

**JOINT STATEMENT FOR ISSUE IN THE MARGINS OF  
EUROPEAN COUNCIL 11-13 DECEMBER 1997**

**Programme of co-operation between Ireland and the United Kingdom**

The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister have published a progress report on the wide-ranging programme of bilateral co-operation which the two Governments had agreed, earlier this year, to take forward and intensify.

In it they noted the historical and geographical links between Ireland and the United Kingdom, which were reflected in the common travel area, in reciprocal voting and residence rights and in social, professional and family ties which are uniquely close among European Union countries. It was appropriate that these links should be matched by similarly close co-operation between Government Departments in the two countries.

They welcomed the many personal contacts which had been established at Ministerial and official levels in the few months since their two Governments had come to office. They reaffirmed that there was mutual interest in building on those contacts in ways which would bring concrete benefits in the many fields where there is scope to develop further the significant co-operation which is already going on, as described in separate reports being released today. Transport links, the fight against crime and drugs, health and food safety, the protection of the environment in the Irish Sea, and school and youth exchanges are but a few of these areas.

The European Union Jobs Summit on 20-21 November had emphasised the need to improve the employability of people within a changing labour market. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach noted that both Governments had accorded high priority to improvements in education needed to respond to modern demands. Both Governments had announced programmes of action, which recognised the important place of information and communications technology both as a tool of education, and as an essential skill for young people entering the jobs market.

The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister undertook that both countries would share views on the use of the new technologies in education, and would consider together how their potential might be used co-operatively in education, not only to develop individuals' capacities and sustain competitive advantage, but also to improve communication and to draw together the young people of their respective societies.



## PROGRAMME OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN IRELAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

1. There is a unique relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom, stemming from their geographical proximity and shared history and from the resulting close intermingling of people and cultural influences. This uniqueness has long been reflected in many special arrangements, such as common travel area and reciprocal residence and voting rights and, in the non-governmental area, in shared organisational and other close arrangements across a wide range of professional, cultural and sporting fields.

2. These links have been paralleled by similarly close co-operation between Government Departments in the two countries. These were given further impetus in December 1995, when the Irish and British Governments agreed to strengthen such East-West co-operation between Departments of State and to facilitate non-Governmental contacts. The two Governments issued a statement in the margins of the European Council at Noordwijk, Holland, on 23 May 1997, which identified further potential areas of co-operation. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach confirmed their commitment to taking forward and developing this programme of bilateral co-operation, when they met in London on 3 July 1997. This paper summarises the progress which is recorded in a fuller report.

3. Since 23 May the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister have met on four occasions when they have discussed Northern Ireland and bilateral issues. There have been many visits of Ministers to both countries. The main areas of East-West co-operation are summarised below. These are in addition to the many contacts between Northern Ireland Ministers and Departments and their Irish counterparts.

### Foreign and European Union Affairs

4. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Dublin on 3 November where he met the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The subjects discussed included European and international, as well as bilateral issues. The Secretary of State for International Development met the Minister of State in the Department of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for overseas development, for talks on development issues.

### Justice and Home Affairs

5. The Permanent Secretary of the Home Office and the Secretary General of the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform met on 18 July 1997, and this was followed by a meeting between the Home Secretary and the Minister of



Justice in the margins of European Union meetings in Luxembourg on 9/10 October 1997.

6. The two Departments have agreed to co-operate more closely on a range of criminal matters, including the confiscation of assets from convicted criminals and combating organised crime and drug trafficking. It was agreed that there should be more systematic co-operation on immigration at operational level, in support of the common travel area. It was also hoped that there would be further co-operation on asylum matters, and on prison issues. Both Departments agreed to implement a more structured programme of co-operation, with dedicated meetings on specialised subjects, including regular meetings to discuss developments in the criminal law.

#### Ireland/Scotland

7. In June 1997 the Minister for Education and Industry in the Scottish Office launched the Columba Initiative to foster links between Gaelic speakers in Scotland and the Island of Ireland. The Minister visited Dublin on 20/23 October 1997 for discussions with the Minister of State at the Department of Arts Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, and there will be continuing contacts between officials on the Initiative. In the course of the year there has been a range of official-level contacts between the Scottish Office and Irish Departments of State, including schools inspection matters, violence in schools, police training, and support arrangements for tourism.

#### Ireland/Wales

8. A major part of co-operation between Ireland and Wales concerns transport links. Most of this work takes place under the European Union INTERREG programme (which is aimed at developing cross border co-operation in border and coastal areas). The aims of the joint Ireland/Wales programme are to promote networks of co-operation across the Irish Sea and to improve transport links between and through the two regions and to the rest of the EU. A related transport initiative, BRIDGE-IT, which is expected to begin at the turn of the year, will provide information about traffic conditions and public transport in Ireland and Wales.

#### Transport

9. Transport co-operation in 1997 has focused on facilitating the movement of passengers and goods between Ireland and the United Kingdom, and into Europe, building on the major improvements effected in 1996. Improvements have been made to the Cork-Dublin-Belfast-Larne-Stranraer rail link. There has



been significant addition to capacity on sea-ferry and air links and substantial increases in passenger and goods movements. A pre-security clearance system for rail freight containers for subsequent transit through the Channel Tunnel has been put in place, obviating the need for subsequent checks. There has been close co-operation between the two Governments on enforcing and approving standards of marine safety, both in relation to the inspection of ships and search and rescue activities.

### Trade and industrial matters

10. The Minister of State in the Department of Trade and Industry visited Dublin on 24-25 July, where he met the Minister of State in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, members of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce and officials of the Irish Trade Board. Discussions included EU matters and wider world trade issues.

11. The United Kingdom and Ireland enjoy a strong trading relationship. Two-way trade between the two countries amounted to £15.6 billion in 1996. Ireland is the United Kingdom's fifth largest export market and the United Kingdom is Ireland's largest - accounting for 25% of all exports. There had been a significant rise in trade missions visiting Ireland from the United Kingdom - 21 missions in 1996 compared with just 2 in 1993. Many of the companies who had participated in these missions were new or inexperienced exporters. There is close co-operation on matters relating to consumer affairs.

### Social Security

12. It is hoped that the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs will visit London shortly to meet the Secretary of State for Social Security to discuss co-operation between the two Governments on social security and related matters. Earlier this year officials of the two Departments met in Dublin to discuss a high level Memorandum of Understanding on social security fraud. This followed a joint review of 1,500 potentially fraudulent social security cases which led to significant savings. The two countries are co-operating in developing the exchange of electronic data for social security purposes. Electronic links have been established to speed up claims to sickness benefit, child benefit and pensions.

