

An Evaluation of the Centre for Cross Border Studies

Armagh

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Executive summary

This is an evaluation of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, Armagh carried out in March 2002. The evaluation is based on the examination of the records of the Centre, 35 personal or phone interviews and survey work. There were seven reference groups for the evaluation: staff, board members, policy-makers, commissioners of the Centre's research, researchers, unsuccessful research applicants and the Centre's target groups. 278 persons were surveyed (final overall response rate: 151 people or 54%).

The Centre was established in 1999 as a project of the Queen's University Belfast, Dublin City University and the Workers Educational Association, aiming to research and develop co-operation across the Irish border in a range of practical areas. In the period from September 1999 to March 2002, the Centre ran three research rounds with eight projects, held 16 study days, ran an in-house research project, completed four mapping studies, carried out six commissioned research projects, published three books and reached out to a range of audiences through press conferences and launches. Spending rose from UK£170,000 in the first financial year to UK£327,000 in the second. The Centre has three staff and a board of eleven.

The evaluation examined the Centre's performance. The Centre has generated extensive media attention. Interest in the website rose from 165 weekly visits to over 900. The reference groups rated the Centre highly for the quantity and relevance of its work. The Centre is considered to be dynamic, entrepreneurial, value for money, effective, independent, credible, non-partisan, producing reports which are substantial and strike the right tone. Ratings for its quality of work range from 6.34 to 8.05 [out of 10]. The director is praised for his energy and commitment. Researchers have a positive experience of working for the Centre. Commissioning agencies are satisfied with the work done for them. Unsuccessful applicants are positive about their interaction with the Centre, the secretariat getting a 100% rating for helpfulness. Its conferences are well received. The Centre has an effective, functioning working board providing oversight, planning and accountability. Critical comments on the performance of the Centre concern its excessive caution, tameness, insufficient outreach, the danger of capture by the North South Ministerial Council, under-developed links to non-governmental and academic bodies, and its promotion and visibility.

The evaluation examined the Centre's impact. There is a good rate of recognition of the research reports, but overall policy impact is modest so far. Some research reports may have brought about concrete changes.

There are several key issues which the Centre must address: financial security; improved targeting and outreach; physical development; modification of the composition of the board; and the development of a European dimension. Specific proposals are put forward whereby the Centre may obtain medium to long-term funding streams (universities, government, consultancy, sales, membership, corporate funding); build its mailing list; prioritize its target groups; reach out to non-governmental organizations and politicians; construct links to Europe; develop a library and promote itself more effectively (newsletters, annual reports, popular summaries). Future research strategies should be based around flagship projects, cross-cutting themes and smaller sectoral projects (topics are proposed). A yearbook should extract the accumulated lessons learned. As it moves from its experimental phase to maturity, the Centre has a bright future.

Table of contents

Executive summary	3
Table of contents	5
List of tables	7
Terms of reference	9
Evaluation objectives	9
Method	9
Acknowledgements	11
1 Introduction to the Centre	13
2 Structures, organization and resources	15
2.1 Structure	15
2.2 Staffing	15
2.3 Services	16
2.4 Promotion	16
2.5 Accounts	17
2.6 Resources	17
2.7 Future plans	18
2.8 Summary	20
3 Research activities	21
3.1 Calls for proposals	21
3.2 Mapping studies	23
3.3 Commissioned research activity	24
3.4 Books	26
3.5 Dissemination and publicity	26
3.6 Summary	28
4 Performance	29
4.1 Internal review	29
4.2 External review: introduction	32
4.3 Overall performance	32
4.4 The research experience	34
4.5 Unsuccessful researchers	35
4.6 Commissioners of research	36
4.7 External assessments of concluded research	36
4.8 Conferences	37
4.9 Performance of the board and issues of accountability	37
4.10 Critical voices	38
4.11 Summary, comments and conclusions	39
5 Impact	41
5.1 Impact: views of the survey group	41
5.2 Impact: views of other reference groups	42
5.3 Summary, comments and conclusions	43
6 Issues arising	45
6.1 Addressing the need for financial security	45
6.2 Improving targeting, mailing lists and outreach	46
6.3 Physical development of the Centre	47
6.4 Modifying membership of the board	48

6.5 Developing the future research agenda	49
6.6 Expanding the European dimension	51
6.7 Defining the future organizational trajectory	51
6.8 Summary, comments and conclusions	52
7 Conclusions and recommendations	53
7.1 The need for financial security	53
7.2 Improved targeting, mailing lists and outreach	55
7.3 Physical development of the Centre	55
7.4 Modifying the membership of the board	56
7.5 Development of the future research agenda	56
7.6 Expansion of the Centre's European dimension	57
7.7 Defining the future organizational trajectory	57
7.8 Concluding remarks	58
Methodological note	59
Annexes: questionnaires used in surveys	61

List of tables

1 Accounts, 1999 - 2001	18
2 Financial plan 2000-2006	19
3 Calls for proposals, rounds 1,2 & 3, 1999 - 2001	21
4 Completed projects funded under rounds 1 & 2	22
5 Round three - environment	22
6 Projects not yet completed	22
7 Study days in connection with research projects	23
8 Mapping studies and study days	23
9 Commissioned research	24
10 In-house research	25
11 Study days to accompany in-house and commissioned research	25
12 Commissioned conferences and similar activities	25
13 Research-linked promotional events by the Centre	27
14 Summary of research activities: autumn 1999 - spring 2002	28
15 Press citations	29
16 Weekly access to website, May 2000 - March 2002	30
17 Survey assessments of the Centre's performance by the target groups	33
18 Outcomes of research projects	35
19 The experience of unsuccessful researchers	35
20 Assessment of conference performance	37
21 Impact - views of the survey groups	41
22 Impact of the individual research reports	42
23 Did proposal receive subsequent funding elsewhere?	49
24 Future research agenda for the Centre	50
25 Projected, simplified organizational trajectory of the Centre 1999-2006	52
26 Response rates to surveys	60

Terms of reference

The aim of the evaluation is to:

- Describe the evolution of the Centre over the past three years in the context of cross border work in Ireland generally;
- Find out what the Centre has done in its first three years in the context of its original mission statement and brief;
- Determine if its brief, priorities and objectives have changed over this time;
- Measure the product of the Centre, in terms of publications, events and other activities;
- Examine where it has allocated its human and financial resources;
- Look at the procedures for decision-making and accountability within the Centre to check that they operate smoothly and efficiently;
- Study how the Centre has reached out and publicized its work, including the use of its website;
- Identify the Centre's on-going means for monitoring its outcomes and impact;
- Measure the level of external satisfaction with the efficiency, quality of service and administration of the Centre;
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the work of the Centre;
- Assess the impact which the Centre has made on its audiences, questioning especially the impact of the first round of research projects;
- Identify any possible areas of work or activity which may have been insufficiently addressed or even missed;
- Test whether its mission statement is up to date and should be adjusted in the light of the Centre's development so far and changing circumstances;
- In the context of its future plans, make recommendations for its further development and means of operation.

Evaluation objectives

By the end of the evaluation, the Centre for Cross Border Studies will have:

- A description of its evolution, work to date and how it operates
- A measurement of the product and outcomes of its activities
- An assessment of the efficiency and organization of the Centre by those with whom it has come into contact
- An identification of its strengths and weaknesses
- An affirmation of its achievements
- Critical comment on those areas which require further attention
- An assessment of its cumulative impact so far
- Recommendations for consideration

Method

This evaluation was carried out by the following methods:

- Examination of the documentation, products and record-keeping systems of the Centre;
- The interrogation of 7 reference groups about the Centre's work, performance, impact and future. These key groups were:
 - Staff (director, administrator and research officer)
 - Board members
 - Representatives of the major funded research projects
 - Unsuccessful applicants for research funding
 - Agencies which had commissioned work by the Centre
 - Key policy-makers
 - The Centre's target groups

They were interrogated by personal interview, telephone interview and survey. Details of the questions asked are provided in the annexe and the methodological note at the end. Interviews were done on a not-for-attribution basis.

Acknowledgements

The researcher wishes to thank all those who contributed to the research, in particular the following who gave interviews. These were personal interviews (plain) or telephone interviews (asterisked), 35 in total.

Staff

Andy Pollak, Director
Dr Patricia Clarke, Research Officer
Mairead Hughes, Administrator

Board

Rev Liam Carey
Harriet Andrews
Brian Trench
Prof. Mari Fitzduff
Richard Jay
Paul Nolan
Prof. Liam O'Dowd
Chris O'Malley
Dr Pauric Travers
Dr Chris Gibson
Margaret Connolly, in attendance as board secretary*

Researchers

Dr Jim Jamison
Prof. Derek Birrell*
Prof. Brigid Laffan*
Dr Mark Morgan
Paul McGill
Prof. Fionn Murtagh
Dr Jacinta Prunty*
Dr Honor Fagan*

Commissioning agencies and policy makers

Michael Clarke, eBusiness unit, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment*
Dick Mackenzie, North South Ministerial Council*
Tim O'Connor, North South Ministerial Council*
Robin Wilson, Democratic Dialogue*
Aidan Gough, InterTrade Ireland*
Gavan O'Leary, North South Ministerial Council*
Brian Power, Department of Education and Science*
Gary Healy, Office of the Director of Telecommunications Regulation*
Ian White, Glenree Centre for Reconciliation*
Tony Kennedy, Co-operation Ireland, Belfast*
Frances McReynolds, Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT), Derry*
John Coakley, Institute for British-Irish Studies*
Adrian O'Neill, Anglo-Irish Section, Department of Foreign Affairs*

Correspondence was received from Mark Langhammer (University for Industry) and Liam Nellis (InterTradeIreland). I wish especially to thank Andy Pollak for all his work in obtaining the documentation of the Centre. I also wish to thank Dr Patricia Clarke for her work in organizing print-outs detailing the use of the Centre's website; and Mairead Hughes for her assistance on administrative issues. Special thanks especially go to all those who took the time and trouble to return the survey forms.

Note All financial amounts are in UK£ unless otherwise specified.

1 Introduction to the Centre

This chapter introduces the Centre by describing the history and development of the Centre for Cross Border Studies. The idea for the Centre for Cross Border Studies dates to 1993 when the Opsahl Commission recommended a public-private Friendship University located close to the border. In 1995, a group of people inspired by Paul Nolan of the Workers Educational Association (NI) and Andy Pollak of the *Irish Times* put forward the idea of an adult education college on the border. This would be a focus whereby people in further and higher education could contribute to the peace process. A feasibility study was commissioned. This did not recommend the project, but did present a number of practical ideas for further consideration. The concept mutated from being one of a college *on the border* to a Centre *dealing with cross border issues*.

The Centre for Cross Border Studies opened its office in Armagh in September 1999, securing funding from the European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. Andy Pollak was appointed as its first and current director. A board was formed comprising representatives of Queen's University, the Workers Educational Association and Dublin City University. Dr Chris Gibson of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and chairman of the CBI/Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) joint business council was appointed the first and current chairperson of the board.

The mission of the Centre is to:

- research and develop co-operation across the Irish border in education, health, business, public administration, communications and a range of practical areas.

Its aims are described as:

- To provide an objective, university-based environment for policy research into and development of such co-operation. The Centre will be a policy research and development institute whose purpose will be to:
 - Commission and publish research related to opportunities for and obstacles to cross border co-operation in all fields of society and the economy;
 - Host events at which research findings can be discussed and disseminated and at which policy formation in the area of cross border co-operation can be developed;
 - Present the findings of such research and development projects to the European Union, the two governments, the regional administration in Northern Ireland and employer, trade union and social partnership bodies.

There was an underlying assumption to the work of the Centre to the effect that there was an identifiable need to overcome present barriers to understanding and co-operation between both parts of the island. 'This consensus holds that the abnormally low level of contact and communication across the Irish border damages the well-being of both parts of the island. Co-operation should take place where real benefits can be seen to accrue in both parts of the island. There has been too little research to date on how this practical co-operation is to be achieved' (from website, *mission statement*).

The period from September 1999 to April 2001 is regarded as an 18-month pilot phase. The Centre resolved to make an early start by making a first call for research proposals in December 1999. Proposals were invited from the universities and the research community in four areas: education, health, transport and communications and public administration. 65 proposals were received.

The Centre became quickly aware that there were many areas of cross border co-operation where the level of knowledge was low and where little preliminary work had been done. The Centre resolved to organize a series of mapping studies, accompanied by study days. Mapping studies were done in the following areas:

- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Education
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Each was in the order of 15-25,000 words. The research activities of the Centre are described in more detail in chapter 3.

The Centre began to attract commissioned research from state agencies anxious to improve their knowledge of cross border co-operation and issues. Two examples are given here. The first was an evaluation of the cross border network of health boards and health trusts, Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT). Second, the Centre was commissioned by the two Departments of Education to report on and assess the current level of north-south school, youth and teacher exchanges. This led ultimately to the establishment of the North-South Standing Advisory Committee on School, Youth and Teacher Exchanges by the two departments.

By the time of this study, the Centre for Cross Border Studies had carried out:

- 16 study days and conferences with 1,300 participants
- 6 consultancy studies
- 2 research rounds with 7 reports completed and more due
- Launched a third research round
- Published three small books in co-operation with Cork University Press

An MA in cross border studies is ready for launch in autumn 2002. This will be jointly hosted by Dublin City University and Queen's University Belfast, with some elements hosted by the Centre in Armagh. A second office is set to open in Dublin City University.

Chapter 2 examines the structure, organization and resources of the Centre before chapter 3 examines in more detail the research activities introduced here.

2 Structure, organization and resources

This chapter examines how the Centre is structured and organized, its systems of accountability and how it is resourced and funded. Its work is reviewed under a number of headings: structure, staffing, services, promotion, accounts and resources (2.1 to 2.6) and future plans (2.7), before being summarized (2.8).

2.1 Structure

Formally, the Centre for Cross Border Studies is formed as a non-profit company limited by guarantee. Financially, the Centre operates as an integral part of Queen's University and the staff are on the payroll of Queen's University. The Centre is located in Queen's University in Armagh, coincidentally in the same building as the North South Ministerial Council Joint Secretariat set up under the 1998 Belfast agreement.

The Centre is governed by a board of 11 members, with the company secretary and director in attendance. The board members are nominated by the three founding institutions: Queen's University, Workers Educational Association and Dublin City University (three each). Later, two additional members were co-opted. These organizations are not stakeholders in the formal sense, for they do not contribute financial resources. The board members are interested individuals nominated by the respective bodies. They combine an interest in north-south issues with academic knowledge and experience. Between 1999 and the present, the board held 17 meetings.

The role of the board is to oversee the current work of the Centre; to take reports on progress (the director issues a progress report for each board meeting); to approve accounts; to consider, approve or receive reports from subcommittees (e.g. research assessment); and to consider the future strategy of the Centre.

The board comprises the following members. The chairperson, as already noted, is a senior businessman with a background in agribusiness and a current involvement in banking and the media. The vice-chairperson, Dr Pauric Travers, is president of the largest college of education in the Republic. Other members come from the following backgrounds and qualifications:

- University lecturer in politics (Richard Jay)
- Director of international institute for conflict resolution and ethnicity (Prof. Mari Fitzduff)
- Director of a university institute of lifelong learning (Paul Nolan)
- University planner, former Member of the European Parliament (Chris O'Malley)
- University lecturer in communications and journalist (Brian Trench)
- Director of north-south health institute (Jane Wilde)
- Retired former director of university adult education centre (Fr Liam Carey)
- Career guidance officer (Harriet Andrews)
- University lecturer in social policy (Prof. Liam O'Dowd)

The board attempts to provide a balance of disciplines, geography, types and levels of skills.

The board has an *ad hoc* subcommittee which deals with research strategy and which had met three times.¹ Subcommittees have also been formed to progress research proposals (see chapter 3).

2.2 Staffing

The current staffing complement is 3. The role of each is described in turn.

