



**Report on the  
AIREN Project Event on  
North / South Research Collaboration Opportunities  
Held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June**

This AIREN Event presented an overview from **Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)**, **Horizon Europe** and the **PEACE PLUS Programme** about the strategies and initiatives they each have in place to support North / South research collaboration. It also presented insights from US Agencies - the **National Science Foundation (NSF)** and the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)** - on the **US Ireland Research & Development Partnership Programme**.

We thank each of our presenters for their time and contribution at the AIREN event on 30 June 2021:

**Paul Hannigan, President of Letterkenny Institute of Technology**, gave opening remarks highlighting the importance of building cross-border relationships / collaboration and how Brexit has refocused political discussions on cross-border development in this era of the 'New Decade, New Approach' and the governments launch of the Shared Island Unit. He congratulated the AIREN Project which will connect Research Managers and Administrators initially across the 3 participating universities, with the long-term ambition of establishing an all-Island Research Excellence Network.

**Ciarán Seoighe, Deputy Director of Science Foundation Ireland**, outlined SFI's ambitions to create, with others, a cohesive research and innovation ecosystem as part of 'Preparing for Tomorrow' in SFI's Strategy 2025 on 'Shaping Our Future'. Ciaran highlighted how there are already many successful collaborations between Researchers, and between Funding Bodies, across the island, and it is important to build on these now to address the shared common challenges and exciting opportunities in areas such as: climate change; pandemic preparedness; social and economic wellbeing; EU Research Partnerships; and areas of differentiation. Opportunities to increase researcher mobility, create focused research areas, share research infrastructure, and to develop a skilled talent pool are being explored - including mechanisms for tri-lateral funding for new large-scale networks of research excellence (e.g. research centres,) and opportunities for future collaboration through Frontiers for Future, Research Professors, Centres for Research Training, SME partnership fund; and supporting border county IoT / TU development.

**Michael D'Arcy, Member, Interreg VA Programme Monitoring Committee**, explained that the PEACE Plus Programme for 2021-27 is currently being developed and is expected to launch at the end of the year with a fund of €1bn available to support North South collaborative initiatives. He outlined the 6 thematic areas proposed in the Programme and advises that we should be innovative and to 'think outside the box' on each – they include: Building peaceful and growing communities; Rebuilding and changing communities; Young people; Healthy communities that include everyone; Better environment and transport; Working together. Michael also posed a challenge for AIREN to aim for some big initiatives through the PEACE PLUS Programme ! and he emphasised the importance of the Project Manager role in managing and delivering on Projects.

**Jon Brookes, European Advisor, UK Research Office, Brussels**, provided an overview of the Horizon Europe Programme that runs for 7-years from 2021-27, with an overall budget of €95.5bn. He explained the UK's Associated Country status in the EU, and confirmed that organisations in the UK / Northern Ireland can participate fully, and be able to lead consortia, in Horizon Europe (with the exception of the European Innovation Council (EIC) Fund). Jon also highlighted some important eligibility changes in the composition of consortia for Horizon Europe across various Actions (RIA, IA and CSA) and any consortiums planning to apply should check the details. Horizon Europe Work Programmes for next 2-years are now available.

**Roxanne Nikolaus, Cluster Lead & Acting Programme Manager, Office of International Science, National Science Foundation (NSF)**, presented an outline of the US Ireland R&D Partnership Programme which aims to increase the level of collaborative R&D amongst researchers and industry across the three jurisdictions of United States of America, Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland. Roxanne told us about the mission and scale of activity in the NSF which is one of the lead US based funding agencies for this programme (with SFI from Ireland and the Department of the Economy from Northern Ireland). Themes include Sensors & Sensor Networks, Nanoscale Science & Engineering, Telecommunications, Energy & Sustainability and new pilot Cybersecurity. Anyone considering applying to the programme and trying to identify US partners is advised to look through the awards database on the [NSF website](#) and they can also contact Roxanne, the Cluster Lead for the Central European Region, EU, Ireland, Switzerland and UK in the [NSF Office of International Science](#)

**Sarah Scharf, Regional Program Director, Fogarty International Center, National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, also presented on the US Ireland R&D Partnership Programme from the NIH perspective, as that is also one of the lead US based funding bodies participating in the programme for submissions under the Health theme. It was noted the programme also has a theme on Agriculture for which the National Institute of Food and Agriculture is the lead agency in the US. She gave an introductory overview of the NIH, which comprises 27 Institutes and Centres. Sarah also mentioned and shared numerous links where intending applicants can find further details including a list of awards, with abstracts, made under the health theme that is available from [Northern Ireland's HSC R&D Division](#) and a full list of all U.S.-Ireland R&D Partnership Program awards published by [InterTradelreland](#).

Some Presenters who used slides on 30<sup>th</sup> June have kindly agreed to make them available and you can access them [here](#).

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<sup>i</sup> The AIREN Project is being delivered with support from InterTradelreland's Synergy initiative. Synergy is a cross-border cluster initiative set up by InterTradelreland, the cross-border trade and business development body. It aims to scale cross border collaboration among SMEs and other players such as universities, third sector organisations and government agencies using cluster and networking supports.