### Agriculture, fisheries and food safety matters

13. On 21 July and 24 October 1997 Ministers from the two Governments met to discuss agriculture, fishing and food safety issues. In subsequent official discussions on rabies control it was agreed that the two Departments should



keep each other informed about their assessment of possible changes to quarantine arrangements. If and when changes were made, the aim should be to preserve a single common area for quarantine purposes. Officials also exchanged information about their thinking on food safety issues and agreed to co-operate further on these issues as policy developed.

### Employment

14. A seminar between the relevant Departments in Great Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland took place in London in November 1997 on the theme of Welfare To Work. This followed a similar event in Dublin in 1996 which looked at ways of tackling long-term unemployment. Work is in hand to identify ways in which the two countries can co-operate on youth training initiatives, with the aim of providing skills for young people in the labour market.

### Education

15. There is a continuing programme of school partnerships which takes place under EU educational co-operation programmes. In the academic year 1997/1998 the respective agencies responsible for youth exchanges intend to strengthen the bilateral relationship through the linking of schools, curriculum development projects, a small programme of shadow visits for head teachers, and the establishment of links between local education authorities in the two countries. It has also been agreed that an important area for further development is in the field of information and communication technology, including networks for schools. A meeting took place on this subject on 18 May 1997, and papers have been exchanged on linking schools to the Internet. The respective Cabinet Ministers responsible for Education are to meet on 17 December to discuss and take forward co-operation in this and other areas.

### Youth exchanges

16. The organisation, Encounter, which promotes exchanges between the two countries on social and economic issues, organised a Youth Conference in Dublin in June. This brought together Irish and British professionals involved in youth work and policy development on youth, to discuss ways of facilitating and expanding youth exchanges. The two governments have agreed to proceed with follow-up action on the basis of proposals submitted from the Conference.



**PROGRESS REPORT ON  
CO-OPERATION BETWEEN IRELAND  
AND THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**DEVELOPING EAST/WEST RELATIONS**

Issued in the margins  
of the European Council  
Meeting in Luxembourg on 12/13 December



## INTRODUCTION

There is a unique relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom, stemming from their geographical proximity and shared history and from the resulting close intermingling of people and cultural influences. This uniqueness has long been reflected in many special arrangements which have existed between both countries, and can be seen in the co-operation which has taken place between Government Departments and agencies on both sides of the Irish Sea.

Over many years, there have been a number of initiatives aimed at furthering and developing this unique relationship, for example, the Anglo-Irish Studies in 1980-1981 which led to the establishment of the Anglo Irish Intergovernmental Council, the Anglo-Irish Encounter Organisation, and the British Irish Interparliamentary Body.

In December 1995 when the former Taoiseach and Prime Minister met in London, they agreed a multi-faceted programme for East/West co-operation. This followed on from an earlier agreement in Mallorca in September that year on the desirability of strengthening the bilateral relationships between the two countries. This commitment to taking forward and developing bilateral co-operation was further endorsed in the margins of the European Council at Noordwijk Holland on 23 May, 1997 when the two Governments issued a statement identifying further potential areas of co-operation. This was given further impetus when the Taoiseach and Prime Minister met in London on 3 July, and agreed to carry forward those programmes of co-operation.

Co-operation is driven and co-ordinated by a joint Steering Group co-chaired by the Department of Taoiseach and the Cabinet Office. The Group meet from time to time, most recently on 10 November, to review and monitor progress over a wide range of areas where better co-operation is being developed. These include areas such as the application of information technology in schools, the fight against crime and drugs, health and food safety, protection of the environment in the Irish Sea and school and youth exchanges to name but a few.

Generally, 1997 has been an excellent year for East/West co-operation and has seen progress across a wide range of fronts. This progress report aims to give a good but not necessarily exhaustive picture of the kind of co-operation which is taking place between the respective Departments and agencies and to illustrate the wide range of areas involved.



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Education and Information Technology	1
The Fight Against Crime and Drugs/Immigration	11
Transport Links and Energy	13
Marine and Natural Resources	17
Science and Technology	20
Trade and General Economic Co-operation	25
Health	27
Homelessness	30
Environment	32
Social, Community and Family Affairs	33
Defence	35
Finance/Treasury and Public Service	36
Tourism	38
Agriculture and Food	39
Arts and Culture	40
Foreign Affairs	43



**EDUCATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

- SECTION 1            INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION  
                                 TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) IN EDUCATION
- INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY  
- NATIONAL GRID FOR LEARNING
- SECTION 2            OTHER CURRENT EXCHANGES IN EDUCATION
- SECTION 3            YOUTH EXCHANGES/ENCOUNTER CONFERENCE

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## SECTION 1:

Introduction

Following the meeting between the then Taoiseach and the Prime Minister in London on 8 May at which it was agreed to promote enhanced co-operation in the field of educational ICTs, a meeting took place between Irish and British Department of Education officials in London on 19th May to discuss possible areas of co-operation. The outcome of the meeting can be summarised as follows:

- the Irish side would prepare a short position paper on specific ICT issues which would be the basis of ongoing constructive contacts as Ireland's *Schools IT 2000* Project develops;
- the UK side would make available research findings as appropriate;
- the Irish side would be kept informed on developments regarding both the proposed National Grid for Learning and University for Industry;
- the EUNET project in which both countries are participating as well as the European Studies Project (both of which involve networks of schools) provide a basis for the development of further co-operation;
- it was recognised that there was potential for co-operation, particularly through the sharing of "best practice" developments and that regular meetings should take place to review the experiences of both sides.



## Current Position in Ireland

The Schools IT 2000 initiative announced last April is a major new initiative concerned with the application of ICTs in Irish first and second-level schools. This initiative targets action on:

- classroom resources and infrastructure;
- teacher skills development and support; and
- policy and research

The overall strategy for the Project was launched by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Education and Science on 28 November, and it involves a £50 million plan to ensure that every school is connected to the Internet within seven months and that there are at least 60,000 computers in schools within the next three years. The details of the plan also provide that:

- At least 20,000 teachers will be trained in the use of computers in the classroom.
- Some schools will be involved in using advanced developments in information technologies and piloting software for use in all schools
- A special Internet, called Scoilnet, will begin operation next year and will be linked to other such international networks.

Central to Schools IT 2000 will be partnership with public and private sector organisations and local communities. This will significantly enhance the Government's investment and ensure the attainment of the project's ambitious goals. In a significant first step to this partnership process, Telecom Eireann announced on 16 September, 1997 that it would be investing £10 million over the next three years in supporting the increased integration of ICTs into first and second-level schools. The Telecom Initiative includes:

- an offer of free Internet connection for every school in the country;
- the provision of high bandwidth ISDN lines to schools;
- free usage of the Internet, up to a certain level, for every school in the country;
- assistance with the provision of computer systems in first and second-level schools;
- support for the Web-based provision of specialised information and other services to schools;
- piloting new emerging technologies in a number of first and second-level schools.



