

Cross-Border Spatial Planning Development and Training Network (CroSPlaN)
Summary of Activities July 2009 to December 2009

The objective of the Cross-Border Spatial Planning Development and Training Network (CroSPlaN) is to strengthen the policy and operational linkages between central and local policy makers and among officials and practitioners involved in spatial planning in the border region. In the period from July-to-December 2009, the programme has initiated its first year of activities in the following projects:

1. Action research on the implications of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) and new planning legislation in the Republic of Ireland on inter-jurisdictional spatial planning;
2. Action research on best practices in cross-border and inter-jurisdictional spatial planning and regional development within the EU and elsewhere that can inform cooperation in the Irish cross-border region.
3. Executive training programme for Councillors, officials and private sector representatives in the Newry-Dundalk Twin City Region.
4. The ICLRD annual conference (sponsored by SEUPB) on *Preparing for Economic Recovery: Planning Ireland, North and South, out of a Recession*.
5. A technical workshop on *Evidence-Informed Planning: Making Information Accessible to Build Inter-Jurisdictional Cooperation*

These different research, training and outreach activities are linked to each other and guided by the CroSPlaN Steering Committee which met in September 2009 to review progress to date and begin to identify the focus on the action research in 2010.

1. The Impact of the Reform of Public Administration on Inter-jurisdictional Planning

There are major policy shifts occurring in the border counties regarding spatial planning. In the future, central government policies and regional planning guidelines for the border counties in Ireland will have a stronger influence than in the past while the newly

designated councils in Northern Ireland will be gaining more latitude in setting development priorities.

This CroSPlaN research is important in that the future implications of these policy initiatives on practical cooperation in cross-border and inter-jurisdictional cooperation in spatial planning and regional development have yet to be identified.

From July to October the ICLRD study team, led by Caroline Creamer, NIRSA, NUI Maynooth, focused its activities on desk-based research and interviews with key officials involved in planning within the border region including: in Belfast--the Department of Regional Development and the Department of Environment; in Dublin--the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government; and, the Border Regional Authority located in Cavan Town. While the exact nature of devolution is still undecided, there are a significant number of publications outlining the potential role for the new super councils in Northern Ireland in community and spatial planning. Policy makers in Northern Ireland are also looking into other models of community planning in Scotland and England to inform possible approaches in Northern Ireland. Within the Republic of Ireland, the study team reviewed the pending legislation on strengthening the regional planning guidelines and local governance. During the interviews, the study team received confirmation of the need for this comparative research.

Focus group meetings are scheduled in November and December to explore the priority planning issues for the new councils in Northern Ireland; the opportunities and challenges for policy integration given the new powers of the councils and the move to introduce flexibility in terms of how councils deliver programmes; and the implications, if any, of the review on cross-border cooperation at both departmental and council level.

This research will result in a briefing paper being produced; which in turn will become a foundation stone for future CroSPlaN action research and training on Promoting Collaboration in Cross-Border Spatial Planning and Services. It is envisaged that the briefing paper will be finalised by end February 2010.

2. EU and International Best practices in cross-border and inter-jurisdictional spatial planning.

Recognising that the track record of cross-border cooperation among different EU countries and inter-jurisdictional planning in the United States can provide models for cooperation on the island of Ireland, this study will focus on good practices in spatial planning and governance. It is closely linked to the above-mentioned study on *The Impact of the Reform of Public Administration on Inter-jurisdictional Planning*.

Since July the ICLRD study team, drawing on its contacts with cross-border organisations throughout the EU, has been reviewing the considerable number of new studies on Interreg funded programs with a particular focus on non-statutory mechanisms for cross-border and inter-jurisdictional spatial planning. In addition, interviews were conducted with the Director and staff of Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) in Paris; Michele Breuillard at the University of Lille and a presentation at a workshop on cross-border planning at the 8th *Biennial of European Towns and Town Planners* in Nancy, France on the December 4, 2009. These interviews, meetings and attendance at the workshop offered an opportunity to meet those directly involved in cross-border spatial planning in Lille (French/Belgium border) and Geneva (French/Swiss border).

Furthermore, there is a body of work in inter-jurisdictional planning within the United States that is directly relevant to cooperation within and between the border counties in Northern Ireland and Ireland. The study team is reviewing selected examples and their applicability to the island of Ireland to include within the study. The team will also explore effective local development structures and processes at the level of the ‘micro-region’ in Spain which again has direct relevance to inter-jurisdictional cooperation across administrative boundaries on the island of Ireland.

Based on this field-research, the briefing paper will highlight a range of examples and the potential applicability of the emerging lessons and recommendations to the Irish cross-border context.