Director

The director Andy Pollak is a well-known national journalist, specializing in education and religious

¹ This comprises Harriet Andrews, Richard Jay, Brian Trench, Liam O'Dowd and Andy Pollak

affairs. He was secretary of the Opsahl Commission, a citizens' enquiry into the troubles in Northern Ireland which played an important part in stimulating the peace process in the early 1990s. He was chosen from 35 applicants. He is responsible for the management of the Centre, the promotion of its work and activities, media and public relations, the accountability of staff to the board, relationships with the three founding bodies and the resourcing of the Centre. He has also taken on responsibility for the management of research, study days and publications, playing an important role in bringing the research product to publication.

Research officer

A research officer was hired on contract at the beginning (Ciaran O Maolain). The research post was advertised in November 1999. There were 65 completed applications. Dr Patricia Clarke was appointed December 2000, beginning April 2001. She holds a MSc in information technology and a PhD in health psychology. She has taken on responsibility for mapping studies, doing her own research studies, maintenance of the website and consultancy projects.

Administrator

The administrator, Mairead Hughes, is responsible for providing day to day management of the Centre; acting as the Centre's primary contact point; organizing conferences and study days; producing budgets and financial forecasts to support the Centre's financial strategy and planning; ensuring the smooth running of all financial management aspects of the Centre on a day-to-day basis; managing the research grant application and award process; working with the director on the Centre's publicity; working with the director on proofing, editing and presentation of research reports.

2.3 Services

The Centre does not yet have a library. Some discussions have been under way with the North South Ministerial Council and the Southern Education and Library Board's Irish studies library about the development of library services in the current location of the Centre.

Because of the lack of library services or product on site, the number of visitors to the Centre is small. Visitors include the RI Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Cowen, the NI Minister for Education, Martin McGuinness (Oct 2000); the pro-vice-chancellor at Queen's University Prof Ken Brown; Prof Farrel Corcoran of Dublin City University; three academics from the UK Action Advisory Partnership; prominent Israeli journalist Yehuda Litani; Israeli political scientist Deborah Haifestz-Yahav; academics from the Medical University of South Carolina; Bilbao lawyer Rocco Caira; Nigel Falls, Northern Ireland regional representative on the Bank of England and Sean Mulgrew, special advisor to Minister Sean Farren. Press and academic enquiries are reckoned at 3 to 5 a week (for example, the Department of Foreign Affairs has asked the Centre for information on cross border issues so that it can compile parliamentary questions).

2.4 Promotion

The Centre promotes its activities through a number of methods.

A website was established in spring 2000 (www.qub.ac.uk/ccbs and www.crossborder.ie). It is installed on the *yahoo* and *google* search engines. The website has three main elements:

- Home page;
- Pages for: about us, news (all press releases), research in progress, events and seminars, publications, media coverage, links, what they say;
- Publications (all the Centre's publications are available on the site).

The website can be accessed through the two domains above and through the Dublin City University site. The Centre features at an early stage of the research listings on the Dublin City and Queen's University

websites. The Centre's links page is extensive, exiting to the Centre's sponsors, north-south sites and cross border resources in Europe and further afield.

The Centre's director has promoted the Centre and its cause by giving talks, addresses and lectures. Examples:

- John Whyte Memorial Lecture, Nov 2000
- Conference 'Europe of the Nations', Sussex, Wilton park, Nov 2000
- Institute for British-Irish Studies/Conference of University Rectors, Dublin, May 2001
- *Team Europe* training seminar, Brussels, June 2001
- Armagh National History and Philosophical Society, June 2001
- Parnell summer school, August 2001
- Basque region politicians (due September 2002)

The research officer has also promoted the Centre through a number of events, mainly in the health area. The Centre does not publish an annual report (nor has it ever been asked for one). The Centre has published pull-out leaflets describing its progress in each of the early years of development (e.g. *Year Two*, *Year Three*). The Centre does not yet have a newsletter but one is under consideration.

2.5 Accounts

The Centre is an integral part of the accounting system of Queen's University. The Centre does not have a bank account in its own right. Queen's University provides monthly balancing statements from its computerized financial system, QFIS. Queen's University provides office, storage space, personnel and legal services, annual accounts, financial statement and accounting records, for which the Centre pays Queen's University a fee, as follows:

1999 £10,909

2000 £11,900

2001 £12,000

The lack of an own-account can present some problems with local suppliers who do not have an account with the university. They may be obliged to wait several weeks until payment comes through the university. Occasionally, the Centre's director may provide a personal cheque (about 6 times altogether). The Centre does have a petty cash float of £200 but this is not designed to cater for local suppliers. Generally, the financial relationship with Queen's University operates relatively smoothly with few bottlenecks.

2.6 Resources

Initial funding for the Centre was £400,000 from the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, allocated in 1999. This was used to set up the Centre, provide initial staffing and fund the first two rounds of research studies.

Ever since it began work, the Centre has sought to broaden its resources base. For example, £25,000 was obtained from Eircom for the telecoms study. The Department of Foreign Affairs provided IR£50,000 from the Reconciliation Fund in 2001, which helped to fund a research study into foot-and-mouth disease, the three small books published by Cork University Press, the opening of an office in Dublin City University and on-going administrative expenses. The Centre was asked to carry out consultancy for CAWT, the University for Industry/*learn*direct and the two Departments of Education and the North South Ministerial Council (see chapter 3). As a result, in 1999/2000 sponsorship and services brought in £101,000, or 20% of the initial budget.

With the end of the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, there has been a period of uncertainty. The Centre has applied for substantial funding (£1.3m) from the successor Peace II programme (measure 5.2 *Public sector co-operation*) but this is awaiting final approval. The Centre applied for gap funding which was made available to assist bodies in this situation and £68,695 was approved in June 2001. A further sum of £29,440 was approved in November 2001 to cover the period to end January 2002. In February 2002, another £29,000 was approved to cover the period up to the end of April 2002.

For 2001-6 the Centre has a projected budget of £2.97m. The Centre's aim is that the proportion of Peace II money will decline from 100% of funding in 1999 to 60% in 2002 (a target already reached) down to 34% in 2006. Applications are also planned for the European Union INTERREG III (study of the impact of EU funding on the border) and Peace II separate budget line for an on-line information project/cross border information source book. It is intended that consultancy will bring in resources from such sources as IntertradeIreland, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (seminar on the euro) and the two Departments of Education (a series of conferences) (see 2.7). The following table summarizes the Centre's annual statements of financial activities to the end of the last full financial year for which information is available (July 2001). According to these annual statements for 1999-2000 and 2000-2001, most of the Centre's resources are spent on 'direct charitable expenditure' (projects and staffing) and relatively little on 'administrative expenses'.

Table 1: accounts 1999-2001

	Aug 2000 - July 2001	Sep 1999 - July 2000
Income	Grants receivable 157,122 Other income 77,340 Total 234,462	Grants receivable 241,378 Other income 25,110 Total 266,488
Spending	Direct charitable expenditure 314,701 Administrative expenses 12,525 Total 327,226	Direct charitable expenditure 151,429 Administrative expenses 19,235 Total 170,664
Surplus/deficit	- £92,764	+ £95,824
Balance forward	+ £3,060	+ £95,824

2.7 Future plans

Before reviewing the record of the Centre, this would be an appropriate place to sketch out the Centre's plans for the future. The Centre has approved a *Business Plan, 2001-6*. This outlines the past development, current evolution and future plan for the Centre. The business plan anticipates the following areas of expansion:

- Expansion of in-house research capacity to meet consultancy demands by government and public agencies
- Taught masters course in cross border studies
- Opening of second office in Dublin City University
- Employment of research manager and up to three in-house researchers
- Appointment of research scholars, fellows and bursaries
- Capacity to offer larger, more long-term research work
- On-line and real assembly of cross border information sources
- International board of reference
- Annual research journal of cross border studies
- Edited books of essays on cross border themes
- Expansion of study groups

Specific timetables are outlined for these developments over the 2001-6 period. The business plan outlines revenue and spending plans for 2001/2 (year 1) to 2005/6 (year 5).

Table 2: financial plan 2000-2006

Financial plan 2000-2006
Peace II programme rising from £199,540 in year 1 to £286,000 in year 5 EU proportion falling from almost 60% to about 34%
Sponsorship, consultancy rising from £40,000 in year 1 to £258,000 in year 5 Proportion rising from 12% to over 30%
Two governments rising from £94,000 in year 1 to £226,000 in year 5 Proportion consistent at around 27%
Two universities rising from £1,000 to £76,000 Proportion rising from 0.3% to 9%

As may be seen, the key elements are to reduce dependence on the Peace programme and to increase revenues from sponsorship, consultancy, the governments and the universities. Besides competing for consultancy, the Centre will attempt to extend the level of sponsorship from industry and look for funding from the EU 6th framework research programme, the UK Economic and Social Research Council, the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences and British and American foundations.

When it comes to research topics, the board has agreed that in the future the following cross-cutting themes would inform the Centre's work:

- Sustainability of cross border funding and programmes
- Transfer of best practice between the jurisdictions
- Added value from joint working
- Democratic participation and the bottom-up approach
- Building mutual trust and social capital
- Obstacles and constraints to co-operation
- External factors which stimulate or inhibit cross border co-operation

In *Notes on a 5-year island of Ireland research strategy* for the President of Dublin City University, the director outlined ways in which the Centre could develop in the future, especially following 2006 when the level of European resources available for both parts of Ireland would be much diminished. The Centre posed the following research agenda:

- Scoping studies covering key themes to act as a coherent baseline for cross border co-operation (health, education, energy, environment, agriculture, e-commerce, human resources, transport).
- Study of the island of Ireland economy to match the Cecchini report on the costs of the non-Europe
- Island of Ireland business research strategies
- Social development of the Belfast agreement
- Lifelong learning, the effectiveness of peacebuilding and social capital
- Technology research

In its application to the Peace II programme, the Centre itemized other research proposals which the Centre would like to fund, such as:

- Monitoring the operation of the north-south intergovernmental bodies
- Follow-up work to the study of educational disadvantage

- The failed cross border waste management project in the north-west
- Cross border schools science forum
- Utilization of cross border health services
- Social support services for older people

In August 2001 the research strategy committee made a number of recommendations to the board, including the following:

- Research studies should be of longer duration, around 12 - 18 months
- A research manager should be appointed from September 2002
- There should be an international advisory board to oversee the Centre's strategy
- Research assessment panels should see projects through from assessment to completion
- Newsletter - paper and on-line
- Common methodology and presentation style for research projects
- Centre should be a research resource for cross border institutions

2.8 Summary

The Centre for Cross Border Studies was established in 1999 and has completed its initial phase of work. It has established a board and organizational structure. The Centre comprises three staff in an office in Armagh. The Centre is promoted through the presentations of the director and an extensive website. The turnover of the Centre almost doubled from £170,000 in the first year to £327,000 in the second. The Centre received start-up funding from the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and hopes to obtain a second round of substantial funding from the Peace II programme. The Centre has diversified its funding in the meantime by attracting sponsorship, grants and consultancy. Several plans have been sketched out for the Centre's future development. Next we examine the core research work undertaken during this period.

3 Research activities

An early discovery of the Centre was that the level of cross border research to date was low - despite much talk of more structured north-south co-operation dating back to the 1980s. The Centre took the early decision to commence research in a broad range of work (*call for proposals*); and to begin to rectify important information deficits (*mapping studies*). This chapter examines the research activities of the Centre to date under a number of further headings, such as calls for proposals (3.1), mapping studies (3.2), commissioned research (3.3) and books (3.4). The publicity and dissemination process is reviewed (3.5). Finally, these activities are summarized (3.6).

3.1 Calls for proposals

The Centre has made three calls for proposals, as follows. These were funded from the initial Programme for Peace and Reconciliation budget, supplemented by some sponsorship.

Table 3: calls for proposals, rounds 1,2 & 3, 1999-2001

Rounds	Total received	No. received	Approved	%
Dec 1999: £97,550 available	64	Health 15; Education 25; Public administration 17; Transport and communications: 7	6*	9.4%
Jun 2000: £37,000 available	31	Health 6; Education 5; Culture and arts 4; Public administration 3; Environment 3; Social services 3; Business and technology 2; Others 4	4**	12.9%
Oct 2001: £25,000 available	12	Environment only	1	8.3%
	107		10	9.3%

* Includes one project not completed by time of the evaluation ** Includes one project deferred

The procedure for these calls for proposals was that they were circulated across the universities in Ireland by e-mail and posted on the website. These gave information on the call, with guidelines for researchers. Detailed areas of suggested research were listed. Proposals of up to 3,000 words were invited, with CVs of principal investigators and assistants, to be filed in 4-5 weeks. In the case of the call for environmental projects, for example, a four-page set of guidelines was issued providing background and explaining to proposers what was expected of them by way of research aims, methodology, timetable, staffing, dissemination and budget.

The system for supervision and quality control was as follows. During the 1999 round, assessment committees were formed for each of the four themes of the first call for proposals. Each of these committees comprised a mixture of board members and outside specialists invited for the occasion.² For the 2000 call, only board members served on the committee.³ For the environment call, another assessment and monitoring committee was formed. Members were Chris Gibson, Frank Convery and Peter Clinch (UCD), Malachy McEldowney (QUB) and Dick Mackenzie (NSMC). Members of assessment committees were sent two-page 9-point guidelines to inform their work. The following is a list of the projects commenced under the first three rounds (tables 4-6).

² These were: education (Pauric Travers, Paul Nolan, Liam Carey, Dominic Murray); health (Jane Wilde, Chris Gibson, Helen Burke); public administration (Mari Fitzduff, Chris O'Malley, John Murray); transport & communications (Chris O'Malley, John Kenna, Paul Gorecki, Anne Davies)

³ Chris Gibson (chairperson), Jane Wilde, Richard Jay, Brian Trench

Table 4: completed projects funded under rounds 1 & 2⁴

Title	Main authors	Cost £
<i>Education</i> : Ireland's learning poor - adult educational disadvantage and cross border co-operation (launched Apr 2001)	Dr Mark Morgan Paul McGill	22,750
<i>Health</i> : Cross border co-operation in health services in Ireland (launched Apr 2001)	Dr Jim Jamison Prof. Martin McKee & others	24,800
<i>Public administration</i> : Creating living institutions - EU cross border co-operation after the Good Friday agreement (launched May 2001)	Prof. Brigid Laffan Dr Diane Payne	24,500
<i>Communications</i> : The evolution of telecom technologies - current trends and near future implications (released Mar 2001)	Prof. Fionn Murtagh Dr John Keating & others	25,500
<i>Public administration</i> : Cross border co-operation in local government - models of management, development and reconciliation (launched Oct 2001)	Prof Derek Birrell Amanda Hayes	9,870
<i>Culture</i> : The local history project - cooperating north and south (launched Nov 2001)	Dr Raymond Gillespie Dr Jacinta Prunty	8,400
	Maeve Mulryan-Moloney	115,820

Table 5: round three - environment (started 2002)

Title	Authors	Cost £
Implementation of Local Agenda 21 sustainable development strategy by the public authorities in both parts of the island	Dr Bill Neill Geraint Ellis & others	25,000

Table 6: projects not yet completed

Title	Main authors	Cost £	Notes
<i>Health</i> : Promoting mental health and social well-being: cross border opportunities and challenges	Dr Margaret Barry Sharon Friel	8,700	Phase I completed June 2001 Phase II due for completion April 2002
Monitoring north-south bodies	Robin Wilson/ Democratic Dialogue	5,000	Delayed, due to suspension of bodies
Environment Waste management	Dr Honor Fagan	12,000	Final text not agreed, project reverted to authors
	Dr Denis O'Hearn	20,700	

The progress of research is continually monitored by the director and one of his main roles has been to keep projects to timetable. Generally, a project is reviewed at the half-way stage. Once a draft report is provided, comments are normally sought from external readers. For example, the health co-operation report (Jamison) was read by board member Jane Wilde and external reader Prof. Cecily Kelleher. The telecoms report (Murtagh) was read by Chris O'Malley and external reader Prof. Alan Smeaton (computer applications, DCU). The education study (McGill and Morgan) was read by Prof. John Coolahan and Paul Nolan. *Creating living institutions* (Laffan) was read by Prof. Liam O'Dowd and Prof. Elizabeth Meehan. The waste management report was read by Brian Trench and by Frank McDonald (*Irish Times*). The local history societies project was read by Dr Bill Crawford (Queen's

⁴ These projects are referred to subsequently in the text by their short titles e.g. 'local government' or by their lead researcher or researchers spoken to in the course of the study (e.g. 'Birrell'). The use of these forms is purely for reasons of economy and space: it does not indicate an undervaluing of the other researchers engaged in each project

University) and Dr Pauric Travers. The local government project (Birrell) was read by Richard Jay and Eamonn Naughten (Clare County Council). Although some comments have led to speedy rewrites, in other cases the revisions have been more substantial and have taken longer.

