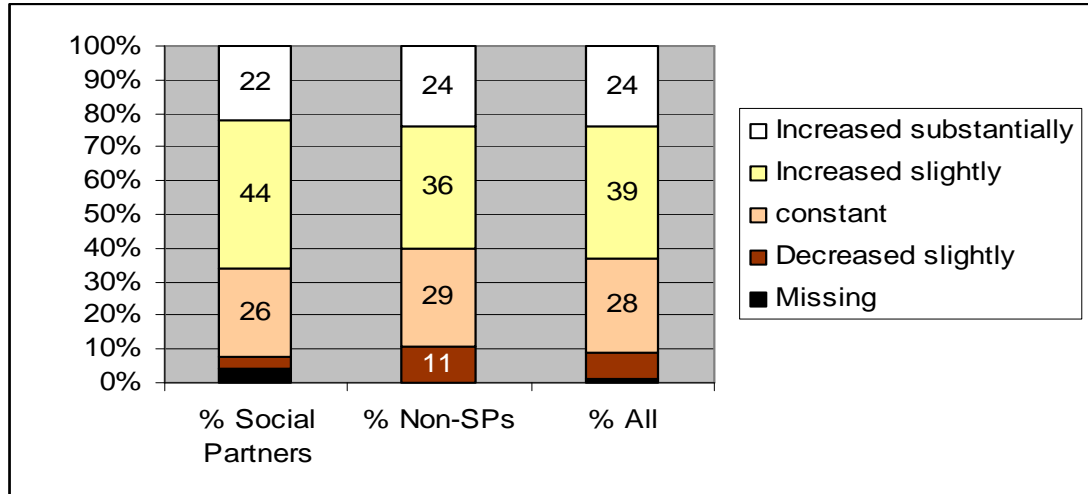
Almost half the survey respondents (49 per cent) thought that social partners had had a substantial positive impact with regard to tailoring interventions appropriately, with more (39 per cent) thinking there was a minor positive impact. Notably over half of non-social partners answered “substantial positive impact”, but even this was only a slightly stronger validation than from social partner respondents. Only four per cent (two statutory and one social partner respondents) thought there was a minor negative impact in this regard.

Again these positive survey results were complemented by positive feedback through consultations. Consultees commonly said that the inclusion of social partners within the discussion at the various bodies created a stronger process, and hence produced more robust decisions. Whilst particular examples are drawn out in later sections, consultees reported a number of instances where social partners had brought significant programme delivery issues to the attention of boards which would otherwise have gone unidentified. This included the need to better access low capacity groups. Social partners were key to highlighting this issue, as they had links to the groups that had previously experienced barriers to accessing the support available. In support of this social partners were subsequently engaged within the processes for simplification of application forms and increasing the opportunity to access small grants.

4.6 Change in Impact Over Time

Figure 4.4

Do you feel the overall level of value added by social partners has changed since it was established?



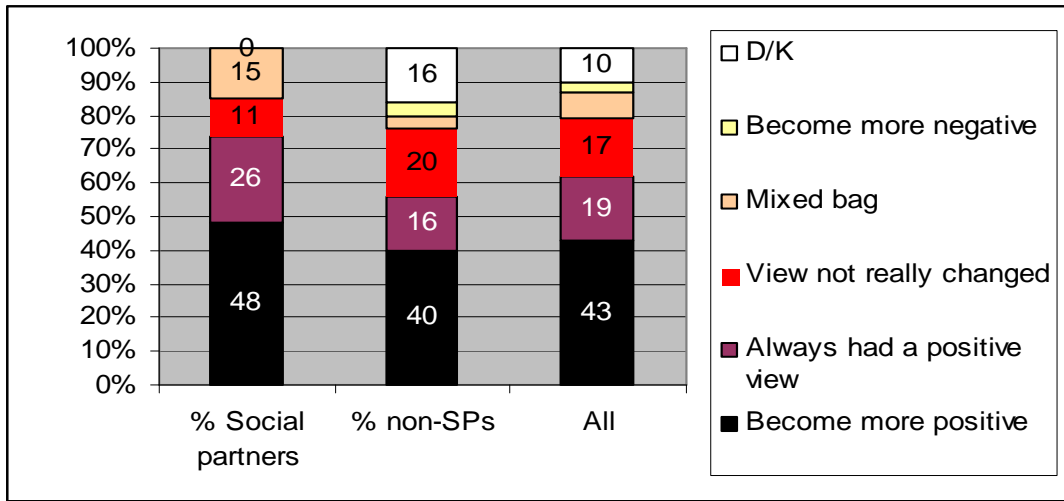
Source: Survey (SPs = 27, Non-SPs = 45, All = 72)

Figure 4.4 shows a majority of survey respondents felt that the overall level of value added by social partners has increased either slightly or substantially. A marginally higher proportion of social partners (66 per cent) thought value added had increased compared to non-social partner respondents (60 per cent). Consultations indicate that this increase in value added was due to some increase in capacity on the part of the social partners as they got used to the partnership structures, but more often due to the process of building better relationships and better partnership working between the broader membership, including social partners. This is highlighted below in the views on changing attitudes to social partner input.

Of the six respondents (eight per cent of total respondents) who thought the value added by social partners had decreased, five were statutory and one was a social partner. This may be explained by the view from a number of consultees that at LSP level the interest and commitment of some social partner representatives waned once all funding had been allocated.

Figure 4.5

Do you feel the attitudes of other members have changed towards social partner input since the MC/RPB/LSP was established?



Source: Survey (SPs = 27, Non-SPs = 45, All = 72)

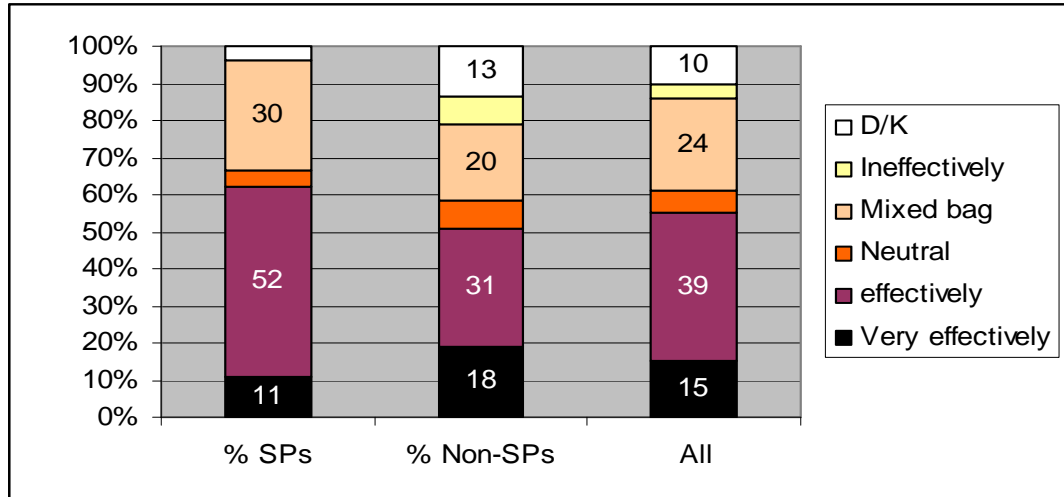
The increase in value added (discussed above) may be closely related to a building of trust and confidence reflected in the development of more positive relationships, as highlighted in consultations and as recorded by a significant number of respondents (43 per cent) (illustrated in Figure 4.5). This compared to those saying relationships had become more negative (three per cent) or that there were a ‘mixed bag’ of attitudes (eight per cent). This is in line with views from consultations which reported development and consolidation of relationships between all sectors and social partners, increasing trust and confidence and facilitating stronger contributions from social partners within the working of the partnership.

4.7 Representation and Accountability

Figure 4.6 illustrates views on how well social partners are “plugged into their constituency”.

Figure 4.6

How well do you feel social partners are plugged into their constituency?

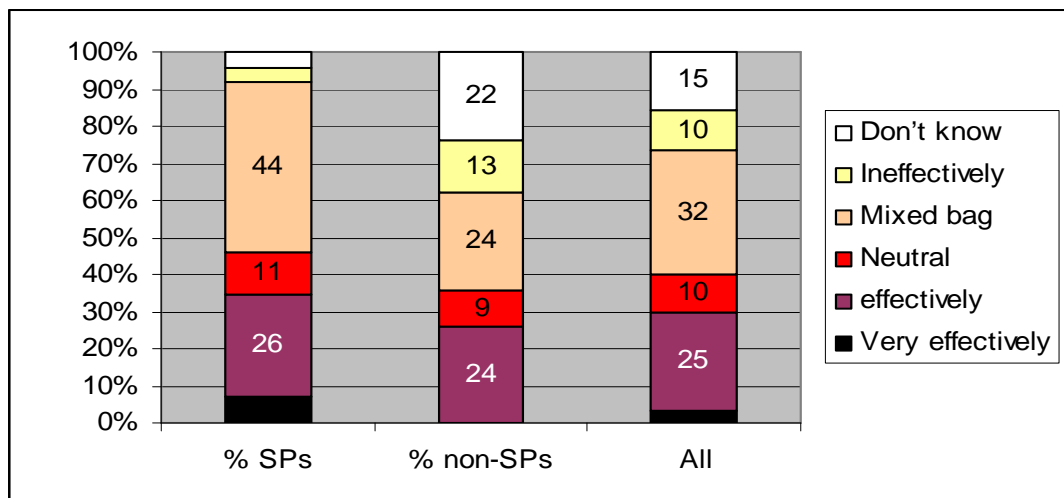


Source: Survey Respondents (SPs = 27, Non-SPs = 45, All = 72)

Amongst survey respondents, 54 per cent felt that social partners were effectively (39 per cent) or very effectively (15 per cent) plugged into their constituency. Non-social partners (49 per cent) were not as strong in this commendation as social partners (63 per cent). Additionally there were a significant number that responded ‘ineffectively’ (four per cent), ‘mixed bag’ (24 per cent) and ‘don’t know’ (10 per cent).

Figure 4.7

To what extent do you feel social partners feedback to their constituency?



Source: Survey Respondents (SPs = 27, Non-SPs = 45, All = 72)

With regard to feedback to constituencies, Figure 4.7 shows there were only a minority of respondents who felt social partners fed-back effectively or very effectively (28 per cent). This compares with those who responded 'mixed bag' (32 per cent), 'ineffective' or 'very ineffective' (14 per cent), and 'don't know' (15 per cent).

Eight out of the 10 responding that feedback was ineffective were non-social partners. The numbers feeling there was a 'mixed bag' suggest a significant inconsistency across social partners in this regard. Notably a higher proportion of social partners as opposed to statutory respondents described feedback as a 'mixed bag'. Ten out of the eleven respondents saying they did not know the extent of feedback were non-social partners.

