



Subject:	Invitation to join International Shared Societies Project
Date:	17 th August 2018
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services,
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To advise members of a request to participate in an international Shared Societies Project involving 4 other countries which starts in October 2018.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to consider and agree the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That Belfast City Council agrees to participate in the first event in October 2018 to explore how the project is developing.• That a report on the project after the event would be brought back to the Council through the Shared City Partnership for further consideration• Given the nature of the project, The Chair and Vice Chair of the Shared City Partnership would be the most suitable members to attend along with the Director of CNS or his nominee.• Given the challenging time commitment from 2-9th October, if required Officers will investigate the options for timing which will yield the most benefit to Council.
3.0	Main report
3.1	The Council has received a request for up to 3 participants to be part of an international shared societies project.
3.2	The project which is envisaged as a 5 year programme aims to bring together five countries to work collectively to create a deeper understanding of the idea of a shared society. It will bring together theorists from universities and practitioners who have to contend with real life cultural contestation on a day to day basis.

3.3	<p>It has been designed as a shared learning experience and has secured funding for the first year from the German Peace Academy. Funding is being sought for the following years from EU Horizon 2020 project and other funding bodies. The countries involved are Belgium, Germany, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Israel/Palestine.</p>
3.4	<p>Participants from Northern Ireland</p> <p>The academics who were contacted about the project thought that BCC as a practitioner organisation would have much to share from our experience of creating a shared city ethos. The academics who will be attending are</p> <p>Gráinne Kelly, a Ulster University lecturer in Peace and Conflict Studies at INCORE, (International Conflict Research Institute).</p> <p>Paul Nolan, an independent researcher who produced the first three Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Reports for the Community Relations Council.</p> <p>Professor Mari Fitzduff is from Brandeis University, Boston. Mari is an international conflict resolution specialist who was previously the first director of the NI Community Relations Council, and the first director of INCORE.</p> <p>Clem McCartney is Policy and Content Co-ordinator, Shared Societies Project, Club de Madrid, has been asked to participate in that capacity.</p>
3.5	<p>Content</p> <p>This is not a conference per se but rather participants will be expected to deliver presentations, talk knowledgeably about the Council's work in relation to a shared city, methodologies, current thinking and participate in discussions. Each country will describe its experiences, exploring both the achievements and the frustrations, and engage in discussions with the other partners. An annual report will be compiled distilling the learning from the sessions.</p>
3.6	<p>This will be a residential experience and the first stage will be at Givat Haviva Centre in Israel from 2 October – 9th October 2018.</p>
3.7	<p>Context</p> <p>The experience of the other 4 countries involved will assist with our own discussions around shared societies and contribute to our good relations strategy.</p>
3.8	<p>Belgium is a prosperous member of the European Union, but a country with three very</p>

distinct internal cultures: the Dutch-speaking region of in the north, the mostly French-speaking Wallonia region in the south, and the German-speaking cantons in the east. In 2010/11 Belgium did without a government for 589 days.

Germany, the heart of European social democracy, which is now struggling with issues arising from immigration. This is not just a recent phenomenon. In the 1960s and 1970s, the German governments invited "guest workers" ([Gastarbeiter](#)) to migrate to Germany for work in the German industries. The largest immigrant group came from Turkey, and some generations on there are unresolved issues about the extent to which the host country and the immigrant communities experience a shared sense of citizenship.

Bosnia-Herzegovina The Bosnian war concluded in 1995 with the signing of the Dayton Accord, but since then the country has experienced an unhappy form of 'peace without reconciliation'. A complex constitutional architecture has led to the segregation of Bosniak, Serb and Croatian communities, but the Nansen Dialogue Project has created links extending across **Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia.**

Israeli/Palestinians. The Middle Eastern partnership in this project is not between Israelis and the Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza, but rather with the Palestinians who live within the state of Israel. The Givat Haviva Centre, which would be the official partner organisation, was created in order to build solidarity between Israeli peace activists and the Palestinian community in Israel. It is a recipient of the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education for its longstanding work in promoting Jewish-Arab dialogue and reconciliation.

3.9 Therefore, it should be noted that while the first part of the residential programme is based in Israel, it is not about the Israeli/Palestine experience – rather it is about the experience of **all** the countries, some of which will have a lot of to share around experiences of segregation, working to build cohesion etc. as outlined above.

3.10 In addition, the Givat Haviva Centre were advised of concerns around the requirement for cross community participation and reassurances have been received that this will be the case. The Givat Haviva Centre is intended to provide solidarity for those working for equality between Palestinians and Israelis and the Centre is particularly concerned to maintain international links as it works against discrimination in the recent legislation.

3.11 **Outcomes for Belfast City Council:**

The Shared City Partnership is regarded as a model of best practice in terms of drawing together a range of sectors within a political setting to advise and influence decision

makers to take on board good relations implications. This active learning experience presents BCC with the opportunity to reflect critically on the work of the Partnership and the Council.

3.12

It will allow Council

- To have more understanding not just about physically sharing space but how we promote shared living in a city where the majority of social housing is segregated.
- To explore the tensions between neutral or good and harmonious environments and how identity features within shared societies.
- To hear first-hand how other countries are addressing legacies of division in a post conflict society and how academics and practitioners evaluate the associated policies/concepts. Subsequently, we would look critically about how these could practically be applied to the Belfast setting.
- To investigate what has been the experience of connecting areas of deprivation to areas of opportunity and how has this impacted upon good relations and cohesion.
- What role community planning and physical planning has played in developing a more diverse but cohesive society – to learn what has and has not worked well and ensure these are featured in discussions around the Local Development Plan and Community Plan.

It is essential that the city is developed in such a way that does not inhibit future initiatives which have the ability to promote and enhance good relations and equality. The SCP has noted that transformative change is required around regeneration to make a difference to local communities, not just in terms of the two main communities but also to include and integrate new communities. What are the levers and drivers to ensure this happens?

3.13

Decisions Required:

If Members are minded to agree to the Council's participation in the project, a decision could be taken to participate in the first event in October to explore how the project is developing.

A report on the project after the event would be brought back to the Council through the Shared City Partnership for consideration.

Given the nature of the project, The Chair and Vice Chair of the Shared City Partnership

<p>3.13</p>	<p>would be the most suitable members to attend along with the Director of CNS or his nominee.</p> <p>In addition, it should be noted that 7 days is an exceptional time commitment and there is a possibility that nominated Members may wish to look at participating for a shorter period. Officers will investigate the most appropriate option.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The only cost to Council would involve Member and Officer time and expenses. . The costs of travel and accommodation for the first seminar will be covered by the Peace Academy grant as outlined in the report. As detailed previously, the organisers are seeking further funding for the next steps of the project from EU Horizon Project 2020 and other programmes.</p>
<p>3.14</p>	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural needs Assessment.</u></p> <p>The rationale for participating in the project is to look at how to create and sustain shared societies which will have a positive impact on equality and good relations.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>