This research programme is being led by John Driscoll, Director, ICLRD. In January, follow-up field work and interviews is scheduled for our European cases. As with the first study, it is envisaged that a final draft of the briefing paper will be available for review at end February 2010.

3. Executive training programme for the Newry-Dundalk Twin City Region

On November 20th, 2009, we were very excited to hold the first of five training modules in the *Shaping and Managing Cross-Border Development* professional executive training programme for councillors and public/private sector representatives in Newry-Dundalk Twin-City Region.

The first session included presentation by the North/South Ministerial Council to set the larger context for cross-border cooperation; exploring international examples of corridor development and inter-jurisdictional cooperation; spatial planning on the island of Ireland – the Regional Development Strategy and the National Spatial Strategy; round table discussions among the participants and closing comments from a representative of the Department of the Taoiseach.

The next session is scheduled for January 19, 2010 and the course will be completed in March 2010. This pilot programme, tailored to local conditions and priorities in cross-border cooperation, will be rolled out across the border region as part of our CroSPlaN activities. The roll-out of this initial training programme is being overseen by Dr. Neale Blair, University of Ulster and John Driscoll, ICLRD Director.

4. The ICLRD annual conference (sponsored by SEUPB) on *Preparing for Economic Recovery: Planning Ireland, North and South, out of a Recession.*

After months of planning and close consultation with the Department of Regional Development in Belfast, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in Dublin and ICLRD partners, the ICLRD annual conference sponsored under the CroSPlaN programme will take place from 21-22 January 2010 in the Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh.

The theme for this conference is: *Preparing for the Economic Recovery: Planning Ireland, North and South, out of a Recession.* This event, held over two days, will open with a ‘health-check’ on the current state of the island of Ireland in a number of areas – economy, environment and planning. The remainder of the conference will focus on the new thinking, innovativeness and risks required to prepare and sustain the island for economic recovery and explore how greater cooperation can be developed around environmental planning, shared services and the green economy. Confirmed speakers include Professor John Fitzgerald of the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI); Pat McArdle, Economist; Conor Skehan, Dublin Institute of Technology; Ian Maye of the Department of Environment, Northern Ireland; Hubert Kearns of Sligo County Council; Celine McHugh of Forfás; Charlotte Kahn of the Boston Foundation’s Indicators Project; Holly St. Clair of the Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council; Martin Spollen of the Strategic Investment Board; Brian Murry of Workspace Ltd. in Draperstown; Professor Greg Lloyd of the University of Ulster; and Declan Kelly, the US Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland as the keynote closing speaker.

5. Technical workshop on *Evidence-Informed Planning: Making Information Accessible to Build Inter-Jurisdictional Cooperation*

A Technical workshop on *Evidence-Informed Planning: Making Information Accessible to Build Inter-Jurisdictional Cooperation* will be held on the morning of the ICLRD annual conference. The workshop is intended for planners, officials, practitioners and

academic researchers who are interested in accessing data and information to inform spatial planning and local and regional development.

The workshop will feature presentations by Charlotte Kahn who is the Director of the Boston Indicators Project and Holly St. Clair, Data Services Director of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Both organisations have been working together for a number of years to promote inter-jurisdictional planning and shared services by providing access to timely and relevant information to local government officials, politicians, the community and voluntary sectors and academic researchers.

The objective is to provide an example of good practice of how intermediary institutions such as the border networks and other groups can use data to drive regional change among decision and policy makers within local government as well as other groups involved in regional development. The workshop will also provide an opportunity for the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) to present its latest work on cross-border indicators.

CroSPlaN Steering Committee

The CroSPlaN Steering Committee held its first meeting on September 25, 2009 in the Blackwater Learning Centre at Knockconan just south of the Monaghan-Tyrone border. Steering group members are: John Driscoll, Director, International Centre for Local and Regional Development (chair); Andy Pollak, Director, Centre for Cross Border Studies; Ciarán Tracey, Senior Planner, Leitrim County Council; Dr. Chris Boomer, Principal Planning Officer, Planning Service, Omagh; Pdraig Maguire, RPG Implementation Officer, Border Regional Authority, Cavan; Caitriona Mullen, Programme Manager, Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN); and Deborah Peel, Senior Lecturer in Planning Policy, School of the Built Environment, University of Ulster. The Committee is supported in its work by Eimear Donnelly, Centre for Cross Border Studies.

The Steering Group recommended that the CroSPlaN research projects in 2010-2011 should address the cross-border environmental implications of EU directives (Habitat,

Water Framework and Groundwater) on cross-border planning in Northern Ireland and the Irish border region; and that future training programmes should introduce these topics and their implications for local, regional and transboundary planning.