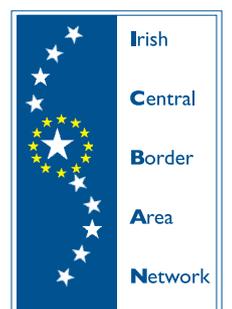


REGIONAL STRATEGIC  
FRAMEWORK FOR THE  
CENTRAL BORDER REGION  
2013-2027

RBSF.



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**DISCLAIMER**

The RSF is a non-statutory document. As such it respects both the plans of the European Union and the two Governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland and the plans, policies and priorities of the local authorities and other key stakeholders in the Central Border Region. The RSF is intended to complement those plans and strategies and does not in any way supersede or dilute their authority or relevance. Nothing in this Regional Strategic Framework will interfere with the responsibility of individual local authorities and other area stakeholders to plan and implement strategies for their own areas of responsibility, or their ability to apply for EU and national funds in their own right. Instead, it proposes to act as a framework for regional cross-border cooperation, within the context of the National Spatial Strategy for Republic of Ireland, the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland and Europe 2020.

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# Foreword

**We commend to you the Regional Strategic Framework (RSF) for the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland. This is the first such formal initiative of this type developed for the area.**

This Framework has been shaped through an 18-month long development process as part of an overall Spatial Planning Initiative. Key to this has been a Data Capture initiative, known as DataCENTRAL, which has drawn on the statistical information from both jurisdictions. The governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland have given the Region the opportunity through this funded initiative to help set out a strategic way forward for the redevelopment of the area. This Framework is the Region's response to helping realise the ambitions and hopes of the people in our Region, and those served by our Region.

We will all be aware that our Border Region faces challenges in the times ahead but there are also many opportunities which can be realised too. The period this plan covers, up to 2027, is quite the unknown. It is because of this that we have sought to be flexible in setting out such a Framework approach, which can be amended and adapted as times and circumstances change.

Our ultimate aim is that the Region can become a more competitive and resilient area, that it will be transformed and that it will have a significant role to play in the renewal of both the island of Ireland and the EU. The document captures these ambitions and the means to achieve them.

Many have been involved in the development of the RSF. We now commit this document for the Region, in the hope that key stakeholders, from all sectors, will play an involved role in working together to implement the stated ambitions and aims. Setting up the necessary effective implementation structures will be the next key stage to be embarked upon.

Finally we would wish to acknowledge and thank the efforts of those who have made this possible. This includes all who have inputted into the development and consultation processes and especially the Spatial Planning Steering Committee members for all their support and guidance to the Management Board in overseeing this.

Thank you also to KPMG and their consultancy team for all their work on the project. It is very important to also acknowledge the Special EU Programmes Body and the governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland who have provided the funding for this initiative, under the EU INTERREG IVA Programme.



**Cllr Pat Treanor**  
ICBAN Chair  
2013/2014



**Cllr Jim Cavanagh**  
ICBAN Chair  
2012/2013



# Introduction

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**The Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland has a population of just under 660,000 people currently (2011 Censuses) and is expected to grow to over 750,000 by 2022. It accounts for 1/5 of the land area of the island of Ireland and 1/10 of its population.**

The area has many strengths and assets. It has an outstanding natural environment and a strong cultural heritage. The area offers a high quality of life, which both residents and visitors greatly value. It has many entrepreneurial and internationally competitive businesses distributed right across the area. There is a network of County and market towns complemented by smaller villages and hamlets, which give the Region much of its distinctiveness. It also has excellent and committed third level educational institutions which are active in training and retraining and engaged with local industry. The Region has the potential to develop further its unique tourism offering of coastline, lakes, inland waterways and hills, to the benefit of both residents and visitors.

The Central Border Region is a rural area, with a high quality landscape supporting natural agricultural and forestry products. These features make the area unique on the island of Ireland and create distinctive opportunities, and challenges. In particular, it is essential that this Regional Strategic Framework (RSF) is sustainable in a rural area and also that the Strategic Framework sustains and supports the distinctive rural nature of the Region while providing it with guidance and direction on additional economic and social opportunities.

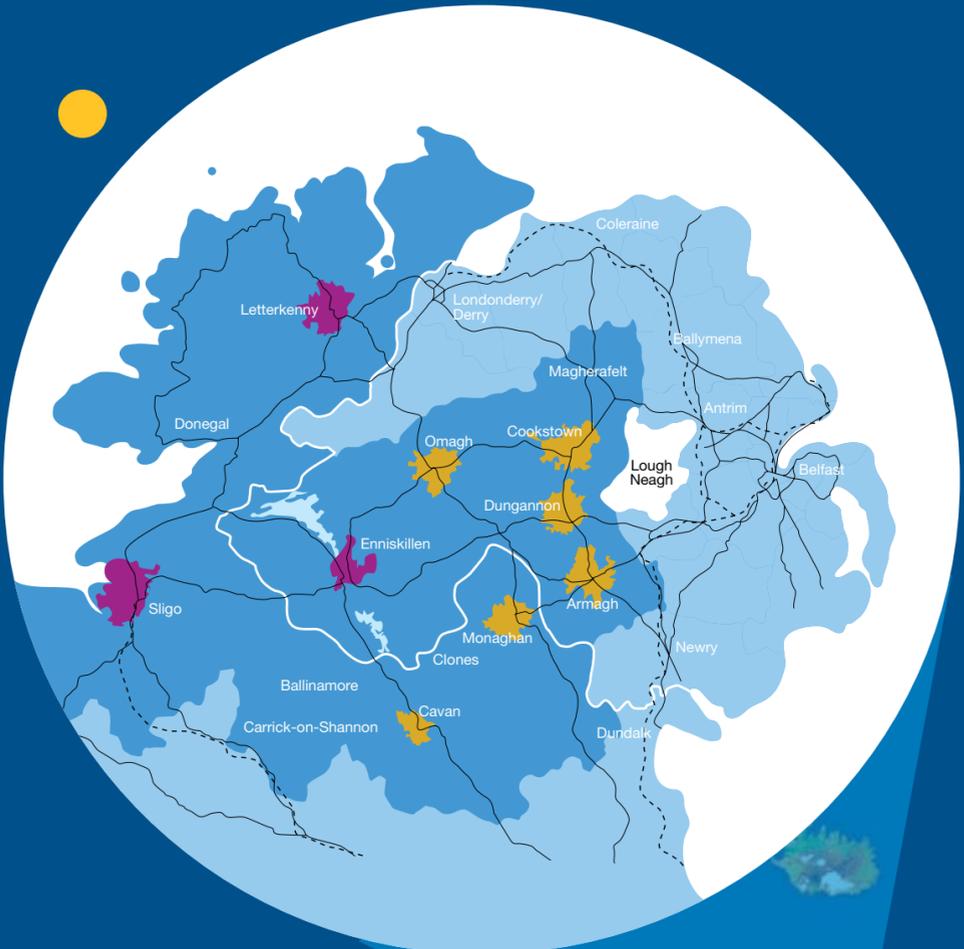
The Region also openly acknowledges its challenges. It has not escaped the current recession, resulting in job losses, emigration and a certain loss of confidence. With more public and private services being centralised in larger towns and cities, or increasingly being delivered online, there is a need for stakeholders to find new ways for the Region to sustain a range of local public and private services. There is a need to further improve connectivity infrastructure through investments, which will improve access to services and allow businesses to operate competitively, on a local, national and international level. On a variety of economic and social indicators the Central Border Region is disadvantaged compared to other regions of Ireland and Northern Ireland and there is therefore a need to address this inequality of economic and social outcomes between the Central Border Region and other regions and also to address persistent inequalities within the Region.

The area has a real potential and desire to become more competitive economically and socially, not just with other regions on the island, but also internationally. This is the first coherent Framework that has been developed for the Region and it is pioneering as the first such regional cross-border initiative of this type on the island of Ireland.

## 1.1 The Purpose of the Regional Strategic Framework (RSF)

This Regional Strategic Framework (RSF) is a Framework for the development of the Region, for the period up to 2027. The approach embraces the opportunities that regional thinking might create. It also sets out the challenges being faced and the actions required to tackle those.

The RSF is linked to a number of other key plans and strategies. As a regional strategy for development it fits within the context of the spatial development plans of the two governments on the island of Ireland; i.e., the National Spatial Strategy for Ireland and the Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy. It offers a sub-regional context to the 'Framework for Co-operation - Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland' which has been agreed between the two governments. It also complies fully with the EU 2020 Strategy and offers a means of implementing EU 2020 policies at the regional cross-border level.



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Central  
Border Region  
Gateway  
Hub



# Introduction

The diagram below illustrates how the RSF balances the influences of EU and national policies with the opportunities and challenges which are distinct to the region, as expressed both in the existing plans, strategies and priorities of the Local Authority Areas which make up the Region and in the stakeholder consultation processes which contributed to the development of the RSF.

This Regional Strategic Framework is an integrated approach to regional development within the Central Border Region. What sets this document apart from other approaches is:

- It is regional
- It is cross-border, and
- It is a non-statutory approach.

This document has been driven by 10 local authorities from both sides of the Ireland / Northern Ireland border in the Central Border Region, working through their partnership organisation and Cross-Border Group, the Irish Central Border Area Network Ltd. (ICBAN).



The RSF represents an affirmation of the commonalities of local authorities in working together in an essentially rural cross-border region.

An additional local authority - Magherafelt District Council - is seeking to join ICBAN with effect from autumn 2013. While the analysis in this Regional Strategic Framework is based on data and the views of the existing 10 member authorities, Magherafelt District Council will be involved in the implementation of the Strategic Framework.

Funded by the EU INTERREG IVA Programme under a Spatial Planning Initiative, the document commands the support of both governments, through the Department for Environment, Community and Local Government (Republic of Ireland) and the Department for Regional Development (Northern Ireland).

The two governments have together provided this opportunity to create a framework for development in this cross-border area. The RSF responds to this opportunity in developing a Vision that will inform and effect policy change, and which will seek to replace the concept of a peripheral people with one of a region that can make a distinctive contribution to regeneration and growth of the island economy. In this way, the Regional Strategic Framework can be seen as an important local cross-border implementation arrangement for a variety of Governmental strategies and priorities such as the National Spatial Strategy, the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland, the Action for Jobs Strategy and the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy.