Only in one case was one report adjudged to be of insufficient quality to be published (waste management). The board took the view that the authors had failed to take on board the comments made by the readers and it was not prepared to recommend publication. Correspondence between the Centre and the lead researcher tells of a substantial dispute over research method, the nature of the investigation carried out and the conclusions reached, overlaid with issues of timescale, payments and contractual obligations. The report was subsequently published as a working paper by the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (December 2001).

An important aspect of these reports has been the study day. These have served the function of bringing together the stakeholders and experts on an issue to inform the research process. The exact stage of the research where this has happened has varied, being at an early stage in some, a middle stage in others and at a more advanced stage in others. The programme of study days was disrupted by the foot-and-mouth epidemic. Because of this some became in effect launch seminars after the report had been completed - but they nevertheless provided good opportunities for the research to be presented and discussed and for groups to network. These have been held as follows:

Table 7: study days in connection with research projects

Study	Location	Attending	
Telecoms report	Dublin	35	Sep 2001
Local government	Armagh	50	Oct 2001
Cross border health services	Armagh	56	Nov 2000
Mental health phase I	Armagh	53	Sep 2001
Education	Armagh	100	Oct 2001
		294	

The impact of these studies will be reviewed later (chapter 5).

3.2 Mapping studies

The following mapping studies were done. These were designed to provide baseline information and fill crucial knowledge gaps at an early stage of the Centre's operation. These were designed as a series of discussion papers for study days held at the end of each project.

Table 8: mapping studies and study days

Theme	Title	Author	Outcome
Agriculture	North-South co-operation on agriculture and food	Ciaran O Maolain	Presented to study day, Apr 2000
Tourism	North-South co-operation in tourism - a mapping study	Ciaran O Maolain	Presented to study day, Jun 2000
Education	North-South co-operation in education including lifelong learning	Andy Pollak	Presented to study day, May 2000
New technologies	Information and communications technologies	Patricia Clarke	Presented to study day, Sep 2000

A mailing list was normally assembled for each event, looking for:

- Civil servants responsible for the policy area concerned
- Researchers with a known interest in the area
- From newspapers and articles, people known to have an interest in the area

For example, the agriculture study group included representatives of the Department of Agriculture, farming organizations, dairy and beef processing companies, food safety bodies, rural development groups, agricultural colleges and universities, public representatives and journalists. Others have attracted trade union leaders, business people, departmental under secretaries and government ministers. For example, the tourism day attracted the interest of the chairperson of the Northern Ireland Tourist Industry Confederation, the chairperson of the Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (who chaired it) and the director of Belfast International Airport. The technologies mapping was chaired by Prof. Fabian Monds, provost of Magee and chairman of the Information Society Initiative in Northern Ireland. Prof Tony Gallagher (QUB) chaired the education day; Prof. Seamus Sheehy (NUID) the agriculture day.

3.3 Commissioned research activity

Commissioned research has grown as an area of the Centre's work. Commissioned research has arisen when an agency has approach the Centre to carry out a specific body of work; or where the Centre has approached a government body or agency suggesting the need for a particular study. The Centre has been commissioned to do the following research activities:

Table 9: commissioned research

Title	Authors	Cost £	Commissioning agency	Status
North-south school, youth and teacher exchanges	Andy Pollak, Ciaran O Maolain, Zena Liston & Sheena McGrellis	25,800	Dept. Education NI & Dept Education & Science RI	Summary published as conference paper, Oct 2001
<i>From concept to realization: an evaluation of CAWT</i>	Patricia Clarke & Jim Jamison	13,000	Co-operation & Working Together (CAWT)	Completed Dec 2000 Published May 2001
Extension of University for Industry to RI	Paul McGill & Mark Morgan	17,300	University for Industry/ <i>learndirect</i>	Completed Dec 2000
<i>Obstacles to mobility between NI/RI: scoping phase</i>	Judith Crosbie & Andy Pollak	5,775	North South Ministerial Council	Presented to NSMC August 2000 1st draft completed
Public consultation phase on PriceWaterhouse Coopers/Indecon study <i>Obstacles to mobility</i>		14,500	North South Ministerial Council	Completed March 2002
		76,375		

An example of commissioned research is CAWT. CAWT approached the Centre, looking for an evaluation which might meet its needs, broadly coinciding with the health study then being carried out under the research round. The extension of the University for Industry project was a project spun off from the research by the same authors under the research rounds in north-south co-operation in the area of education.

One in-house study is included here for convenience. The foot-and-mouth study was suggested by the Centre. The board took the view that an analysis of such a cross border issue was timely and was an ideal opportunity for the Centre to demonstrate its value. A successful approach was made to the Department of Foreign Affairs to fund this study.

Table 10: in-house research

Title	Author	Cost £	Commissioning agency	Status
Foot-and-mouth	Patricia Clarke	10,000	Dept. of Foreign Affairs	Published Feb 2002

Similar supervisory procedures were followed to the three research rounds. The foot-and-mouth study was supervised by a research steering committee comprising board member Brian Trench and agricultural journalists Richard Wright and Matt Dempsey.

This research also uses study days and consultations to accompany the process. These were as follows:

Table 11: study days to accompany in-house, commissioned research

Study	Location	Attending	Date
Foot-and-mouth	Armagh	30	Oct 2001
Cross border mobility	Carrickmacross	90	May 2001
	Omagh	70	
Cross border school, youth and teacher exchanges	Armagh	100	Oct 2001
Health services and CAWT	Armagh	59	Nov 2000
		349	

The seminar on cross border school, youth and teacher exchanges attracted 100 participants with keynote addresses from Prof John Coolahan and Sir Kenneth Bloomfield. Andy Pollak wrote the conference report which was forwarded to the North South Ministerial Council meeting of November 2001. The CAWT evaluation study and health service study day was chaired by Dr Maurice Hayes, former secretary of the Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services and member of Seanad Eireann.

In addition, the Centre has been commissioned to run a number of consultative events and conferences. Although strictly speaking they are not research, they contribute to the research base, knowledge and networking process and are listed here as a research - related activity. These are as follows:

Table 12: commissioned conferences and similar activities

Subject	Agency	Date	Attending	Value
European cross border co-operation (3-day conference)	Armagh	Sep-Oct 2001	211	£25,000*
Education for democratic citizenship	Dept. of Education & Science (RI)	Nov 2001	90	IR£10,000
North-South co-operation	Dept. of Foreign Affairs	Dec 2001	100	£660 + in-kind assistance
			401	

* The actual cost was about £17,000 since £8,000 was taken in in fees.

The European conference was opened by President McAleese and included leading academic contributors from Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Italy and Slovenia. Other speakers were Ronnie Flanagan, Asst Garda Commissioner Kevin Carty and Baron von Richthofen, head of the Brandenburg Commission for Polish - German relations. People came from 13 countries, with 43 speakers from 10 countries. The conference was also addressed by the First Minister, David Trimble, Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon and John Hume MEP.

90 people attended the *Education for democratic citizenship* conference, with speakers from England, the Council of Europe, Romania and Croatia, being opened by the Minister for Employment and Learning Sean Farren and the main address given by Anne Looney, chief executive of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (RI).

For 2002 commissioned conferences are planned as follows (agencies indicated):

- Impact of the euro: NI Euro Preparations Forum
- Higher education co-operation: Department of Education and Science and Department for Employment and Learning (first of 6 conferences)
- All Ireland business strategy: InterTradeIreland

3.4 Books

The Centre edited three books which were published by Cork University Press:

- John Bradley and Esmond Birnie: *Can the Celtic Tiger cross the Border?* 2001 (introduction by Peter Sutherland)
- Ivana Bacik and Stephen Livingstone: *Toward a culture of Human Rights in Ireland.* 2001 (introduction by Mary Robinson)
- Edna Longley and Declan Kiberd: *Multiculturalism in Ireland* (introduction by President Mary McAleese), 2001

The books received favourable reviews in the *Irish Times*. There do not appear to have been many other reviews, though one was done by the Connolly Association. The Centre sold 70 to 80 copies directly itself. Sales figures from Cork University Press are awaited.

3.5 Dissemination and publicity

Research completed under the calls for proposals (3.1) and mapping studies (3.2) was all published under the Centre's own rubric. In the case of commissioned research, this is either made available from the commissioning agency or from the Centre.

When formally distributed by the Centre, each research report has a standard format and a print run of 750. Each researcher is expected to be attentive to issues of dissemination (this point is stressed in the application process) and is asked to suggest imaginative ways in which findings may be distributed to politicians, civil servants, the media and public.

The Centre distributes its reports to:

- Appropriate policy-makers in government departments
- Press
- Those involved in the study days
- People making enquiries about the reports meantime
- Researchers in the Assembly
- Universities
- Libraries

The output of the Centre for Cross Border Studies is aimed at north-south policy makers. These are more closely defined as:

- North South Ministerial Council
- North-South implementation bodies

- Public servants in government departments, north and south, who have a cross border brief, interest or dimension to their work
- Senior civil servants with policy making roles in the fields of work covered by the Centre (e.g. health policy)
- Interested academics in universities, north and south

The Centre does not have a centralized database (although various lists can be created with the mailmerge facility) . Two lists with addresses do exist. These are those invited to the 3-day conference on European co-operation, September/October 2000; a list of those invited to meet Brian Cowen, 17th December 2001 (these became the subject of survey work: chapter 4). The Centre normally draws up a list for each event; and a list of the 20 or so main media contacts in the northern and southern national and provincial press, radio and television. For example, researchers are typically asked who should be invited to study days and the Centre then organizes invitations accordingly. These lists have names and affiliations, but not always addresses.

The Centre attempts to obtain maximum publicity for the launch of each report. A press conference is sometimes held and where possible a high-profile personality is asked to launch the report. The director, having worked in the media himself, has good media contacts and this helps in obtaining recognition and publicity for the Centre. In some cases (e.g. telecoms) the launch was linked to the one of the study days.

Table 13: research-linked promotional events by the Centre

- i. The education report (McGill and Morgan) was launched publicly in April 2001 by Minister for Employment and Learning Sean Farren and covered by BBC, *Irish Times*, *Irish News* and *Belfast Telegraph*.
- ii. *Creating living institutions* (Laffan) was launched by the RI Junior Minister for Foreign Affairs, Liz O'Donnell, in Newman House with 120 politicians, academics, government officials, EU officials, ambassadors and diplomats and was covered in the *Irish Times*.
- iii. The CAWT evaluation (Clarke and Jamison) was launched by Paul Simpson, deputy secretary of the Dept of Health, Social Services and Public Safety; Paul Robinson, CAWT director general and the chief executive of the north-eastern health board. The health report (Jamison) was launched by NI Health Minister Bairbre de Brun. They received coverage in the *Irish Times*, medical journals and border papers.
- iv. The local history report (Prunty) was launched at the all-Ireland local history studies conference.
- v. The Cork University Press books were launched in May 2001 by Supreme Court judge Catherine McGuinness and received extensive coverage and extracts in the *Irish Times*.
- vi. The telecoms report was covered by the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent*, *Irish News*, *BBC Northern Ireland*, *RTE Radio 2*.
- vii. The report on foot-and-mouth, for example, reached the front page of the *Irish Examiner*, received prominent attention in other papers, was covered in radio discussion shows and was featured prominently on RTE radio news. It got the report of the week award on the Vets-at-work website.

Commissioned research has been presented in a structured way to the commissioning agencies. For example, the preliminary commissioned research into the obstacles to cross border co-operation was presented to the North South Ministerial Council secretariat (August 2000) and the Council itself (September). The research into school, youth and teacher exchanges was presented to the North-South working group of education civil servants (Newry, Nov 2000 and Feb 2001). The CAWT report was presented to the CAWT executive (Sligo, Feb 2001).

So far, the Centre has given less attention than it might have liked to follow-up to its reports. Meetings have been sought, but have not yet taken place, with the respective ministers for education and health. Where possible, the director will speak to senior civil servants about the Centre's research to gauge their reactions.

In order to obtain maximum value for publications, researchers are encouraged to present edited versions for academic publication. The CAWT study has led to the following published paper: 'CAWT - the end of the beginning', by Patricia Clarke and Jim Jamison in *Journal of health gain*, vol 5, #3, autumn 2001. A paper on the mental health project was also published in the same journal. The papers from the European conference (September - October 2000) were published in a special edition of *Administration* (vol 49, #2, 2001) . Two researchers are currently planning to place papers in journals: Fionn Murtagh (telecoms) and Jim Jamison (cross border health services). The Laffan report led to a series of papers (see table 18, later).

In addition, a paper on the work of the north - south bodies has been published (Andy Pollak: *Cross Border Bodies and the North-South Relationship - Implementing Strand 2*. Institute for British Irish Studies, working paper #12, 2001).

3.6 Summary

This chapter has catalogued an extensive range of research activities undertaken by the Centre between September 1999 and spring 2002. The primary activity is the research report, based on an open call for proposals. Here the Centre has carried out two research rounds (seven projects completed or almost completed) and begun a third, single-project round. These projects involved 30 researchers drawn from 12 colleges and universities in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The second major area of work is commissioned research and here six reports have been concluded or commenced. The third area is mapping exercises. Here, four mapping studies were carried out. Although associated with the earliest phase of the Centre when it sought to define the field, these studies have an on-going value, as evidenced by their continued popularity with website users. The study days have been an important aspect of the work of the Centre. Here, 16 events have been held, drawing in not only the key players in the fields, but attracting widespread interest. The Centre has carried out one in-house research project (foot-and-mouth) and held three conferences. Three books have been published. Several promotional events have been organized to publicize the Centre's research activities, attracting high-level political personalities and subsequent media interest. The product of the Centre may be summarized to date:

Table 14: summary of research activities: autumn 1999 - spring 2002

Type of activity	Activity completed or in progress
Research reports (call for proposals)	Three calls for proposals: two rounds completed 7 projects completed, 1 started, 1 delayed, 1 not completed
Commissioned research/consultancy	6 studies commenced, 5 now completed.
In-house research	1 started and completed.
Study days	16.
Mapping research	4 commenced, all completed.
Books	3 commenced, all published
Conferences	3 held
Promotional events	8 press conferences or launches

This is an impressive product list, especially considering the time period (two and a half years), the limited staff of three and an annual budget of between £170,000 to £327,000. The performance of the Centre will now be reviewed.

4 Performance

Chapters 1,2 and 3 recorded the factual history, evolution, development and activities of the Centre under a number of headings. The Centre's performance is now analysed in detail. First the in-house means of monitoring the work of the Centre is reviewed. Then the work of the Centre is reviewed externally.

4.1 Internal review

The Centre already has in place a number of systems for recording its own activities and performance. These are as follows (some have already been noted above):

- The leaflets (*Year Two, Year Three*) which record research in progress (see chapter 2)
- Progress reports by the director to the board
- Annual accounts (see chapter 2)
- Press book
- Informal records of meetings addressed by the director and visitors to the Centre (chapter 2)
- Website logs
- Records of people attending study days, seminars, conferences and similar events
- Endorsements

Conferences and events

These records provide useful information on the work of the Centre. Records of people attending study days, seminars, conference and similar events show that 1,300 people have now attended events organized by the Centre. Because records are kept of the identities and affiliations of those coming, it is possible to break down their categories. For example, the conference on cross border school, youth and teacher exchanges attracted teachers from counties in different parts of Ireland; members of the North South Ministerial Council; representatives of Vocational Education Committees; teachers from loyalist and nationalist backgrounds; trade union, teacher and parents representatives from both parts of the island. Similar lists are available for the other study days and events and they provide a test of whether the Centre is reaching its key audiences. Examination of these lists suggests strongly that it is.