Discussions are currently taking place between the Department of Education and Science and Telecom Eireann with a view to finalising the detailed content and implementation arrangements for Telecom's Initiative, which will be fully integrated within the overall Schools IT 2000 framework. The implementation of Schools IT 2000 will be managed at national level by a new National Centre for Technology in Education to be based at Dublin City University. Recruitment for the post of Director is at an advanced stage with the recruitment of the four co-ordinators in different areas is being finalised shortly thereafter, and the Centre will be up and running within two months of that date.

The Minister for Education and Science published a policy framework document for the Project on 28 November and a copy of the policy document has been forwarded to the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE).

The Irish Government also announced details of a £250 million Education Technology Investment Fund on 6 November which will be used to develop technology education at all levels, ranging from primary schools to advanced research. There are three main objectives to the establishment of the Fund:

- to renew and modernise the infrastructure of third-level institutions, particularly in the technological sector,
- to develop new areas of activities where emerging skills need have been identified.
- invest in promoting innovation to maintain and further our economic growth.

This funding will be in addition to annual capital allocations and will not replace or reduce existing investment.

#### Current Position in the UK

In broad terms, the UK Government's main objectives for the use of technology in education are to :

- ensure that technology plays an increasingly helpful and supportive role in the delivery of teaching and lifelong learning;
- ensure that young people leave school and college with the technology skills that they will need for life and employment in the next century.

In the schools sector, the development of ICT capability forms an important element of the National Curriculum and places substantial emphasis on communicating and handling information, and the use of ICT in all curriculum subjects. The UK Teacher Training Agency is now developing a National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training which will set a minimum level of ICT competence for Qualified Teacher Status.



The UK Government's plan to establish a National Grid for Learning (NGFL) provides the foundation for the exploitation of new technology so that it plays a major role in enhancing the quality of learning and teaching in schools. A Government consultation paper on the NGFL was launched by the Prime Minister in October and addresses a number of important issues such as the content of the Grid, and the mechanism for its roll out. A prototype Grid will be up and running in early 1998. The Grid will:

- provide a national focus and agenda for harnessing new technologies to raise educational standards, and improve quality of life and Britain's international competitiveness;
- remove barriers to learning, ensuring opportunities for access for all, including those in isolated areas and those with special needs;
- provide high quality software, content and services which are relevant and differentiated according to individual needs;
- stimulate public/private partnership, bring together the best of private sector creativity and the highest standards of public service;
- ensure that nothing is provided at public expense, which otherwise could be provided commercially, of good quality and at reasonable cost.

The NGFL consultation document also sets out a number of targets on the implementation of this project and invites comments on them.

The Secretary of State for Education and Employment will announce the Government's plans for taking the initiative forward at the BETT '98 Show Olympia, London, in January 1998.

#### Areas of possible East/West co-operation

The Department of Education and Science (Dublin) duly prepared and forwarded to the British side the position paper envisaged at the meeting on 19 May last. There is considerable potential to increase East-West co-operation on educational ICT issues as the new initiatives underway in both Ireland and the UK develop. Given this, the Irish side has proposed that a joint forum be established to facilitate regular discussion and exchange of ideas and to identify areas in which co-operation might be developed. It suggested that the North-South dimension be included by inviting the Department of Education for Northern Ireland to nominate one or more representatives to the joint forum.

Given the very wide range of issues involved, it was suggested that it will be necessary to target a small number of specific areas in which detailed co-operation is to occur over a given time period. The areas selected should be those offering the greatest potential for mutual gain. The following were suggested for consideration by the DFEE:



- (a) The plans for both the *ScotNet* component of *Schools IT 2000* and the *National Grid for Learning* envisage the creation of a "virtual meeting place" for teachers on the Internet using dedicated Web sites. The options for mutual support and complementary activities in this area might be examined in detail.
- (b) Mechanisms could be developed to increase inter-school contacts and partnerships (North-South and East-West) facilitated by technology. These could include further developing projects such as the European Studies Project (ESP), in which 105 schools from Ireland, 97 schools from Northern Ireland and 47 schools from England, Scotland and Wales are already involved.
- (c) Both countries are participants in the European Schoolnet (EUNET) Project. Consideration could be given to developing a joint programme for participation in this initiative.
- (d) Given the fundamental importance of teacher training to the success of any ICT initiative, planned activities in this area could be compared to identify opportunities for joint or complementary pilot actions e.g. in the area of pre-service training.

Exchanges between trainers of teachers could also be considered at the appropriate time.

#### Further steps to promote East/West co-operation

As stated earlier, a key document on the strategy for *Schools IT 2000* was published by the Department of Education and Science on 28 November and a copy has been forwarded to the DFEE. It is proposed that the appropriate officials from both sides should meet soon in Dublin to consider this paper and build upon the very useful exchange of ideas which took place in London on 19th May last. The Minister for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Education and Employment will meet on 17 December to examine the possibilities for co-operation between the respective education sectors, having particular regard to the National Grid for Learning and the development of Information and Communications Technologies in schools.



## SECTION 2 : Ireland/UK Co-operation in the Education Sector

There is a great deal of co-operation and contact between Ireland and the UK through educational links and exchanges. In particular, there is a continuing programme of school partnerships which takes place under EU educational co-operation programmes.

### School Links

#### **European Studies Project:**

This project was launched in 1986 as a tripartite venture by the Departments of Education in Ireland, Northern Ireland and London. It has been progressively extended to other countries but continues to have significant participation in these islands as the following figures for numbers of schools participating in the school year 1996/97 show:

Ireland	N. Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales	Main land - Europe	Total
91	82	29	4	15	182	403

The question of renewed involvement by DFEE in the management of this project is currently being discussed.

### **SOCRATES Programme**

**SOCRATES.** the European Community action programme for transnational co-operation in the field of education, was adopted on 14 March 1995. spanning the period until the end of 1999.

The overall aim of SOCRATES is to help improve the quality and relevance of education for children, young people and adults, by enhancing European co-operation and increasing access to the range of learning opportunities available across the Union.

#### **School Education (COMENIUS):**

This sub-programme of SOCRATES focuses on the encouragement and support of multilateral partnerships between schools which are built around a European Education Project and provides for the following initiatives.