## 1.2 The Key Ambitions and Aims

The key ambitions of the Regional Strategic Framework reflect the challenges and opportunities at local / regional, national and international levels:

- To develop and deliver strategic responses to the key identified needs, which will enable the Region to develop and grow economically and socially
- To influence the Governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland on their investment priorities for the Region, by providing an evidence base to justify investments
- To address the inequalities in economic and social outcomes between the Central Border Region and other regions of Ireland and Northern Ireland and the inequalities which persist within the Region itself, by contributing to the balanced development of the area
- To identify opportunities for local authorities and other stakeholders to work together to realise opportunities and to respond to the challenges facing the area. This is particularly important in a cross-border Region where the existence of the Border may make it more difficult to work together across different legal and organisational structures.
- To play a more involved role as an EU region, by not being peripheral in either a geographic or participative sense. There is a desire to embrace the learning potential within the EU through networking and engaging, as well as securing investments for key initiatives and projects. This will help implement the aims of EU 2020 Strategy and in particular cross-border programmes such as INTERREG. This RSF can assist in suggesting and identifying potential opportunities for further consideration and development by stakeholders.



By working together with a joint strategy and agenda the Region can realise opportunities which would not otherwise be available to it. It can, for example:

- Gain critical mass, by working together and sharing resources on a cross-border basis, for example in providing innovation support to local businesses or by encouraging joint purchasing and trade between businesses in the Region;
- Tackle issues arising from the presence of the Border, such as the weaknesses in the roads, telecoms and energy infrastructure in the vicinity; and
- Make the case to the two Governments and the EU for investment in the area on a consistent and evidence-informed basis.

The implementation of the Framework will require effective cooperation between the authorities and other stakeholders in the Central Border Region, policy and decision makers in both national governments and those responsible for the allocation of resources to the area. The implementation of the Framework is considered in more detail in Section 8.

The Framework is, therefore, based around developing a common strategic vision and advocating the case for investment. As a result of obtaining the financial and other resources necessary to make the vision into a reality, the Central Border Region will become more prosperous and offer a better future to its citizens, as illustrated in the diagram right.

## 1.3 The Vision and Objectives of the Regional Strategic Framework

The Regional Strategic Framework sets out a series of opportunities and priorities for the Region over the period to 2027 which, taken together and if well implemented, will lead to the area becoming more confident in itself and in its future.

The Vision for the Central Border Region is of:

**'A sustainable region that delivers the best quality of life for its people and makes a distinctive contribution to economic and social renewal and growth on the island'**

It is proposed to organise the work to realise the Vision under the four objectives of a smart and internationally competitive region, a people centred and inclusive region, a sustainable region and an accessible and connected region. These four objectives are derived from the internationally recognised principles of sustainable development which seek to promote regional development without undermining or eroding the natural and built assets of the Region to the detriment of future generations.



# Introduction



As a result each of the themes is related to a particular type of asset found in the area, as shown in the diagram below.

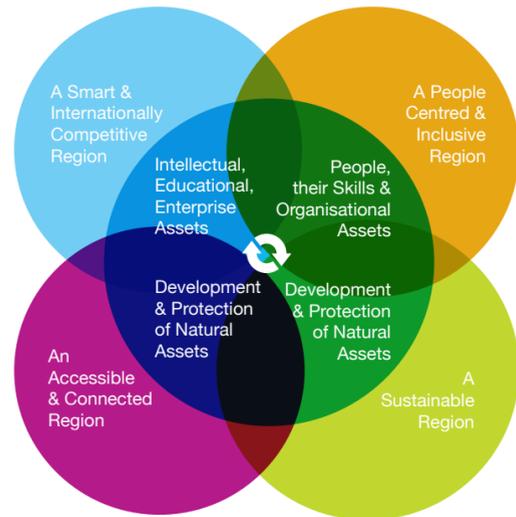
**A smart and internationally competitive region;**  
Development of intellectual, education and innovation support and enterprise assets

**A people centred and inclusive region;**  
Development of people, skills and organisational assets

**A sustainable region;**  
Development and protection of natural assets, and

**An accessible and connected region;**  
Development of physical assets.

The Framework must not become a rigid straitjacket. It will need to be flexed and updated as new opportunities and challenges arise. In addition, the Framework is strategic in nature and does not set rigid targets; instead it provides a context or skeleton in which more detailed operational plans and project pipelines can be developed from time to time.



## 1.4 A Long-Term Framework

These changes will not be achieved overnight. There are three distinct time phases which overlap with the implementation phase, each with differing challenges.

The table summarises the different time periods in the Framework, their funding context and the implications for the types of activities which can be undertaken.

See Table below.

## 1.5 Structure of This Document

This document is structured as follows:

- Section 2 is concerned with the strategic context of the Framework;
- Section 3 provides a short profile of the Region, identifies its key characteristics and the actions required to further the development of the area;

- Sections 4, 5, 6 and 7 deal in turn with the four objectives of the RSF; and

- Section 8 deals with the management, monitoring and evaluation of the Framework.

This document is complemented by a number of more detailed Supporting Documents and information resources which are available from [www.icban.com](http://www.icban.com). These include DataCENTRAL, a substantial statistical analysis and profile of the Central Border Region and:

- A review of the main strategies and policies relevant to the Framework;
- A survey of European Best Practice Case Studies relevant to the Framework;
- A detailed review of the infrastructure needs of the Central Border Region.

Period	Challenges	Funding Context	Appropriate Activities
Up to 2015	The short term which is principally about preparing for the major activity and building the capacity of the Region	Difficult - EU cross-border funding is largely committed. Local authority and national budgets under considerable fiscal pressure.	Preparatory actions, capacity building, building awareness of the needs of the Region. Project pipelines / design.
2015 - 2020	The medium term which is more strategic and ambitious in its nature, building on the use of national and EU funds for border region development (including the INTERREG V and Horizon 2020 Programmes) and national funds.	The next EU Programming Period will be 2014-2020, and funding should be available from 2015. National fiscal pressures may ease slightly.	More strategic and more ambitious projects, capital projects, projects reflecting EU priorities and projects building new regional strengths for the future.
2020 - 2027	The longer term which is concerned with realising the benefits of the investments made in the earlier period.	New EU Programmes may be available. National fiscal policies may ease further.	More aspirational projects, completing and building upon projects commenced in the previous periods.



# The Strategic Context for the Central Border Region

**This Section sets out the strategic context for the Central Border Region and how it is intended to work together to achieve the vision. It is built on:**

- An understanding of the relationships between the RSF and key national, regional and EU plans and strategies;
- A review of the impending impact of local government reform in both ROI and NI;
- An analysis of the needs of the Region, based on the analysis in the Statistical Profile supporting document, as well as commentary on the response required.

## 2.1 The RSF and the Policies and Strategies of Ireland and Northern Ireland

The Regional Strategic Framework has been funded by the INTERREG IVA Programme, the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, as an important step towards the full implementation of the National Spatial Strategy for Ireland and the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland and in making an important contribution to the realisation of the Europe 2020 Strategy on the island of Ireland.

The National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Development Strategy are the key spatial policies of the two Governments, which themselves are reflections of wider policies, such as the National Recovery Plan for Ireland and the Programme for Government for Northern Ireland. The principles of these documents and of the Europe 2020 Strategy, together with the identified needs of the Central Border Region, have been among the principal building blocks of the Regional Strategic Framework. In addition the Border Regional Authority's Regional Planning Guidelines and the existing plans, strategies and priorities of the local authorities in the area and the extensive stakeholder consultation processes, which contributed to the development of the RSF, have also

been of critical importance. As a result the RSF represents a balancing of key top-down policy considerations with an understanding of the distinctive opportunities and challenges which the Central Border Region represents.

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in Ireland and the Department for Regional Development in Northern Ireland have agreed a 'Framework for Co-operation - Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland'. The Framework for Co-operation examines the key planning challenges faced in the two jurisdictions and identifies the potential for non-statutory collaboration in spatial planning to mutual benefit. This RSF is an early example of the type of co-operation envisaged in the Framework for Co-operation at the level of a region. The Framework for Co-operation described this form of working together as Level 2 Co-operation where local authorities North and South are

**'responsible for achieving national and regional spatial planning objectives through the delivery of local plans, programmes and projects that are well integrated in a cross-border context'.**

It is not intended that the RSF will supersede any of these key plans and strategies. Instead, it proposes to act as a framework for regional cross-border cooperation, within the context of the NSS & RDS and the Europe 2020 strategy and the particular plans and strategies of the local authorities which make up the Central Border Region.



## 2.2 The RSF and the Europe 2020 Strategy

Europe 2020 is the European Union's main strategy for putting Europe's economy back on the path to growth and to make the EU a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These three mutually reinforcing priorities are intended to help the EU and the Member States to deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

There is a clear relationship between the objectives of the Regional Strategic Framework and the drivers of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Regional Strategic Framework Objectives	Related Europe 2020 Drivers
A smart and internationally competitive region	Smart Growth
A people-centred and inclusive region	Inclusive Growth
A sustainable region	Sustainable Growth
An accessible and connected region	Smart Growth in relation to telecoms provision. Inclusive Growth in relation to improved access to local and regional services. Sustainable Growth in relation to promoting the switch to more sustainable transport modes.

## 2.3 The RSF and Local Strategies

Local authorities in Northern Ireland and a range of other bodies in the Republic of Ireland have been responsible for developing plans and strategies to develop their areas in appropriate ways. Those plans, strategies and priorities are an important input to the RSF, providing a bottom-up complement to the top-down perspectives which arise from EU and Governmental strategies and priorities.

A key factor influencing the Regional Strategic Framework is local Government reform, which is on the agenda in both of the jurisdictions which make up the Central Border Region. The development of the RSF is particularly timely as developments in the role of local authorities on both sides of the border are producing a convergence of functions and roles.