It is noted that amongst all the feed back, both through the survey and the qualitative consultations, this issue provided the most mixed results. The response from both non social-partners and social partners suggested that feedback processes are inconsistent and are not transparent. These issues are addressed in greater detail in the following sections, as their degree of importance and practicality is partly determined by the level of body (i.e.. it is easier to feedback to people in a local area, which might be the remit for someone on a LSP, compared to feeding back to a sector right across NI which might be perceived as a required function of Monitoring Committee members).

It should also be pointed out that while the questionnaire probed the extent to which social partners are representative of and accountable to their constituencies, the same query was raised by a number of consultees regarding feedback from statutory and elected representatives. The following queries were raised:

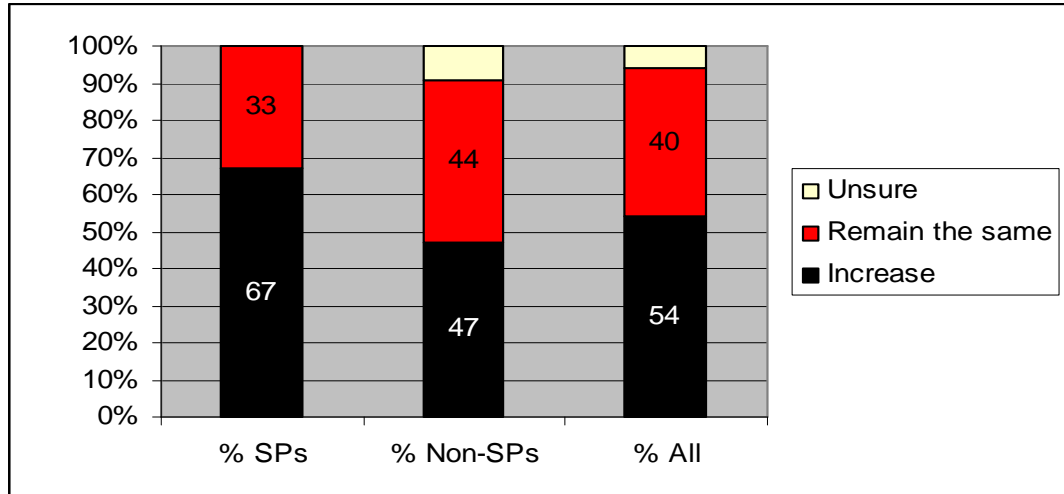
- to what extent do Councillors update their Councils on partnership activity?;
- to what extent do Councillors bring back whole-Council opinion to the partnership? (as opposed to their constituency's opinion); and
- to what extent do statutory representatives feedback to their top management (including Ministers) and take on board the tax payer's opinion to feed back into the partnership's operation.

These issues were raised in the context of asking why such high expectations are often placed upon social partners while these consultees felt that the same requirements were not applied to non-social partner representatives.

4.8 Future Role / Influence

Figure 4.8

How would you like to see the role / influence of the social partners change within the partnership in future?



Source: Survey Respondents (n=72)

Figure 4.8 shows the majority of attitudes toward social partner input are perceived to have always been positive or to have become more positive, and there is a similar moderate majority who would like to see the role and influence of social partners to increase within the partnership bodies. In total the majority of respondents (54 per cent) wanted the role and influence of the social partners to increase. Non-social partners were marginally less supportive of this as almost half said the role and influence should remain the same (44 per cent) or were unsure (9 per cent).

It was notable in consultations that the simple opportunity to meet regularly on partnerships was generally considered a good thing by almost all consultees. It was notable that central department officials all spoke of engagement with social partners as something that was important and something that would continue, in line with broader government policy.

One Social Partner organisation highlighted that it was keen for social partners to be involved in mainstream governance, not just EU governance, suggesting “an increased role for social partners would create stronger government”. Central and local Government officials largely took the view that appropriate access mechanisms would be in place, outside of EU structures for social partner engagement. However the potential reduction in influence of EU structures remains a considerable concern for social partners.

4.9 Summary of Findings

The overarching view on social partner contribution to EU programme structures was generally a positive one. There are strong results from our survey and positive feedback from consultations with regard to:

- impact on effectiveness;
- impact on efficiency;
- impact on tailoring decisions to meet local or sector needs;
- increase in impact overtime; and
- improved attitudes towards the input of social partners.

However there is a more mixed picture with regard to:

- how well social partners are plugged in to their constituency; and
- how well social partners feedback to their constituency.

There is agreement amongst consultees that social partner inclusion within the public policy process is highly likely to continue in NI at least at the current level (including statutory consultees). However there is perhaps a slight misalignment of views on how that inclusion will be achieved in future. Statutory consultees tended to feel that regardless of what EU structures exist post-2006, there will be adequate social partner inclusion in the public policy process, *including* domestic policy issues. On the other hand, social partner consultees tended to feel that their domestic policy influence was limited, and had significant concerns that with much reduced EU-funding levels post-2006, overall social partner influence on public policy decisions would be substantially reduced in NI.

5. MONITORING COMMITTEES

5.1 Introduction

Article 35 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260 /1999 addresses the issue of Monitoring Committees, stating that “each Community support framework or single programming document and each operational programme shall be supervised by a Monitoring Committee”. The Monitoring Committee (MC) is “to satisfy itself as to the effectiveness and quality of the implementation of assistance.” Therefore the MCs are primarily to monitor the implementation of the programmes.

The three MCs considered in this study are those for the Peace II programme, BSP programme and the overarching CSF.

The structure of this section is as follows:

- participation of social partners in MCs;
- role of social partners in MCs; and
- impact of social partners in MCs.

The analysis regarding the participation is largely based on desk research, whilst the role and impact analysis also draws in information from our consultations and survey.

5.2 Participation

Membership of the Peace II MC is show in the Table below. Due to the cross-border nature of the programme, there is matching representations from NI and RoI. The Peace II MC meets quarterly and is chaired by SEUPB.

Table 5.1
Peace II MC

Sector	EU Bodies	NI	RoI	Total
Chair	1			1
Social Partners		4	4	8
Government Departments (Paying Authorities)		5	5	10
Horizontal Priorities		2	2	4
Regional Interests / local government		4	4	8
Total Members				31
Advisors	2	10	10	22
Observers				4

The BSP Monitoring Committee is different in structure, largely as it does not have a cross-border remit. The structure, as presented in its Rules of Procedure, is presented below.

Table 5.2
BSP MC

Sector	Number	Representatives
Chair	1	DFP
Deputy Chair	1	OFMDFM
Social Partners	4	Four sectors
Government Departments (Paying Authorities)	3	ESF, ERDF, EAGGF / FIFG
Horizontal Priorities	2	Equality and Environment
Sub-regional (local government)	4	Elected representatives
Total Members	15	
Advisers		European Commission, NI Departments,
Observers		DTI, IFI

The make-up of the CSF Monitoring Committee is presented below. The CSF meets twice a year, and is charged with supervising BSP and Peace II MCs and reporting on the progress of NI Community Initiatives. A Co-ordination Steering Group will be established under the auspices of the CSF Monitoring Committee, which will promote co-ordination across these interventions.

Table 5.3
CSF MC

Sector	Number	Representatives
Chair	1	Minister of Finance & Personnel
Deputy Chair	1	Junior Minister OFM/DFM
Chairs of Programme MCs	2	Peace II and BSP Chairs (SEUPB and DFP)
Social Partners	4	
Paying Authorities	3	ESF, ERDF, EAGGF/FIFG
Horizontal Priorities	2	Equality and Environment
Sub-regional (local government)	5	
Total Members	18	
Advisers		European Commission, NI Departments,
Observers		DTI, IFI

In total therefore, across the MCs, there are 16 places for Social Partners, 12 of these from Northern Ireland. This compares with 17 places for local government and sub-regional interests, 16 for government departments and paying authorities, 8 places for horizontal priorities.

Overall, when including Chairs and Deputy Chairs, **Social Partners account for 25 per cent of member positions on the CSF, BSP and Peace II MCs**, which is comparable with local government (25 per cent) and central government (25 per cent), albeit if chairs and vice-chairs are included within Central Government then it becomes the most represented sector with almost 40 per cent of members. However the horizontal principles' representatives are arguably more akin to social partners than statutory and hence could add significant influence to the social partner representation on the MCs.

It should also be noted that there is a significant number of additional attendees in the form of observers and advisers. The bulk of these are representatives from government Departments. In the case of Peace II there are often over 50 people attending the MC meeting, including representatives from each of the NI and RoI government departments. In consultations there was some concern with the numbers attending, with views including that these people did not add any value to the meeting, and some suggestion that the presence of the larger number of officials, even though not there as members, tended to stifle rather than add to discussion and debate.

5.2.1 Monitoring Committee Working Groups

Social partner members have participated in all working groups and have taken chairing roles in several, including Information Society (Community & Voluntary representative), Communications and Information (Business representative) and Distinctiveness (Agri-Rural representative). Feedback from social partners noted that Chairing Working Groups was a very positive experience.

One example provided was the Distinctiveness Working Group, Chaired by a Social Partner, who deliberately held meetings away from SEUPB, in community venues that had been funded through the Programme. This provided an opportunity to hear directly from people who were involved which was generally felt to be worthwhile by all involved, making the programme more “real” for those administering it.

5.2.2 Role of Social Partners within Monitoring Committee

The following analysis provides a summary of the positions put forward by individual consultees. This does not represent a specified policy position.

From consultations the following roles for social partners on MCs were identified:

- **provide sectoral expertise:** The social partners are there to provide an insight on the sector they represent. They bring specialist knowledge to the decision making processes based on the direct experience of and links within their sector. In particular one social partner felt they needed to “communicate difficulties and concerns being experienced by those outside central government” Therefore to a degree their role is to **represent** their particular sector at the MC. It was noted that there is a balance required between representing a sector and lobbying for a sector;
- **provide realism:** As members of the MCs, social partners bring a link between high level programme monitoring and front line project implementation. The constituencies represented by the social partners include individuals and groups who are involved in project promotion at a local level. This will allow for a transfer of knowledge between those involved in the monitoring standards at programme level, and those having to implement the monitoring requirements at project level. One official said they allowed for decisions and actions to be “operationalised” at a high level before they are implemented on the ground. An alternative perspective on this was to view social partners on the MC as a market research tool, understanding what the market will bear;
- **provide a challenge function:** the social partners provide a view that is independent of government and independent of party politics, which can challenge government departments. The social partners “keep government on their toes” by asking questions, seeking clarification

and requiring that decisions are clearly accounted for *before* being taken; and

- **targeting:** to facilitate greater and/or more effective engagement with target groups on the ground (i.e. partnerships inspire more confidence, and facilitate more links with some groups than ‘pure government’ bodies), especially those which “do not approach government”.