## SOCRATES Programme - Comenius Action 1

### Number of Activities between Ireland and the United Kingdom

	Year 1995/96	Renewal 1996/97	New Applicants 1996/97	Total
Irish Coordinating Schools	5	5	12	17
Irish Partner Schools	17	17	66	83
Preparatory Visits	5	N/A	5	10
Study Visits	1	N/A	4	5
Teacher Exchanges	2	N/A	4	6

### COMENIUS Action 3 In-service Training Projects

	Year 1995/96	Renewal 1996/97	New Applicants 1996/97	Total
Irish Coordinating Institutions	7	N/A	N/A	7
Irish Partner Institutions	8	N/A	N/A	8
Preparatory Visits	4	N/A	N/A	4
Irish Participants at UK Courses	2	N/A	N/A	2

### United Kingdom Study Visits for Principals and Senior Management

This programme was initiated in November 1990 and is operated on behalf of the Department by Léargas, the Exchange Bureau. The budget in 1995 and 1996 for the scheme was £12,000.

The purpose of Schools Head Exchange is to provide in-career development for participants, facilitate the development of the European dimension of the school, and develop links between Irish/UK schools.

### United Kingdom Study Visits for Principals and Senior Management

	Year 1994/95	Year 1995/97	TOTAL
Irish principals	3	10	13



**Irish Language Course in Ireland for Teachers of Irish in Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

This course is run under Action B of LINGUA (funding for in service training abroad for language teachers, funding being provided by the UK office of LINGUA, through the Belfast branch. For the past three years, 28 teachers of Irish have been sent from England and Northern Ireland to attend a two week course in Donegal. This course has been organised in conjunction with the Armagh office of the Irish language organisation, Gael-Linn.

**Leonardo Da Vinci Vocational Training Programme**

This programme covers the period 1 January 1995 to 31 December, 1999 and builds upon the PETRA, FORCE, EUROTECNET, COMETT programmes, as well as part of the LINGUA and the IRIS network.

Leonardo supports and complements actions in the Member States of the European Union, to improve the quality of training policy and practice and its capacity of finding new ways of learning. LEONARDO fosters transnational co-operation, bringing together the diverse experience across Europe, to devise innovative approaches to training methodology, content, delivery and materials.

**Breakdown of Funded Irish Projects for 1995/1996 with UK organisations**

		No. of Irish Funded Projects 1996 With UK Involvement	No. of UK Organisations Involved	No. of Bursaries for Placement & Exchange Projects
1.995	TOTAL	20	100	18
1.996	TOTAL	31	35	28

**SOCRATES;**

The Higher Education Authority has confirmed that 122 students attended universities in the UK in 1994/95 academic year and 114 in 1995/96 under this programme. In addition in 1996 5 European Credit Transfer System students spent a study period in the UK.

In the 1994/95 academic year 6,300 Irish students were studying in universities in England, Scotland and Wales. In addition, 1,300 were participating in further education and 3,000 doing part-time courses.

### **SECTION 3 : YOUTH EXCHANGES ENCOUNTER CONFERENCE:**

Youth Exchanges were identified as an area for increased future co-operation between Ireland and Britain following a meeting between President Robinson and the Prime Minister in June 1996. The Working Group on Education and Culture of the Anglo Irish Intergovernmental Council at its meeting in February also agreed that a small sub group - would be convened to examine the area of Youth Exchanges.

Following on this, a Youth Exchange Conference was held by the Encounter organisation in association with the respective bodies responsible for promoting youth exchanges (Léargas and the Youth Exchange Centre) on "Youth Work" in June in Dublin to look at ways of increasing mutual understanding and co-operation between the UK and Ireland in this area. Approximately 120 people attended from Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland, 80 of whom were young people and leaders representing groups which had had experience in transnational exchanges. The remaining participants were invited experts, guests and representatives of Government Departments in Ireland and the UK.

The conference had as its main purpose affirming the value of youth exchange as a youth work method, raising the level of awareness of the value of exchange work in improving relationships between the people in these islands and the creation of networks which could facilitate exchange opportunities in the future. It was also hoped that as a result of the conference, the deliberations between the two governments in regard to proposals to enhance "East-West" contact could be reinforced and accelerated.

Feedback from the conference was to the effect that the participants found it both interesting and enjoyable and the report back from the various working groups indicated that many were calling for the establishment of greater opportunities for contact.

Following the conference, an informal session attended by the invited guests and the representatives of government departments from both jurisdictions was held to look at possible future steps. Arising from that meeting, Léargas, Encounter and the YEC were requested to develop a proposal for an East-West programme and an operational model for its delivery. Consideration would also be given to the management structure required to ensure proper co-ordination between all interested parties.



Pursuant to this request, a document was finalised in late September which envisaged a substantial expansion in youth exchange within these islands was submitted simultaneously to the Department for Education and Employment, Department of Education and Science, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Foreign Affairs. The proposals in the paper were to establish a Programme and Joint Management Structure designed to facilitate greater interaction between young people and those who work with them, in these islands discussed at the meeting of the AIIIC Education and Culture working group on Friday, 14th November, and are now under active consideration by the relevant Departments and agencies. [The proposals will also be discussed in general terms when the Ministers with responsibility for education meet on 17 December.

### Youth/Youth Worker Exchange

Leargas, the Exchange Bureau, currently operates two programmes in the non-formal youth work sector which have an East/West component: **The Ireland/UK Exchange Programme** and **Youth for Europe 111**.

The Ireland/UK exchange programme promotes exchanges of young people under the age of 25 years

#### Ireland/UK Exchange Programme

1995	1996	Total
6 Exchanges	8 Exchanges	14
288 young people, 71 leaders	313 young people, 60 leaders	601 young people, 131 leaders
£8,000	£8,000	£16,000

The Youth for Europe 111 programme has a number of areas of action including youth exchanges and initiatives and youth worker training and exchange of information.

#### Youth for Europe 111: Exchange programme

1995	1996	Total
17 Exchanges	17 Exchanges	34
475 young people, 126 leaders	430 young people, 976 leaders	905 young people, 223 leaders
£41,818	£45,414	£87,232



## THE FIGHT AGAINST CRIME AND DRUGS/IMMIGRATION

A meeting at Ministerial level in September 1996 agreed on the value of developing co-operation in a number of areas including the fight against drugs/police co-operation, legal co-operation, prisons and immigration. It was agreed at the meeting that there would be contact at Secretary/Permanent Under Secretary level with a view to developing further co-operation, in these areas. At Head of Government level, co-operation in the fight against organised crime was identified as a priority area for co-operation in the Joint Statement of Intent which was agreed between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister following their meeting in May this year.