Progress reports

The director makes progress reports to each board meeting. These are generally 2-3 pages long and provide succinct records of the main activities that have taken place and are in train in the Centre. These are important records (and are a prime source of documentation for this evaluation).

Press book

The press book records the media interest in the work of the Centre. It enables a record to be assembled of the column inches of press attention which the Centre attracts, the range of media covered and the frequency. Here is a list of the principal press citations (table 15). There were 59 citations in 15 different titles.

[Notes 'Irish Times E&L supp.' denotes the *Educational and Living* supplement of the *Irish Times*. 'Times HE supp' denotes the *The Times Higher Education* supplement. 'BT' denotes *Belfast Telegraph*.]

Table 15: press citations

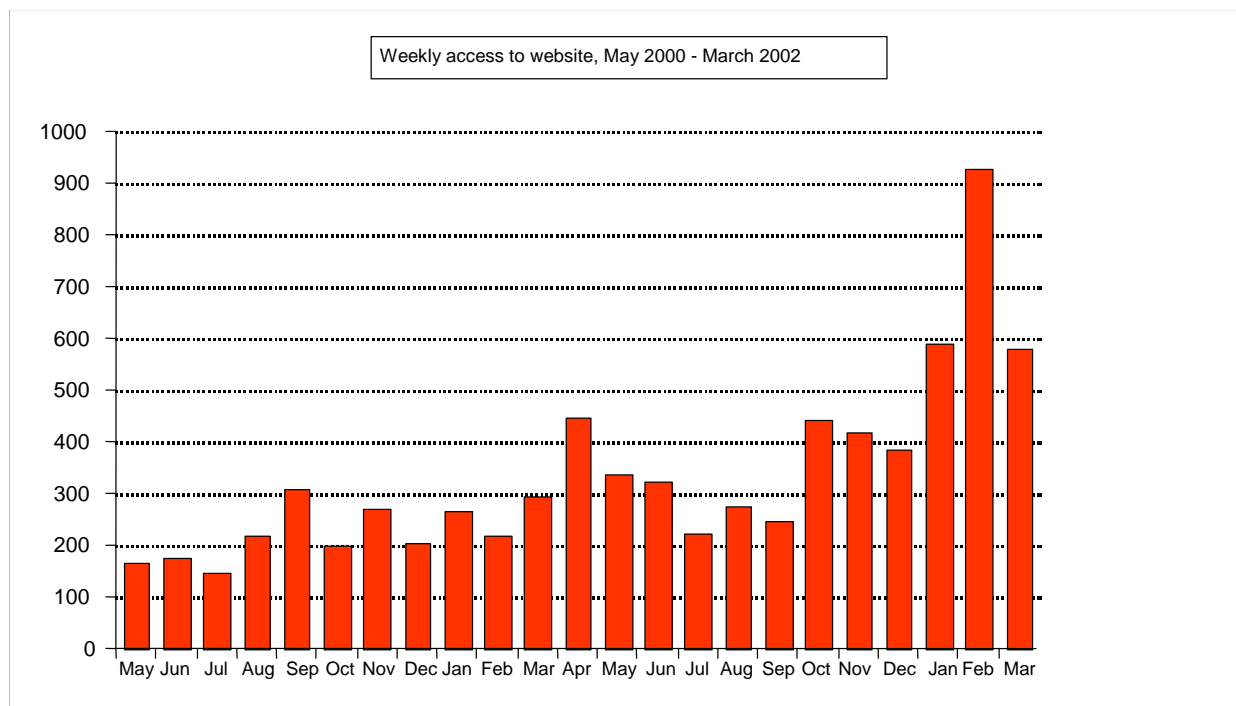
Studying ways to break down the border	Irish Times/E&L supp.	28 Sep 1999
Cross border Centre is launched	Irish News	8 Nov 1999
Cross border Centre opens	Belfast Telegraph	8 Nov 1999
Cross border research Centre opened	Irish Times	9 Nov 1999

Unique cross border Centre set up in city	Ulster Gazette	11 Nov 1999
Centre for Cross Border Studies launched	Armagh Observer	11 Nov 1999
Sharing learning on a small island	Irish Times/E&L supp.	23 Nov 1999
Armagh research offers get huge interest	Irish Times/E&L supp.	29 Feb 2000
Outreach a cornerstone of teaching	BT supplement	March 2000
Cross border blues	Irish Times	14 Mar 2000
Cross-border studies group donates funding	Irish Times	21 Mar 2000
City cross border Centre to fund projects	Ulster Gazette	23 Mar 2000
Cross-border links that face differences	Irish Times/E&L supp.	30 May 2000
President opens conference on co-operation	Irish News	30 Sep 2000
Mutual gains from changes to constitution	Irish Times	30 Sep 2000
Working for a common good will transform	Irish Times	2 Oct 2000
Patten will bring Gardai, RUC closer	Irish Times	2 Oct 2000
Agreement is still the only way	Irish News	2 Oct 2000
Working together signals a better life	Irish News	2 Oct 2000
McGuinness in visit to Centre	Irish Times	13 Oct 2000
Agents of co-operation	Times HE Supp.	9 Feb 2001
Bargains in cross border jungle highlighted	Irish Times	21 Mar 2001
Website compares costs of phone calls	Irish Examiner	21 Mar 2001
Report a wake-up call over mobiles	Irish News	22 Mar 2001
Report shows roaming phone costs	Leinster Leader	29 Mar 2001
Cross border medical co-operation very low	Irish Times	9 April 2001
Hospitals must share their work	Belfast Telegraph	9 April 2001
New report suggests health board in mess	Northern Standard	12 April 2001
Goldmine	Irish Independent	19 April, 2001
Experience the joys of cyber shopping	Irish Examiner	20 April 2001
Report says 1m learning poor not being helped	Irish Times	24 April 2001
25% of adults have literacy problems	Irish Times	24 April 2001
Education policy is failing 1.1m	Irish News	24 April 2001
Raw deal for adults in search of learning	Belfast Telegraph	24 April 2001
Sharing the wealth with the learning poor	An Phoblacht	29 April 2001
Get connected	Irish Independent	30 April 2001
Cross border research projects	Irish Times	8 May 2001
Delays in human rights law a matter of regret	Irish Times	9 May 2001
Politicians fear cross border body, report	Irish Times	10 May 2001
Cross border accord	Irish Times	12 May 2001
Problems of cross border workers	Irish Times	17 May 2001
Make people take jobs road south	Belfast Telegraph	26 May 2001
Over 9,000 cross border for work	Irish Times	30 May 2001
Co-operation the theme	Northern Standard	31 May 2001
Everybody needs good neighbours	Belfast Telegraph	2 June 2001
Bordering on optimism	Irish Times	7 July 2001
Greater north-south health links planned	Sunday Tribune	8 July 2001
Fears unfounded - Parnell summer school	Irish Times	17 Aug 2001
Two day citizenship education conference	Ulster Gazette	13 Dec 2001
Trimble brings council talks to Belfast	Belfast Telegraph	17 Dec 2001
Irish foreign minister visits Centre in city	Ulster Gazette	27 Dec 2001
Report criticizes DARD over F&M strategy	Irish News	18 Feb 2002
FMD: report calls for all-Ireland strategy	RTE interactive news	18 Feb 2002
All-Ireland health system vital [editorial]	Irish Examiner	18 Feb 2002
F&M crisis blamed on staff shortages	Irish Examiner	18 Feb 2002
Report criticizes lack of F&M controls	Irish Times	18 Feb 2002
All Ireland animal health strategy proposed	Irish Times	18 Feb 2002
Report calls for all Ireland...	Newsletter	18 Feb 2002
All-Ireland approach can protect livestock	Belfast Telegraph	18 Feb 2002

Website

For purposes of this evaluation, data on website use was made available through the main server, using the Analog 4.1 logging system. The following table traces the level of internet access to the Centre. This enables a useful comparison to be made between the early period of operation of the Centre and the more recent period.

Table 16: weekly access to website, May 2000 - March 2002



This table shows a steady increase of visits from 165 a week when the site opened to about 400 at the end of 2001. There were seasonal declines in the summer months and a peak in April 2001 (the principal point of interest was the tourism mapping study). There was much increased interest in the site from January 2002, marking interest in the consultation on mobility (over 900). The mapping study on tourism is the most popular file and accounts for the largest proportion of downloads into 2002.

The website log enables information to be provided on the total number of requests, daily requests, requests by domain, search words used and pages most frequently accessed, as well as more technical information (e.g. operating system of accessor). A comparison was made of the first week for which information was available (May 2000) and the last week (March 2002). This shows that:

- The largest single group of visitors at present has commercial domains (.com): 21% (22% in 2000).
- By country, the largest proportion of visitors come from the UK (16%) followed by Ireland (9%) and the United States educational (6%) (proportions in 2000 were 16%, 11% and 6% respectively).
- The largest proportion of those who come in using search words have done so through the use of the word 'Ireland'.
- Most visitors now arrive at the home page, followed by, in descending order, the links page, research page, 'about the Centre' page, publications and news pages.

The logs do not give details of the links from which visitors arrive, nor duration of stay times. Until now, this monitored data from the log was not reported regularly back to the Centre.

One area of the website which has been neglected is its potential use for the board members. It should be possible, for example, to construct a private, password-only accessible area for board members. Agendas, minutes, notes and discussion could be posted there.

This concludes the review of the performance of the Centre, based on internal data available. We now pass on to external data.

Endorsements

The Centre keeps records of official endorsements of its activities (indeed, they are published on the website). These are, in their own way, witness to the effectiveness of the Centre. Among those publicly or formally endorsing the work of the Centre have been the President of Ireland; the NI Minister for Finance and Personnel, Dr Sean Farren; the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson; European Commission Secretary General, David O'Sullivan; RI Minister for Health and Children, Micheal Martin; and RI Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Cowen. Others are the joint secretaries of the North South Ministerial Council, Tim O'Connor and Dick Mackenzie, and the *Times Higher Education Supplement*. The Centre was commended as one of two noteworthy examples of cross border co-operation in the National Development Plan 2000-6.

4.2 External review: introduction

Several external tests were applied, in the course of this evaluation, to adjudge the work of the Centre for Cross Border Studies. Seven groups were interrogated for their views on the performance of the Centre: staff, board, researchers, unsuccessful research applicants, policy-makers, commissioners of research, and the Centre's target groups. They were questioned by means of personal interviews and survey. 35 interviews were carried out and 278 people were surveyed, with a final return rate of 151 people or 54%, which is high for surveys of this nature. Details of the questions asked may be found in the annexes and details of the surveys may be found in the methodological note. The areas are dealt with collectively, unless there is a divergence between what one group is saying compared to another and that will be so noted. The assessment will move from the general to the particular.

4.3 Overall performance

The general view of the Centre is overwhelmingly positive. Comments may be summarized as follows:

- The work it is doing is valuable and recognized as a vital adjunct to the political settlement achieved over the past four years. The Centre is seen as a serious body anxious to make an impact. It is reaching the right people.
- The Centre is seen as dynamic, entrepreneurial and quick to spot opportunities (e.g. the project to analyse the issues arising from the foot-and-mouth epidemic).
- The Centre is seen to have almost passed through its experimental phase and to be a feature of the cross border landscape. Several commentators saw it as 'the unofficial research wing of the Belfast agreement'.
- It is visible, conspicuous and has a strong profile. It 'punches above its weight'.
- The research reports are lucid, tightly written, with, due to effective editing, little or no padding. The research reports are professionally produced and well received.
- It is well thought of among peer groups.
- It has low costs, low overheads, is 'swift and light' in its operation.
- The three book publications are liked. Some rated them as one of the most important products of the Centre, designed to provoke opinion.
- Its policy proposals are seen to strike the right tone: challenging enough to provoke a response, but not so controversial as to lose support. The Centre had been right to focus on practical issues of co-operation in a pragmatic way and this had brought on board a significant element of unionist thinking.

- It is politically balanced, independent, credible and non-partisan. It has pursued cross border issues in a non-ideological way, without permitting these issues to be defined either in a nationalist or unionist way (though recognising that such differences exist).
- The Centre seems to have a good combination of means of work: in-house research, commissioned research, the call for proposals, study days, publications. Study days provide important neutral networking opportunities and a safe place for people to debate. These off-the-record fora are highly valued by public servants. Through the Centre, academics had done work that is seen to be relevant, useful and practical.
- Its reports are seen to score highly for volume, relevance and quality. The reports are seen as substantial, weighty and more than up to academic standard. They are seen to have attacked a broad spread of carefully chosen issues. It is acknowledged that the Centre cannot take on all issues, but it is considered to have made a number of judicious, shrewd, well-balanced choices. Many commented on the remarkable volume of output in a short period with only limited funding. All are impressed with the amount of activity carried out in a short period of time. ‘A lot has been achieved in a short period’ is a typical comment.

Many of those interviewed commended the commitment, energy, vision, determination, skilfulness, academic and journalistic capacity of the director. These remarks were unprompted but widely volunteered. He was lavishly praised for his management of the Centre, dynamism, tact, diplomacy, patience, extreme forms of energy, sanguinity in the face of financial uncertainty and preparedness to progress issues despite personal inconvenience. He was commended for his academic abilities, multiple skills and circle of contacts. He has worked well with subtle political imperatives involved in dealing with nationalist and unionist opinion. The Centre as a whole is seen to be flexible, energetic and well managed. The comments on the two other staff members were all positive.

The comments above may be quantified by survey. Three groups were asked to give their assessment of the performance of the Centre. The following is the outcome.

Table 17: survey assessments of the Centre’s performance by the target groups

Question	European conference Sep/Oct 2000	Unsuccessful applicants	Dec 2001, Brian Cowen (attending)	Dec 2001, Brian Cowen (not attending)
How relevant do you consider the Centre’s work to be to the key cross border issues				
Completely irrelevant				3%
Largely irrelevant	7%		4%	14%
Relevant	48%		52%	60%
Very relevant	45%		44%	23%
Compared to other cross border bodies, do you consider the Centre to be:				
Less effective	15%	7%	10%	31%
As effective as the others	55%	86%	53%	52%
More effective	30%	7%	37%	17%
How would you rate the quality of its work on a scale 1 to 10 (1 = poor, 10 = excellent)	7.29		8.05	6.34

For details of the four groups, see methodological note, p56. N=55, 33, 24, 39 respectively. Note: some columns may not, due to rounding, reach exactly 100%.

This indicates that:

- The Centre is seen to be relevant or very relevant to the key cross border issues
- Most people consider the Centre to be as effective as other cross border bodies. This rating is much higher for those attending the European conference and lower for those invited to the Brian Cowen conference but not attending.
- The work of the Centre is rated highly - well over 7 - by the majority of respondents. It is lower (6.34) for those invited to the Brian Cowen reception but not attending.

There is a distinct gap in perceptions between the Cowen attending group and the non-attending group and we return to this issue later.

4.4 The research experience

Successful research applicants were asked about their experience of undertaking work for the Centre. This is an important point of the evaluation, a test of the Centre's management skills, reputation and ability to attract research proposals in the future. The findings:

- Researchers learned about the call for proposals through the circulation of e-mails and notices of opportunity within the universities.
- The Centre was entirely clear in the information it provided about the proposal.
- Decisions for approval were reached in a reasonable time.
- The Centre's monitoring of their research was a positive experience. It was neither too light nor too demanding. The director of the Centre took an active interest in each project, met researchers at the key stages of each project, providing help, support and encouragement.
- With one exception, where there were unexplained delays, payments were made promptly.
- Few had changes to recommend as to how the research process should be managed differently. Exception: the role of the Centre in final editing of the report should be made clear. Researchers did not object to it, but were unaware it would be done.
- The study days were felt to be a valuable part of the process. Researchers welcomed the expectation in the research that there be an interaction with policy-makers. 'They brought the process alive' was one comment.
- Researchers were happy with the way their reports were refereed, seeing this as a standard form of quality control. The reports of the referees were seen to be valuable, positive and constructive.
- The Centre did not try to steer reports toward particular directions or conclusions.
- They were gratified with the way in which the Centre had launched their reports.
- The researchers were very happy with the publication of their reports. They liked the layout, presentation, format, colours and logos. Although the director had edited the final reports in some cases in the interests of a sharper publication, they were happy with the way this was done.
- They were happy with the dissemination process. Researchers reported a stream of subsequent inquiries, indicating the success of the dissemination process. Some of their reports were now becoming scarce, an indicator of high take-up, which pleased them. A couple of researchers commented that there could have been a more systematic discussion about who should have gone on the list and draft mailing lists should have been shared.
- Carrying out a research project for the Centre for Cross Border Studies was a positive experience. For one researcher, it was the first ever experience of a project of this nature and the trust shown was much appreciated.

