

# €29 Million Shared Education Project Launched

Shared education on both sides of the border is to receive over €29million of EU PEACE IV funding through an initiative being taken forward by the Education Authority (EA) in partnership with Léargas.

Match-funding for this Collaboration and Sharing in Education (CASE) project has been provided by the Department of Education (DE) in Northern Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in the Republic of Ireland.

Over a four year period, the CASE project, which will run until 2022, is intended to enable 280 schools and 135,000 pupils to take part in shared education through local partnerships on a cross-sectoral and cross-border basis.

Over 2000 teachers will be trained to facilitate and deliver at least 30 hours of shared education for the pupils involved.

Ahead of this week's official launch at Armagh's Marketplace Theatre, 89 local partnerships involving just over 200 schools and approximately 11,000 pupils have been approved, with funding approaching €1million already committed.

The money is being provided by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) through the PEACE IV programme, with EA in Northern Ireland and Leargas, the Dublin-based national agency for European programmes, selected to manage the project in partnership.

The CASE project is aimed at primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland and the border counties with limited or no previous experience of providing shared education to their pupils.

The emphasis is on sustainable curricular-based sharing, delivered internally by partnership staff, and developing a culture of collaboration, thereby supporting school improvement for all young people within communities.

Five of the partnerships involved, featuring schools from as far afield as counties Fermanagh and Cavan, showcased some of their shared education activities at the CASE project launch.

The event was addressed by DE Permanent Secretary Derek Baker, EA Chief Executive Gavin Boyd, Léargas Executive Director Jim Mullin, SEUPB Chief Executive Gina McÍntyre and guest speaker Michael Wardlow from the Equality Commission.

Gavin Boyd, Chief Executive of the Education Authority said:

***“The Education Authority is committed to delivering its statutory responsibility to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education. Working in partnership with Léargas, EA is delighted to have been entrusted with managing this very important project.***

***“This valuable work is already underway with a first cohort of schools currently engaged in delivering shared education and I have greatly enjoyed the demonstration of some of the shared activities at this morning’s launch by pupils from a range of schools.***

***“The CASE project provides opportunities for pupils and staff from schools of different management types, and in some cases different jurisdictions, to engage in collaborative and meaningful learning experiences.***

***“The reconciliation element in Shared Education is of vital importance to our society, but this CASE project is also designed to deliver positive educational outcomes. There is a strong focus on the sharing of professional expertise, making better use of limited resources and community engagement.”***

Derek Baker, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education said:

***“It is important we continue to make progress in advancing Shared Education and the Peace IV Programme is a vital element in doing so. The Collaboration through Sharing in Education (CASE) project being launched today, with a budget of up to almost €30 million, is a major undertaking and has the potential to make a real difference to education, both in Northern Ireland and in the border counties.***

***“Achieving the CASE project’s targets of 135,000 participants in shared education classroom in 280 schools by March 2022 will represent a leap forward in the uptake of shared education. Equally important is the project’s target of 2,000 teachers trained with the capacity to facilitate shared education. We cannot hope to progress in any meaningful way without a skilled workforce. This legacy of capacity building will contribute significantly to the Department’s objective to embed Shared Education so that it becomes a normal part of school life.”***

Speaking at the official launch of the EU PEACE IV funded project Gina McIntyre, CEO of the SEUPB said:

***“This funding will give school children an opportunity to have meaningful, sustained contact with young people from a different community background. By learning to understand and accept each other it will equip them with the skills and confidence required to break the cycle of intolerance which exists in our society.”***

Jim Mullin, Executive Director of Leargas, said:

*“We are delighted to partner with the Education Authority in Northern Ireland in a programme that has such potential to impact on the lives of young people and their communities in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. In our partnership we are effectively mirroring the collaboration we hope to see in the schools taking part in the programme.*

*“As is internationally recognised now, knowledge alone will not provide sufficient solutions for the world that the future generations need. What is required are soft skills, teaching team work, independent thinking, values, trust, collaboration.*

*“Collaboration and Sharing in Education (CASE) provides an opportunity for students to garner these skills in practical ways. This is a feature in a number of schools initiating their collaboration, including those featured in the exhibition area this morning. We can only hope for a better future when this programme of Shared Education impacts on thousands of students and teachers embed its principles into their work.”*

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<https://www.leargas.ie/programmes/case-peace-iv/>