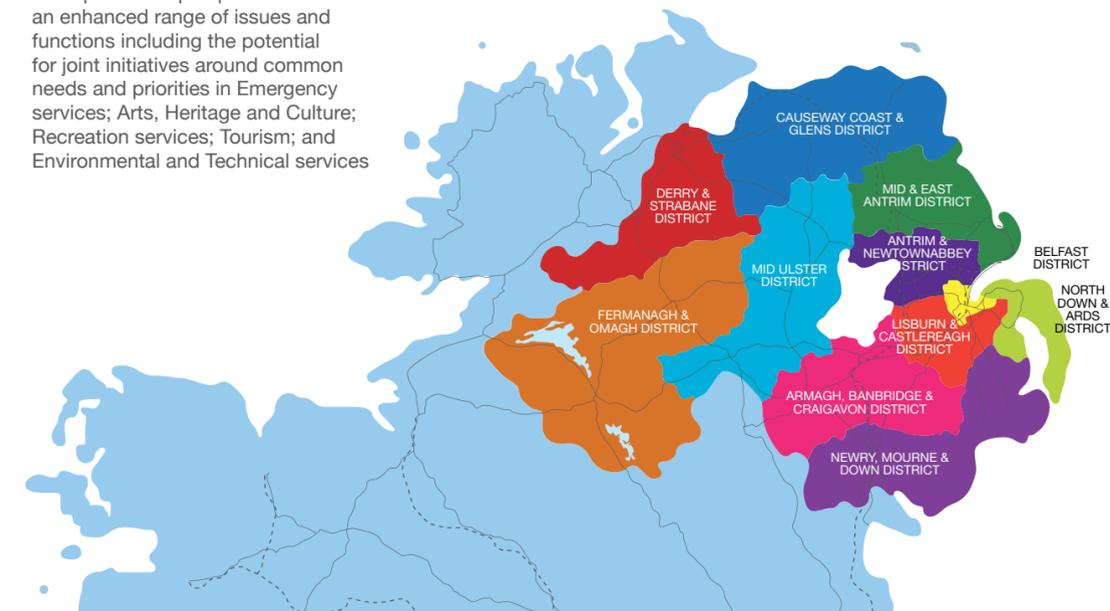
The Action Plan for Jobs, the development of County Action Plans, the Alignment Report and the new emphasis on local employment actions as set out in the 'Putting People First Action Plan', are all tending to give local authorities in the Republic of Ireland a stronger and more strategic economic development remit.

Under Putting People First the Border Region will be subsumed into a new Connaught Ulster Regional Assembly which will be responsible for articulating the development needs of the Border Counties. These new arrangements will have considerable implications for spatial, economic and social infrastructure in the Border Region.

In Northern Ireland the long awaited reform of local government under the Review of Public Administration (RPA) is now expected to be implemented in 2015. This will reduce the number of local authorities in Northern Ireland from 26 to 11 and extend Council's remit to include planning and most aspects of economic development and regeneration. At the same time local authorities in Northern Ireland are to be given a general power of competence to promote the well-being of their communities, and from 2015 will take on the role of community planning for the first time. Significant functions in relation to regeneration, local tourism and business support will be transferred to the Northern Ireland Councils.

**The proposed new local government boundaries in Northern Ireland after 2015 are shown in the map below.**

Although the implementation of the new arrangements is more advanced in the Republic of Ireland than in Northern Ireland, during the period of this Framework Councils in the Central Border Region will have the opportunity to learn from each other's approaches and to share strategic and operational perspectives around an enhanced range of issues and functions including the potential for joint initiatives around common needs and priorities in Emergency services; Arts, Heritage and Culture; Recreation services; Tourism; and Environmental and Technical services



The RSF provides a framework for the development of such shared perspectives and the development of joint strategies and initiatives. The convergence of functions in relation to economic development will enable the Councils in the Region to deliver many of the actions identified under the RSF.

However, further more detailed work is required to identify the full potential of joint working by Councils to realise cross-border development opportunities and priorities.

In both jurisdictions the Regional Strategic Framework can, itself, be an important input to the development of community planning processes.

# The Strategic Context for the Central Border Region

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## 2.4 Outcomes from the Regional Strategic Framework

It is intended that the Regional Strategic Framework will provide a structure, skeleton or scaffolding on which more detailed plans will be developed from time to time over the period to 2027. In this sense the RSF should be seen as a living document and not as a prescriptive plan.

This has the advantage of maintaining relevance as circumstances change over time and new opportunities or new challenges emerge. This also means that it is not possible to predict in quantitative terms the impact which the RSF will have - this will depend on the priorities selected from time to time and the financial and other resources which will be allocated to them.

However some of the potential impacts can be described qualitatively. In relation to the four objectives of a smart and internationally competitive region, a people centred and inclusive region, a sustainable region and an accessible and connected region, the potential impacts of the Regional Strategic Framework are given in the appropriate later Sections (see Sections 4.4, 5.4, 6.4 and 7.4).

There are also some cross-cutting impacts which do not fall easily under the four objectives, or are the cumulative effect of all of the actions taken under the Framework. Those cross cutting impacts include:

- The Central Border Region participates in a range of European networks covering smart, inclusive and sustainable growth, to learn from other regions and to share its experience with other rural cross-border areas;
- The Region has a much greater sense of its own identity and has shared pride in that identity with its citizens;
- Greater success as a Region in drawing down EU and national funds; and
- The local authorities of the Region, the Government Departments which engage with the Region, regional stakeholders and citizens of the area all see a more confident, outwardly focused, sustainable and coherent Region making a distinctive contribution to economic renewal and growth on the island of Ireland and offering the best possible quality of life to its residents.



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# A Profile of the Central Border Region

This Section provides a short profile of the Central Border Region. Much more detailed information is available in DataCENTRAL, the wider Central Border Regional Data Profile, which is one of the principal outputs of the ICBAN Spatial Planning Initiative, of which this Regional Strategic Framework is also an output.

The analysis of the Region has had the advantage of being able to draw on the recent results of the 2011 Censuses. (The Census is held every 10 years in Northern Ireland and every 5 years in the Republic of Ireland).

The Census information enables comparisons to be made with earlier periods. However, statistical comparisons on a cross-border basis using data from sources other than the Censuses is difficult.

The difficulties in using non-Census data are set out in detail in the Central Border Region Data Profile but essentially they relate to the use of different statistical definitions and different time periods on each side of the Border. The challenge which the Regional Strategic Framework has identified in working with non-census data sources is a constraint on border regional development which has also been noted by other organisations active in cross-border development, such as CAWT and the ICLRD. It is important that work to improve cross-border data sets from sources other than the censuses continues to remove this constraint on cross-border development.



## 3.1 Key Demographic and Economic Statistics

The ten existing member Council areas of the Central Border Region, together with the inclusion of an additional local authority - Magherafelt District Council - which is seeking to join ICBAN with effect from autumn 2013, had a population of approximately 700,000 in 2011 and that population had increased by 18% since the 1991 Census.

County Donegal accounted for just under 1/4 of the total regional population.

With the exceptions of Armagh, Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt, the population density is quite low across the Region and well below the average population densities for both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Population projections<sup>1</sup> suggest that the Region's total population will grow to 754,218 by 2016 and to 804,818 by 2022. This would represent a 12% rate of population change over the decade to 2022, which is a slightly lower rate of growth than was experienced in the decade to 2011. This rate of projected population growth would be well in excess of the projected Northern Ireland population growth over the period (6.9%) but below the projected Republic of Ireland average growth (17.2%).

The table below shows the key demographic statistics for the Central Border Region, taken from the 2011 Censuses.

The Region is predominantly rural in nature, characterised by a dispersed population and distance from major urban centres. Approximately one third of the population live in settlements over 1,500 population, and two thirds in small settlements and open countryside. This makes the region quite 'rural' - with all the associated challenges for 'critical mass' and the cost of services provision. There are in excess of 50 villages of over 1,000 population, with a greater number of small villages and hamlets of less than 1,000 population.

The Region's economy is dominated by small businesses. Of an estimated 33,769 VAT or PAYE registered businesses in the Region, just 29 have more than 250 employees and just 374 have more than 50 employees. 91% of all businesses employ fewer than 10 persons.

Area	Population 1991	Population 2001 / 2002*	Population 2011*	Population Change 1991-2001/02%	Population Change 2001/02-2011%	Population Change 1991-2011 %	Population Densities / person per km2**
Cavan	52,796	56,546	73,183	7.1%	29.4%	38.6%	39.4
Donegal	128,117	137,575	161,137	7.4%	17.1%	25.8%	33.8
Leitrim	25,301	25,799	31,798	2.0%	23.3%	25.7%	21.2
Monaghan	51,293	52,593	60,483	2.5%	15.0%	17.9%	47.5
Sligo	54,756	58,200	65,393	6.3%	12.4%	19.4%	36.5
Armagh	51,817	54,263	59,340	4.7%	9.4%	14.5%	89.5
Cookstown	31,082	32,577	37,013	4.8%	13.6%	19.1%	72.3
Dungannon	45,448	47,735	57,852	5.0%	21.2%	27.3%	75.8
Fermanagh	54,033	57,527	61,805	6.5%	7.4%	14.4%	37.3
Magherafelt	36,290	39,780	45,038	9.6%	13.2%	24.1%	78.6
Omagh	45,809	47,953	51,356	4.7%	7.1%	12.1%	47.2
<b>Region</b>	<b>576,742</b>	<b>610,548</b>	<b>704,398</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>42.7</b>
<b>ROI</b>	<b>3,525,719</b>	<b>3,917,203</b>	<b>4,588,252</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>30.1%</b>	<b>67.0</b>
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>1,577,836</b>	<b>1,685,267</b>	<b>1,810,863</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>14.8%</b>	<b>133.1</b>

<sup>1</sup> Data on the population projections is provided in the Statistical Analysis Supporting Document

Population, Population Change and Population Density

\* Source: 2011 Census (CSO and NISRA)

\*\* Source: NI Data: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp3.htm>; 2011 data

ROI Data: <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/saveselections.asp>; 2011 data

# A Profile of the Central Border Region

Size Distribution of VAT or PAYE Registered Businesses.

The table below shows the size distribution of VAT or PAYE Registered Businesses in the Central Border Region.

In the period between the 2001 and the 2011 Censuses, the Central Border Region experienced both an increase in the overall numbers in employment and an increase in the overall numbers in unemployment. This apparently contradictory result arises from the Region's increased population over the period and an increased level of labour market participation.

The increase in the rates of unemployment is particularly notable in relation to the Counties in the Republic of Ireland. The following two charts show, respectively, the numbers in employment and unemployment in the Central Border Region in 2001 and 2011.

Key sectors for employment in the Region include Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing; Mining & Quarrying; Manufacturing; Construction, Retail/ Wholesale and Hotels & Restaurants.

These are all traditional economic sectors and their status in this Region reflects the need to consider how to modernise the employment structure of the area. Census data also shows that despite strong outputs in terms of educational attainment in local schools, many of the Region's graduates leave for university and later employment. Despite a significant improvement compared to previous census results, the Region remains characterised by a high proportion of persons with No Qualifications and that relatively low proportions of residents hold Degree level qualifications or above.