Since then, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Home Secretary have been in contact. They held a bilateral meeting in the margins of the Informal Council of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers on 9 October where they reviewed a number of matters of mutual interest, including the issue of East-West co-operation. The Minister and Home Secretary noted the steps taken to move the agenda for East-West co-operation forward and endorsed the objective of seeking out further areas of co-operation between the two administrations

At official level, there was a meeting on 18 July between the Secretary of the Department and the Permanent Secretary of the Home Office and their senior officials. The meeting provided a useful opportunity for senior management in both administrations to discuss developments and trends across a range of areas in which the Department and Home Office share common responsibilities. The meeting was also seen as a useful basis for the beginning of a more structured relationship between the two administrations including further meetings at that level.

A further meeting at Secretary General/Permanent Under Secretary level took place on 6 November. The primary purpose, was to draw on the experience of the Home Office in the establishment of their Prison Service Agency against the background of the Irish Government's commitment to establish a Prisons Authority. The meeting also involved the relevant senior officials from both administrations.

A further meeting at official level in Dublin on 24 and 25 November took forward work on the negotiation of a bilateral agreement with the United Kingdom on mutual assistance in criminal matters which is intended to supplement and facilitate the implementation of three multilateral conventions to which both countries are parties, dealing with mutual assistance in criminal matters; money laundering, search and seizure and confiscation of the proceeds from crime, and drug trafficking. The necessary consultations are now taking place within both administrations in advance of seeking Government approval and arranging for signature in due course.



Officials from the respective Department with responsibility for immigration matters including asylum also met in London on 7 October for the purpose of discussing the operation of the Common Travel Area that has long existed between the two countries. Arrangements were agreed for a programme of work which would enhance co-operation between both administrations in this regard. It was also agreed that senior management with responsibility for operational matters in these areas would in future meet twice yearly.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Home Office also continue to maintain very close contact on the operation of the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons as between the two jurisdictions.

## TRANSPORT LINKS AND ENERGY

In 1997, the momentum in regard to the development and improvement of transport links was sustained, building on the remarkable progress achieved in 1996. This was promoted by a number of meetings at Ministerial level in that year. The following paragraphs report on some of the principal developments over the past year.

### Rail and related developments

#### Cork-Dublin-Belfast-Larne-Stranraer rail link

This is a significant project in the context of East-West co-operation and the European Continent, and the upgrading of the Dublin/Belfast rail line, which is being jointly undertaken by Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways, is at an advanced stage. In particular, new rolling stock has been acquired with EU assistance which has enabled an improved timetable to be implemented with effect from 1st September, 1997. Track and signalling on the route has also been upgraded with EU assistance. The official launching of the "Enterprise" Rail Service on 21st October, 1997 has brought rail transport between Belfast and Dublin to a standard and quality comparable with those linking other major cities throughout Europe.

#### Dun Laoghaire - Holyhead link

Following on from the introduction of new high-speed ferries and the major upgrading of the port of Holyhead, a major programme of works under the Ireland/Wales INTERREG programme, costing £1.45m., is underway at Dun Laoghaire Station close to Dublin. Completion is expected by the end of the year. This upgrade will transform the station and will improve links to Dun Laoghaire Harbour, which is the marine terminal for ferry services to Holyhead. In view of the substantial volume of passenger and roll-on/roll-off freight traffic between Ireland and the UK to and from this port, the station upgrade will contribute greatly to the improvement of East-West links. A pre-security clearance system for rail freight containers for subsequent transit through the Channel Tunnel has also been put in place, obviating the need for subsequent checks.

#### Rail link to Dublin Port

Work on the extension of the rail link to Dublin Port continues. It will result in easier and more efficient freight access to Dublin Port with a consequent increase in the market share for rail-based freight movements both in Ireland and between Ireland and Great Britain. The track-laying has commenced and it is anticipated that the connection will be in place early next year. This project, costing £1.7m, is also being carried out under the Ireland/Wales INTERREG programme.



## Shipping/Ports

Considerable new additions to ferry capacity were introduced during 1997 with the introduction of the Isle of Inismore by Irish Ferries on the Dublin to Holyhead route. Sea Containers introduced a Dublin/Liverpool passenger service in summer 1997, operating from the new Dublin Ferryport facilities. Stena Line also increased the capacity on their Dublin to Holyhead Ropax route.

The Isle of Inisfree vessel was transferred by Irish Ferries to the Rosslare/Pembroke service adding significant additional capacity there. In response, Stena Line brought the Koningen Beatrix Superferry onto the Rosslare/Fishguard route in the summer of 1997.

Despite the demise of the Bell Line, lo-lo services from Waterford Port have been replaced by the Coastal Container Line twice weekly Lo-Lo service to Cardiff and the three sailings per week operated by Seawheel to Bristol commencing on 5 September, 1997..

New freight services from Dublin Port have contributed to considerable growth in certain Ro-Ro and Lo-Lo traffic to the U.K. Traffic figures for first half of 1997 compared to first half of 1996 show increases of 10% in Ro/Ro and 2% in Lo-Lo traffic.

## Ireland/Wales Co-operation

There has been a positive level of co-operation between Ireland and Wales in the area of transport. Most of this co-operation has taken place under the European Union INTERREG programme (which is aimed at developing cross border co-operation in border and coastal areas). The aims of the joint Ireland/Wales programme are to promote networks of co-operation across the Irish Sea and to improve transport links between and through the two regions and to the rest of the EU. As previously indicated, there are a number of projects under this programme which benefit Ireland/Wales co-operation in this area. These also include:

### **BRIDGE-IT Better Regional Interconnection through Digital Gateways and Enhanced-Information Terminals**

The main objective of the Bridge-It project will be to create a system which will provide travellers with a comprehensive travel information enquiry service, accessible via voice or data dial-up connection as well as through dedicated public access terminals. The objective will be to provide a single enquiry point where accurate, up-to-date, relevant and consistent information can be obtained concerning the commercial and passenger transport services which are available within the region. The resulting increase in available data, with provision for tourist information, will



greatly assist in the removal of barriers and improve the conditions for travel between Ireland and Wales.

#### **Ireland Wales Port Community System**

This project will develop an information system which will form the basis of a Port Community System which presents the advantages of an automated information management structure. This will link those in the Irish port community with Dublin Port and the participants in the Welsh port community, with Holyhead as the facilitator and chief agent in the implementation. The enhanced speed and efficiency of the Port Community System addresses the growing logistical demands on Irish and Welsh surface transport as trade grows.