5.3 Impact of Social Partners

This section will present an assessment of the impact of social partners within the MCs, based on consultations and member survey.

In the consultation and survey, questions were asked regarding the value added by social partners on various forums. Results from MC questionnaire returns are provided in Appendix III. In the case of Monitoring Committees, whilst there was generally agreement that the contribution was positive, it was difficult to isolate tangible differences in outcomes, for example how specific decisions have altered due to social partner inclusion within the MC’s decision making process.

5.3.1 Impact on Efficiency and Effectiveness

Out of the 18 completed survey returns from MC members relating specifically to MC experience, the perception is that social partners have contributed in a positive manner with regard to both effectiveness (n=17) and efficiency (n=15). The perception is that the impact is stronger with regard to effectiveness. This is reasonable considering the value consultees said social partners added in debating issues and in challenging misinformed views. One social partner member did recommend however that there should be “less focus on spend and more substantive focus on outcomes and impacts in the discussions” as this would be more challenging, as opposed to “discussions about numbers which often become a technical exercise for departments”

A small number of government consultees noted that social partners made information requests that were unrealistic given resource constraints. Other government consultees noted that several of the social partner members have been involved in EU funding for a considerable period of time, and have developed a range of skills and experience which they can bring to bear in the MC. The majority of survey respondents, (including the majority of non-social partner members) felt that social partners have had a positive impact with regard to efficiency of the MC.

5.3.2 Impact on Tailoring Decisions to meet Sectoral Needs

The views provided suggest that social partners are having a positive impact on tailoring the decisions taken at MC level to better meet sectoral need. This is in line with the views regarding efficiency and effectiveness.

It was notable in consultations with other MC members, including Government consultees, that the social partner members were largely considered to have the capacity to act at an appropriately strategic level with regard to their sector, without descending to personal or local “hobby-horses”. One Government MC survey respondent indicated they did not feel

this was always the case suggesting that when “partners impose their personal lobbying role at partnership everything fails”. However, generally the view was positive, with the scale of impact being determined by the social partner’s “negotiation skills” and knowledge of the “art of the possible”.

5.3.3 Change in Impact Overtime

In regard to impact over time, 15 out of the 18 respondents felt the value added by social partners had increased slightly (n=10) or substantially (n=5) since the MC was established. This was at least partially due to an embedding period, during which time members developed their understanding of their role within the MC and simultaneously increased their contribution. Secondly consultees suggested that this increase may relate to improved relationships and stronger “partnership working”. This is considered below.

A total of 14 MC respondents, including all the social partner respondents, felt the attitudes towards social partner input had become more positive. This is in line with the previous question’s view on changes in value added. A government consultee suggested that this process was a virtuous circle - as value added increased, attitudes towards social partners improved, and this in turn created more space and encouragement to add value. These working relationships are fundamental to the partnership model desired within the MC structure.

One respondent noted that a much broader range of social partners now have the confidence to engage fully in the debates at Monitoring Committees. Another government consultee highlighted how certain departments had well established relationships with their relevant social partner counter-parts before the MCs came about, while other departments who had needed to develop relationships initially in order to move from positions of suspicion to relationships built on trust and confidence.

Therefore the MCs have acted to both develop relationships and consolidate pre-existing relationships.

5.3.4 Relationships

The views regarding the impact of MCs on relationships between members were considered positive in consultations, as well as survey responses (n=14 though attitudes towards social partners had become more positive). The key outcomes were identified as:

- the development and “maturing” of relationships between social partners and other MC members especially government departments, are demonstrated through the “broader range of social partners who now have the confidence to engage fully in the debate” and through the meetings that take place “outside” the constraints of the formal meeting. These can either be before or after the formal meeting or at a different time altogether. It was highlighted by both social partners and government consultees that the MC had directly facilitated a number of these networks;

- certain Departments highlighted that they already had good relations with social partner but that the MC meetings have helped consolidate these through the regular contact they entail;
- another department official said that their department had been going through a process of relationship building with social partners, and that this relationship had developed from an initial level of wariness and suspicion to one of greater respect and trust. It was stated that the social partner presence and contribution on MCs had contributed to this;
- the opportunity for engagement through the MC meetings was appreciated by all consultees. In particular the opportunity to meet face to face is considered a significant improvement on more distant forms of engagement such as telephone or email, with regard to developing relationships;
- one elected representative member noted that the social partners have brought a deeper economic and social focus to the MCs, which has contributed to facilitating greater co-operation between Councillors from different political parties on economic and social issues;
- one social partner noted that it was good to meet and network with other members, “including other social partners” indicating that the relationships being developed are within the social partner grouping as well as without.

Some challenges were also highlighted with regard to changes in relationships:

- one Departmental official said there remained significant scope for developing continuity of relationships, particularly given the size of meetings, their relative infrequency and member turnover.

5.3.5 Representation and Accountability

Eleven of the survey respondents thought that social partners were effectively or very effectively plugged in to their constituency, however four didn't know and three considered there to be inconsistency across the social partners in this respect.

The debate put forward by consultees is not primarily whether one person can represent an entire social partner constituency (for example the whole community and voluntary sector) but rather whether someone *needs* to represent the whole sector in order to serve as an effective monitoring committee member. Consultees generally felt that what was most important for an MC member was a good grasp of the concerns and issues in their sector, in other words, that the social partner was “well plugged in”.

There was a larger spread with regards to feedback, with only four stating social partners were effective or very effective at feeding back (including only one social partner respondent), five considering them to be a mixed bag, two neutral, one ineffective and five not knowing (“it is not possible for me to

judge”). Therefore only a minority of respondents felt able to comment definitively on social partner performance in this regard. It was noted in consultation however that there was better understanding between certain Departments and social partners sectors (e.g. DARD and the agri –rural sector, with feedback through the Agri-Rural Forum).

5.4 Summary of Findings

Our research with regard to social partner contribution and participation within monitoring committees identified the following:

- social partners have added value to the Monitoring Committees by providing realism and/or an understanding of what the market will bear. One example is getting a clearer understanding as to what project promoters within the social partner constituencies were able to manage with regard to application forms and monitoring requirements;
- MCs have facilitated development of new relationships with the social partners, and consolidated existing ones;
- the social partner role sits within the predefined role of the MC - a monitoring function. Making the most of the opportunity was considered to be largely down to the capabilities of the individual member;
- it is not clear to all members how, if at all, social partners are gathering views from within their sector to present at meetings, and secondly providing feedback to their constituency. Whilst strong representation and feedback may be something of a moot point with respect to MCs, it is a generic issue for social partners to address for building confidence with regard to future participation in governance structures. It was also noted that there is no way of knowing how effectively central and local government officials and representatives are gathering views from and feeding back to their sectors; and
- the number of people attending the Peace II MC meeting is perceived to be too large when compared with the number of people who are visibly taking part. This has had the effect of stifling the debate without adding value.

6. REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD

6.1 Introduction

The Regional Partnership Board (RPB) replaced the Northern Ireland Partnership Board that operated under Peace I. The Peace II Operational Programme, agreed by the Executive on 14.12.2000, stated that:

“A Regional Partnership Board will be created by the NI Executive. Its functions will be to:

- *promote the principles of partnership working at local level;*
- *promote the sharing of best practice in the development and delivery of local area strategies;*
- *assist different districts to work together on projects and actions which cross the boundaries of two or more districts; and*
- *promote effective working between districts and Intermediary Funding Bodies.”*

In this section we:

- present an analysis of the participation of social partners within RPB;
- consider the role of social partners within RPB; and
- assess the impact of social partners on RPB.

6.2 Participation of Social Partners within RPB

Table 5.1 presents the membership breakdown of the RPB.

Table 5.1
RPB

	Sector	Number of Members	Comment
Social Partners	Agri-rural	4	4 members from Agri-rural Forum
	Business	4	1 position was vacant at time of evaluation
	Trade Union	4	2 positions had been vacant – 1 was filled in time for June 05 meeting
	Voluntary and Community	4	
Statutory	Central Government	2	OFMDFM DFP
	Political Parties	9	2 elected members from DUP, SDLP, SF, UUP and 1 member from Alliance
	Local Government	2	2 Chief Executives - SOLACE
IFB	IFB	1	CE of NIPPA
Horizontal Principles	Environment and equality	2	Equality position vacant at present

From Table 5.1 it can be seen that with 16 members the aggregated social partner block is larger than statutory members 13 members, whilst constituting 50 per cent of overall membership, (when IFB and horizontal principle members are included).

The RPB, with its role of widening and deepening partnership was to be chaired by the Junior Ministers of OFMDFM, to ensure strategic influence. Since suspension of devolution the RPB has been chaired by the Minister for OFMDFM Economic Unit, currently Lord Rooker, and former Minister Ian Pearson. SEUPB provide the Secretariat for the RPB.

In addition to the Members there are a significant number of advisers and observers who attend the RPB. The advisers are senior civil servants (Grade 5 and above) from each of the NI Government Departments, and the observers are from a range of bodies including LSP WG and IFI.

The RPB meets 3-4 times annually, and alternates between a Belfast and regional venue. It previously had a sub-committee structure, but after reviewing this, moved to a task linked working group approach to take forward specific pieces of work. At time of research there is one on-going task, which is preparing a response to the RPA

Consultation Document. The RPB elects the Chair of the Working Group, but membership is open so any member is free to attend.

6.3 Previous Evaluation Work on RPB

SEUPB and the PricewaterhouseCoopers PII mid-term evaluation both suggest that the RPB's primary role is to ensure that partnership working could continue beyond the Peace II programme, however Deloitte's mid-term evaluation of M3.1 and M3.2 found that the RPB has experienced significant difficulty in developing its own practical role since initiation. By the time the RPB was up and running, the focus of most LSP programmes had already been set, and procedures put in place (and in many cases fine tuned). Added to this the LSPs had already formed their own working group and project officers' forum in order to share best practice and formulate common policy positions. The LSP evaluation suggested that the late arrival of the RPB had resulted in a significant missed opportunity to enhance programme effectiveness and efficiency.

There was limited evidence at the time of the MTE to suggest that this role has yet been agreed by the members of the board or that the RPB is in a better position to provide individual LSPs with the type of support that they require/desire. One symptom of these difficulties has been low attendance and ongoing challenge to get vacancies filled.

It is important to be aware of these wider issues with the RPB when considering the role and contribution of social partners.

6.4 Role of Social Partners on RPB

Consultations with social partners and statutory members identified a range of roles and some issues with fulfilling that role.