Area	Number of Employees							Total Firms
	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 19*	20 - 49	50 - 99	100 - 249	250+*	
Cavan	2,813		144	67	27		5	3,056
Donegal	5,072		-	175	53		-	5,649
Leitrim	1,240		-	23	12		-	1,330
Monaghan	2,382		-	71	36		-	2,641
Sligo	2,260		105	67	22		4	2,458
Armagh	2,570	330	140	75	20	15	0	3,150
Cookstown	1,835	265	100	50	15	5	0	2,270
Dungannon	2,685	355	155	80	30	15	5	3,325
Fermanagh	3,575	360	135	75	30	10	5	4,190
Omagh	2,630	315	120	65	10	10	5	3,155
Magherafelt	2,085	265	95	60	25	10	5	2,545
<b>Region</b>	<b>31,037</b>		<b>994</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>345</b>		<b>29</b>	<b>33,769</b>
<b>Rep of Ireland</b>	<b>177,547</b>		<b>9,769</b>	<b>5,215</b>	<b>2,441</b>		<b>459</b>	<b>195,431</b>
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>51,560</b>	<b>8,915</b>	<b>4,085</b>	<b>2,190</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>67,955</b>



Numbers in Employment and Unemployment 2001 - 2011

Employed

Graph  
2001/02  
2011

This is a consequence of many young people needing to leave the region to attain employment and qualifications. Although past trends have shown that people will come back if opportunities are presented.

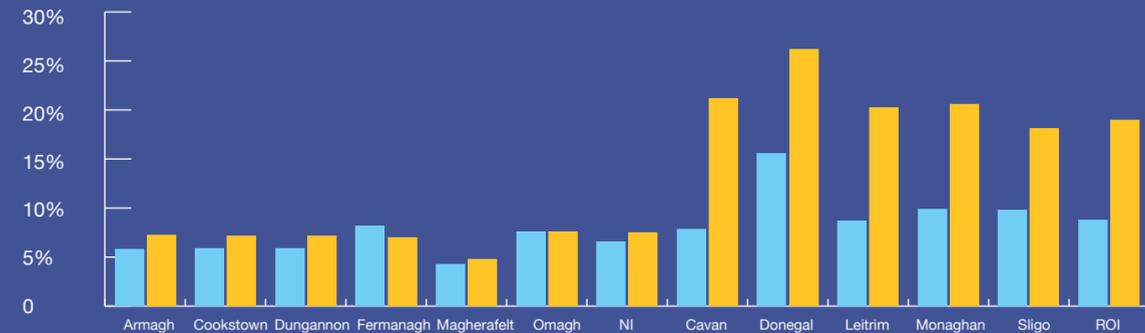
There are three general sectors of employment: the Primary Sector which includes agriculture, forestry and fishing; the Secondary Sector which includes manufacturing and construction; and the Tertiary Sector also known as the service sector, which typifies modern and progressive economies.

In the Central Border Region there has been significant progress from secondary to tertiary in the past 10 years as employment in the tertiary sector grew from 60.6% to 68.9%, while employment in the secondary sector declined from 30.2% of all employment to 23.4%.

However, employment in the secondary sector in the Region remains above both the Ireland and Northern Ireland averages, while employment in the tertiary sector remains just below the respective regional and national averages.

In summary, just over 20,000 people are employed in agriculture in the Region. The Construction industry employs over 24,000 people and over 33,000 people are employed in manufacturing, a reduction of just over 7% on the previous 10 years. In Retail there are over 40,000 people employed. There are over 800 traded services firms, which comprises 'Finance/ Insurance', and 'Property/Real Estate', and employs over 16,000 people.

The main public sector employers are in health, education, central government departments (and their agencies) and



Numbers in Employment and Unemployment 2001 - 2011

Rates of Unemployed

Graph  
2001/02  
2011

Area	Employment Sector 2001 / 2002						Employment Sector 2011					
	Primary		Secondary		Tertiary		Primary		Secondary		Tertiary	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Cavan	3,367	15.0%	6,821	30.4%	11,065	49.4%	3,381	12.4%	5,973	21.9%	16,438	60.2%
Donegal	4,042	8.4%	13,741	28.4%	27,909	57.7%	4,036	7.6%	8,344	15.7%	38,103	71.5%
Leitrim	1,275	12.8%	2,672	26.7%	5,454	54.6%	1,215	10.1%	1,914	16.0%	8,140	68.0%
Monaghan	2,856	13.5%	6,326	30.0%	10,693	50.7%	2,860	12.4%	5,109	22.2%	13,915	60.5%
Sligo	1,928	8.1%	6,023	25.2%	14,589	61.0%	1,770	7.0%	4,498	17.7%	17,572	69.1%
Armagh	1,348	6.0%	5,752	25.8%	14,372	64.4%	1,340	5.0%	5,906	22.2%	18,223	68.5%
Cookstown	809	6.5%	4,037	32.6%	7,109	57.4%	819	5.1%	4,806	30.0%	9,711	60.7%
Dungannon	1,175	6.4%	5,862	31.8%	10,819	58.6%	1,286	5.0%	7,928	30.9%	15,439	60.2%
Fermanagh	1,674	7.3%	6,439	28.3%	13,776	60.5%	1,474	5.3%	6,226	22.6%	18,688	67.8%
Magherafelt	968	5.8%	5,961	36.1%	9,065	55.0%	1,765	3.8%	6,358	31.8%	12,175	60.9%
Omagh	1,200	6.4%	4,715	25.3%	12,047	64.7%	1,239	5.7%	5,109	23.6%	14,454	66.7%
<b>Region</b>	<b>20,642</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>68,349</b>	<b>30.2%</b>	<b>136,898</b>	<b>60.6%</b>	<b>20,185</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	<b>62,171</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>182,858</b>	<b>68.9%</b>
<b>Rep of Ireland</b>	<b>97,281</b>	<b>5.9%</b>	<b>411,495</b>	<b>25.1%</b>	<b>1,031,283</b>	<b>62.8%</b>	<b>94,247</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>302,227</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>1,309,575</b>	<b>72.5%</b>
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>20,724</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>166,462</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>469,205</b>	<b>68.3%</b>	<b>17,822</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>153,403</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>587,567</b>	<b>73.9%</b>

Change of Employment Sectors for Central Border Region 2001 - 2011

# A Profile of the Central Border Region

the county/district councils, together employing over 85,000 people.

### 3.2 Implications of Census Data

ICBAN commissioned a review of the implications of the Census data for the Region and for each of its constituent Council areas<sup>2</sup>. Among the conclusions of that review were the following;

#### Demography

- The low rate of urbanisation implies continued importance of safeguarding commercial centres in villages and dispersed communities as local service hubs. It also offers the potential to promote the region on the basis of the attractions of rural living.
- The relatively low population density suggests a need for more integrated service provision and effective public transport solutions.
- The above-average proportion of older persons indicates a strong potential demand for older person's services, disability services and care, and niche retail outlets, and a need for additional resourcing to enable retention of rural provision.
- The combination of a high proportion of younger people and relatively low levels of urbanisation reflects a need for the continued retention of rural education provision.
- The reduction in the population of working age reflects strong outward migration following post-primary education and a need to improve the retention or attraction back of young qualified individuals.

#### Economic Activity

- The relative increase in unemployment indicates the need for sustained action to support job creation locally in order to prevent further disadvantage.
- There is a need for more effective interventions to reduce the growing problem of long-term unemployment across the region.

- The low rate of youth unemployment coupled with the high proportion of young people under 16 reflects the significant outward migration of younger people.

#### Employment and Industrial Base

- There is an opportunity to translate agricultural employment strength into higher value-added opportunities e.g. in Agri-Food or Farm-based Businesses. This region has key resources to advance this and should seek to increase cross-Council projects to this end.
- The area's manufacturing strengths range across the region but there is clearly potential for a Manufacturing Corridor to be promoted in the Region which would provide a base for further growth and collaboration.
- The development of the Tertiary (Service) Sector lags behind that in both jurisdictions; there is both a need and an opportunity to develop this sector through collaborative, cross-border approaches.
- There is a need to link training and business support to encourage start-ups and growth in 21st Century industries focused around hubs of high capacity telecommunications infrastructure.

- There is a strong economic development rationale for improved Broadband and Mobile Phone coverage outside the main population centres.
- There is a need to identify key regional Commercial Centres and to take measures to reinforce their status to the wider benefit of the Region.

#### Education and Skills

- There is a need to focus on Provision of Training for Green Energy, Creative Economy Sectors and wider Entrepreneurship Skills.
- There is a need to retain or attract back graduates through measures to attract experienced and qualified workers who could relocate and contribute to generating growth businesses.
- There is a need for a Regional skills audit to assess supply and demand of skills within regional labour force.
- There is an opportunity to promote a strong local Entrepreneurial culture throughout the Region at the level of secondary and tertiary education and for the promotion of linkages between local businesses and education/training providers.

#### Other

- Reduced household sizes and substantially increased numbers of households will require additional resources to maintain existing service level provision.
- The high proportion working from home across the region reflects the urgency of improved connectivity and mobile/ broadband access.
- There is a need for additional resources to safeguard rural service provision and to deal with isolation and lack of access to services.

### 3.3 The Characteristics of the Region

Drawing upon the Census and other data used in the Statistical Profile and the Central Border Region Data Profile, DataCENTRAL, some of the key characteristics of the Region can be identified;

- The Central Border Region is predominantly a rural area; the largest town has a population of 21,000; many smaller towns are faced with challenges to the public and private services which they provide;

- Many successful businesses are located in the Region with strengths in manufacturing in general and in particular sectors such as engineering, furniture, food and wood processing. There are also some strong companies in traded services and pharmaceuticals. There is, however, a need to enhance the representation of knowledge-intensive service sectors, such as Professional, Scientific and Technical activities and Information and Communication while still acting to protect the Region's strengths in manufacturing sectors by interventions which protect and diversify the sector;

- Public Sector administration employment base is also important economically to the area; therefore any challenges to this need to be carefully managed in the interests of the area's economy also;
- There is an important issue connected to net out-migration of skilled labour and which needs concerted support - especially affecting young people - the so-called 'brain drain';
- Tourism represents a particularly important source for economic development in the Region, both in terms of attracting visitors (overseas and domestic) and providing a significant number of job opportunities;

Characteristic of Central Border Region	Required Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rurality of Central Border Region</li> <li>• Challenge to service provision in smaller centres</li> <li>• High quality environment</li> <li>• Significant renewable energy opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploit opportunities for development of agri-food and forestry sectors</li> <li>• Reinforce role of major towns and villages as centres of provision of public and private services to their rural areas by experimenting with new models of service delivery</li> <li>• Protect the Region's environment as a major economic asset and for its own sake</li> <li>• Realise renewable energy opportunities in areas such as wind, wave, tidal, biomass etc. and the infrastructure required to export it from the Region</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence on manufacturing and traditional sectors</li> <li>• Relatively high proportion of employment in public sector</li> <li>• Low level of representation of knowledge based industries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support innovation in existing businesses to maintain their competitive advantage</li> <li>• Align 3rd level colleges and enterprise support organisations to establish new businesses</li> <li>• Align the educational and innovation resources of the Region around an agreed set of priority sectors to diversify and modernise economy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of young people through emigration</li> <li>• Relatively high levels of deprivation</li> <li>• Strong and distinctive cultural heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide incentives to those who wish to start a new business as an alternative to emigration</li> <li>• Provide incentives for existing emigrants to return to the Region to start a business</li> <li>• Develop a strategic region-wide approach to retaining people with knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Address relative economic and social disadvantage of the Central Border Region and the inequalities within the area</li> <li>• Support those who are out of the labour market in gaining employment</li> <li>• Foster a sense of regional identity and pride by developing the Region's cultural heritage</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively distant from main cities, ports, airports, Universities etc.</li> <li>• High proportion of businesses are in rural areas</li> <li>• Importance of tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve key strategic roads to improve access to employment and markets and to ports and airports.</li> <li>• Improvement of strategic ports within the Region</li> <li>• Improve fixed and mobile broadband provision</li> <li>• Develop the tourism assets of the Region</li> </ul>

# A Profile of the Central Border Region

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- Deprivation issues need to be acknowledged, appreciated and also addressed. All of the Counties within the Southern Central Border Region are deprived relative to the national average, with the exception of Sligo. Overall, the Border Region is the most disadvantaged region of the Republic of Ireland; and-
- The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010 (NIMDM) is the official measure of spatial deprivation in Northern Ireland. On this measure none of the Districts in the Northern part of the Central Border Region are highly deprived, although Fermanagh is the 4th most deprived District in Northern Ireland in terms of the extent of deprivation and the 9th most deprived in terms of income, while Omagh is the 7th most deprived District in terms of the extent of deprivation.