#### **Air Transport Developments**

In recent years the Ireland-UK market has seen significantly increased competition on the main routes, particularly those from Dublin to London/Birmingham/Manchester/Glasgow. This has resulted in dramatic growth in traffic between Ireland and the UK, which has more than trebled from 2.1 million in 1986 to 6.8 million in 1996. Many new services have also been introduced by various carriers on less established routes and while some of these have come and gone, the net result has been an increased level of services on the traditional larger routes and also a wider availability of other routings served.

The high frequency of services between Ireland and London, in particular Heathrow, not only services the origin/destination market but is also a significant factor in improving Ireland's accessibility on a world-wide scale because of Heathrow's standing as the largest hub in the world for international services.

Traffic between Ireland and the UK in 1996 accounted for almost 60% of total traffic to/from Ireland. Under EU Single Market rules governing the air transport sector all Community airlines are free to fly on any international route within the EEA and to set air fares based on their own commercial judgement. As such, there are no regulatory impediments on any EEA carriers who wish to fly between Ireland and the UK, and new services on all routes have been actively encouraged and welcomed.

#### **Priority Transport Projects in Trans European Networks**

**Background:** The development of Trans European Networks (TENs) is provided for in Article 129(b)-(d) of the Maastricht Treaty. The funding of the transport TENs was provided for in a Council Regulation of 18th September, 1995, replacing the Transport Infrastructure Fund. At the Essen European Council in December, 1994, 14 priority transport projects were identified which are to receive the majority of TENs funding (75% in 1995 and 1996 and 60% in 1997) each year. These include four projects of interest to improved East/West co-operation - two direct and two indirect. The two directly related projects are:



- Cork/Dublin/Belfast/Larne/Stranraer Rail Project, and
- Ireland/UK/Benclux Road Project.

The two indirect projects are ones which, when completed can benefit the flow of Irish passenger and freight traffics through the UK, namely:

- West Coast Main Line, and
- Channel Tunnel Rail Link

**Progress on Direct Projects:** Progress is being made in developing both of the direct projects. In the case of the Priority TENs Rail Project, a separate note on the progress has been provided earlier.

As regards the Priority TENs Road Project a study of the new route for the Newry - Dundalk road corridor was completed recently. A final decision on the line of the new road will be taken when the necessary statutory procedures have been completed.

**Indirect Projects:** The UK have secured significant contributions for the two priority rail projects in the UK.

#### Natural Gas

For the purposes of meeting the growing demand for natural gas, and of providing security of supply in the event of a disruption in supplies from the Kinsale Head/Balycotton field. Bord Gáis Eireann has constructed a natural gas interconnector pipeline between Moffatt in Scotland and Loughshinny in North County Dublin.

A bilateral agreement between Ireland and the United Kingdom was signed on 30 April 1993 to facilitate the construction and operation of the pipeline. The agreement provides for a free flow of information between the two Governments about matters relating to the operation of the pipeline and the current and projected utilisation of its capacity. In accordance with the terms of the agreement, a Commission called the "Irish Sea Interconnector Commission" was established to facilitate the implementation of the agreement consisting of officials from the Irish Department of Public Enterprise and the UK Department of Trade and Industry. A number of meetings have been held to date to consider matters relating to the operation of the pipeline.

The interconnector is in commercial operation since late 1995 and Bord Gáis now import some 30% of its natural gas requirements through the interconnector. This volume will increase as Irish reserves deplete.



**MARINE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Marine Environment**

**Quality Status Report**

The main current platform for co-operation on Irish Sea issues is that afforded by Irish/UK joint efforts on the preparation of a Quality Status Report (QSR) for the Celtic Seas area (including the Irish Sea). A joint Irish/UK Regional Task Team, representative of the relevant Government Departments and agencies, was established early in 1996 to progress the matter and meets periodically towards this end.

**UK Initiative on curbing Marine Dumping**

The UK Government announced their policy to protect the marine environment on 1 September. This policy will aim to very substantially dramatically curb dumping and discharges of hazardous (including radioactive) waste into marine areas adjacent to the UK. It also establishes that dumping of redundant offshore installations will only occur in the most exceptional circumstances.

The details of this policy and its implications for the Irish marine environment have now been the subject of intensive Irish/UK contacts. Heads of delegations of the Oslo and Paris Commissions which deal with dumping at sea and discharge from pipes at sea also met in London during November.

**Beaufort's Dyke**

Intensive contact has been maintained between Ministers, officials and scientists in relation to munitions and radioactive materials dumped in Beaufort's Dyke.

Arising from a number of newspaper reports in June, 1997 that documents had been discovered in the UK which showed that small quantities of radioactive materials had been dumped in Beaufort's Dyke, the Irish Minister for the Marine and Natural Resources, Dr. Michael Woods T.D., met the UK Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Dr. Jack Cunningham in London on 7 July. It was agreed at this meeting that an intensive archival investigation would be carried out by the UK authorities as a matter of urgency and that all information coming to light would be made available to the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources. Following close ongoing contact, including a meeting at official level, a report on this investigation was published on 24 November.

The UK authorities have also instructed their National Radiological Protection Board to carry out a full independent assessment of the information available and the implications for both human health and the marine environment as a result. The Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland was invited to put forward its comments as to how this assessment should be undertaken and they met with the National Radiological Protection Board in Oxford on 11 September to review the methodology



of the report. This report will be published and will be the subject of further consultation between officials.

As regards munitions, contact is being maintained between officials and scientists on both sides of the Irish Sea following extensive joint investigation of this munitions dumpsite. These investigations culminated in the publication on 28 November 1996 of a report on the extent and implications for the marine environment of historic dumping of munitions.

### **Sellafield**

Standing arrangements are also in place involving the Irish Department of Public Enterprise and the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland and their UK counterparts to address nuclear matters, including the operation of the Sellafield plant. A UK/Ireland agreement to formalise existing informal arrangements relating to notification of accidents and emergencies is currently being drawn up. The Minister of State at the Irish Department of Public Enterprise, Mr. Joe Jacob and the UK Minister for the Environment, Mr. Michael Meacher also met earlier this month to discuss Sellafield and the Irish Government's concerns relating to the UK nuclear industry generally.

### **Marine Transport/Safety**

Officials from the Irish Department of the Marine and Natural Resources and the UK Department of Transport met in London on 12 March, 1997 to discuss a wide range of EU and bilateral issues in the maritime transport and safety areas. There was also a meeting on 23 September, and a further meeting is planned for London in Spring. Discussions also took place in Dublin on 13/14 October with officials from London on a Memorandum of Understanding on Search and Rescue and Marine Pollution.