The role includes the following:

- bringing sectoral experience and perspective to the RPB from the four social partner sectors (agri-rural, business, community and voluntary and Trade Unions); and
- providing perspective, experience and insight from the operation and mindset of LSPs. This is a two way flow between LSPs and RPB. This function ties in the role of the RPB, in particular with the sharing of best practice in the development and delivery of local area strategies, promoting the principles of partnership working at a local level objective. It is noted that this role is not specific to social partners but also applies to other RPB members who are also LSP members, for example elected representatives, and also SEUPB who are Secretariat for RPB and are also closely linked with the LSP network, through its implementing role.

6.5 Impact of Social Partners

This section will set out an assessment of impact of social partners within the RPB, based on consultations and member survey. Survey results for RPB members are contained in Appendix III.

In the consultation and survey, questions were asked regarding the value added by social partners on various forums. In the case of the RPB, as for the MCs, whilst there was generally agreement that the contribution was positive, it was difficult to isolate tangible differences in outcomes, for example how specific decisions have altered due to social partner inclusion within the Board's decision making process.

6.5.1 Impact on Efficiency and Effectiveness

Whilst the overall impact of the RPB has been questioned by many commentators, the perception from the respondents is that the social partners have had a largely positive impact with regard to effectiveness and efficiency. One local government representative did say that the social partners have brought a range of skills and knowledge set to the decision making process that would have been missing without their membership. Their "non-political status" was also noted by three consultees as having a positive impact on efficiency and effectiveness.

6.5.2 Impact on Tailoring Decisions to meet Sectoral Needs

Considering the nature of the role of RPB, with its sharing of best practice and lobbying roles, it is difficult to identify what tangible "interventions" could be tailored to sectoral needs. However there is still a sense amongst the majority of respondents that in the role that it has, social partners have had a level of positive impact. The key reasons offered for this was the social partners' "grass roots links bringing a better understanding of social and community need to the table".

A social partner who suggested there was only a neutral or marginal impact reasoned that while social partners were increasing the RPB's understanding of their sectors, they were unable to get government to act on their views, as "government departments appear to have already decided in many cases".

6.5.3 Change in Impact and Relationships Overtime

Nine of the twelve respondents felt that the value added by social partners to the RPB had increased, (including all non-social partner respondents). This may be related to the fact that social partners are some of the stronger attenders at the RPB (and on Working Groups - as noted in consultation with secretariat), but also to feedback from members that there has been a period of reflection and review regarding the body and that the members are becoming clearer as to the role of the body and how they can better use their influence to impact upon policy.

There was positive feedback from consultees with regard to the RPB's impact on relationship building. One local government member said that the RPB had helped bring some relationships on, through more regular contact, whilst a social partner member felt that the RPB had allowed the bringing together

of IFB and LSP views on delivery structures and facilitated development of relationships with IFB sector. One respondent said this had helped work through some blurred lines with regard to local delivery.

One social partner member did suggest that the way RPB operated did create fault lines between SEUPB and DFP at the top table (alongside Departmental advisors), and the rest of the RPB members. It was noted that whilst this “unity in opposition” assisted relationships amongst council representatives, social partners, IFBs and horizontal principles representatives that attended, it had not helped foster relationships with government departments.

Other issues noted by consultees, included the “difficulty of having dialogue” particularly with “Departmental advisers who attended, who often remained silent, but especially whenever the Minister is there”. Whilst this was the perception of a social partner, it comes back to the point made in several strategic consultations, (including that with an EU official), that social partners face a challenge in being able to make the most of the opportunity for engagement with departments through such partnerships.

It was also generally felt that while the direct access to ministerial decision-making was welcomed, the level of influence over a *direct rule* minister was limited in practical terms. However there was a positive view as to a local minister of a devolved government attending, and a more optimistic view that this could facilitate a dialogue with the heart of government.

6.5.4 Representation and Accountability

Only a minority of survey respondents felt that social partners were effective or very effective with regard to being “plugged-in” or feeding back to their constituency. This was an issue for one local government official who said there was uncertainty as to who or what social partner members were there to represent. The suggestion made was that there needs to be better recognition as to what social partners can and cannot represent. At RPB level, whilst acknowledging that social partners in attendance are “higher profile” individuals, who are generally well plugged into networks, there are still limitations as to what and who they represent.

A social partner member from the community and voluntary sector agreed with this view, and admitted that there were nuances regarding “representation” that required clarification. In the case of the four community and voluntary sector representatives, it was explained that two were nominated from NICVA and North West Community Network, and two from the LSP Working Group. The latter was understood to ensure a link with the LSP sector. One of these members said they felt capable of representing the community and voluntary sector in their local LSP area, and the LSP Working Group, but not the community and voluntary sector NI wide. Yet when sitting at the RPB, the member is labelled as a generic community and voluntary sector representative.

An EU official commenting on the make-up of the partnerships across the EU programmes, agreed with the principle that it was not possible to be truly representative, however for someone considering the membership for the first time, it would appear to provide a reasonable spread of societal interests and perspectives, the point being whilst the situation isn't perfect there are reasonable efforts with regard to representation and feedback across the sectors.

In terms of representation and feedback questions, there was uncertainty as to how other social partners gathered and fed back views with regard to their constituency. This mirrors the representation and feedback issues raised in assessment of Monitoring Committees, namely whilst these processes may be in place to varying degrees, this is not well understood by other partnership members.

6.6 Summary of Findings

Findings are summarised as follows:

- the social partners have been amongst the strongest participants with regard to attendance, and participation in working groups;
- with central government represented, and occasionally the Minister, the RPB represents a significant opportunity for engagement between social partners and central government, however to date there has been limited dialogue and debate;
- it is acknowledged that a working group is considering the RPA consultation document at time of research. This is a good example of a strategic issue that should be dealt with by the RPB, particularly given its role to ensure that partnership working could continue beyond the Peace II programme; and
- there remains a lack of clarity as to who and what the social partner members are representing, and how they are feeding back to their constituency.

7. LOCAL STRATEGY PARTNERSHIPS

7.1 Introduction

The Local Strategy Partnership (LSP) Model evolved from the District Partnership Model of Peace I. The Peace II Operational Programme stated the LSP model was to be “based on a more integrated and sustainable approach to planning and managing the use of resources available under Priority 3 of the Programme”.

The guidance on the establishment of Local Strategy Partnerships was that there should be an equal partnership between two strands:

- local government and the main statutory agencies operating at local level; and
- four pillars of the social partners: private sector, trade unions, community and voluntary and the agri-rural sector.

The model was not fixed with regard to absolute numbers, rather there was a deliberate decision to allow for a local agreement. Local processes were put in place to determine how member could be sought. These were approved by Concordia, providing regional endorsement. The 26 structures and nomination procedures were approved by SEUPB and Concordia.

7.2 Social Partner Participation

A previous discussion paper by the RPB³ provided the sectoral breakdown of members across the 26 LSPs shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1
Sectoral Composition of LSPs

Sector	Number	Percentage (%)
Statutory	159	24.2
Council	168	25.6
Trade Union	52	7.9
Business	76	11.6
Agri-Rural	57	8.7
Community & Voluntary	144	22.0

³ Regional Partnership Board, Discussion Paper DP01/03 Membership and Participation

Whilst the numbers may have changed marginally since the report, it is clear that there is a good balance between statutory and council (49.8 per cent) and social partners (50.2 per cent). It is also clear that within the social partners the largest representation is from community and voluntary, which has significantly more than business, trade union or agri-rural sectors.

With over 300 social partner members across 26 LSPs, many of which have monthly Board meetings, and additional sub-committee or working group meetings, the LSP sector is clearly a sector into which social partners have provided a very large contribution in terms of resource in the form of their time and skills.

7.3 Role of Social Partners

The key roles of social partners were considered in consultations to be:

- bringing local knowledge, that could assist with regard to targeting of interventions;
- bringing local networks and relationships, that could assist with targeting and accessing difficult to reach communities and sectors;
- bringing sectoral perspective, in so doing providing complementary knowledge; and
- providing a check and balance to avoid LSPs following a purely statutory or council-led agenda.

7.4 Impact of Social Partners

This section will present an assessment of impact of social partners within the RPB, based on consultations and member survey (for full results see Appendix III).

7.4.1 Impact on Efficiency and Effectiveness

The large majority of survey respondents, (including the large majority of non-social partners) think that social partners have had a major positive impact on effectiveness and efficiency in LSPs. Evidence provided in survey returns, consultations and case studies of Larne Development Partnership and Derry Local Strategy Partnership to support this included:

- network of community and voluntary workers bring awareness of service gaps facing the local community. For example in Larne Development Partnership, the community sector was aware of an absence of support for women returning to the workforce in the area, and agreed support for 20 women to undertake childcare NVQs. This would not have occurred through Council or statutory agencies without the social partner engagement through the LSP;
- social partners can provide sectoral expertise that statutory sector do not possess, for example “knowledge of volunteering in the community and voluntary sector, in which volunteering is critical, is largely unknown amongst statutory bodies”;

- several social partner members have taken on the responsibility of Chairperson, both of the full Board meeting and of sub-committees. Larne LSP has been chaired by Community and Voluntary sector representative since the late 1990s. This follows a deliberate decision to avoid potential domination by statutory or council members. The Derry LSP model has had co-chairs from its outset, with one social partner and one from statutory / council. The Co-Chairs only serve one year before being replaced;
- a significant proportion of social partners are there in voluntary capacity, giving their time and skills for free, enhancing the cost efficiency of the LSP. In both Larne and Derry it was highlighted that whilst expenses were available, social partners rarely availed of them. This was compared with statutory members who were often there “as part of their paid employment” and councillors, who would get an allowance for attendance. Other survey respondents did highlight this as a limiting factor on their involvement, particularly as they or their employer were not compensated for loss of earnings whilst they were attending LSP business;
- the local knowledge brought by the social partners arguably complements the local knowledge of the councillors. For example social partners can add value to the application assessment process as they will often bring an experience of the practicality of enterprises being assessed. Additionally they will often bring “more specialised knowledge, for example regarding funding requirements of local associations” bringing greater transparency to the table;
- many social partners “bring a long term commitment to the area”; and
- one LSP officer noted that social partners bring a “commitment to partnership ethos and practice”. A social partner from another LSP perceived such an ethos to be “limited amongst statutory members”.

As well as these positive comments there were several consultees, largely statutory officials, who pointed out that the value added was inconsistent. In particular:

- added value is partly determined by the commitment social partners were able to offer the partnership. This can range from those who were in chairing roles, and participating in assessment panels, to those who could not make it to meetings due to other commitments;
- added value is also partly determined by the capacity of the individuals to contribute. This inconsistency was mentioned by various respondents and consultees with regard to the full range of social partner pillars;
- however, both these issues were also raised as also being applicable to certain council and statutory members. As a result it was felt important that support and development activities being offered by Concordia was available for all members in a partnership, as statutory and council representatives could both be equally in need of this. It

was recognised that Concordia’s development activities has been available for all members, with non social-partners having to pay when there is a fee, but attending freely when it is a seminar. One consultee was not aware these development activities were available for non-social partners.