## 3.4 Actions to Develop the Central Border Region

From the list of characteristics set out above and from other information provided it is possible to identify the actions required to further the development of the Region.

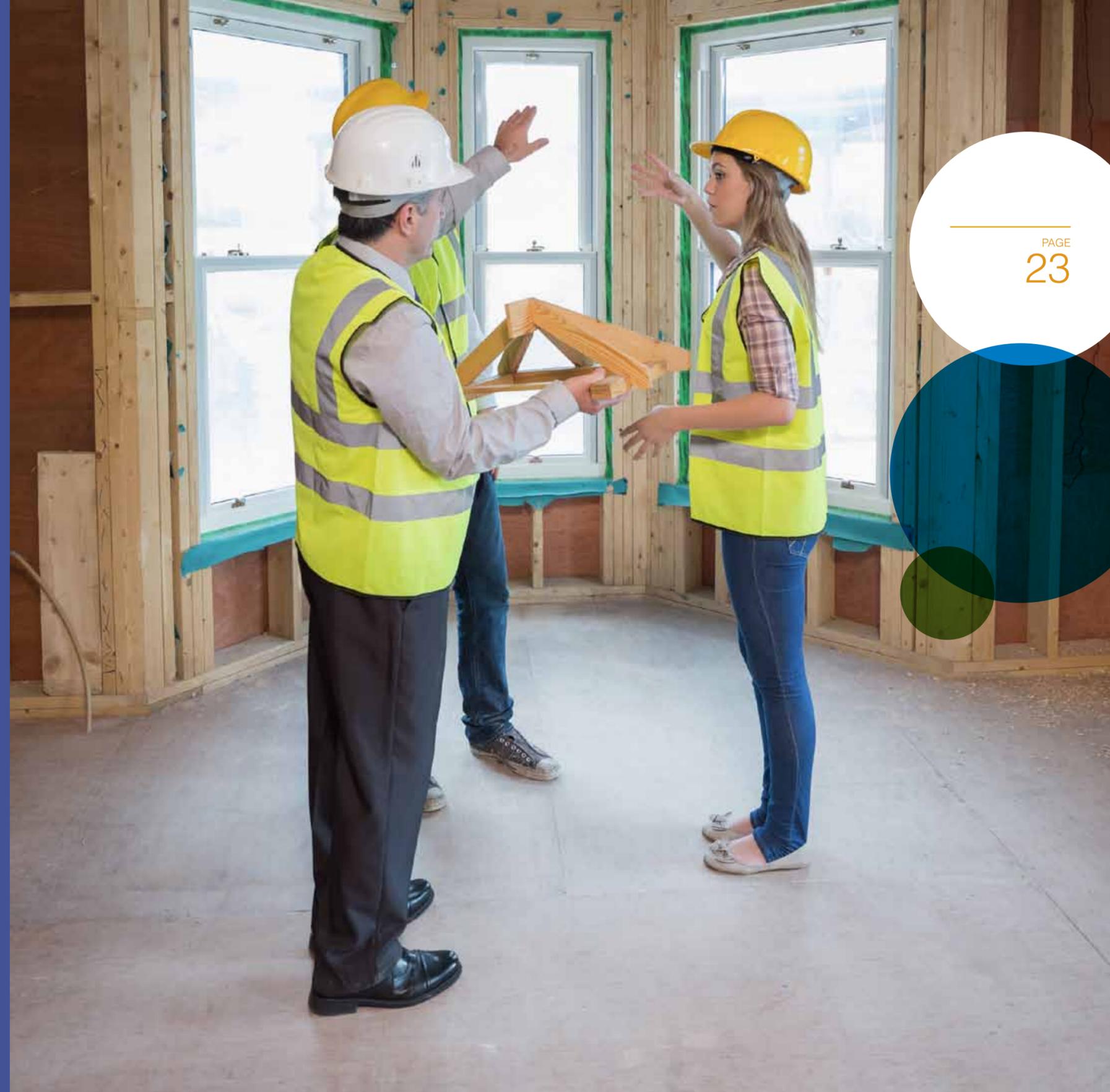
As Section 2 demonstrated, there is a strong alignment between the economic policy aims of the EU, the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, as expressed in their policy documents and in their Spatial Planning policies.

Combining those insights with the analysis of this Section suggests that the priorities for the Regional Strategic Framework are actions to:

- Build new economic strengths for the Region based on innovation, its tradition of entrepreneurship and its endowment of strong internationally competitive businesses;

- Ensure that the growth of the Region is inclusive in its character, offering a range of opportunities to everyone, addressing inequalities and recognising the unique challenges of a rural cross-border area;
- Build on environmental strengths by investing in and developing expertise in renewable energy, energy conservation and sustainable development; and
- Improving the ability of the Central Border Region to connect with other regions and its internal connections.

These can be summarised as actions to develop new sources of competitive advantage for the Central Border Region and as a result to make a major contribution to the realisation of EU, Irish Government and Northern Ireland Executive policies and priorities.



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# A Smart and Internationally Competitive Region

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**The first of the four objectives is that the Region should become smart and internationally competitive. The Central Border Region has a relatively specialised economy, as shown by the balance of employment. It is focused on manufacturing, particularly processing of wood and food and light engineering, the construction sector, retail and wholesale distribution and tourism. Public service employment is also important to the area. By contrast the proportion of employment in knowledge-intensive sectors is lower.**

There are many successful and internationally competitive businesses in the Region, particularly in sectors such as engineering and food and wood processing and these provide a basis for growth and development. The skills and educational attainment in the Region require attention and there is a challenge in the out-migration of many highly skilled and highly qualified workers.

#### 4.1 The Rationale for this Objective

The Central Border Region, like all regions, operates in an increasingly globalised economy in which companies and consumers can purchase goods and services from a wide range of suppliers around the world. This means that the Central Border Region is in competition for investment with areas which have much lower labour and production costs. At the same time, locally based companies which previously served local markets on the basis of low cost or proximity to the customer, are facing increased competition and will have to be more innovative, more flexible or offer better service than their competitors. In short, the Region needs to find new competitive advantages to sustain and develop both externally owned and indigenous companies.

A study<sup>3</sup> by Professors Bradley and Best, undertaken for the Centre for Cross Border Studies and funded by the INTERREG IVA Programme, concluded:

**“If regions such as the Irish border region are to prosper, other than by depending on transfers from more developed regions, then they must build on and strengthen their productive base. And the existing productive base - good, bad or indifferent is where you must start”.**

Fortunately the Central Border Region has a strong base of locally owned and externally owned companies serving local, national and international markets. These businesses are already smart and internationally competitive. The task is to underpin the competitive advantages of those businesses and to develop more such businesses able to compete in these markets. This will require more concerted action by the Region's business and enterprise support organisations and by its third level educational institutions, which are already strongly engaged. Both in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland local authorities are gaining new powers to generate economic growth and employment in their areas and there is scope for them to work together to implement joint initiatives and to better address problems which are common on both sides of the border.

More generally, there is a need to manage an evolution from a traditional economic system which dominates in the Region, towards higher value added industries. This development must not mean that traditional industries are isolated to any extent but rather that the impact of technologies etc. is fully realised to help reinvigorate these sectors.

Economic and business growth must be supported by effective skills and employability programmes. There therefore is a need to create the right enabling environment. Long-term strategies need leadership, time and resources to deliver tangible results. This RSF approach mirrors the economic restructuring advocated in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

#### 4.2 Relationship to Europe 2020 Strategy

Activities undertaken under this objective align with the Smart Growth component of the Europe 2020 Strategy under which EU Programmes can support activities such as technology development, innovation support, improving access to information and communications technologies, and the development of entrepreneurship.

#### 4.3 Opportunities for Smart and Internationally Competitive Region Objective

The RSF provides a framework within which opportunities to take forward the four objectives can be identified, funded, implemented and evaluated over the period to 2027.

It is not appropriate to identify specific projects to be carried out over this time period. Instead ICBAN will bring together the local authorities of the region and other stakeholders to identify projects which can be implemented to achieve the four objectives over the time-frame to 2027.

#### Best Practice Case Studies for the Smart and Internationally Competitive Region Objective

It is useful to examine the experience of other regions which have had to confront some of the issues facing the Central Border Region. A Best Practice Case Studies Supporting Paper is available from [www.icban.com](http://www.icban.com) It sets out a series of examples of initiatives which are all relatively straightforward but draw their best practice status from the fact that the regions concerned have organised themselves to address their identified issues. There is the opportunity to learn from these best practice examples and then develop customised regional approaches to the issues.

#### The Best Practice Case Studies relevant to this objective are:

- **The Pius-Check programme** in the German North Rhine-Westphalia region, provides targeted support to SMEs to identify savings in the production cycle and to improve their efficiency and competitiveness. A consultancy approach is used to work with companies to identify new ways of working, with each 'audit' costing between €10,000 and €15,000. Since the programme commenced in 2000, more than 500 audits have been undertaken and over 40% of the companies audited made savings which they regarded as 'notable'. The EU recently identified the Pius-Check programme as a good practice case study.