Many commented that the time schedule for their report was a tight one, requiring the research to be carried out at a much faster pace than usual, but recognized that the Centre was under pressure to deliver its product quickly.

Researchers were asked about whether and in what way follow-up papers and projects had been generated. This was a test of the added value applied to the research and the following are the outcomes.

Table 18: outcomes of research projects

Report	Papers, citations, follow-up
<i>Creating living institutions</i> (Laffan)	Paper for <i>Irish Political Studies</i> to be published Paper on INTERREG for <i>Journal of Common Market Studies</i> to be published Conference paper on European regional policy in Edinburgh Conference paper for European Consortium for Political Research, Queen's University, September 2002 Paper 'The changing Irish state' Conference 'Changing relationships in the British Isles', University College Dublin, April 2002 Graduate seminars Follow-up study planned
Local history (Prunty)	Presented at library studies day in the Royal Irish Academy Presentations to libraries Used as a study document by the North-South History Federation Use in routine lectures in the university Follow-up guide: funding applied for
<i>Ireland's learning poor</i> (McGill & Morgan)	Presentations to Civic Forum, Further Education Cross Border Network Follow-up research project on extension of University for Industry to the Republic (see: commissioned research)
Cross border co-operation in health services (Jamison)	Follow-up project for CAWT (see: commissioned research) Journal paper planned
Telecoms (Murtagh)	Two academic papers in progress Informed consumers through website b4ucall.com (40,000 hits) Successor project b4umove.com Research used extensively in master's degree, doctoral degree

Although there is an expectation that additional papers will be written based on the research, the outcome here has been uneven. Several researchers have clearly gone to some efforts to bring their research to a wider audience. Others have expressed the desire to get papers from their research, but have not yet found the time to do so.

4.5 Unsuccessful researchers

Unsuccessful research applicants were asked about their experience of the application process to adjudge whether they felt the process was efficient and fair; and whether they felt they received a fair hearing. This is a much tougher test, for those with a negative outcome to their application are likely to be more critical. They are less likely to flatter the Centre than researchers interviewed for 4.4. The following was the outcome.

Table 19: the experience of the unsuccessful researchers

Question	Response
Was the call for proposals:	
Clear	94%
Unclear	6%
Was the decision about your proposal	
Speedy	83%
Slow	17%

Was the secretariat of the Centre Helpful Unhelpful	100% 0%
Do you think your proposal received a fair hearing Yes No	88% 12%

This is a remarkably positive outcome. The vast majority of applicants believe that the details of the call were clear and that a decision about their proposal was reached speedily. All found the secretariat to be 'helpful', with the enviable approval rating of 100%, a particular tribute to the administrator. All but a small proportion felt that the decision about their proposal received a fair hearing. One complained that his proposal had been turned down as ineligible because it was business-related research, yet the guidelines had not been clear in ruling this out. Some other comments were volunteered. Two said that they wished to hear more about the outcome of successful projects and see a higher profile in dissemination. Another felt that a wider spread of organizations should be invited to put in and chosen for proposals.

4.6 Commissioners of research

Commissioning bodies were asked for their assessment of research that they had commissioned from the Centre for Cross Border Studies. The findings:

- They were satisfied or very satisfied with the commissioned research. One described it as 'of high quality'.
- It was carried out within the specified terms of reference.
- It was carried out on time.
- It represented good value for money.
- They were satisfied with the depth and breadth of the reports (some queries on depth).
- They felt that the conclusions reached were merited. One commended their clarity.
- The Centre was, in its dealings with them, at all times courteous and efficient .
- They rated the reports for varying levels of usefulness. The general rating was 'moderately useful' rather than 'very useful', though one gave 'very important'. The answers here may reflect the purpose of the reports in the eyes of the commissioning agency, more than the performance of the Centre.
- All would, on principle, be very happy or happy to ask the Centre to carry out commissioned research for them again.
- Generally, the reports received a positive response from colleagues. Some government departments and commercial organizations had reacted badly to some of the criticisms - but the criticisms in the reports concerned may have been fair.
- One commented that 'the Centre's insistence on retaining its independence in preparing the report resulted in a stronger report, from which we learnt more'. Another described it as an excellent, independent, research centre.

4.7 External assessments of concluded research

Several policy makers were asked to assess the usefulness, quality and relevance of the research already concluded by the Centre. Their views:

- The research was seen as breaking new ground and original.
- Several referred to the absence of virtually any proper cross border research in Ireland and how the Centre was filling an important gap.
- State agencies welcomed the Centre as providing an independent voice to an issue.
- The networking value of the study days and the presentations made there were especially valued, especially on the government side.

Several reports had a fairly high recognition rate. The telecoms report (Murtagh) was cited for its originality, *Creating living institutions* (Laffan) for its comprehensiveness, the foot and mouth report (Clarke) for being critical, challenging and well thought out, and *Ireland's learning poor* (McGill and Morgan) for prompting employers to think more of their training responsibilities. A few critical comments were made that the reports were better at mapping the area than coming to policy conclusions.

4.8 Conferences

Although research is the most prominent activity of the Centre, it is not the only one. This research also attempted to measure the performance of the Centre in running conferences. The participants who attended the September/October 2000 conference on European cross border issues were surveyed to ask them their experience of the event. The participants were asked to judge the organization of the conference, its informative value, whether they would in principle be prepared to attend another event organized by the Centre and whether they had been in contact with the Centre since. The following was the outcome.

Table 20: assessment of conference performance

Question	%
How do you rate the quality of organization of the conference?	
Very poor	
Poor	2%
Good	55%
Very good	33%
How informative did you find the conference?	
Not at all informative	0%
Informative	70%
Very informative	30%
Would you in principle come to another event run by the Centre?	
Yes	98%
No	2%
Have you been in contact with the Centre since the conference?	
Yes	78%
No	22%

This is a positive outcome. 88% of conference participants rated the conference organization as good or very good. All rated it as informative. All but 2% would be prepared to come again (one negative person had retired and planned never again to attend any conferences). Almost 80% had retained their contact with the Centre over the 18 months subsequently.

4.9 Performance of the board and issues of accountability

Staff and board members were asked about the operation of the board. The general view was that:

- The board functions effectively as a system of oversight. It is a working board.
- It has the right balance of critical minds, academics, enthusiasts. People on the board have a sufficient level of knowledge to ask probing questions about the operation of the Centre. It works well despite, or possibly because of, its diverse composition.

- Meetings are efficient, purposeful and orderly. It maintains pressure for a steady pace of work. Decision-taking is speedy.
- Meetings are chaired smoothly with the right combination of efficiency, lightness of touch and inclusion. The chairman is well networked to senior political figures (e.g. Taoiseach, First Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs). His approach is businesslike, consultative and supportive of the director. Colleagues are aware of the time he puts into the Centre outside meetings.
- The atmosphere of the board has become, after initial settling in, generally healthy and trustful. People listen to one another with respect. People do not seem to pursue personal agendas at board level. There are no cliques.
- Board members value their participation. Several are on other boards but regard the Centre as far above average.
- There is satisfaction with the accountability of the director to the board. He is considered to report back properly on the key developments, strike a proper balance as to his freedom of manoeuvre as director and to have good lines of communication to each board member. Some had the impression that the director was doing more than what was reported and that in recording his own activities he understated them - not out of evasiveness, but because of their volume. Some minor concerns were expressed that the board might have exercised closer supervision of some projects (e.g. the CUP books) and discussed in advance the director's appearance on controversial TV programmes (*Questions and Answers*) but these are small in the broader scope of things.
- As in most boards, there is a core and periphery when it came to attendance. The core comprises the university representatives, the periphery the co-opted members and one or two others. This coincides, regrettably, with the male/female balance.
- Negatively, too much of the board's time is spent worrying about financial insecurity (see: *financial security*, 6.1).

The legal form of the Centre is considered to be a strength, avoiding the many institutional and bureaucratic obstacles encumbering university departments. So, in conclusion, the board is perceived to perform well and carry out its functions of oversight and accountability in an effective way.

4.10 Critical voices

There was a set of minority opinions expressed from throughout the reference groups about the performance of the Centre. Many of the critical voices put their criticisms in the context of otherwise very positive views about the Centre and they should be heard in that context. Most of the critical comments came from board members - people who might rightly be expected to have reflected most on the Centre. These views represent some points to watch for and they are developed in the discussion which follows (4.11). The main axes of criticism were as follows. They have been amalgamated under a number of groupings and summarized.

- The Centre is worthy but dull, solid and serious. The Centre has been too cautious in the issues it approaches, how it presents them and is over-sensitive. The Centre should aim to be more provocative, like the Institute for Public Policy Research in London. The Centre has now been there long enough to be more adventurous. The Centre should explore ideas more. It could be more challenging and critical without necessarily being contentious. To date, it has been too academic in its approach. It is too focussed on public sector issues - more attention should be given to industry, commerce and science.
- The Centre is too closely allied to the North South Ministerial Council. Several others referred to the danger of this happening.
- The Centre has spread itself too broadly and does not appear to have a clear focus or a strategic view.
- Reports are too front-loaded: there is insufficient emphasis on implementation, utilization or defining target audiences. 'We do not know enough about who gets the Centre's reports or what they do about them'. 'They do not appear to be followed up' The political parties have never been approached systematically. The Centre has not reached out adequately to the practitioner or non-governmental community - either individually or collectively. It must achieve a deeper penetration in the universities, Institutes of Technology, politicians and the unionist community. It should be the best

known body in the cross border area - but others are better known, like the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust and the Combat Poverty Agency.

- There is a lack of consciousness of its website. Board members use it little themselves and come across others who use it little. It lacks prominence on the Queen's website, which does not help. The site is insufficiently newsy and could do more to create a sense of excitement and movement about what the Centre is doing. (Although there was criticism of the website, it should be noted that some of those interviewed used it a lot, considered it well maintained and were enthusiastic about its value).
- Its relationships with other cross border bodies are unclear. The two most frequently cited are the Institute for British Irish Studies (IBIS) (at University College Dublin) and the Centre for International Borders Research (CIBR) (at Queen's University).
- There is insufficient branding and marketing. Reports are attributed more to the author than to the Centre. Reviews of some of the research publications made only passing reference (and sometimes none) to the Centre for Cross Border Studies.
- Although the board may function well, it requires a younger, more radical and enthusiastic membership.

4.11 Summary, comments and conclusions

This chapter has presented a range of views and assessments of the Centre gathered in from seven reference groups. The internal means for assessing the performance of the Centre have also been cited, showing extensive press coverage and accelerating use of the website. The press coverage has become more extensive, the foot and mouth report attracting an editorial in the *Irish Examiner* and coverage in the *Newsletter*.

The Centre's work is clearly assessed positively. The overall assessment of the Centre is a highly positive one - it is seen as effective, efficient, dynamic, productive and to present value for money. It is esteemed for the quantity, quality and relevance of its work, which are three of the most important tests. The board is seen to operate effectively, to conduct oversight of the Centre and to be a working, planning body. The director is praised for his vision, energy and managerial capability and there are positive comments on the other staff. Numerically, the Centre's performance is rated between 7.29 and 8.05 by those who know the Centre well. Those who carried out research work for the Centre found it was a positive experience for them. Unsuccessful applicants rated the Centre highly for its administration, with a 100% 'helpful' rating. Conferences were rated highly for their organization and participants would return to further events run by the Centre. The external commissioners of research were very satisfied with the work done for them by the Centre. There is evidence of value-added being achieved by those who wrote the Centre's main research reports.

These are positive outcomes for any body under examination. Nevertheless, there are some critical comments which merit further examination. Again, it must be stressed that the critical comments came from many of those who had very positive comments to make about the Centre, so they were very much given in the spirit of friendly, rather than hostile, criticism. They suggest a number of cautions, questions and warning points which should be considered carefully, principally:

- The danger of moving too close to the North-South institutions, what some political scientists call 'capture';
- The possibility of becoming too cautious and tame;
- The need to pay more attention to targeting, dissemination, outreach and branding;
- The importance of greater clarity of relationships with other bodies working in the north-south arena;
- The need to refresh the board, even if it is currently functioning well.

Clues to addressing some of these problems lie in one of the survey groups. The most critical comments were to be found in one group: those, largely from the border region, invited to the Brian Cowen seminar *and who did not attend*. Here the assessment of the Centre is lower (the rating is down to 6.34) and the Centre achieves markedly lower ratings for effectiveness and relevance. This group of non-attenders

comprises a range of people who appeared to be less familiar with the Centre than the others, but who are nevertheless an important cross-section of its target audience. This group is less convinced of the merits of the Centre, but its willingness to engage with the research suggests a preparedness to be persuaded. The most critical comments are to be found here. Typical comments refer to the Centre lacking penetration in its ideas and that it does not make itself well known. The survey suggests that the Centre may be less effective in reaching this group than others and that fresh strategies of outreach are indeed required. Indeed, this group suggests some itself, such as sending out report summaries, making presentations to the district councils, newsletters and fliers about publications.

A final point is that the Centre may wish to send for and report on the use of its website on a regular basis. Trends and sub-trends could be noted in progress reports for the board. This has not been done so far. It would be worth testing whether originating site identification and links could be ascertained (if not, whether an improved referrer log could be used).

5 Impact

The impact of the Centre for Cross Border Studies is a key question of this research. Measuring the impact of a research and policy-making body is necessarily an imprecise science. Extensive academic studies of the impact of think tanks, for example (an organizational form not dissimilar to the Centre) have yielded frustratingly inconclusive and even contradictory results. A recent study commented succinctly on how researchers tend to overestimate their impact, while policy-makers tend to understate the impact of research.⁵ Nevertheless, impact is a question amenable to some assessment and a variety of tools were used to assess the impact of the Centre. The seven reference groups were asked to assess the impact of the Centre in a series of complementary questions (see annexes for details).

Here, for convenience, the views on impact are divided between those of the survey groups (5.1) and the rest: staff, board, researchers and policy-makers (5.2). Where there are notable differences between the sub-groups, these are flagged. The overall issues of impact are then discussed before conclusions are drawn (5.3).

5.1 Impact: views of the survey group

The surveys attempted to measure a number of indicators of impact of the Centre: their familiarity with the Centre, their familiarity with its research reports and the impact which they felt it had made. Not all the same questions were asked to the same groups, but where they were these are presented together. The following are the outcomes:

Table 21: impact - views of the survey groups

Question	European conference	Cowen attending	Cowen not attending
How familiar are you with the Centre ?			
Not at all familiar	6%	0%	16%
A little familiar	36%	36%	41%
Familiar	49%	50%	32%
Very familiar	9%	14%	11%
Which research reports are you aware of?			
Telecoms (Murtagh)		38%	18%
Creating living institutions (Laffan)		75%	44%
Local history (Prunty)		42%	10%
Local government (Birrell)		50%	31%
Learning poor (McGill & Morgan)		58%	18%
Foot-and-mouth (Clarke)		58%	26%
Health co-operation (Jamison)		58%	41%
Has the Centre informed your thinking			
Not at all		8%	41%
A little		38%	35%
To some extent		46%	24%
A lot		8%	0%
What impact do you think the Centre has had on policy makers?			
None	2%	0%	3%
Very little	21%	23%	37%
Some	67%	64%	60%
A lot	9%	14%	0%

⁵ Marie Smyth and John Darby: Does research make any difference: The case of Northern Ireland. In Marie Smyth & Gillian Robinson (Eds): *Researching violently divided societies*. Pluto Press, 2001, 34

These figures indicate:

- Most people consider themselves to be ‘familiar’ with the Centre, but there is a 16% part of the Cowen non-attending group not familiar and a further 41% only a little familiar
- The level of recognition of the individual reports was between 42% and 75% (Cowen attenders) and between 10% and 44% (Cowen non-attenders). The highest overall recognition rates are for *Creating living institutions* and the health report (Jamison). [We may wish to take into account the fact that some of these reports were published more recently than others and some might be fresher in people’s minds].
- The Centre has had some role in informing people’s thinking.
- Estimates of the impact on policy makers tend to be modest, ‘some’ being the most popular answer.