There was also a suggestion from a respondent who, largely positive regarding the contribution of social partners, suggested that “continuous improvement comes from constant involvement so it is essential that all are encouraged to be active members with, perhaps, a harsher line being taken with those who do not actively participate in either meetings or assessments.”

7.4.2 Impact on Tailoring Decisions to meet Local / Sectoral Needs

A total of 28 respondents (including 19 non-social partners) felt that social partners had had a substantial positive impact on tailoring LSP interventions, whilst a further 11 said they had had a minor positive impact. An example of positive impact is described in the Larne Development Partnership case study below.

Case Study – Larne Development Partnership
<p>Larne Development Partnership highlighted community and voluntary representatives facilitating engagement in the Craighill area in Larne, a disadvantaged area that had been stigmatised by anti-social behaviour and sectarianism. It had been seen as an area that was difficult to access for statutory agencies, who had limited existing relationships with the area. Some members were reluctant to work with the community due to its perceived links with paramilitaries. The community and voluntary sector representatives on the LSP disagreed, arguing that there was a significant need here with regard to community development and peace and reconciliation, and that it was appropriate the LSP became involved.</p> <p>A community representative on the LSP facilitated an initial link with the area. On the back of this other LSP members have become involved. NIHE has provided a community property, and further specialist support has been brought in through PSNI and Youth Service, statutory authorities that would not have been welcomed without the trust and credibility developed between the community and the LSP through the community and voluntary sector LSP members. It was noted that there was also something of a learning experience for the statutory members in this, as they need to ensure that the emphasis of this intervention was on “local support” rather than “local supervision”.</p>

Whilst the very large majority viewed social partners as having some degree of positive impact, there were some counter voices. In consultations, one “frustrated” social partner viewed “the influence of social partners to be undermined by the overall influence of the LSP” which he continued “has no authority to deliver the local strategy” and has “no influence with statutory sector”. Another added the difficulty in “influencing the statutory sector was

heightened by the lack of co-terminosity, whilst the central government departments were often represented by junior staff with no influence in their own organisation”.

Discussion regarding tailoring decisions around local needs led to discussion regarding the wider question of the medium - long term position of LSPs with certain consultees. The Chair of one LSP was not optimistic, noting that if the “RPA led to organisation at a wider area, for example County Antrim, how will social partners represent the local issues of Larne or Carrick or Ballymoney?”. However another consultee, and current LSP member questioned the sustainability of LSPs suggesting there “was no point keeping them if they did not get greater authority”.

7.4.3 Change in Impact Over Time

The most common response in this instance is that the value added by social partners on LSPs has remained constant (n=14), with those considering it to have increased slightly (n=11) or substantially (n=10) outnumbering those who think it has decreased slightly (n=5) or substantially (n=1).

Of the minority who thought that the value added had decreased, one explanation from a survey respondent was there was difficulty in filling the social partner vacancies in their LSP with six out of twelve vacant at time of writing. They linked this to the fact that funding was spent and the perception that there was no remaining incentive for them (e.g. attendance allowance).

Survey respondents were generally positive with regard to changes in attitudes with 11 saying their always was a positive view and 13 becoming more positive. Consultees linked positive attitudes with good relationships and better partnership working (one LSP officer reported the “social partners are now considered the equal of the other members”). In addition a consultee highlighted the interface between “participative democracy and formal representative democracy” as helping develop capacity, suggesting that a reason for increased impact over time was increased social partner capacity.

There are a number for whom perceived attitudes remain an issue, with three social partners responding “mixed-bag” and two non-social partners saying attitudes to social partner input has become more negative. This is in line with those who feel social partner value added has decreased. One survey respondent said “All members should be treated with respect and equality. Sometimes this is not the case especially with some statutory and council members.”

7.4.4 Relationships

Social partner membership of LSPs has facilitated:

- the development of new relationships across all members at a local partnership level;
 - local issues effect all partnership members, and consideration of common issues can assist in bonding between members. For example, relevant consultees suggested that Derry LSP’s members

had initially built strong relationships by coming together to lobby central government regarding a perceived skewing of resources and infrastructure away from north west;

- Banbridge LSP invested in relationship building through away days and strategy days. A council official reported that this has paid off, with the LSP operating very much as a team. The relationships between councillors and social partners are generally strong, with Councillors praising social partners for their commitment to the LSP (especially through their efforts on the assessment panels). The official noted that the council has working relationships in place with social partners through several forums including LSP, Leader+, Mourne Heritage Trust and Community Safety Partnership, and that these working relationships are important for local level knowledge and community buy-in. Looking ahead he suggested that such relationships would remain critical when councils' community planning roles become formalised;
- the development of new relationships between social partners;
 - In Derry LSP, community members facilitated visits to certain areas, in which private sector partners were wary of investing. These visits developed a better understanding of the situations and their need for private sector members, and developed new bonds between private and community sector;
 - Derry LSP supports an Interagency Play Strategy. This is a partnership between community, voluntary and private sector. Previously the Derry City Children's Commission had no links with the private sector, but through the LSP, new links between the sectors were fostered, facilitating the new play partnership;
- the development of relationships between political representatives;
 - social partners have allowed the partnerships to become bodies in which, as one consultee put it, "party politics can be left at the door". A consistent view was that councillors could operate more freely within the confines of the LSP, a different operating environment to the competitive party politics found in other forums. Part of this was due to the non-political focus social partners brought to social and economic issues, which helped take the "heat" out of political issues;
 - one LSP chair noted that he viewed the LSP model as a vehicle that had "moved decisions outside the traditional Northern Ireland political arena";
 - one LSP member said the social partners were in a position "to broker working arrangements and relationships between political representatives within the LSP, and this included periods of heightened political polarisation and tension, and at election time, when new councillors would join the LSP". A member from

another LSP highlighted that “Sinn Fein and DUP councillors sit together at the LSP”, although this relationship was not perceived to have “transferred beyond the LSP”;

- the consolidation of relationships:
 - it was noted that by some of the local government officials that councillors get on perfectly well in certain forums outside of LSPs, including some council chambers, suggesting that good working relationships between political parties are in some cases already established at local levels, and that these are consolidated through LSPs.

However it was noted by one LSP member who had been a member of two LSPs, that in one LSP “social partners had to refer to other members as Councillor or Chair, creating formal barriers that did affect relationships, compared to the other LSP where it was based on first name terms.” She added the second LSP “had a chair from the community sector who would not have stood for that”.

7.4.5 Representation and Accountability

The issue of representation and feedback was brought up on several occasions. There is clearly an ongoing debate with regard to this. However this debate appears to be more “tense” in certain areas.

The major concerns with social partners taking part in LSPs regard perceived mandate issues and their accountability:

- one local government Chief Executive spoke of an individual, perceived to be linked with paramilitarism, who had stood for council and had failed to be elected, yet managed to get onto the LSP. The consultee felt that this provided the individual with an undue level of credibility and influence, whilst alienating some of the councillors. Others, however, highlighted that while councillors were given an electoral mandate in the local government election, councillors were subsequently nominated rather than elected onto the LSP body, in line with the selection process of social partners;
- some perceived the nomination process to be driven centrally rather than locally, with members “parachuted” in. One Chief Executive felt that the selection process “needs to be localised”;
- there was perceived to be inconsistency with respect to how social partners were feeding back to their constituencies, and uncertainty as to whether there were any accountability mechanisms for the social partners; and
- Derry LSP was successful in a self-application to fund a Communication Strategy. This allowed for feedback processes into each of the sectors through regular newsletters and web site, as well as direct feedback by members into their network bodies. The strategy has helped create formal feedback processes and heighten the degree

of accountability. The Task Groups in charge of selecting members for the respective social partner pillars for Derry LSP, are also responsible for annual performance reviews of their sector's members, including attendance record.

The mix of social partners, councillors and government officials was considered healthy by many consultees. The reasons given for this included:

- social partners bring sectoral expertise and perspective;
- social partners help bring a sense of reassurance to decisions over funding. For example one LSP spoke of how “social partners can bring anecdotal information from the grassroots to the LSP, providing additional reassurance, even in situations when application criteria have been met”;
- social partners bring wider connections and access into various sectors of the local community;
- inclusion of social partners in the application assessment processes provides a greater sense of transparency. This is particularly helpful for *some* local applicant groups who will relate and respond more positively to social partners partly because they are considered to be neither government nor party political;
- the elected members selected onto the partnership do not represent everyone, the mandate they get is from a proportion of the population, social partners “helped provide a voice for a disenfranchised population”;
- social partners are perceived to bring a freedom and independence with regard to opinion that is useful for a fuller debate. Councillors may be restricted by party allegiance, or concern with how something may be perceived by their electorate, with regard to addressing certain issues;
 - In Derry LSP it was suggested that community and voluntary representatives and local councillors experienced a “healthy tension” regarding the issue. However it was argued that community and voluntary did provide a different range of knowledge regarding the reality on the ground from elected members. In particular it was argued that the community and voluntary representatives provided a complementary perspective on community development, namely that they were freer to promote longer term solutions rather than the shorter term solutions perceived to be held or required by elected members.

Case Study – How Derry LSP Selected its Social Partners

Derry LSP invested in developing processes to provide transparency in their nomination and selection processes.

Community and voluntary – A Community and Voluntary Task Group (a range of stakeholders) was established to design and implement a locally agreed nomination process. After public consultations North West Community Network was selected by the Task Group to administer the process. The Task Group agreed that the equality proofing for gender should be as close to 50:50 as possible, and religious background 4:3 “catholic and none” and “protestant” respectively. Spatial representation was also to be considered. **Nominations** - Nominations were sought for representatives from formally constituted groups for the seven posts of: Women, Social Economy and Labour Market, Area Based Regeneration (2 posts) and Section 75 (3 posts). **Elections** –Postal ballot papers were issued to all groups who had registered to vote. Each group could vote for one nominee under each of the seven posts. The four highest scoring nominees were elected to the LSP and the remaining three were selected to meet with the equality criteria.

Business - Five key business groups within the area formed a task group to design and implement a nomination process. The Task Force agreed criteria for nominations based on the experience of the nominees. Nominations were considered, discussed and agreed. The period of office is to be two years (pending annual performance review including record of attendance). The Task Group is responsible for the renewal process.