- **Slim iii**, under which three regions in north-mid Sweden are collaborating through the SLIM project to develop smart, sustainable and inclusive regional growth. The project involves 15 clusters and four universities and national authorities. The regions concerned cover 60,000 square kilometres, but are sparsely populated, with around 820,000 people. They are undergoing long-term structural change, from traditional industries such as pulp, paper, steel and engineering, towards knowledge-based industries. The SLIM (Systematic Leadership and Innovative Management) project aim is to be a learning platform to stimulate business innovation. Among its benefits is a higher growth rate among the participating companies. The project includes around 700 companies, with 60,000 employees, gathered in 15 clusters. The companies are encouraged to participate in networking activities and research projects in order to develop new products and services and increase employment. The clusters cover everything from IT and services sectors to traditional industries.

**The RSF provides an opportunity to address a range of issues under the Smart and Internationally Competitive Objective, including the following;**

- Advancing the modernisation of traditional manufacturing and service sectors.
- Embracing opportunities in new emerging higher value added areas, such as information and knowledge-based sectors.
- Alignment of the third level educational resources of the Region around the key identified sectors (of Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, Agri-food development, Green Technologies, Creative Media Industries and Tradable services), drawing on EU Smart Growth best practice examples such as Pius-Check and Slim III.
- Cluster Development Initiatives creating sectoral 'knowledge networks', which bring synergies to operations in marketing, product development, new learning, and management approaches. These clusters can create competitive advantages through development of supply chains and joint procurement.
- Create a modern business support infrastructure (Green Tech Business Parks, Centres of Excellence, Special Economic Planning Zones<sup>4</sup>, Masterplanning of Brownfield Development Sites etc.) all contributing in distinctive ways to overall excellence in business support across the Region.

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Legislation to provide for Special Economic Planning Zones was approved by the Northern Ireland Assembly in June 2013. A study is required to consider their possible role in the Central Border Region and to consider whether and how such Zones could be operated on a cross-border basis.

# A Smart and Internationally Competitive Region

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- Examining the potential for Economic Corridors in Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, Agri-food development, Sustainable development, Creative Media Industries and Tradable services etc. These initiatives could be linked to the proposals for a Border Development Zone which are currently being developed by the Centre for Cross Border Studies, using financial support from the INTERREG IVA Programme.
- Entrepreneurship projects focused on:
  - Exploiting opportunities for new smart businesses in the Region;
  - Helping young people to relate to business enterprise and to understand the entrepreneurial opportunities in the Central Border Region;
  - Bursaries for young people who wish to remain in the Region and start a business as an alternative to emigration and also targeted support to those who have gone abroad to return, to use their skills and experience to start a business;
  - Increased cross-Council collaboration on enterprise development and job creation initiatives, given enhanced roles in economic development.
- A Regional Economic Forum. Bringing together cluster sectors, third-level educational institutions, local authorities and other key business development stakeholders, to debate, promote and develop a SMART and Internationally Competitive Regional Economy Agenda.
- Development of internal trade, business co-operation and business linkages across the Region. Much of the purchasing power of public and private buyers in the Region leaks away, as a very high percentage of all purchases of goods and services come from outside the area. An internal trade and linkages programme could encourage purchasers to consider purchasing from suppliers within the Region.
- Regional promotion of the area to take wider advantage of inward investment and public sector employment opportunities.
- Participation in EU Smart Growth networks The Central Border Region can learn from other regions by participating in EU and wider networks concerned with Smart Growth, and which would be of value to local businesses and regional development.



## 4.4 Outcomes from the Smart and Internationally Competitive Region Objective

Among the outcomes or potential impacts of this Objective are the following;

- A substantial diversification of the Regional economy, building new economic strength and competitive advantage to the Region and reducing its vulnerability to economic change
- A more integrated Regional economy, with a higher degree of internal purchasing and supply reducing the leakage of expenditure out of the area
- Much closer alignment of the Region's educational and innovation resources to key industry sectors, offering opportunities for growth and development
- A reduction in the economic and social inequalities between the Central Border Region and other regions in Ireland and Northern Ireland
- Existing jobs in the traditional employment sectors in the Region will be protected and safeguarded and additional jobs will be generated in the new priority sectors.



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# A People Centred and Inclusive Region

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The main resources of the Central Border Region are the quality of the environment and the skills, resources and enterprise of its people. There is a strong attachment to place in the Region because of the quality of life which it offers. The network of towns, villages and hamlets which provide the distinctive character have long been the focal points for the delivery of public and private services. However, these urban centres are facing increasing challenges as public and private services are centralised in larger centres and are increasingly being delivered to citizens and customers remotely.

The Central Border Region faces significant labour market challenges. As in other regions, there have been job losses due to the recession. Attention will be needed to an employment mix which has been concentrated in sectors with lesser growth prospects (such as public sector and construction employment), than is the average in Ireland or Northern Ireland. Other challenges include stemming the flow of a significant proportion of the working age population who out-commute to find employment and those who leave the region to avail of other education, training and employment opportunities. The Regional Strategic Framework provides an opportunity to address these issues by action at the regional level and - at the same time - to foster a move towards a more integrated Region, developing awareness and pride in a regional identity.

## 5.1 The Rationale for this Objective

Vibrant and successful communities need to give their citizens access to educational, training and employment opportunities and to a range of public and private services.

Previous sources of employment and income in the Region, such as the textile and clothing sector and furniture manufacture, have been lost as the competitive advantage of the Region in these sectors was eroded by competition from overseas regions with lower cost materials and labour. The Region needs to develop new skills to provide new and growing businesses with the human resources they need to sustain growth in local, national and international markets.

There is the opportunity for the Central Border Region to demonstrate how education can drive economic development and to build a reputation as an area which demonstrates excellence in this regard. This also offers the opportunity to provide employment to those young people from the Region who have emigrated to countries where they see greater opportunities for employment.

This objective, therefore, is concerned with:

- Providing balanced educational, training and employment opportunities across the Central Border Region to support the transition from traditional sources of employment and to promote inclusion in the labour market as a means of addressing inequalities within the Region; and
- Providing sustainable access to public and private services in a 21st Century, rural cross-border region.

## 5.2 Relationship to Europe 2020 Strategy

Activities undertaken under this objective align with the Inclusive Growth component of the Europe 2020 Strategy, under which EU Programmes can support activities such as investment in health, economic regeneration, social enterprise, investment in education, skills and lifelong learning and public sector cooperation.

## 5.3 Opportunities for the People Centred and Inclusive Region Objective

The RSF provides a framework within which opportunities to take forward the four objectives can be identified, funded, implemented and evaluated over the period to 2027. It is not appropriate to identify specific projects to be carried out over this time period. Instead ICBAN will bring together the local authorities of the region and other stakeholders to identify projects which can be implemented to achieve the four objectives over the timeframe to 2027.

### The opportunities for actions under this Objective include:

- Supporting representations to safeguard rural service provision, highlighting the need for national economic policies to address issues of isolation and the lack of appropriate services in rural areas.
- Measures to tackle unemployment, economic inactivity and alienation across a range of personal circumstances<sup>5</sup> as a means of tackling inequalities within the Region, i.e.:
  - For those previously employed in the construction sector;
  - For young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs); and
  - For those with a physical or mental disability.

- Encouraging cross-border labour mobility, through initiatives such as Border People and by tackling anomalies between the two jurisdictions in relation to taxation and social benefits, and lobbying Government Departments to address those anomalies.
- New approaches to integrated service delivery in smaller communities, perhaps by using a variety of community or social enterprises to deliver local services in a more sustainable manner, for example providing multiple services through local schools as an alternative to their closure.
- A Regional Skills Audit.
- Enhanced co-operation between the Region's third level colleges to deliver skills and training initiatives focused on Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, Agri-food development, Sustainable development, Creative Media Industries and Tradable services. This co-operation could include work to improve mutual recognition of qualifications within the Region and work towards a model of a cross-border rural technical university, comparable to the University of the Highlands and Islands. This work could be developed, over time, to build the reputation of the Central Border Region as one in which higher education has been used as a particularly effective economic development resource for a rural cross-border area.

- Developing new approaches to the regeneration of towns and villages. A regional regeneration programme could draw on best practice examples. This could include:
  - Identifying and supporting key Regional Commercial Centres;
  - Embracing new Sustainable Development concepts; and,
  - Developing a role for towns and villages as multi-functional centres supporting a range of uses and capable of attracting and sustaining private sector investment, for example by being regional destinations for leisure, recreation, tourism, cultural heritage and healthy living.
- Fostering a sense of pride in the Region by developing a strong and distinctive cultural heritage.
- Development of Diaspora Networks. An exercise should build on existing initiatives to map those leaving the region for work / study elsewhere, with the aim of building stronger linkages.
- Development of a regional strategic approach to retaining people with skills and knowledge in the Region.
- Promotion and Development of Age Friendly Communities.

- Working with Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) on key initiatives to promote health as a driver of economic development in a rural cross-border region. Those initiatives might include:
  - Developing a Healthy Living Region, through the promotion of initiatives such as Active Ageing etc.;
  - Jointly with CAWT addressing the wider determinants of health and well-being, i.e., employment, education, social inclusion, rurality and access to services;
  - Using technology and innovative connected health approaches to respond to health and social care challenges for those who have difficulty in accessing the current service provision
- Participating in EU networks. The Central Border Region can learn from other regions by participating in EU and wider networks on Inclusive Growth, and which would be of value to local businesses and regional development.

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# A People Centred and Inclusive Region

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## 5.4 Outcomes from the People Centred and Inclusive Region Objective

Among the outcomes or potential impacts of the People Centred and Inclusive Region Objective are the following;

- A reduced number of persons unemployed and economically inactive
- A healthier society which emphasises well-being and takes advantage of the quality of the environment to support vulnerable people
- Implementation of a regional strategic approach to retaining in the Region people with knowledge and skills
- A more equal distribution of social and economic opportunities and outcomes
- Retention of public and private services in smaller towns
- Regional assessment of the impact of plans on groups experiencing inequality and resourcing participation of those affected by inequality.



