

Forum for Peace and Reconciliation

The Social and Economic Consequences of Peace and Economic Reconstruction

1. In 1983 the New Ireland Forum published a path-breaking report on The Cost of Violence arising from the Northern Ireland Crisis since 1969. Further studies of this topic have since been published, including, in 1994, papers by DKM Consultants and by Do Mike Tomlinson.
2. Since the IRA's announcement on 31 August of its complete cessation of military operations, and the similar announcement made subsequently by the Combined Loyalist Military Command, there has been considerable discussion of the likely economic and financial impact of a stable and lasting peace upon both North and South and upon the island economy as a whole. While most commentators have emphasised the benefits likely to arise from the transformed situation, some notes of caution have been sounded.
3. An important dimension of the situation is the prospect of substantial additional international support for economic reconstruction, whether in the form of direct financial assistance or otherwise. Particularly significant in this regard are the recently-announced package of United States assistance, the proposals from the European Parliament for additional support for the International Fund for Ireland, and those which the EU Commission is to bring forward to the Essen European Council.
4. A further element of significance will be the social and economic re-integration of released prisoners and their families, and of those who have been involved in paramilitary activity.
5. The Forum could, therefore, usefully examine the likely social, economic and financial consequences of a durable peace.
6. In so doing, it would appear neither appropriate nor timely, given its non-executive role and the fast pace of developments, for it to seek to enter into a detailed analysis of

individual projects which might be brought forward for support. Likewise, it might not be productive for the Forum to seek to involve itself in general debate on economic and social policy issues which are the subject of detailed study elsewhere (eg in the NESF, NESF, ESRI or NIEC). Furthermore, the question of the scope for enhanced North-South co-operation might usefully be addressed in a separate study.

7. It is suggested that the Forum might concentrate on the general areas set out in the terms of reference below. Exploration of these issues could allow for a valuable contribution to debate on social and economic regeneration and the consolidation of the peace process.. It is envisaged that on certain aspects the Forum might be assisted by outside consultants as well as by submissions from groups or individuals with a particular interest in these issues.

Possible Terms of Reference

8. The Forum will examine the likely social, economic and financial consequences for both North and South, and for the island economy as a whole, of a stable and lasting peace in Ireland, with particular reference to
 - its impact upon both British and Irish public finances, and upon levels of public expenditure North and South
 - its effect upon patterns and levels of investment and economic activity, both in general and sectorally
 - the implications, in the short, medium and long terms, for levels of employment, both overall and sectoral
 - the role of international support, both institutional/governmental and private
 - ways of ensuring that the benefits of peace are concentrated on the areas, groups and individuals most affected by conflict, both within Northern Ireland and in the border counties of the South

- the role of economic reconstruction in tackling deprivation and inequality and in promoting fair employment

- the social implications of peace, in particular as regards the reintegration of released prisoners and their families, and those involved in paramilitary activity.

Forum Secretariat

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