Trade Union - It was agreed that Derry Trade Union Council (DTUC) should select the representatives for the LSP. Members of DURC were invited to submit expressions of interest, in which to demonstrate specified criteria.

Agri-Rural - UFU and NIAPA completed their nomination processes separately. A UFU Group Committee selected their representative on agreed criteria. NIAPA worked with the Local Leader Group to select the second agri-rural representative.

Conclusion - Derry LSP invested significant time and resources into this process to ensure the selection processes provided a level of transparency, inclusivity and representativeness. Social partners consider that they have been treated as equals, whilst the relationship between the social partners and the elected members was described as respectful, with a level of “healthy tension”.

7.5 Summary of Findings

A summary of findings with regard to social partners participation in LSPs are as follows:

- with over 300 social partner members across 26 LSPs, many of which will have monthly Board meetings, and additional sub-committee or working group meetings, social partners have provided a very large contribution in terms of resource in the form of their time and skills.
- social partners have added significant value with regard to effectiveness and efficiency, through the local and sectoral knowledge they can bring to bear;
- there is inconsistency with regard to the capacity and commitment of the social partners in some LSPs, however this was also felt to be the case for non-social partner members;
- there is evidence of social partners having positive impact with regard to:
 - bringing resources and skills for assessment panels, chairing roles often on an entirely voluntary basis;
 - accessing disengaged communities;
 - development of new relationships between social partners and statutory sector officials and elected representatives;
 - consolidation of existing relationships;
 - facilitation of relationships between individual elected representatives;
- social partners face challenges regarding their mandate and accountability mechanisms. This can have detrimental affects on the relationship between social partners and other members. Derry LSP has invested in ensuring selection processes are transparent and in ensuring there is a strategy that formalises feedback into constituencies. This has undoubtedly helped bring a sense of a more equal partnership to the LSP. Whilst Derry LSP is significantly larger than most others, and has the economies of scale to allow for such investment in processes, it is noted that the RPA proposes to rationalise local government areas bringing them to a similar size; and
- there are concerns with regard to social partner processes for replacement and renewal of members. This is perceived to be particularly acute “after the money is spent”.

8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUM

The primary focus of this research has been upon the contribution of social partners in the governance structures of EU programmes. In this section we consider a partnership body that has been established purely to deal with domestic policy issues – the Economic Development Forum.

The Economic Development Forum (EDF) was established in 1999, following a recommendation in the Strategy 2010 Report, to provide a formal mechanism through which a wide range of organisations could advise Ministers on issues relating to the development and future competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy.

8.1 Membership of the Economic Development Forum

The Terms of Reference for the EDF set-down the following membership structure for the Forum:

- four government / public sector;
- four trade unions;
- four employers;
- two community / voluntary;
- two rural / farming; and
- two education.

The actual membership of the Forum at the time of this research is presented in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1
Membership of the Economic Development Forum

Sector	Organisation	Number of Members
Government / public sector Local Government	Ministers for - Enterprise, Trade and Industry - Employment and Learning - Regional Development	2 (as one direct rule minister (Angela Smith) has responsibility for both Enterprise Trade and Investment and Employment and Learning)
	Invest NI	1
	SOLACE (local government)	1
	Permanent Secretaries for DETI, DFP and DE	3 (ex-officio members)
Trade Unions	NI Committee / Irish Congress of Trade Unions	3
Business	Institute of Directors, Confederation of British Industry, NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Centre for Competitiveness, Federation of Small Business	5
Community and Voluntary	NICVA	2
Agri-rural	UFU, NIAPA	2
Education	QUB, Newry & Kilkeel Institute of Further and Higher Education	2

Source: Economic Development Forum website 30.6.05

The Forum is chaired by the Minister responsible for economic development. The Permanent Secretary of DETI is a member ex officio and acts as Chairman of the Forum in the absence of the Minister.

Social partners make up the majority of membership, with the business pillar having the largest representation with five members. It is noted that membership is different from the structure set out in the terms of reference, notably with an additional business sector representative, and one less trade unionist.

8.2 Role of Forum / Role of Social Partners

The role of the forum as laid down in its Terms of Reference is “to advise and make recommendations to the Northern Ireland Administration on all matters affecting the development and future competitiveness of the economy of Northern Ireland”. The agenda would be drawn from the principles and recommendations in the Report of the Economic Development Strategy Review Steering Group, “Strategy 2010”, published in March 1999. The Forum would also take account of “contemporary information and advice.”

The terms of reference continue to define that in particular, the Forum shall:

- advise on how the recommendations of targets contained in Strategy 2010 which have been adopted by the Administration may be most effectively implemented;
- monitor progress with the implementation of these recommendations and towards the achievement of the targets proposed in Strategy 2010, and make any necessary proposals for corrective action;
- advise on ways to balance the objectives of improving competitiveness, maximising economic growth, achieving sustainable development and promoting social cohesion and inclusion through an equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth; and
- as requested by Government, to offer advice on public expenditure allocations in the light of economic development priorities.

The two issues arising out of the EDF role that are most pertinent to social partners are the breadth of perspectives required and the monitoring role.

The role stated in the Terms of Reference, relates to “all matters affecting development and future competitiveness of the economy of NI”. The third specific point talks about “balance”, “sustainable development” and “social cohesion and inclusion”, recognising the need for a broader range of perspectives that the spread of social partners should be able to provide.

Hence based on the analysis of the Forum’s role, the role of the social partners can be largely seen as two-fold:

- to contribute sectoral expertise and perspective; and
- to provide an independent challenge function, particularly important with regard to the monitoring of implementation of recommendations.

8.3 Impact of Social Partners

As noted above, the role of the Forum was to be advisory, the body was structured to include a broad range of stakeholders, including social partners, to provide advice for Ministers within the Assembly. Clearly suspension of devolution has changed the wider context.

Analysis of social partner involvement and input to EDF would highlight a relationship that has developed over time with enhanced confidence in the forum contributing to a changing dynamic over time.

The early stages of Social Partner involvement were characterised by their anxiety and concern over the 2010 strategy with many questions raised on the extent to which this was offered an appropriate platform for economic growth and development with, we understand, many feeling they couldn't sign up to the 2010 agenda. Thus in the early stages the focus of debate was on the appropriateness of 2010 rather than on developing on the role and remit of EDF and the nature and process of Social Partner involvement.

In tandem, the central government outlook was changing with DETI and other Departments represented getting used to working collaboratively through the forum and this called for greater transparency and openness of the Departmental policy agenda and decision making processes with the Social Partners. This has also led to the discussion and debate of issues which have strongly challenged the appropriateness of government's policy response directly through EDF. Departmental members have expressed the view that this has provided a healthy tension within the overall EDF dynamic.

Over time it would appear that Social Partner involvement has stabilised with EDF maturing and strengthening to the extent that it has developed and released its economic 'Vision' for Northern and Ireland and reconstituted to ensure it comprises a membership capable of overseeing the progression of the vision.

Another interesting development has involved EDF's engagement with the political parties with the objective of facilitating a constructive exchange of views on economic issues.

A key challenge for EDF is to progress its thinking on the NI economy as articulated within the Vision document through to strategy. This will call for continued active involvement of all its partners together with the resource commitment of DETI. DETI has expressed its commitment to the future of EDF and recognises benefit in the work completed to date. Key benefits being defined as:

- the stimulus to increase openness and transparency in policy agenda and decision making processes;
- the direct Social Partner challenge on policy issues relevant to the sector they represent;
- a maturing of relationships and debate facilitated through a greater understanding of each other's position/perspective and as evidenced by the development of an EDF agreed economic Vision for NI.

DETI highlights that EDF is now effectively mainstreamed and embedded within its processes. EDF is to be consulted and resourced over the forthcoming period of the Department's Corporate Plan.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section draws upon the findings of research and presents an analysis of key conclusions and recommendations for the future.

9.1 Strategic Context – Looking Forward

The two key strategic drivers with regard to the position of social partners in Northern Ireland in coming years are the RPA and the shrinking EU programmes:

- **Future of European funding in Northern Ireland:**-The present cycle of European funding is coming to an end in 2006. It is not clear how Northern Ireland will benefit from the future cycle. It is clear that due to the steps taken towards normalisation and prosperity coupled with the influx of net recipient accession states, Northern Ireland will move out of the highest funding bracket, most likely resulting in a substantial decrease in EU funding; and
- **Review of Public Administration:** - a key issue for social partners with regard to the scope of the RPA is the proposed rationalisation of councils and the relationship of the new structures to the LSP structures. The new council structures are to be in place for 2009. Whilst there are no recommendations within the RPA as to how Councils would meet revised responsibilities there is potential for development of a process which includes social partners.

9.2 Major Achievements and Outputs of Social Partners in Peace II Programme

On the basis of our analysis we conclude that in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and tailoring of interventions the positive impact of social partners has been:

- participation and commitment, often in a voluntary capacity, not just on the main body but also in working groups and sub-committees;
- the provision of realism. In particular their understanding of their sector or local area provides the body with an insight as to what is achievable and what is not;
- the provision of a challenge function, asking questions ensuring there is clarity and justification at an early stage in the decision making process; and
- additional transparency and credibility of the process and the programme, facilitating access to, and buy-in from difficult to reach groups (see Larne District Partnership case study).

Whilst the feedback from the surveys has been largely positive, a few respondents highlighted negative feedback. In particular it was suggested that:

- the value added by social partners is not consistent. It was suggested the social partner value is partly due to the competency of the individual members and their commitment. The qualitative feedback indicated this was most variable at LSP level. It was noted that it was also variable amongst elected members and statutory members.

9.3 Processes Involved

The key issues regarding social partner processes have been how they are selected onto partnerships, and how the social partner members feedback to their constituencies. On the basis of our analysis we conclude that:

- there are varying degrees of uncertainty regarding the processes of selection. This uncertainty can simply arise from not knowing what the processes are (even when they exist), which was particularly true for statutory sector survey respondents;
- in more severe instances concern regarding “mandate” can lead to a level of suspicion, which has the effect of undermining the status of the social partner member and limiting partnership working. Others noted that councillors, although elected onto council, were subsequently nominated or selected onto LSPs, NIRPB and MCs in a similar manner to social partners, countering the “mandate” division; and
- the Derry LSP case study provided an example of selection and feedback processes based on formal procedures that were agreed upfront. This provided a degree of transparency that was important for their constituencies and for the other members of the partnership. It is noted that Derry LSP is a body with significant size and resources compared to other bodies however if these issues are to be resolved it is important that there is proportionate effort given to ensuring transparency regarding these processes. It is also noted that the future environment might include a rationalisation of LSP structures bringing them to a similar size.

An additional discussion issue in consultations was clarity regarding who social partners represent.