Those most familiar with the Centre (the European conference group and the Cowen attending group) tend to rate the Centre higher for informing them and for making an impact on policy makers. The Cowen non-attenders are least informed and the more sceptical in their assessment of its impact. The need for reaching out more effectively to this group has already been discussed (chapter 4).

5.2 Impact: views of staff, board, researchers, unsuccessful applicants and policy-makers

The following are the broad findings:

- Many expressed caution and uncertainty in trying to come to a conclusion on the impact of the Centre. Some could see an impact in individual sectors, but were unfamiliar with others and reluctant to come to conclusions as to its collective impact. Some researchers felt intuitively that their reports had made some impact within national and local government - but that it would be largely invisible to them.
- There was a broad view that the Centre’s impact was probably greatest among the civil servants who dealt with north-south issues. The impact of the Centre was considered to be less on the commercial, non-governmental sector.
- The three books published by the Centre did not have the hoped-for impact in sparking off debate, even though they are well regarded and some felt that they were among its best publications.

This evaluation attempted to assess the impact of the individual reports, based on the comments of the researchers and those on whom the reports were intended to impact. These reports are the key research output of the Centre so they merit a more detailed assessment.

Table 22: impact of the individual research reports

Report	Impact made
CAWT evaluation (Clarke & Jamison)	Consideration of new techniques of public health profiling. Changes in CAWT internal structure and informed the review of the use of acute hospitals
Cross border health co-operation (Jamison)	Informed the new health strategy in Republic.
Local history (Prunty)	Valued as an information source, baseline document by libraries, historians, people concerned with our heritage
North-South school, teacher, youth exchanges	Standing Advisory Committee on North-South School Exchanges set up
Telecoms (Murtagh)	Used by government agencies, private companies to press for regulatory reform Strengthened co-operation between Cork University Hospital and Belfast City Hospital telesurgery

Creating living institutions (Laffan)	Use of local action teams to inform the new cross border programmes - moving away from centralization
Foot-and-mouth (Clarke)	Formally commended by the two Ministers for Agriculture who said it ‘will help to inform how we react should we ever have to confront crises of this sort in the future’
Ireland’s learning poor (McGill & Morgan)	Comments from Civic Forum (NI), Department of Education & Science (RI) that this informed their thinking and work

In the case of the local government report (Birrell), it was considered too early to come to a view.

These indicate that these studies have been reasonably impactful. Policy change is rarely effected by self-standing document - generally it is a combination of research, political pressures and other factors which propel change - but these reports indicate at least a modest impact. This is in line with the survey findings which found a reasonable recognition level for the reports. The foot-and-mouth report, which was published when this evaluation began, actually makes an interesting case study in itself. The two respective Departments of Agriculture were less than cooperative with the early stages of the research. In the end, the report was commended by the two Ministers who expressed their gratitude to the Centre for its work, admitting they did not agree with all its findings, but nevertheless saying that it would inform their future responses. It would be an interesting exercise for the Centre to test in, say, six months time, what changes had taken place in departmental contingency plans for foot-and-mouth that could be traced to the report. Several of the policy makers interviewed had the impression that the foot-and-mouth report had made an impact on government and was beginning to seep through into departmental thinking.

5.3 Summary, comments and conclusions

This short chapter indicates that the Centre has made more than a modest impact. Individual research reports have a reasonable recognition and appear to have made some distinct impacts. There are three reasons why these figures may be more encouraging than they actually appear. First, this level of impact was achieved in a short period - less than three years. Studies of think tanks indicate that it takes many years to build up an impact, so the Centre’s performance may be more impressive than it appears. Second, the recognition levels of the main research reports appear to be positive. Many institutes would be more than happy to achieve this level of recognition for their individual outputs. Third, the survey audience is a sceptical one, prepared to give low ratings for effectiveness and relevance, so even modest assessments of impact should be received positively. By way of final comment, it may be useful to repeat an exercise like this with similar target groups in a number of years time, so as to test if the Centre’s impact appears to be increasing over time.

6 Issues arising

This chapter reviews the range of issues which emerged from discussions with staff, board members, policy-makers and the survey groups. There are seven:

- The need for financial security (6.1)
- Improved targeting, mailing lists and outreach (6.2)
- Physical development of the Centre (6.3)
- Modifying the membership of the board (6.4)
- Development of the future research agenda (6.5)
- Expansion of the Centre's European dimension (6.6);
- Defining the future organizational trajectory (6.7). A summary is then made (6.8).

6.1 Addressing the need for financial security

It is agreed that the Centre has passed successfully through its pilot, experimental, initial phase. However, financial insecurity remains a significant problem. No-one felt that the Centre still needed to prove itself. There was a general view that the wind was blowing in the favour of the Centre and that this was a good time to look for further political, financial support. It was well positioned.

Staff and board members isolate financial insecurity as the single most important issue. It has taken up more than its fair share of the time of the director and the board. The gap between the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and the hoped-for funding from Peace II has also created a hiatus which retarded the research. Financial insecurity has pushed the Centre into short time frames, with the danger of making over-pragmatic choices about the work it should pursue. There is a widespread acceptance, including among people on the governmental side, that the challenge for the Centre is now to access a regular funding stream - or set of streams - that will give it security, stability and lift it from its somewhat precarious current situation. Medium-term sustainability would enable the Centre to undertake more substantial, long-term research projects and make more principled choices about the work to be undertaken. There are several views as to how this can best be achieved:

- Mainstreaming within the two universities
- Regular grants from the two governments
- Consultancy and commissioned research

All avenues (they are not mutually exclusive) present problems. Dealing with the universities first, several board members expressed disappointment that the two universities, Dublin City and Queen's University, had not been able to do more to reinforce their human resource commitments with financial resources. The universities have limited budgets negotiated with governments (or their intermediaries) which fund from year to year an existing block of activities, staff, plant and programmes and these do not offer scope for expansion. Generally, universities north and south must find resources external to government to fund expansion projects. However, governments and their intermediaries can from time to time be prevailed upon to fund an expansion: an example (and, moreover, a cross border one) exists in the Irish School of Ecumenics which was mainstreamed into the core budget of Dublin University through high-level political intervention. It is also possible that the two universities could be prevailed upon to prioritize the Centre in their shopping lists for government and persuaded as to the attractions for them of being associated with successful bodies like the Centre. A more gradualist position is that the two universities could allocate some staff time to work with the Centre, especially with the joint postgraduate programme.

An improvement in the level of university funding could go hand in hand with the greater development of the teaching, postgraduate and resource role of the Centre. Closer association with the universities in general and Queen's University in particular could lead to the Centre participating in the Research Assessment Exercise, which would be to the benefit of both. It is also important there be a symmetry of

contribution between DCU and Queens' University: not only that the ownership, funding and human contributions are seen to be broadly similar, but that each university is equally prominently associated.

Some have pointed out that the difficulty which the governments have in responding financially to cross border bodies is in itself a study of cross border relationships. There is no ready-made source of mainstream (non-EU) government funding for cross border work. However, some possibilities may exist to create funding lines in the future. Examples are the executive programme fund (Northern Ireland) and the Department of Finance vote 6 budget line O for cross border bodies. Again, these would require a high level political intervention. Because of its well - established networks and contacts, the Centre is in a better position to make such approaches than most. Policy-makers intimated that there would be little if any government resistance to a proposal for government funding of the Centre, granted the importance of the political settlement between north and south. A way could be found.

The third and controversial aspect of the discussion concerns consultancy. There is a view that it is appropriate for the Centre to propose research tasks to government and the private sector which it could carry out; and for the Centre to bid competitively for such funding. The Centre could apply, for example, for contracts for cross border and related regional studies for the European Commission. It is reasonable for the Centre to apply for some limited, niche research tasks which fit the Centre's priorities.

Two cautions are entered in the debate on consultancy. Several commentators warned of the danger that the Centre might be captured by, or become over-deferential to, the North South Ministerial Council. It might suit both for it to be the research wing of the council but this would not necessarily serve critical cross border co-operation. Detachment and distance are essential. It is worth mentioning that capture, if it happened, was likely to be the Centre's doing: policy-makers in government stressed how important it was to them that the Centre be independent. Others expressed a concern that the Centre might become excessively involved in commercial consultancy. Others warned of the dangers of taking on an excessive volume of consultancy: commissioning agencies could undermine the independence of the Centre. 'The Centre should not become a specialized version of PriceWaterhouseCoopers' was one comment. It is essential that the Centre retain a strategic approach and an independence of position and mind.

6.2 Improving targeting, mailing lists and outreach

Targeting of and outreach to key audiences is a problem for the Centre for Cross Border Studies. Modern theorists of the interaction between policy and research point to the importance of defining and prioritizing target groups closely, devising a broad range of dissemination strategies, using new media and formats, accessible summaries and follow-up meetings with the target groups.⁶ The Cowen non-attenders highlighted the presence of a broad target group which the Centre had not yet convinced of its value, effectiveness and impact. There are essentially three inter-related problems here:

- Although the Centre has a broad view of its target audiences, these have not been categorized or prioritized with a hierarchy of the more important or less important
- Some groups may have been insufficiently targeted
- Communication strategies may be under-developed

The groups which may have been insufficiently targeted include a range of non-governmental organizations, the political parties, members of the Assembly and members of the Oireachtas. The Centre has good contact with public representatives in the border regions but needs to work more closely with public representatives further afield whose work has a cross border dimension (for example, members of Oireachtas committees whose brief covers Northern Ireland but who do not represent border constituencies).

⁶ Marie Smyth and John Darby: Does research make any difference: The case of Northern Ireland. In Marie Smyth & Gillian Robinson (Eds): Researching violently divided societies. Pluto Press, 2001, 345-7

The Centre's mailing list is a key focal point for defining these target audiences. As noted earlier, the Centre has a series of different mailing lists: one for each study day (names and institutions but not always addresses), a press contacts list and two conference lists (with full postal addresses). However there was no readily available on-going mailing list for the Centre's then current audiences. This means that a unique list must be constructed for every mailing or communication, which may not be an efficient use of resources.

Building and maintaining a mailing list is one of the most important functions of any organization and a task whose value is often underestimated. A well-constructed and maintained mailing list will:

- Make the organization think structurally about its different target groups
- Enable the Centre to select target groups according to sector (commerce, agriculture), category (governmental, non-governmental, press, public representatives) and generic cross border bodies (e.g. Ministerial Council)
- Add those groups which the Centre may not yet have reached
- Grade those who are the most important for it to influence (top 10, top 30, top 100)
- Provide a basis for publicity, newsletters, mailings and invitations (different codes being applied for each requirement)
- Enable the Centre to add people who make enquiries of the Centre
- Permit the Centre to audit its outreach, impact and effectiveness on a frequent basis in the future.

Once such a list is constructed, there are several ways in which the Centre could communicate its message more effectively:

- Use of a newsletter
- Publication of a popular annual report
- Short accessible summaries of reports (for example, along the lines used by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation)
- Experimental use of new formats and media (video, exhibitions, CD-ROMs)
- Built-in strategies for follow-up meetings
- Briefing meetings with the political parties, NGOs
- Publication of a yearbook, with reviews, articles, themes, reports (see 7.5)

6.3 Physical development of the Centre

Armagh is generally considered to be an excellent location for the Centre, its principal disadvantage being that it is not located on a rail line. Politically the choice is considered to be neutral. Armagh has good conference facilities, although accommodation services may be less plentiful. There are good reasons to maximize this favourable location.

The Centre's on site facilities comprise the three staff and their workplaces. However, the Centre does not have resource material on site (apart from the personal research material of the individual staff), nor a library nor a selling point for its publications. This has not proved to be a problem so far, but the absence of such facilities may become more obvious as the Centre expands. Visitors to the Centre have no product to interact with, apart from the (considerable) human resources of the staff. It may be reasonable to think of the physical expansion of the Centre, or the redeployment of existing space, to provide:

- A selling point for the Centre's publications
- Resource materials
- A small area for study
- Learning areas for tutorials

Having physical product available could add considerably to the prestige and recognition of the Centre as a place of excellence at a relatively modest cost. It would add considerably to the value of the postgraduate course in cross border studies planned for autumn 2002. Armagh could become a place

where people could go to to consult an increasingly valuable collection of documentation on cross border questions and issues. The arrival of visitors - be they journalists, intern students, postgraduate researchers or consultants - could add to the liveliness of the Centre. Among the resource materials which could be collected are:

- Studies, theses, articles, on cross border issues in Ireland
- Reports, articles and publications on cross border issues in Europe
- Documentation on other cross border institutes
- A small collection of journals (e.g. *Journal of Borderland Studies*)
- The annual reports and documentation of the north-south project, cross border institutions and linked bodies in Ireland (e.g. Human Rights Commissions)

The emphasis should be on ephemera rather than hardback books.

6.4 Modifying membership of the board

The issue of the board arose several times in the course of the research. As already noted, the board is considered to work well and the core role of the representatives of Queen's University and Dublin City University has been commended. Despite this, the following problem issues were identified:

- The anachronistic nature of the representation of the Workers Educational Association (WEA)
- The possibility of building a wider constituency on the board
- Relationships with CIBR and IBIS
- Uneven attendance by co-opted members

Each issue is now explored in turn. The WEA representation is felt to have become anachronistic, for a number of reasons. First, the senior WEA representative is now a staff member at Queen's University. Second, the southern member does not have a direct connexion with the WEA (although he has a lifetime's record in adult education) while the third member is seen as a representative of the University of Ulster. Third, the link between the Centre and the WEA is not seen to be as strong as that between the Centre and the two universities. None of these comments is seen as criticism, either direct or indirect, of the WEA or of its current representatives: to the contrary, people value the link with the WEA and wish it to continue. However, it does suggest that this constituency on the board of the Centre be reconsidered.

The Centre has no formal relationship with the Centre for International Borders Research (CIBR) in Queen's University nor the Institute for British-Irish Studies (IBIS) at UCD. However, one of the Queen's University representatives on the board is also the director of CIBR and this link is valued. It is important that there be complementarity and good lines of communication between the Centre, CIBR and IBIS, or, to put it negatively, that potential conflict is avoided (none has yet arisen). It might therefore be worth considering whether the relationship with CIBR and IBIS be put on a more formal basis.

Some outside commentators felt that it was important to complement the current academic representation on the board with a wider representation. Among the proposals put forward were the representation of:

- Government and the public service (e.g. the North South Ministerial Council), either in a formal or informal capacity. Most felt that civil servant representatives should be invited to join on a basis of individual interest rather than to formally represent government.
- Non-governmental organizations interested in cross - border issues, peace and reconciliation (e.g. the proposed new north-south network of NGOs). A specific example is Co-operation Ireland. Although the image of Co-operation Ireland is that it is purely concerned with running projects, a recurrent issue for the organization has been the need to reflect on its work, test its value and learn the issues arising.
- Institutes concerned with cross border issues in other parts of the European Union.
- Younger researchers with an interest in cross border issues in such areas as governance, public policy, social science and economics.

The idea of inviting political representatives on to the board was mooted by some, but it was recognized that such a move created a danger that the Centre might be seen as partisan.

The uneven attendance of some members was felt to be a problem. It was recognized that obtaining the participation of busy people was always going to be a problem and those who may have been classed as poor attenders themselves recognized and regretted the problem. Several have tried to make good their absence by contributing to the board’s work between meetings in different ways.

Now we move on to the future development of research activities for the Centre and its organizational trajectory. Here we can be guided by the comments of the seven key groups who have provided a substantial level of feedback, information and ideas. First some information is available on the unfunded level of cross border research.