### **Fire Fighting at Sea**

A scheme of co-operation for fire fighting at sea is being developed, under the leadership of the Irish Department of the Marine and Natural Resources. It is expected that a Memorandum of Understanding between the Irish Marine Emergency Service (IMES) and Dublin Fire Brigade will be finalised shortly. This will formalise the relationship between the services and will facilitate the fire fighting response at sea. It will also allow for the holding of joint exercises in the Irish Sea involving co-operation between the Irish and Welsh services.

IMES and the UK Coastguard have well established operational procedures in place. A number of joint Search and Rescue and Pollution Response exercises have been held.

### Fisheries

On the fisheries front, regular contact at official level has continued during 1997 with a further bilateral meeting taking place at the end of September. Bilateral discussions and liaison up to the end of the year will be dominated by EU issues and will be in the context notably of the forthcoming UK Presidency.

Routine co-operation (on control/fisheries protection notably) will continue to feature in bilateral contacts at official level during the remainder of the year. The official level bilateral meetings are occasions to review EU and international fisheries developments as well as discussing issues of direct bilateral interest in the fisheries area.

Ireland and the UK have continued to liaise very closely in 1997 for the purposes of monitoring the EU salmon market and the effectiveness of the recent agreement reached between the EU and Norway on Norwegian exports of farmed salmon into the EU.

### Forestry

Regular contact is maintained between the Forest Service in Ireland and the Forestry Commission in Edinburgh. The issues of forest health, forest management, contact is most frequent. The Forestry Commission organised a Workshop on Forest Certification and Labelling for EU Government representatives in September in Edinburgh in which the Irish Forest Service is participated.



## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

In recent years there have been good practical, pragmatic working relationships between Ireland and the UK on a wide range of Science and Technology (S&T) issues, including the in groups dealing with the Council of Ministers under the EU 4th Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration 1998- 2002 which is currently under negotiation in Brussels.

Since 1990, there has been an Institutional Agreement between the British Council and Forbairt. There are two schemes in operation under this Agreement, one operated by Forbairt/British Council and the other by the Health Research Board and the British Council. Details of these are as follows:

### *Forbairt/British Council Research Visits Scheme*

This scheme aims to facilitate Irish and UK researchers in developing collaborative research projects by supporting travel and subsistence associated with short term research visits, particularly new links.

Research areas include the natural sciences, engineering, economic and management sciences.

Funding is normally on a 50:50 basis with the Irish participant being supported by Forbairt, and the UK participant by the British Council. Grants are normally in the range of £500 to £1,000. The duration of visits is up to 6 weeks and there are approximately 30 to 40 awards annually.

In all, nearly 70 Irish researchers went abroad under the scheme in 1997, and a similar number visited from the UK. The highest number travelling in both directions were in the area of physics.

### *Health Research Board/British Council Research Visits Scheme*

A parallel scheme to that above, focused on medicine and health, is operated by the Health Research Board in collaboration with the British Council. The value of this is approximately £7,000 per annum and the scheme funded 18 collaborative research projects in a wide range of areas in 1997.

## EUREKA

EUREKA (acronym for European Research Co-ordination Agency) is a European inter-governmental initiative established to promote cross-border co-operation in



European research and technology. It deals with research which is 'close to the market' and which will lead to products, systems and services.

There are a number of countries involved. Ireland joins approximately 7 new projects per year of which approximately one-third have UK participants. The table below shows the number of projects in various areas of research in which researchers from Ireland and Great Britain are partners, sometimes with others.

Specific Programme	Great Britain links
Agriculture	66
Communications Technologies	76
Biomedical & Health Research	2
Biotechnology	59
Industrial & Materials Technologies	173
Dissemination & Optimisation of Results	19
Environment & Climate	27
Information Technologies	88
Controlled Thermonuclear Fusion	0
Co-Operation with Third Countries & International Organisations	19
Non-Nuclear Energies	21
Marine Sciences & Technologies	41
Nuclear Fission Safety	6
Standards Measurement & Testing	33
Telematic Systems	262
Training & Mobility of Researchers	26
Transport	17
Targeted Socio Economic Research	14

### Co-Operation under the EU Framework Programme of Research and Technological Development

The EU Framework Programme (FP) of Research and Technological Development enables organisations in Ireland to join with organisations in Europe, and beyond, to compete for funding for specific research which the European Community considers important for its industrial competitiveness and quality of life. It is implemented by specific programmes which cover a number of activities, ranging from Information Technologies to Agriculture, Health and the Training and Mobility of Researchers. There have been four of these Framework Programmes to date.



Under the current, fourth, Framework Programme which covers the period 1994-98, Ireland has almost 5,000 links with 46 countries. Of these, the highest proportion (21%) is with the UK (including Northern Ireland).

The Fifth Framework Programme (1998- 2002) is currently under negotiation in Brussels.

### International Collaboration Scheme

The International Collaboration Scheme is an Irish scheme administered by the agency, Forbairt on behalf of Office of Science and Technology within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Scheme aims to assist international collaboration in the following ways:

- to assist Irish researchers establish new, and extend existing, research collaborations;
- to enable researchers learn new techniques in laboratories abroad, including access to large scale facilities;
- to improve research capability in Ireland through international collaboration.

In the first call for proposals under this Scheme, which closed in February, 1997, 16 linkages were created between Ireland and the UK (including Northern Ireland).

### COST

COST (acronym for the French equivalent of European Co-Operation in the Field of S&T Research) is a European framework for R&D co-operation. It allows for both the co-ordination of national research projects and/or the participation of third countries in Community programmes. COST does not provide funds for the implementation of its research programmes.

Of the 143 COST actions in operation early in 1997 with Irish participation, Ireland and the UK were linked in 56 (39%) of them. The breakdown by topic is as follows:

Topic	No. of Irish/ UK Linkages
Telecommunications	7
Transport	6
Oceanography	1
Materials	4
Environment	2



Agriculture & Biotechnology	11
Food Technology	8
Social Sciences	1
Medical Research	2
Civil Engineering	2
Chemistry	7
Forests and Forestry Products	5

### INTAS

INTAS is the International Association for the Promotion of Co-Operation with Scientists from the Newly Independent States (NIS) of the Former Soviet Union. INTAS supports joint research projects and networks of scientists and research teams in a number of scientific fields. Each project or network associates participants from Western Europe and the NIS. In the latest call for proposals (Autumn 1996), five Irish universities (UCC, UCD, UCG, DCU, Trinity College), together with the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies and the Dublin Institute of Technology, have been successful in winning twelve INTAS projects. Three of these involve linkages with the UK (including N. Ireland) as follows:

- UCD, Dept. of Chemical Engineering, with the University of Edinburgh, Dept. of Chemical Engineering;
- UCD, Dept. of Experimental Physics, with the Council for the Central Laboratory of Research Councils, Daresbury Laboratory;
- Trinity College, Dublin with Queen's University, Belfast. School of Mathematics and Physics.