## Best Practice Case Studies for the People Centred and Inclusive Region Objective

The examples of best practice in the Best Practice Case Studies Supporting Paper which are relevant to this objective are:

- **The SUCCES Project**, which is a collaboration between Kent and Norfolk in England, Nord-Pas de Calais in France and Flanders in Belgium, has developed a cross-border programme of employment support reaching out to those who are farthest from the labour market. The Project is focused on areas which have experienced economic decline. It has assisted 34,000 people in total, and published a 'Ten Steps to Work' guide. The project is particularly successful in sharing innovative and creative ideas between the 3 jurisdictions, in part through staff exchanges. SUCCES focuses initially on soft skills development, to build self-esteem confidence, motivation to work and basic employment skills. Participants can then progress to a wider range of sector skills training. The project focuses on persons with poor health, who are homeless, in debt or in broken relationships. Emphasis is placed on linking participants with community activities and tailored training is provided for groups or individuals, if necessary in their own homes. A 3 year programme of the SUCCES Project was funded by the INTERREG IVA Programme at a cost of €2.7 million, of which 50% was ERDF funding;
- **The STRIDES Alliance** tackles deprivation in the Neath Port Talbot area of Wales, which suffers from low employment, low incomes and poor health. The STRIDES Alliance focuses on engaging and progressing disadvantaged persons to employment using simulated working environments covering work opportunities. Through these they offer training on personal and financial management. The STRIDES Alliance has engaged with 1050 unemployed people and 600 economically inactive people. Over 1200 persons have found a job, entered into further learning or gained a qualification. The STRIDES Alliance was funded under the West Wales and The Valleys ESF Programme over the period 2010 - 2012 at a total cost of €3.2 million, of which €1.8 million was ESF funding.
- **Sønderborg** in Southern Denmark / Northern Germany is a region of small towns challenged by urbanization and where people leave rural areas and move to large cities. The region has developed a concerted campaign to remarket itself, that life doesn't have to be dull to live outside the big cities. Under the ideal of a 'Countryside Metropolis' theme, promoting the strapline 'Provincial is cool' Sønderborg promotes that rural areas have a lot of attractive qualities that will be highly sought once they are developed and rendered visible. Here, life is at a healthier pace, nature is right outside the door, and there are many strong communities. Linked into a campaign for European Capital of Culture, the region has set culture and creativity at the heart of this drive also. This is a starting point "for creating a melting pot where cultural diversity is seen as strength" in a region not dissimilar to the Irish Central Border area, where conflict was a recurring feature and where today younger generations are being attracted out towards larger cities.
- **The University of the Highlands and Islands** in Western Scotland is an example of a regional initiative in which 13 colleges and research institutions got together to create the critical mass to offer full degree courses in the remote west of Scotland, through a network of 50 learning centres.



# A Sustainable Region

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The Central Border Region is characterised by the diversity and quality of its landscapes, its network of vibrant county and market towns, its strong tradition of enterprise with many internationally competitive local businesses and the quality of life which it offers to residents and to visitors.

## 6.1 Rationale for this Objective

Together with the skills, resources and enterprise of its people, a key asset of the Central Border Region is its high quality environment.

Making good use of these natural environmental assets by means of a renewed emphasis on sustainability of development (in both the environmental and economic sense of the term) can assist the Region to prepare for climate change and foster a scale and type of economic development which is appropriate for a rural area.

These natural environmental assets can also be used to develop a new competitive advantage for local businesses which supply sustainable products and services to local, national and international markets.

## 6.2 Relationship to Europe 2020 Strategy

Activities undertaken under this objective align with the Sustainable Growth component of the Europe 2020 Strategy under which EU Programmes can support activities such as shifting to a low carbon economy, promoting climate change adaptation, protecting the environment, regenerating brownfield sites and development of the Region's cultural heritage.

## 6.3 Opportunities for Sustainable Region Objective

The RSF provides a framework within which opportunities to take forward the four objectives can be identified, funded, implemented and evaluated over the period to 2027. It is not appropriate to identify specific projects to be carried out over this time period. Instead ICBAN will bring together the local authorities of the region and other stakeholders to identify projects which can be implemented to achieve the four objectives over the timeframe to 2027.

## The opportunities which could be pursued under this Objective include:

- A sustainable energy and technology development network in the Central Border Region, to assist in the dissemination of existing knowledge to a wider SME and micro-enterprise network. That wider network could, in turn, develop the capacity of the area as an Eco-Region, and to prepare for and adapt to climate change, enhance the survival and the competitiveness of existing businesses and improve the likelihood of new businesses, based on knowledge of renewable energy and sustainable technologies, emerging.

## Best Practice Case Studies for the Sustainable Region Objective

The Best Practice Case Studies Supporting Paper provides the following examples relevant to the sustainable region objective:

**The Green Business Growth in SMEs** project in the region of Southern Denmark is successfully creating new jobs by helping small businesses undertake energy efficiency renovations in residential and office buildings. Green Business Growth was launched in July 2009 and is targeted at small businesses and in particular the master craftsmen, who are being retrained in the techniques of energy-saving renovation. SMEs showing an interest are offered a full support package designed to provide them with the required skill sets for undertaking energy renovation and the marketing of their services. The project has targeted the creation of 300 new, green jobs over the period of 2010-2013.

**Austria's Greentech Valley**, Austria hosts one of the world's leading green technology clusters - Eco World Styria. Styria has had a large concentration of environmental companies that dates back to the 1970s. Then in 1998, the local business support agency established a loose network and a web platform to promote green technology projects. By 2005, the loose network had evolved into a well-founded cluster and currently around 200 companies and research centres are actively working in the cluster on the environmental engineering solutions of tomorrow. The total budget of the cluster development project during 2007-2012 amounted to €888,800. Half of this funding came from the ERDF. The cluster has already helped to create 5,000 new jobs to grow the local economy.



- Development of shared service collaborations between local authorities and other public bodies in the Central Border Region. Potential areas for collaboration include economic development, emergency services, the arts, heritage and culture, recreation services, tourism, environmental and technical services.
- Initiatives to embrace opportunities in renewables and sustainable development and to reduce and reuse wastes.
- Identify key cross border risks and undertake joint emergency planning training and exercises. The quality of the environment is one of the key assets of the Region - it is essential that this quality is protected from the risk of major disasters. Major risks, such as flooding in Fermanagh, require a cross-border response which is planned, integrated and timely.
- Development of a cross-border regional tourism strategy. This is a diverse Region offering a range of experiences and it is clear that no single tourism strategy will be applicable to all parts of the area. However, there are elements which are common across the Region, including the rich natural environment and the cultural and heritage endowment. A Regional Tourism Strategy could examine:

- Regional Tourism branding / identity ;
- Identification of flagship regional tourism assets and development of plans to maximise their tourism impact in the Region;
- A destination region for leisure / adventure / activity tourism;
- A metropolis for rural living;
- An area rich in cultural heritage.
- Regional Action Plan for Cycling and Walking, embracing the Greenways concept.
- Regional Carbon Reduction programme:
  - Dealing with energy conservation and efficiency in SMEs and the public sector, as well as in domestic dwellings;
  - Development of Centres for Excellence in Sustainable Development;
  - Creation of clustered eco-towns and eco-villages.
- Environmental protection and remediation. The quality of its natural and built environment is a major asset of the Central Border Region which needs to be protected and, where appropriate, repaired. Action is needed to protect both rural and urban environments, to protect bio-diversity and where previous industrial development has left scars on the landscape, to restore the quality of the environment. In agriculture, action is required to reduce the adverse impacts of wastes and, where feasible and economic, to make those wastes into economic assets.

- Participating in EU networks. The Central Border Region can learn from other regions by participating in EU and wider networks on Sustainable Growth, and which would be of value to local businesses and regional development.

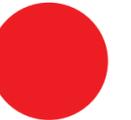
## 6.4 Outcomes for the Sustainable Region Objective

Among the outcomes or potential impacts of the Sustainable Region Objective are the following;

- A Region which respects and protects its environmental assets both for their own value and as a source of regional competitive advantage
- Development of a stronger regional tourism offering through the implementation of the cross-border regional tourism strategy
- Green technologies in energy and other fields becomes a key sector and a source of competitive advantage for the Region
- The Central Border Region becomes known for its carbon reduction work, which underpins business competitiveness and reduces fuel poverty and social exclusion
- Central Border Region develops a reputation across Europe for sustainable development of rural cross-border regions.

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# An Accessible and Connected Region

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Both the National Spatial Strategy for Ireland and the Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy recognise the importance of infrastructure to balanced and effective regional development. This Section provides an overview of the issues relating to infrastructure in the Central Border Region. A more detailed review is available in the Infrastructure Supporting Paper available from [www.icban.com](http://www.icban.com)

As the Regional Development Strategy notes, good linkages between towns and rural areas for access to services and business opportunities are vital. Improved connectivity will support the network of towns and their associated hinterlands. The RDS points out that to remain competitive in the global market it is important to continue to promote transport which balances the needs of our environment, society and economy. The National Spatial Strategy, equally, aims to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development across Ireland, supported by more effective and integrated planning.

The Central Border Region needs to improve its roads infrastructure to enhance the competitiveness of its businesses, to encourage tourists to visit the Region and to improve access to key services. There is also the need to significantly improve the telecommunications infrastructure, especially broadband speeds and mobile communications, across the entire Region.

This would enable industry, including micro SMES, the creative industries and farm-based businesses to operate efficiently and competitively. People in general will be enabled to access public services, enhance their educational and learning prospects, enjoy modern technologies and thus improve their quality-of-life as a result.

More metropolitan regions have the opportunity to use a variety of types of infrastructure. Rural cross-border regions such as the Central Border Region have fewer opportunities and it is all the more important for such regions that the infrastructure which they do have is effective, is maintained at a high standard and receives appropriate investment. For the Central Border Region at this time the two priorities are investment in identified roads and in broadband telecommunications.

However, circumstances change and priorities need to be adjusted as a result. For that reason the Regional Strategic Framework seeks to keep under review innovation in relation to railways and airports as well as the potential for investment in those forms of infrastructure to contribute to the development of the Region.

## 7.1 Rationale for this Objective

The Central Border Region has limited connectivity to major roads and, in particular, to key arterial routes such as motorways. Telecommunications, in terms of mobile and Wi-Fi access, is poorer outside of the main towns. The area is also relatively distant from / to air and sea ports, and higher centres of education on the island of Ireland, particularly those in Dublin and Belfast.

Development of public transport in the Region is hampered by the dispersed nature of the population and the absence of critical mass. Certain forms of public transport, though costly to provide, are necessary for development, in terms of the enhancement of quality of life for residents, to enhance labour mobility and to facilitate access for visitors.

In addition, the provision of a reliable and secure energy supply, both electricity and gas, that also addresses renewable energy connectivity and environmental sustainability targets, is critical to the well-being of the regional economy.

Those projects dealing with Roads and Telecommunications have been deemed by ICBAN to be 'Strategic' for the development of the Central Border Region. This selection of priorities for the infrastructure objective has been informed by two key strategic studies commissioned by ICBAN:

- 'Socio-Economic Case N16/ A4 Sligo to Ballygawley & N2/ A5 Monaghan to Letterkenny Transport Corridors' Final Report for ICBAN by MVA Consultancy in association with Stephen Wood Consultancy, June 2012
- 'A Strategic Way Forward for Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Central Border Region', Innovacom Consulting, August 2012.