- it was noted for example at the RPB that a voluntary and community member said they could represent their LSP and the community sector in their local area but could not represent anything wider. Whilst this is quite reasonable there is a concern that others may think the member is there to represent the voluntary and community sector across NI. Therefore it was noted that social partners on the RPB, whilst members of particular sectors, are not necessarily fully representative of those sectors; and
- it was also noted in consultations that it was difficult to assess how effectively other non-social partner members of various partnerships were representing and feeding back to their respective “constituencies”.

9.4 Relationships and Partnership Working

An underpinning rationale for social partner inclusion in EU programmes is to further develop relationships and partnership working. This assignment required identification and consideration of evidence of participation of social partners creating an impact on relationships and partnership working.

From our analysis we conclude the following:

■ **social partners and central government departments:**

- consultations highlighted that relationships between social partners and central government departments were being developed and consolidated largely through the MC structures, with only limited development through the RPB;
- whether the relationship was being developed or consolidated depended on what relationships had historically been in place;
- informal meetings and linkages now taking place outside the confines of the MC meetings;
- one department official said that their department had been going through a process of relationship building with social partners, and that this relationship had developed from an element of wariness and suspicion to one of greater respect and trust. It was stated that the social partner presence on MCs had contributed to this;

■ **social partners and local government:**

- the strongest messages regarding concern for social partner representation and accountability processes emanated from the local government sector;
- there were reports of relationships developing into mutual respect, particularly within a number LSP environments;
- the RPB provided a opportunity to link with local government officials “on the same side of the table”;

■ **social partners and statutory agencies:**

- relationships between social partners and statutory agencies were reported to be generally good in the LSP case studies. The exceptions to this occurred when statutory agencies’ representatives were perceived by social partners to have limited interest in the area and were infrequent attenders at meetings;

■ **between social partners:**

- social partners brought together in partnership structures are able to develop new networks between themselves. These can often lead to additional networks;

■ **elected representatives:**

- it was noted across the partnership structures, that the social and economic focus that social partners brought to the table facilitated a different operating environment to the competitive party politics found in other forums. This environment in turn largely assisted relationships and partnership working between elected representatives and other members and within elected representatives themselves. The extent of this was

difficult to measure as some consultees noted that councillors already enjoyed good working relationships in certain council chambers;

- the relationships between councillors and social partners are not consistent. The sense from consultations was that in most LSPs the relationships between councillors and social partners are generally strong, however there are a number where there are significant degrees of friction. In one case this was explained to be due to concern over the mandate of particular social partners;

- **need to invest in building relationships:**

- the need to invest in relationship building was highlighted by Departmental officials and social partners. In particular there remained significant scope for developing continuity of relationships, particularly given the size of meetings, their relative infrequency (MCs and RPB) and member turnover (certain LSPs).

9.5 Changes in Attitudes and Potential Implications for the Future

The key conclusions with regard to changes in attitudes toward social partner input are:

- a significant number of respondents felt that the attitude towards social partner input had grown more positive (n=31), as compared to just 2 who felt it had become more negative; and
- as outlined in the previous section this positive inertia is in line with views from consultations which reported development and consolidation of relationships between all sectors and social partners.

Looking to the future role / influence of social partners it was concluded that:

- there is a moderate majority who would like to see the role and influence of social partners increase within the partnership bodies. Non-social partners were evenly split on this;
- in consultations central department officials all spoke of engagement with social partners as something that was important and something that would continue in the future, in line with broader government policy. This included engagement outside the parameters of EU structures (for example Agri-Rural Forum and EDF);
- central and local Government officials largely took the view that appropriate access mechanisms would be in place, outside of EU structures for social partner engagement; and
- the reduction of EU structures remains a considerable concern for social partners with regard to how they perceive it will reduce their influence on the public policy process.

9.6 Lessons learned for Wider European Context

Our key conclusions here are as follows:

- Northern Ireland has suffered from a polarised society and a number of decades of inter-community and intra-community violence. The EU Peace programme has focussed on addressing peace and reconciliation through a range of support measures within NI. The inclusion of social partners within the implementing structures of this programme has helped bring economic and social focus to processes. The social and economic focus has allowed fuller engagement from political representatives from opposing sides of the political spectrum;
- it is widely accepted that there has been some degree of “democratic deficit” in Northern Ireland. The challenges and shortcomings of representative democracy within a conflict / post-conflict society created additional space and need for participative democracy provided through partnership bodies, such as those within this study;
- the inclusion of social partners within processes can provide access and relationships with target communities and sectors which government departments and agencies struggle to engage with, including those communities that have suffered significantly from the conflict; and
- social partners need to present themselves to others in partnerships in a transparent manner with regard to their selection, feedback and accountability mechanisms.

9.7 Recommendations for Social Partnership in NI

Following from these conclusions there are a number of recommendations for social partners within Northern Ireland.

Strategic recommendations:

- currently a significant amount of social partner engagement takes place within partnership structures tied into EU programmes. With the future of EU programmes uncertain it is important that Concordia and the social partners use research such as this study to articulate the value they can add to public policy processes in non-EU arenas and particularly how they can add value to local processes, especially in community planning and community relations, in a post-RPA local government environment; and
- social partners need to be realistic that there is a desire to normalise local politics and a subsequent desire to involve local representative politics more fully in decision making. It is therefore important that Concordia and its social partners are prepared to articulate how participative democracy complements representative democracy offered through fully elected bodies.

Operational recommendations:

- it is recognised that Concordia's development activities are open to all partnership members, not just social partners. With evidence of variable contributions from both social partners and elected and statutory members of some partnerships, we recommend that this practice, of making such support open to all, is continued and is marketed clearly so that all members are aware of this;
- it is recommended that Concordia work on ensuring that processes regarding selection of social partners onto partnership bodies, and processes for feeding back to constituencies are in place for social partners, are understood by social partners and are made clear to all partnership members and secretariats including non-social partners; and
- whilst the longer term future of EU structures is uncertain, it is recommended that social partners bodies continue to make the most out of the current membership opportunities on EU structures, including the RPB, which provides an opportunity for engagement with senior civil servants and with the Minister. It is recommended that Concordia consider presenting the key issues raised in this study to social partners in the various bodies as recognition of their effort, but also to restate the role they are to play on their respective bodies, namely to:
 - provide sectoral expertise;
 - provide an independent challenge function;
 - provide connection and access to target groups and sectors; and
 - develop partnerships and relationships that can be continued outside the confines of the formal partnership.

EU Recommendation:

- Concordia engage with DG Regio to ensure that the story of social partner engagement in Northern Ireland is acknowledged, and also to offer the lessons of social partner engagement, especially to regions with programmes that are addressing comparable societal issues, for example a polarised political environment or a post-conflict situation.

**APPENDIX I
CONSULTATION**

CONSULTATIONS

Interviews were undertaken with strategic policy makers and stakeholders at a regional level, either by face to face, telephone or written interview. The following organisations were interviewed:

Social Partners

- **NICVA** **CEO (face to face)**
- **UFU** **CEO (face to face)**
- **ICTU** **Deputy Assistant Secretary (face to face)**
- **CBI** **Director (face to face)**

Central Government

- **DARD** **face to face**
- **DFP** **(face to face)**
- **DETI** **(face to face)**
- **DSD** **(face to face)**
- **OFMDFM** **(face to face)**

RoI Central Government

- **DETE** **(telephone)**

Local Government

- **NILGA** **CEO (face to face)**
- **Armagh City & District Council** **CEO (telephone)**
- **Banbridge District Council** **Director of Development (telephone)**
- **North Down District Council** **CEO (telephone)**
- **Magherafelt District Council** **CEO (telephone)**
- **Derry City Council** **Direct of Development (written)**

EU Bodies

- **SEUPB** **Deputy CEO (face to face)**
- **DG Regio** **Desk officer (telephone)**

Case Studies

As part of case studies consultations were also taken with members and secretariat of the following:

- **Derry LSP** **LSP Manager & three Board members**
- **Larne LSP** **LSP secretariat & two Board members**
- **Northern Ireland Regional Partnership Board** **Central government, local government and community sector representatives**
- **Economic Development Forum** **Permanent secretary of DETI**

APPENDIX II
QUESTIONNAIRE

CONCORDIA SOCIAL PARTNER RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

RESPONDENT BACKGROUND

Please indicate which of the following bodies you personally have been (or currently are) a member of:	CSF MC	BSP MC	PII MC	NIRPB	An LSP	EDF

Sector you represent:	Central Govt. Dept.	Other Stat.	Council	Comm /Vol	Private Sector	Unions	Agri-Rural

SURVEY

- Please complete the rest of this questionnaire with reference to your experience of the partnership that you have received this questionnaire through;
- Please note that the term ‘partnership’ is used throughout the questionnaire to include monitoring committees and development fora;
- Please circle the option which *most closely* reflects your opinion;
- Please select only one option per question unless directed otherwise in the text.

1. Do you feel your position has been reflected in the decisions made by the partnership since it was established?	
- <i>My position has not been reflected at all in the decisions made</i>	1
- <i>My position has rarely been reflected in the decisions made</i>	2
- <i>My position has frequently been reflected in the decisions made</i>	3
- <i>My position has been entirely reflected in all the decisions made</i>	4

2. Overall, how would you rate the balance of influence within the partnership since it was established?	
- <i>It has been dominated by one sector</i>	1
- <i>It has been dominated by a number of sectors</i>	2
- <i>It has not been dominated by any of the sectors</i>	3

2a. If it has been dominated by a sector or sectors which ones have dominated? (circle all that apply)	
- N/A – it has not been dominated by any sector	1
- Central Govt Depts	2
- Other statutory agency partners	3
- Councillors	4
- Community/Voluntary Sector	5
- Private Sector	6
- Trade Union Sector	7
- Agri-rural Sector	8

3. Do you feel that all Board members have ‘pulled their weight’ since the partnership was established?	
- Only a minority of members have pulled their weight	1
- The majority of members have pulled their weight	2
- All members have pulled their weight	3

3a. Have any particular sectors not pulled their weight? (circle all that apply)	
- N/A – all sectors have pulled their weight	1
- Central Govt Depts	2
- Other statutory agency partners	3
- Councillors	4
- Community/Voluntary Sector	5
- Private Sector	6
- Trade Union Sector	7
- Agri-rural Sector	8

4. To what extent do you feel Social Partner participation has impacted upon the partnership’s effectiveness overall?				
<i>Substantial negative impact</i>	<i>Minor negative impact</i>	<i>Neutral/marginal impact</i>	<i>Minor positive impact</i>	<i>Substantial positive impact</i>
1	2	3	4	5

5. To what extent do you feel Social Partner participation has impacted upon the partnership's efficiency overall?				
<i>Substantial negative impact</i>	<i>Minor negative impact</i>	<i>Neutral/marginal impact</i>	<i>Minor positive impact</i>	<i>Substantial positive impact</i>
1	2	3	4	5