6.5 Developing the future research agenda

This evaluation suggests that there is a high level of interest in cross border research, but that it is not yet funded by existing research funding streams and instruments. This research asked unsuccessful applicants whether the proposal for which they had been turned down by the Centre had subsequently received funding elsewhere. The following is their response:

Table 23: did proposal receive subsequent funding elsewhere?

Question: Was the project for which you applied for funding (or a modified version thereof) ever carried out?	
Yes	12%
No	88%

In those cases where it was carried out, the unsuccessful applicants were invited to indicate who did provide funding. The answers were the Departments of Health, north and south; the Higher Education Authority; the Food Safety Promotion Board; and the Health Research Board. The answers to this question clearly indicate that there is much cross border research defined but unfunded - a point which the Centre may wish to make to prospective funders.

The board has already identified a series of areas of potential future interest (> 2.7 above). The board was conscious of the danger that the Centre might become the funder of a series of discrete, unconnected studies, arguing that the Centre should formulate a set of strategic themes that would create a more integrated framework, covering thematic areas not so far adequately addressed and make its approach more coherent. The paper presented by the research strategy sub-committee, *Strategic cross-cutting themes in cross border research*, suggested several themes (> 2.7) and went on to put forward a number of provocative areas of research development, proposing that cross border research explore such areas as elitism in cross border work, core areas of government, government obstacles to co-operation, trade competition and new democratic models. These themes would be considered ‘horizontal’ themes in European Union terminology. There is broad agreement both within the board and outside that the rationale and future added value of the Centre lies with the exploration of cross-cutting as much as sectoral themes. The Centre must go beyond the ‘compare and contrast’ exercises to explore the cross border dynamic.

One of the hopes of this evaluation was that it could provide useful guidance for the Centre’s future research. In the event, the seven reference groups provided substantial comment on the Centre’s future research agenda and the next section will attempt to put shape on the amalgam of ideas proposed. These proposals were dominated by a number of themes.

First, there was a strong view that the Centre should run a number (one, two or three) flagship, heavyweight research projects that might be carried out over a period of 12 - 18 months. Second, a focus

on cross-cutting themes is an appropriate line of development. Third, without contradicting this, there is still scope for cross border studies in sectoral areas. These ideas are summarized in the following table.

Table 24: future research agenda for the Centre

Cross-cutting themes	Sectoral themes
<p><u>Flagship projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring the new cross border institutions and their effectiveness - Impact of the European Union - Cost of non-Ireland (see 2.7) - The accumulated lessons learned from cross border co-operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community development. Comparisons of education systems: applications of good models from one to another (e.g. systems of accountability, inspection) Adult education and lifelong learning Environment, especially waste management Consumer needs and health Situation of older people Social capital Business co-operation, models of promoting enterprise Heritage management/museum studies (none of this is done on N-S basis) Access to archives and historical sources (likewise)
<p><u>Others</u></p> <p>How do the problems and issues of the Irish border regions compare to other parts of Europe?</p> <p>Attitudes, biases and prejudices on north-south issues among civil servants in government departments, north and south.</p> <p>Attitudinal changes to cross border co-operation among ordinary people and the administrative elite.</p> <p>Smuggling</p> <p>Testing the underlying assumptions of cross border co-operation - do borders really become less important?</p> <p>The future of cross border co-operation: painting scenarios for 2010, 2020, 2030</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of the voluntary sector north and south Comparisons of benefit systems - models of good practice which could be applied from one jurisdiction to another (e.g. retention of secondary benefits to promote employment (RI)) Racism and multiculturalism: how the two parts compare Substance abuse Scientific co-operation between north and south - there is almost none and there are no incentives for it. Schools science. Currency co-operation in the run-up to UK entry to the euro Cross border co-operation by women's groups The nature of cross border cultural co-operation Crime, violence, policing and security north and south Transport Poverty Community arts and drama Comparing the two health systems Co-operation in public procurement Interschools activities Broadcasting Leisure policies, practices and habits Disaffected youth

There is strong support for the idea of a number of flagship projects, with monitoring and critiquing the new institutions being the undisputed winner. 'These are some of the most innovative in the world and should be monitored in real time - too important to be left to the historians'. These sentiments were echoed in government, where there was an appeal for the north-south project to be studied and understood. One person commented on how, since 1921, north and south had grown administratively far apart. Indicators were different, statistics were not comparable, concepts underpinning governance were dissimilar, the underlying assumptions of public services varied widely, educational and professional qualifications were not directly comparable. There was an important role for the Centre in examining where data were comparable, the nature of current conceptual and practical differences, whether bridges could be built between them, and whether virtuous circles of learning exchange could be established.

There was a widespread feeling that the Centre could be more adventurous in its approach and subject matter - 'the harder tougher issues'. No one proposed a 'big bang' of controversial reports - rather, instead, that the water be tested carefully and the frontier be pushed back gradually with good

preparatory work (seminars, debates) and the Centre establishing some distance with the product (e.g. commissioning discussion papers). Once the Centre has more secure funding, it can afford to be more robust in its arguments. Apart from the research reports, one area was felt to be open to further development, namely the books. The Centre could, it was felt, do more to develop book series along the lines of those published by Cork University Press. The role of such a series in stimulating opinion should not be underestimated. A subcommittee of the board could, with the director, take a look at future possibilities and supervise the process.

6.6 Expanding the European dimension

One of the least developed areas of work for the Centre is its links to the European Union and the border issues of concern to the European Union. Although the European conference of September/October 2000 addressed cross border issues in Ireland in a European context, the European dimension has not generally been a subsequent theme of the Centre's work (though there was reference in the CAWT evaluation and the Laffan study). There are good reasons for this, principally the lack of a vehicle whereby such an interest could be expressed at a time of pressing domestic priorities. However, a compelling case can be made for the Centre to look to develop a stronger European dimension. The key elements are:

- Border issues will be a central concern of the European Union as new member states begin to join from 2004.
- There are many echoes and similarities on cross border issues between the island of Ireland and the experience of the new accession states. Several of their borders were cast at the time of the post first war settlement in Ireland. Many also had overlying themes concerning the rights of minorities, the movement of population, decolonization and civil war. There are many potential lessons to be shared.
- Europe already has a number of cross border institutes which provide opportunities for sharing and the exchange of information. An example is the European Centre for Minority Issues in Flensburg, supported by the German and Danish local authorities. There is also a Border Regions Studies Network. Some of these are more impactful than others and there is much substance the Centre could bring to a network of these groups.
- There may be funding opportunities for the Centre for Cross Border Studies within the regional and cross border programmes developed by the Commission's Directorate General for Regional Affairs.

It might be useful at this stage for the Centre to:

- Make an exploratory visit to the other cross border institutions in Europe;
- Become familiar with the history, evolution and current state of development of cross-border policies by the European Union;
- Collect documentation on cross border policies and programmes;
- Identify those institutions and groups within the Commission and other European institutions most concerned with cross border issues;
- Develop links with Brussels-based think tanks with an interest in cross border issues and the EU-related consultancies (e.g. European Information Service) and media (e.g. *European Voice*);
- Consider collaborative activities with the European observatory on cross border issues (called LACE-TAP), which includes an outpost in nearby Monaghan.

It is important that this be done in co-operation with the Centre for International Borders Research, both to avoid any conflict of interest and so that this may be a positive experience for both.

6.7 Defining the future organizational trajectory

The Centre has already sketched out its future organizational trajectory (2.7). None of the comments from seven key reference groups would contradict this sketch but can elaborate on how some of this may be achieved. In essence, the organizational trajectory of the Centre should be:

- The securing of medium to long-term funding streams (6.1, above)
- Building up the staffing complement from 3 at present to between double and treble that by 2006, with the hosting of fellows and scholars
- Improved targeting, mailing lists and outreach (6.2)
- A reconstituted board (6.3)
- Physical enlargement of the Centre (6.4)
- A research agenda based around large-scale, long-duration flagship projects, medium-duration cross-cutting themes and specialized sectoral projects (6.5)
- An expanded European dimension (6.6)

It may be worth commenting on the staffing arrangements proposed in the Centre’s own sketches. The current staffing complement of the Centre is three: director, research officer and administrator. A typical complement sketched for 2006 would be: director, research manager, three research officers, two administrators (one in Dublin, one in Armagh), and 5 scholars/fellows/interns.

Two parts are missing here: first it may be necessary, to consider within the complement one member of staff to be responsible for communications, outreach, publications, electronic contact, archiving, website and the library. Second, a fundraiser may also be required, either temporarily or permanently, to negotiate with government, universities and prepare proposals for consultancy. The Centre has recognised this need with an initial advisory report from Dublin consultant John Shiels.

In essence, the organizational trajectory will evolve as follows:

Table 25: projected, simplified organizational trajectory of the Centre 1999-2006

1999-2000	2000-2	2002-6
Setting up	Consolidation	Maturation
Mapping	Sectoral studies (‘compare and contrast’)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Attacking the cross cutting issues * Sharing the lessons in the European Union * Transferring the accumulated knowledge * Focus on implementation

The Centre should mature as:

- The key centre, institute or think tank addressing cross border issues in Ireland, with international recognition and acclaim, linked to the main European bodies engaged in cross border research, able to address the key issues of cross border relationships in Ireland in a European context, taking a pragmatic approach, pursuing both sectoral and cross-cutting themes, extracting and passing on the accumulated learning arising.
- The features of its research should be that it is:
 - independent, critical, analytical, longer term, larger in scale, collaborative, international, ideas-focussed, the standard reference site for politicians, policy-makers and citizens.

6.8 Summary, comments and conclusions

The Centre faces a number of challenges which it must address. Centre staff and board members are critically aware of the need to secure medium to long-term funding streams and possibilities are outlined (6.1). The evaluation identified a number of weaknesses with targeting, mailing lists and outreach and these must be confronted (6.2). There is discussion of the expansion of the Centre in regard to its physical development (6.3) and its European dimension (6.5). There is a strong case for modifying the constituent components of the board (6.5). The Centre must decide on the research agenda it wishes to pursue (6.6) and the trajectory which it wishes the organization to describe over the next number of years (6.7).

7 Conclusions and recommendations

The Centre for Cross Border Studies has completed its pilot phase and has now become well established. It is a sound organization. Its greatest strengths are seen as:

- Survival
- A correct original design
- Track record: a remarkable output in a short period of time with a small staff and a limited budget
- Quality and relevance
- The establishment of a defined territory
- The professional qualities of the director
- The quality of the research officer and administrator
- An efficient, harmonious, well-chaired, functioning board providing a proper system of accountability and oversight
- Networking with the key cross border players
- The balance of topics followed to date
- The balance of methods of work followed, study days being highly valued
- The tone struck
- Independence and non-partisanship
- Making an early impact
- Efficiency and value for money

This is a positive outcome, especially considering the short period for which the Centre has been in existence. The mood of many of the reference groups was upbeat with, in their words, the view that ‘the best was yet to come’.

Having said that, the following are the problem areas which require attention:

- Establishing medium to long term financial security
- Improved targeting, mailing lists and outreach
- Physical development of the Centre
- Modifying the membership of the board
- Development of the future research agenda
- Expansion of the Centre’s European dimension
- A defined future organizational trajectory.

Each has already been discussed (chapter 6). Here, some of the implications are teased out and refined. Practical recommendations are put forward for consideration by the Centre.

7.1 The need for financial security

The need to secure medium to long-term funding streams is a problem with which the staff and board are more than familiar (indeed, others outside the Centre also appreciate the problem). Peace II funding, assuming it arrives as hoped for and scheduled, should provide a breathing space and enable fresh work to be undertaken. However, even if it does, the problem concerning medium to long-term funding will remain. This report has suggested that the Centre find ways of:

- obtaining regular government funding;
- having distinct parts of the Centre’s work mainstreamed into the two sponsoring universities;
- seeking consultancy work from government bodies, agencies and others.

Regular government funding and a mainstreamed role within the universities require the preparation of formal proposals, an understanding of the decision-making and financial allocation processes in the

principal four bodies concerned and good access to the key personnel involved. For this reason, an early task of the Centre (and a specific responsibility of the director and chairman) must be:

- Acquaintance with the systems whereby regular funding may be obtained from government and how mainstreaming may take place within the two universities;
- The preparation of a formal proposal to both;
- Personal meetings with the key personnel involved.

The procedures for the possible obtaining of a regular grant from the two governments may prove simpler. 6.1 outlined the possibility of obtaining funding via the executive programme fund (Northern Ireland) and in the Republic, vote 6, heading O, suggested new heading O.5 in the budget line for cross border bodies.

Consultancy, as already noted, offers a number of possibilities. These could take the form of:

- Negotiated jobs of work to be done for the North South Ministerial Council, for other cross border bodies or agencies, or government departments or agencies requiring discrete north-south research tasks to be undertaken. Tasks above a certain financial value must of course go for full competitive public procurement;
- Competitive tendering for public contracts for north-south research tasks.

The view of the reference groups is that it *is* appropriate, even desirable, for the Centre to compete for north-south consultancy and to undertake important research tasks for the North South Ministerial Council and similar bodies. However, they entered a number of provisos which it is important to endorse here:

- The Centre should choose carefully which consultancies it should choose to tender. Not all will be suitable and the Centre should not, even when under financial pressure, apply opportunistically for tenders simply because they are there. Some may more appropriately be left to larger commercial agencies. They should only be applied for when they fall within the Centre's defined research interests at that point of time.
- It is essential that the Centre not be captured by, or be seen to be captured by, the North South Ministerial Council or its flanking bodies. It must retain and be seen to retain its independence.

There are procedures developed elsewhere that may help to safeguard the independence of research bodies. These procedures were developed by Policy Studies Institute in the UK and have been followed by other think tanks to address the danger of capture. These are:

- To apply for research consultancies which encompass a sufficient range of the institute's interests (in this case, for example, some of the cross-cutting issues);
- Agreement that the commissioning body may not make approval of the conclusions of a report conditional on signing off;
- Agreement that the report must be made publicly available within a defined period.

A final comment is that neither the Centre nor the reference groups appear to have considered a much broader range of funding possibilities which may exist beyond government, university and consultancy funding. Think tanks and research institutes in Ireland, the UK and continental Europe diversify their funding by attracting resources from the following areas:

- Membership fees, sales of publications and merchandizing, which routinely contribute around 20% of income;
- Corporate donations, which may contribute from 10% to 20% of income, more in the case of the few think tanks in the Republic.

Granted the small number of think tanks in both parts of Ireland, some potential may exist to develop these sources of funding. This should now be given attention by the Centre.⁷

7.2 Improved targeting, mailing lists and outreach

The need for improved targeting, mailing lists and outreach was discussed above (6.2). One survey subgroup (the Cowen non-attenders) provided compelling evidence that an important cross-section of the Centre's target group was sceptical about the Centre, considered itself under-informed about the Centre, but was well-disposed to its future development. This embodied the type of problem which the Centre faces.

The problems of targeting, mailing and outreach can be addressed by a number of specific measures and tools. Some are time-consuming at first, but well worth the investment.

The mailing list should be deemed a priority task within the Centre. Specifically, the Centre should:

- Establish a centralized, computerized mailing list which encompasses all those to whom the Centre wishes to address its message. This should contain a number of fields, for example: name, affiliation, coordinates [phone, fax, mobile, e-mail, website link], point (s) of contact with the Centre, sectors of interest, type of organization, publications to receive, debit/credit [for conferences] and notes.
- Identify the hierarchies of those whom the Centre wishes to influence within it (top 10, top 20, top 50, top 100).
- Establish systems for the regular review of the mailing list, both by the staff and the board. This should enable new people to be added, changes of personnel or address to be noted and deceased people to be removed.
- Put in place a system to add routine enquiries to the Centre to the list.

Second, outreach should be prioritized by the Centre. Specifically, five measures are suggested:

- Publication of an annual report. This should not be a wordy company-style document, but a short, popular, accessible document. It would be sent to all on the mailing list.
- Publication of a quarterly newsletter, both in paper and e-mail format. This should be short, newsy (4 pages), reporting on the progress of the Centre, publications, activities planned, broader news of cross border interest and critical comment.
- Publication of popular summaries of main research reports. These could be 4 to 6-page colour publications, along the lines of those done by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for its research.
- Outreach to some of those groups not yet approached by the Centre. This could take the form of briefings, presentations or 1-to-1 meetings with key groups who may not yet be sufficiently familiar with the work of the Centre. The reference groups suggested the following: NGOs involved in north-south work and peace and reconciliation; MLAs; members of the Oireachtas; and the district councils.
- Researchers should be asked to consider whether there are other formats which should be considered for the publication and dissemination of their reports. These include: video, CD-ROM, touring exhibition. A schools pack could also be considered.