## 7.2 Relationship to Europe 2020 Strategy

Activities undertaken under this Action priority align both with the Smart Growth and Sustainable Growth components of the Europe 2020 Strategy under which EU Programmes can support activities such as the Digital Agenda, Creativity and Media, Improving Access to Information and Communications Technologies, increased Energy from Renewables, Climate Change and Energy Sustainability, and a Resource-Efficient Low-Carbon Economy.

## 7.3 Priorities for the Accessible and Connected Region Objective

As has been noted in relation to each of the other objectives, the RSF provides a framework within which opportunities to take forward the objectives can be identified, funded, implemented and evaluated over the period to 2027. This objective is different to the other 3 themes, as it is essentially concerned with the provision of physical infrastructure for the Region, much of which will have a lifespan of 30 - 50 years. It was for this reason that ICBAN commissioned the MVA and Innovacom studies referred to in Section 7.1. As a result of those studies ICBAN has determined its strategic regional priorities in relation to roads and telecoms infrastructure needs.

## Best Practice Example for the Accessible and Connected Region Objective

**Midtsoenderjylland is a small farming region in southern Denmark.** In 2002 the regional authorities identified that the area was very deficient in broadband infrastructure and services. The area suffered from typical rural socio-economic problems, including high rates of unemployment, low incomes, and a lack of a higher education institution. The development of a suitable ICT and broadband infrastructure was seen as a key component in a strategy to reverse the region's problems.

A group of four municipalities came together and built a network themselves, supplying fibre connections between the municipalities, with an initial public investment of €1.4m.

The impressive outcomes of this project include: fibre access for 100% of the population in the region; the emergence and growth of over 50 new technology companies; involving a local University with significant technical benefits and synergies; has stimulated other businesses in the area, allowing them to grow and remain in the area; private partners invested almost all (99%) of the funds required, as a result of the lead by the municipalities in stimulating demand, in demonstrating the economic benefits, and by offering public support, especially in the planning process; and the farming community has become a prominent user group, with the need to access and upload information on livestock etc.



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# An Accessible and Connected Region

## Priorities for this theme are:

### • Roads

ICBAN and other interest groups have pressed the case for delivery of the A5/N2 and A4/N16 projects, as set out in the MVA Report. These are ICBAN established strategic priorities for the Region. However, other important regional roads projects such as the A29 and N3 networks merit consideration for improvements.

### • Telecommunications

ICBAN has already argued for major investment in the telecoms infrastructure of the Region through the Innovacom Report. This will help realise the Vision for Telecommunications:

"The ICBAN region will have an advanced broadband infrastructure capable of delivering download speeds of at least 100Mbps to 50% of premises, and delivering download speeds of at least 24Mbps to the remaining 50% of premises by 2017."

The ICBAN Telecommunications study makes recommendations based on five pillars: Planning, Public Assets, Investment, Local Activism and Demand Stimulation.

The Region must also maximise the potential gains to be realised from the Project Kelvin initiative.

- Advocating the case for sustainable public transport provision in the Region, particularly local and community transport, in order to improve quality of life for residents, by improving access to services and to employment and to facilitate tourist mobility.
- Supporting the case for strengthening electricity transmission infrastructure to ensure security of supply, and especially where weaknesses pose a potential barrier to the development of renewable energy sources.
- Promoting the extension of the natural gas distribution network as soon as is practicable, where technically possible and economically feasible, to enhance diversity of fuel supply and customer choice, and bring about reductions in CO2 emissions.
- Champion enhancement of the key Waterways and Canals of the Region.
- Investment in ports by promoting the refurbishment, upgrade and diversification of key ports in the Region.
- Monitor and promote development of Regional airports within and adjacent to the Region.
- Consideration of the case for extension of railway networks into and within the Region.

## 7.4 Outcomes of the Accessible and Connected Region Objective

Among the outcomes or potential impacts of the Accessible and Connected Region Objective are the following:

- Investments reduce the perceived peripherality of the Region and opens up new opportunities for tourism and leisure and access to markets and employment opportunities
- All parts of the Region have high quality fixed and mobile broadband services
- The energy infrastructure of the Region is reinforced by increased electricity interconnection and an expanded natural gas distribution network.



# Managing and Delivering the Regional Strategic Framework

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The completion of this Regional Strategic Framework is an important step towards helping transform the Central Border Region. The Framework has identified opportunities for future development and sets out a Vision for the future.

The next stage, implementation, will necessitate stakeholders sitting down and working together to prioritise the key ambitions and opportunities. This should be done in the form of a Regional Action Plan, which will set out the detailed targets and resources required.

The delivery of the Framework must be managed effectively if it is to make a difference to the development of the Central Border Region and to the balanced sub-regional development of the island of Ireland.

To date ICBAN has carried forward oversight of the wider Spatial Planning Initiative by means of an overall Steering Committee and a series of special interest groups. A new Vision must be supported by new means of implementation.

It would therefore be appropriate to review the most appropriate structures for implementation of the Framework. This should also take into account also the new functions and roles of local authorities in both jurisdictions and the opportunities for them to work together strategically by providing shared services to their citizens.

## 8.1 Moving Towards Implementation

During the development of this Framework, representatives of Local Government, Government Departments, Public Bodies, the Private Sector, Community and Voluntary Sector have been actively involved in engagement to identify the needs of the Region and how they might be addressed.

The Implementation stage will require a similar multi-sectoral partnership approach, drawing on a range of expertise, experience and capacities. Those involved are to work to the common purpose and have a sense of real involvement and ownership of the project.

Their full buy-in and participation is critical to success. The principles of partnership working, embracing change and adopting creative approaches to complex challenges will be the cornerstones of the approach.

## 8.2 Structure Considerations

The structure might consist of the following:

- A Strategic Oversight Group which will oversee the strategic implementation of the Framework and agree any revisions, updates or flexing of the Framework which are required. Membership of the Group would include senior representatives of Central Government, of member Councils of the Region and other key stakeholders;
- Priority Oversight Groups overseeing delivery of the four objectives; and
- A Policy Reference Group which would provide the interface between the Regional Strategic Framework and the Departments and Agencies of the two Governments, as well as the EU.

These structures would require to be professionally resourced to sustain their work and, in addition, an idea for consideration is that the Strategic Oversight Group might have an independent chairperson or joint chairpersons from the two jurisdictions. At the same time, mechanisms must be found to ensure that the key role of CEOs within the Region, including Council CEOs and County Managers, is formalised in terms of involvement and governance.

ICBAN will work with the two Governments to identify options for the implementation structures and for resourcing those structures at a professional level. The structures finally put in place will, as a key priority, generate a detailed, timetabled and costed Regional Action Plan.

This will consider in detail issues such as delivery responsibilities and sources of financing for the prioritised projects, as well as the arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the Framework and communication of its impacts more widely.

While the arrangements outlined in this Section may provide the skeletal structure for the management and delivery of the Regional Strategic Framework, the flesh can only be put on the structure by practical experience. There, therefore, remains a range of issues which will need to be decided upon in the course of implementation.

## 8.3 Responsibilities

The RSF is a Framework for the Region. It is not a Framework for delivery by ICBAN or by its member local authorities exclusively. Instead the principle should be that delivery of initiatives under the Regional Strategic Framework should be by the organisation or organisations best placed to deliver.

This means that delivery of the Regional Strategic Framework will require a 'mixed economy' approach where some initiatives are led by local authorities, others might be delivered by, for example, Invest NI and Enterprise Ireland working together to deliver an initiative identified under the Framework, others by the third level educational institutions, enterprise development organisations, the community and voluntary sectors and yet others by the private sector working on contract.

A strong bottom-up approach within the Region has developed this blueprint. To enable successful implementation the commitment and support of both central governments, working with key stakeholders, will also be important, given their decision-making authorities and possession of key development resources.

## 8.4 Key Principles Underpinning Implementation

If the Regional Strategic Framework is to be effective and to make a difference it must:

- Be driven by key stakeholders who embrace the spirit of combined actions and who will provide a leadership thrust as agents of change;
- Enable the Central Border Region to speak with a single strategic 'voice' on the priorities for the area;
- Form the core of an evidence-informed lobbying approach to the Governments of ROI and NI and to the EU and other authorities who can allocate funds to the Region;
- Link into the spatial, economic, social and community planning of the local authorities involved;
- Be the subject of rigorous and timely monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of the Framework; and
- Help to integrate and make more effective public and private investment across the Region.

In the case of other plans developed jointly between local authorities and other key stakeholders, such mutual commitment has been demonstrated through Enabling Agreements. To signify their mutual commitment to the Framework, the County and District Councils in the Central Border Region and other regional stakeholders, may wish to consider exploring such Enabling Agreements, which would be constructed around ensuring successful implementation of the 4 key Objectives<sup>6</sup>.

## 8.5 Engagement with other Regions

Over the period of the Framework the Central Border Region will need to engage more strategically with other European regions. Each action priority has shown how the Central Border Region can learn from other EU regions and can, progressively, contribute its own experience to the development of those regions.

There may be a need for a central resource for this work to take place and for co-ordination of inputs and relationships between the Central Border Region and other EU regions. In carrying forward this work the Central Border Region will have the opportunity to work in co-operation with other cross-border areas on the island of Ireland, such as East Border Region and the North West Region, to share resources and opportunities and to develop concepts such as a border development zone.

Over the period of the Regional Strategic Framework, it is likely that the emphasis on linkages with other EU regions will widen to an emphasising of the internationalisation of the Central Border Region, building on the worldwide markets of many of the Region's businesses and the international aspirations and intents of its Colleges.

In particular the Central Border Region is well placed geographically and organisationally to promote sharing of experience between the EU and North America and to be able to reflect on a mature regional cross-border development process which will be an example to other rural cross-border regions, including those in the emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India and China.

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There are a number of different types of Enabling Agreements which could be explored. One such mechanism used has been that of a Memorandum of Understanding between Newry and Mourne District Council and the Louth local authorities. This mechanism reflects the mutual importance of their relationship towards each other in a document which is of civic importance but which is not legally binding.

REGIONAL STRATEGIC  
FRAMEWORK FOR THE  
CENTRAL BORDER REGION  
2013-2027

# RSF

'A sustainable region that delivers the best quality of life for its people and makes a distinctive contribution to economic and social renewal and growth on the island'

- A smart and internationally competitive region
- A people centred and inclusive region
- A sustainable region
- An accessible and connected region

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A Spatial Planning Initiative