6. To what extent do you feel Social Partner participation has impacted upon tailoring the partnership's interventions appropriately to meet local/sectoral needs?				
<i>Substantial negative impact</i>	<i>Minor negative impact</i>	<i>Neutral/marginal impact</i>	<i>Minor positive impact</i>	<i>Substantial positive impact</i>
1	2	3	4	5

7. How effectively do you feel the Social Partners on the partnership feedback to their constituencies?						
<i>Very Ineffectively</i>	<i>Ineffectively</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Effectively</i>	<i>Very Effectively</i>	<i>'Mixed Bag'</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. How well do you feel that Social Partners are 'plugged in' to their constituencies? (i.e. bringing representative opinion to the partnership)						
<i>Very Ineffectively</i>	<i>Ineffectively</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Effectively</i>	<i>Very Effectively</i>	<i>'Mixed bag'</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Do you feel the overall level of value added by Social Partners to the partnership has changed since it was established (or as long as you have been a member)?	
- The value added by the Social Partners has increased substantially	1
- The value added by the Social Partners has increased slightly	2
- The value added by the Social Partners has remained constant	3
- The value added by the Social Partners has decreased slightly	4
- The value added by the Social Partners has decreased substantially	5

10. Do you think that the attitudes of other members have changed towards Social Partner input <i>since the partnership was established</i> (or as long as you have been a member)?	
- <i>Other partners' have always had a positive view of the value added by the Social Partners</i>	1
- <i>Other partners' view of the value added by the Social Partners have not really changed</i>	2
- <i>Other partners' view of the value added by the Social Partners have become more positive</i>	3
- <i>Other partners' view of the value added by the Social Partners have become more negative</i>	4
- <i>'Mixed bag'</i>	5
- <i>Don't know</i>	6

11. How would you like to see the role/influence of the Social Partners change within the partnership in future?	
- <i>I would like the role/influence of the Social Partners to remain the same</i>	1
- <i>I would like the role/influence of the Social Partners to increase</i>	2
- <i>I would like the role/influence of the Social Partners to decrease</i>	3
- <i>Unsure</i>	4

12. If you have any specific ideas about how the value added by Social Partners can be continually improved, please summarise below?

13. Please summarise what you think are the most significant contributions that the Social Partners have brought to partnerships in Northern Ireland over the last five years.

APPENDIX III

Monitoring Committee Survey Results

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon the MC's effectiveness overall

Extent of impact	Substantial negative	Minor negative	Neutral /marginal	Minor positive	Substantial positive
SP	0	0	0	2	3
Non-SP	0	0	1	6	6
All	0	0	1	8	9

Source: MC Members Survey (n=18)⁴

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon the MC's efficiency overall

Extent of impact	Substantial negative	Minor negative	Neutral /marginal	Minor positive	Substantial positive
SP	0	0	0	3	2
Non-SP	0	0	4	8	2
All	0	0	4	11	4

Source: MC Members Survey (n=18)

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon tailoring the MC intervention appropriately to meet local / sectoral need?

Extent of impact	Substantial negative	Minor negative	Neutral /marginal	Minor positive	Substantial positive
SP	0	0	0	3	2
Non - SP	0	1	2	8	3
	0	1	2	10	5

Source: MC Members Survey (n=18)

⁴ Of the 18 respondents 9 were from central government, 5 were social partners, 3 from other statutory bodies (e.g. SEUPB) and 1 was a councillor.

Do you feel the overall level of value added by social partners to the MC has changed since it was established?

Value added	Decreased substantially	Decreased slightly	Constant	Increased slightly	Increased substantially
SP	0	0	0	3	2
Non-SP	0	0	4	7	3
All	0	0	3	10	5

Source: MC Members Survey (n=18)

Do you feel the attitudes of other members have changed towards social partner input since the MC was established?

Attitudes	Always had a positive view	View not really changed	Become more positive	Become more negative	Mixed bag	D/K
SP	0	0	5	0	0	0
Non-SP	0	1	9	0	1	2
Change overtime	0	1	14	0	1	2

Source: MC Members Survey (n=18)

How well do you feel social partners are plugged into their constituency?

	Very ineffectively	Ineffectively	Neutral	Effectively	Very effectively	Mixed bad	Don't know
SPs	0	0	0	2	2	1	0
Non-SPs	0	0	0	5	2	2	4
All	0	0	0	7	4	3	4

Source: MC Members Survey (n=18)

How well do you feel social partners feedback to their constituency?

	Very ineffectively	Ineffectively	Neutral	effectively	Very effectively	Mixed bad	D/K
SP	0	0	1	0	1	2	1
Non-SP	0	1	1	3	0	3	5
Feedback?	0	1	2	3	1	5	6

Source: MC Members Survey (n=18)

Regional Partnership Board Survey Results

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon the RPB's effectiveness overall

Extent of impact	Substantial negative	Minor negative	Neutral /marginal	Minor positive	Substantial positive
SP	0	0	2	1	5
Non-SP	0	0	2	0	2
Effectiveness	0	0	4	1	7

Source: RPB Members Survey (n=12)⁵

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon the RPB's efficiency overall

Extent of impact	Substantial negative	Minor negative	Neutral /marginal	Minor positive	Substantial positive
SP	0	0	2	2	4
Non-SP	0	0	2	0	2
Efficiency	0	0	4	2	6

Source: RPB Members Survey (n=12)

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon tailoring RPB intervention appropriately to meet local / sectoral need

Extent of impact	Substantial negative	Minor negative	Neutral /marginal	Minor positive	Substantial positive
SP	0	1	1	5	1
Non-SP	0	1	1	1	1
All	0	2	2	6	2

Source: RPB Members Survey (n=12)

⁵ Of the 12 RPB returns there were 6 social partner members, 3 councillors, 2 statutory members and 1 environment representative.

Do you feel the overall level of value added by social partners to the RPB has changed since it was established?

Value added	Decreased substantially	Decreased slightly	Constant	Increased slightly	Increased substantially
SP	0	1	2	4	1
Non-SP	0	0	0	3	1
Change overtime	0	1	2	7	2

Source: RPB Members Survey (n=12)

Do you feel the attitudes of other members have changed towards social partner input since the RPB was established?

Attitudes	Always had a positive view	View not really changed	Become more positive	Become more negative	Mixed bag	D/K
SP	2	2	3	0	1	0
Non-SP	1	1	1	0	1	0
All	3	3	4	0	2	0

Source: RPB Members Survey (n=12)

How well do you feel social partners are plugged into their constituency?

	Very ineffectively	Ineffectively	Neutral	effectively	Very effectively	Mixed bad	D/K
SP	0	0	1	3	1	2	1
Non-SP	0	1	2	0	0	1	0
Plugged in?	0	1	3	3	1	2	2

Source: RPB Members Survey (n=12)

To what extent do you feel social partners feedback to their constituency?

Extent of impact	Very ineffectively	Ineffectively	Neutral	effectively	Very effectively	Mixed bad	D/K
SP	1	0	2	2	0	3	0
Non-SP	1	1	0	0	0	2	0
Feedback?	2	1	2	2	0	5	0

Source: RPB Members Survey (n=12)

Local Strategy Partnerships – Survey Results

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon LSPs effectiveness and efficiency overall

Extent of impact	Substantial negative	Minor negative	Neutral /marginal	Minor positive	Substantial positive
SP	0	0	2	4	8
Non-SP	0	0	3	3	21
Effectiveness	0	0	5	7	29

Source: LSP Chairs, Officers and Focus Group Attendees (n=41)

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon LSPs effectiveness and efficiency overall

Extent of impact	Substantial negative	Minor negative	Neutral /marginal	Minor positive	Substantial positive
SP	0	0	1	6	7
Non-SP	0	1	2	9	15
Efficiency	0	1	3	15	22

Source: LSP Chairs, Officers and Focus Group Attendees (n=41)

To what extent do you feel social partner participation has impacted upon tailoring LSP intervention appropriately to meet local / sectoral need

Extent of impact	Substantial negative	Minor negative	Neutral /marginal	Minor positive	Substantial positive
SP	0	0	2	3	9
Non-SP	0	0	0	8	19
All	0	0	2	11	28

Source: LSP Chairs, Officers and Focus Group Attendees (n=41)

Do you feel the overall level of value added by social partners to your LSP has changed since it was established?

Value added	Decreased substantially	Decreased slightly	Constant	Increased slightly	Increased substantially
SP	1	0	5	5	3
Non-SP	0	5	9	6	7
All	1	5	14	11	10

Source: LSP Chairs, Officers and Focus Group Attendees (n=41)

Do you feel the attitudes of other members have changed towards social partner input since LSPs were established?

attitudes	Always had a positive view	View not really changed	Become more positive	Become more negative	Mixed bag	D/K
SP	5	1	5	0	3	0
Non-SP	6	7	8	2	0	4
All	11	8	13	2	3	4

Source: LSP Chairs, Officers and Focus Group Attendees (n=41)

How well do you feel social partners are plugged into their constituency?

Extent of impact	Very ineffectively	Ineffectively	Neutral	effectively	Very effectively	Mixed bad	D/K
SP	0	0	0	9	0	5	0
Non-SP	0	2	1	9	6	6	3
Plugged in?	0	2	1	18	6	11	3

Source: LSP Chairs, Officers and Focus Group Attendees (n=41)

To what extent do you feel social partners feedback to their constituency?

Extent of impact	Very ineffectively	Ineffectively	Neutral	effectively	Very effectively	Mixed bad	D/K
SP	0	1	0	5	1	7	0
Non-SP	1	4	3	8	0	6	5
Feedback?	1	5	3	13	1	13	5

Source: LSP Chairs, Officers and Focus Group Attendees (n=41)

**APPENDIX IV
GLOSSARY**

GLOSSARY

BSP	Building Sustainable Prosperity
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CSF	Community Support Framework
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Environment (RoI Department)
DETI	Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment
DFP	Department of Finance and Personnel
DSD	Department for Social Development
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EAGGF	European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund
EDF	Economic Development Forum
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
FIFG	Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance
IFB	Intermediary Funding Body
IFI	International Fund for Ireland
LSP	Local Strategy Partnership
LSP WG	Local Strategy Partnership Working Group
MC	Monitoring Committee
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NIAPA	Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association
NICVA	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
NIC / ICTU	Northern Ireland Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
NILGA	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
NIRPB	Northern Ireland Regional Partnership Board
OFMDFM	Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister
RPA	Review of Public Administration
RPB	Regional Partnership Board
SEUPB	Special European Union Programmes Body
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
UFU	Ulster Farmers Union