These recommendations necessarily involve a greater proportion of staff time going to targeting, outreach and the operation of mailing lists; and some modest cost increases (see 7.7, below). Finally, to repeat an earlier recommendation (4.1), there should be regular internal reporting on access to the website and trends in its use.

7.3 Physical development of the Centre

The importance of the physical development of the Centre has been underlined (6.3). Such a move could:

⁷ See this author: Does Ireland need more think tanks? *Administration*, vol 49, #4, 2001/2, 89-100

- Provide a selling point for publications (and, possibly later, merchandizing);
- Offer resources on cross border issues for students, postgraduates, journalists and policy-makers;
- Provide space for the postgraduate programme, and later, fellows and interns.

Early efforts should be made to:

- Determine the location of such space;
- Provide the necessary furniture and shelving;
- Begin to build up the resources for a library. The type of items to be included were outlined in 6.3. Once these were built to a critical point, the Centre could begin to advertise these facilities.

It is again stressed that such an expansion should be modest. It should provide a limited niche but an important resource, one which would enhance the value of the Centre in Armagh.

7.4 Modifying the membership of the board

The modification of the membership of the board has been discussed in 6.4. No changes are proposed in the representation of the two university sponsoring bodies, Queen's University or Dublin City University. The Workers Educational Association, whose participation is valued, should continue to have a formal involvement. The following are the changes suggested:

- The Centre for International Borders Research and the Institute for British Irish Studies should each be invited to send a representative;
- The Workers Educational Association should either appoint three representatives directly associated with its work, or alternately reduce its representation to one;
- Co-operation Ireland should be invited to send a representative;
- There should be a further representative of the north-south non-governmental sector (the new north-south network may be the best body to approach);
- Consideration should be given to inviting the participation of a civil servant involved in the north-south institutions, but in a personal or informal capacity;
- To address gender imbalance, nominating agencies should be asked to give consideration to selecting female nominees. In particular, the two university sponsoring bodies should be asked to nominate at least one woman out of their three nominees;
- The Centre should look to co-opt one or two younger researchers involved in the area of cross border studies;
- Invitation to an internationally renowned expert in cross border issues.

These ideas could be discussed before the next board is constituted. It must also be ascertained if these would require a change in the legal document governing the Centre.

7.5 Development of the future research agenda

The future research agenda was discussed in chapter 6 (6.5). The ideas of the reference groups are very much in line with the Centre's existing thinking, especially as regards the development of cross-cutting issues and the transfer of the accumulated lessons learned. The reference groups provided a wealth of ideas as to possible future research themes, ideas and approaches.

The key features of the Centre's research strategy should be:

- A small number of longer-term, larger flagship projects. Ideas were proposed and prioritized, the top one being to monitor the operation, effectiveness and impact of the new north-south institutions.
- Several research projects which develop cross-cutting themes.
- A number of sectoral studies. Many topics were presented. Many in the reference groups made a case for shifting the emphasis to industry, commerce and science.
- Continuation of the current research methods, especially the study days.

- A book publishing programme, building on the three Cork University Press publications, to stimulate fresh thinking and ideas.

The reference groups were less clear in how cross-cutting themes could be applied or how the accumulated lessons learned could be applied. Here, two ideas are put forward to address this issue:

- Each sectoral project should be expected to examine the cross border dynamic and implications of its study and should be marked up accordingly. Sectoral projects must be expected to move beyond the task of ‘contrast and compare’ and seek out the lessons arising for the two parts of the island; how examples of policy and practice from one part can be applied to the other, and how these issues can be progressed on a north-south basis. Pure ‘contrast and compare’ projects should not, unless there are compelling reasons for doing so, normally be funded.
- The accumulated lessons arising should be the focus either of a specific study commissioned by the Centre (table 24); or should be discussed in a yearbook to be published by the Centre. A yearbook probably offers a more promising and popular format. In the British Isles yearbooks are an underused vehicle for communicating research, although they are used to positive effective in other countries, notably Germany (the *Jahrbuch*). A yearbook could record the research of the Centre over the previous year, note the outcomes of the main research articles, but also carry a set of in-house or commissioned critical analyses of the accumulated lessons arising and their collective impact. Some of these issues could in turn be summarized in the proposed annual report (7.2). Undertaking this exercise yearly could generate a sense of dynamism and progress to the question.

7.6 Expansion of the Centre’s European dimension

An expansion of the Centre’s European dimension is proposed. It is important that this be done in co-operation with the Centre for International Borders Research. The purpose of the development of the Centre’s European dimension is to better situate the Irish border in a European context, maximize the transfer of learning between Europe, win international recognition, position the Centre in the context of enlargement and open new learning and funding opportunities. The earlier discussion (6.6) proposed a series of actions and these are reiterated here:

- An exploratory visit to the other cross border institutions in Europe
- Familiarity with the history, evolution and current state of development of cross - border policies by the European Union
- Collection of documentation on cross border policies and programmes
- Identification of those institutions and groups within the Commission and other European institutions most concerned with cross border issues
- Development of links with Brussels-based think tanks with an interest in cross border issues, EU-related consultancies (e.g. European Information Service) and media (e.g. *European Voice*)
- Liaison with the LACE-TAP European observatory on cross border issues (Monaghan office).

7.7 Defining the future organizational trajectory

Finally, the Centre’s future organizational trajectory must be explicitly defined. In its business plan, the Centre outlined its own thinking in this area (2.7). This evaluation does not substantially alter the plan’s underlying assumptions or approach. It suggests that the Centre is now ready to mature as the key centre, institute or think tank addressing cross border issues in Ireland, with international recognition and acclaim, linked to the main European bodies engaged in cross border research, able to address the key issues of cross border relationships in Ireland in a European context, taking a pragmatic approach, pursuing both sectoral and cross-cutting themes, extracting and passing on the accumulated learning arising. Its research should be independent, critical, analytical, longer term, larger in scale, collaborative, international, ideas-focussed, the standard reference site for politicians, policy-makers and the public.

The evaluation does suggest some differences of emphasis compared to the business plan above and beyond the recommendations made above (7.1 to 7.6). The two most important modifications which should be considered concern:

- Within the staffing complement, a full-time post to develop targeting, mailing lists and outreach. This reflects a stronger emphasis on mailing, outreach, presentation, newsletters and the rest of the publications portfolio (e.g. annual report, newsletter and yearbook).
- Staffing or consultancy for the negotiation of medium to long-term funding from government and the universities and the preparing of research proposals for consultancy. These tasks can be time-consuming and it is unreasonable that the director should, in the future, bear the full burden of them.

7.8 Concluding remarks

The evaluation of the Centre for Cross Border Studies is a positive one. Much has been achieved in a short period of time. The Centre is well positioned to move into a more mature phase. This report puts forward a number of proposals in seven areas to address current problems and these should strengthen its work. In the words of one member of the reference groups, 'the best is yet to come'.

Methodological note

This note provides information on the research method used in the course of the evaluation.

Seven reference groups were identified for this research: staff, board, researchers, commissioning agencies, policy makers, unsuccessful applicants and target groups.

All the staff were interviewed in person. All board members were interviewed in person, with the exception of Dr Jane Wilde who was out of the country during the full period of the evaluation and could not be contacted. Of the three research rounds funded by the Centre, contact was made with the lead researcher in each project from the first two rounds (the third round has only just commenced, so a discussion would have been premature). Where possible, personal interviews were carried out, but where not, phone interviews took place. One researcher was unavailable, Dr Margaret Barry of National University of Ireland, Galway.

Three surveys were carried out. Survey work for this evaluation faced a number of constraints. The Centre had only two complete mailing lists with addresses. These were:

- A list of those attending the European cross border conference of September/October 2000;
- A list of invitees to the event organized for Foreign Affairs Minister Brian Cowen on 17th December 2001. This comprised an amalgam of prior mailing lists as well as public representatives and local government officials who lived in the vicinity of Armagh (principally Armagh, south Down, Louth, Cavan and Monaghan).

Between them, they comprised an imperfect but, for this research, satisfactory representation of the Centre's target audience.

There was a record of unsuccessful applicants for the first two research rounds. The Centre was able to fill address gaps and unsuccessful applicants for the first two research rounds were surveyed with six questions. The total number of unsuccessful applications for the first two research rounds was 95. >From this list, 67 forms were sent out. The balance comprised people who applied more than once, people who made separate successful applications and unsatisfactory addresses.

The participants in the European conference were those who attended the conference on cross border issues in Europe in September/October 2000. Surveying presented a number of problems. The conference mailing list provided details of 111 people attending (and paying to attend) out of the total final attendance of 211. Of the 111, eight people returned questionnaires denying, sometimes strenuously, that they had attended the event in question (these were therefore invalidated, below). This raises the possibility that some others who did not return questionnaires had not attended either; and means that 100 were not surveyed at all (these mainly comprised visitors, students and other guests).

The third group, subdivided into a fourth group, was those who were invited to the reception organized for Foreign Affairs Minister Brian Cowen on 17th December 2001. These comprised 351 people. A survey was made of 100 of this group. They comprised:

- 28 people who attended (far more did attend, but their identities cannot be confirmed for certain) ('attenders')
- 72 people who did not attend ('non-attenders').

The 72 comprised a cross section of representatives of local politicians, north/south, government, commercial and media sectors. Altogether 278 people were surveyed, with a final overall return rate of 54%. The detailed response rates to the three surveys were as follows:

Table 26: response rates to surveys

	Total Number	Returned questionnaires	Valid	Percent
Unsuccessful applicants	67	33	33	49%
Participants in European conference	111	55	47	50% (all) 42% (valid)
Brian Cowen 17th December 2001: attending	28	24	24	86%
Brian Cowen 17th December 2001: not attending	72	39	39	54%
	278	151	143	54.3% (all) 51.4% (valid)

This is a good response rate for a postal questionnaire. The normal response rate for postal questionnaires is 15% to 20%, so these rates are all more than double that. It should also be borne in mind that:

- The European conference was held 18 months ago, and a percentage of those identifications and addresses will now be invalid;
- Respondents were given a short period to respond (12 days);
- The response rate may be depressed by pre-Easter absences and people taking end of tax year leave.

This evaluation included all returns which arrived by the easter deadline, but more arrived subsequently and more may be expected to do so.

Annex 1

Questionnaire sent to those attending European conference September/October 2000

The conference

1. How do you rate the quality of organization of the conference

Very poor Poor Good Very good

2. How informative did you find the conference

Not at all informative Informative Very informative

3. Would you, on principle, come to another event run by the Centre?

No Yes

4. Have you had any form of contact with the Centre since the conference?

Yes No

The Centre for Cross Border Studies

5. Turning to the broader work of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, how familiar would you describe yourself with the Centre?

Not at all familiar A little familiar Familiar Very familiar

6. How relevant do you consider the Centre's work to be to the main cross border issues?

Completely irrelevant Largely irrelevant Relevant Very relevant

7. Compared to other cross border bodies, would you consider the Centre to be:

Less effective As effective as the others More effective

8. From what you know about the Centre, how do you rate the quality of its work? (1 = very poor, 10 = excellent)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. What impact do you think it has made on policy-makers?

None Very little Some A lot

10. Any other comments

Annex 2

Questionnaire sent to those attending Brian Cowen 17th December 2001

Centre for Cross Border Studies

Please circle your answer

1. How familiar are you with the Centre for Cross Border Studies?

Not at all familiar A little familiar Familiar Very familiar

2. The Centre has published 7 reports. Are you aware of the following reports...

Telecoms and mobile phone charges	Yes	No
Cross border co-operation and INTERREG programme	Yes	No
Local history	Yes	No
Local government	Yes	No
Ireland's learning poor - educational disadvantage	Yes	No
Foot and mouth disease	Yes	No
Cross border co-operation in health services	Yes	No

3. Would you say that your own work has been informed by the activities of the Centre for Cross Border Studies?

Not at all A little To some extent A lot

4. How relevant do you consider the Centre's work to be to the key cross border issues?

Completely irrelevant Largely irrelevant Relevant Very relevant

5. Compared to other cross border bodies, would you consider the Centre to be:

Less effective As effective as the others More effective

6. From what you know about the Centre, how do you rate the quality of its work? (1 = very poor, 10 = excellent)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. What impact do you think the Centre has made on policy-makers?

None Very little Some A lot

8. Any other comments?

Annex 3

Questionnaire sent to unsuccessful research applicants

Centre for Cross Border Studies: call for proposals in 2000

Please circle your response as appropriate

1. Please could you give me your views on your dealings with the Centre for Cross Border Studies

Was the call for proposals

Clear Unclear

Was the decision about your proposal

Speedy Slow

Was the secretariat in the Centre

Helpful Unhelpful

2. Leaving aside the negative outcome, do you think your proposal received a fair hearing?

Yes No

3. Was the project for which you applied for funding ever carried out?

Yes No

If yes, can you say who funded it.....

4. Do you have a view on the effectiveness of the Centre for Cross Border Studies compared to other bodies working in the area?

More effective Same as the others Less effective

5. Are there areas of work where you feel the Centre for Cross Border Studies should carry out or support research?

.....

6. Any other comments?

Annex 4

Set of questions asked of researchers

Please could you tell me:

- About how you learned of the opportunity to apply for a project in the Centre for Cross Border Studies
- About your experience of the application process. Was the Centre reasonable in the amount and nature of information it asked you to submit in your proposal? Was a decision reached in a reasonable period of time?
- About your relationship with the Centre during the period of the research. Was the Centre over/under-demanding in the way it monitored the research? Were payments made in reasonable time? In your dealings with the Centre, were you treated reasonably and courteously? Were there any problem issues with the Centre during the research and were you given any support or assistance you needed?
- Whether you think the Centre should make any changes in the way it handles or manages research projects.
- If a seminar/study day was held in the course of your research project: if so, whether you felt it was useful and in what way?
- Whether you were happy with the publication process.
- About the dissemination strategy for your report
- The impact which you feel your report made. How was it received? Have things changed as a result? Was there follow-up research or action?
- More broadly, what impact do you think the Centre for Cross Border Studies has made?
- What is your assessment of the contribution of the Centre to cross border research and understanding?
- What future agendas of research and action you foresee in the area of cross border studies.

Annex 5

Set of questions asked of board members

Please could you tell me:

- About your own involvement in the Centre over the past three years
- Your view as to its principal achievements
- What you think the main difficulties have been
- If you think mistakes have been made
- Whether you think the Centre's priorities have changed over time
- Your views on the research projects undertaken. Are there any you would especially single out for innovation, impact, originality, depth, breadth?
- How happy you are with the *means of work* undertaken and their balance (e.g. research, study days, seminars, publications).
- How happy you are with the *volume of work* undertaken
- How happy you are with the *fields of work* in which the Centre has engaged.
- What cumulative impact you think the Centre has made? On who? In what way? What has changed as a result? Has our understanding of cross border issues improved as a result of the Centre's work?
- How you think the Centre fits in to other cross border work and activities
- Your view as to the structure, operation and decision-taking in the Centre. Are you happy with systems of accountability? Does the Centre operate efficiently?
- About your experience of the board. Do you feel you have your say? Does it run smoothly? How does it function as a group? What is the level of trust? Should other types of people be on it?
- How well you think the Centre publicizes its activities - publications, informal contacts, website?
- How well you think the Centre is networked and linked to the important players in cross border activities and studies
- What do other people say to you about the Centre?
- Is the Centre reaching out to the right audiences? Are there groups it is missing?
- What you think are the main strengths and weaknesses of the Centre?
- Whether you think important areas of work have been missed or neglected
- What you would like the Centre to do over the next number of years. Are there ways in which it should change or modify its role? Are there things it should do that it does not now do? Are there ways in which it should work differently? Where would you like the Centre to be in 5 years time?

Thank you.

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