### ESA

The European Space Agency groups together the complete range of civilian space activities in a single agency. Both Ireland and the UK are contributors to ESA and both are also involved in a number of ESA contracts.

### Six Countries Programme

The Six Countries Programme is an international group (including Ireland and the UK) which was established in 1975. It provides an international network and forum between experts and practitioners engaged in research in innovation and related public policies. It aims at a better understanding of innovation processes and their development and at an assessment of the impact of Science and Technology on public policies and programmes.



There are continuing links between the Innovation Unit of the Department of Trade and Industry in the UK and the agency, Forfás, in Ireland, in relation to this programme.



## TRADE AND GENERAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

The United Kingdom and Ireland enjoy a strong trading relationship and since joint accession to the EEC in 1973, have continued to forge ever closer economic links. Two-way trade between the two countries amounted to over £15 billion last year. Ireland is the UK's fifth largest export market and the United Kingdom is Ireland's largest, accounting for a quarter of all exports.

Regular contact is maintained at various levels between the Irish Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Minister of State at the UK Department of Trade and Industry, Lord Clinton Davies met with the Minister of State at the Irish Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mr. Tom Kitt, in Dublin in July. The Dublin Chamber of Commerce and the Irish Trade Board were also involved and discussions included EU matters and wider world trade issues.

### Deregulation

Ongoing contact between the Irish Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Deregulation Unit in the UK has continued at official level in relation to the SLIM initiative in the European Union and other deregulation issues.

### Company Law

The Irish Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has periodic meetings with its UK counterparts for an exchange of views on issues of mutual interest. Officials of the Irish Department met with the Director General of the London Takeover Panel last year to discuss the proposed 13th Directive on Takeovers and a further meeting with officials from the Department of Trade and Industry took place in mid-September for an exchange of views on the 13th Directive and other EU Company Law dossiers currently under consideration. (Company Statute, 10th Directive on Cross-Border Mergers). Other areas where there has been close contact are the new accounting strategy within the EU, and new structures for regulation of the accounting and auditing profession within the UK and Ireland. Ireland also participates, through a Minister's representative with informal observer status, on the Financial Reporting Council, which oversees the Accounting Standards Board and the Financial Review Panel.

### Training and Mutual Recognition

FAS, the Irish Training and Employment Authority, is engaged in talks with its UK counterparts concerning the mutual recognition of electricians' qualifications on both sides of the Irish sea. They are also engaged in discussions on the mutual recognition of the training qualifications of construction workers other than craft workers. Negotiations are also continuing on the recognition of the FAS training standard by the UK authorities. These negotiations, if successful, would make the FAS Standard



"Excellence through People" and the UK standard "Investors in People" mutual by acceptable in both countries.

A joint venture company has been established with a company called Scottish Screen to promote training in the area of Film and TV. FAS has invested £300,000 in this project. A more detailed note on this initiative has been provided under Arts and Culture

FAS has a long standing joint certification agreement with City and Guilds, the largest UK certification body, which is recognised throughout the world.

### Transfrontier Committee (TFC)

The TFC on Employment and Training was established in 1991 in response to the British Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body report on the Irish in Britain. The TFC brings together the employment and training services of Britain and Ireland to facilitate the free movement of migrant workers between the two countries. Meetings alternate between Britain and Ireland and are chaired alternately by FAS and the UK Employment Service. The last such meeting was held in Kinsale, Co. Cork in March and a further meeting is scheduled for London on 18th/19th December.

### Employment

A Tripartite Seminar on Welfare to Work involving the relevant Departments in Great Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland took place in London on 13 November. This followed a similar event in Dublin in 1996 which looked at ways of tackling long-term employment. This year's seminar again took the form of a series of presentations by officials and academics from each side, followed by general discussions. The seminar was considered by all sides to be very constructive and useful and work is in hand to identify ways in which the two countries can co-operate on youth training initiatives with the aim of providing skills for young people in the labour market.



## **HEALTH**

There has been continued co-operation between the Departments of Health in Ireland and the United Kingdom in many areas of mutual interest such as the development of drug misuse policy and the provision of treatment services.

### **Heart/Lung Transplantation**

The Irish Government's programme for its period of office, "An Action Programme for the Millennium" includes a commitment to support the establishment of a heart and lung transplant facility in Ireland. At present there is no Heart/Lung and Lung transplantation programme in operation in Ireland. Irish patients in need of lung and heart/lung transplants are referred through their local health board for assessment to the U.K. and, if suitable, are put on a waiting list for a transplant.

The Department of Health in Ireland is at present carrying out detailed research into the establishment of a heart/lung transplant programme in Ireland. It is recognised that the establishment of a successful transplant programme for any speciality is an extremely complex and difficult task. It is essential to have appropriately trained staff, infrastructure and backup resources to ensure successful outcomes. Apart from the surgery involved, it is equally important to develop expertise in pre and post operative care and to develop a long term after-care programme associated with transplantation.

In preparing for the recommencement of Ireland's adult liver transplant programme it was considered necessary to firstly develop a formal link with an established and experienced transplant unit in order to build up the knowledge and expertise required to operate a successful programme in Ireland. An agreement between The Department of Health and Camberwell Health Authority was entered into in March, 1991. From that date patients from Ireland requiring liver transplantation were referred from designated Irish centres to the U.K. designated centre at King's College Hospital, London. In addition King's College Hospital agreed to provide the necessary training for Irish staff in preparation for the establishment of an Irish based programme. In September 1992 it was decided to recommence the adult liver transplant programme at St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin. The programme is now well established. Kings College Hospital continues to treat Irish children requiring liver transplantation and provides continued support to the National Liver Transplant Programme.

It is probable that a similar strategy to that which was successful in the development of the liver transplant programme will be required for the establishment of a heart/lung and lung transplant programme in Ireland. The strategy will be to approach the issue on a phased basis. Initially, it will most likely be necessary to develop a formal link with a transplant centre, probably in the U.K., which would treat Irish patients currently waiting for heart/lung or lung transplants and assist in building up the necessary expertise required to operate a successful programme in Ireland.



The Irish Department of Health has had preliminary discussions in this regard with the UK Transplant Support Service Authority which is responsible for central management and monitoring services for organ transplant centres in the UK including the management of transplant waiting lists. It is the Department's intention to broaden these discussions to individual transplant centres with a view to the possible development of a contractual arrangement with a preferred centre in the UK.

### **Drug Misuse**

Both UK and Ireland participate in the EU Drug Dependence Programme, which was adopted at the Health Council under the Irish Presidency of the EU in Dublin in November 1996. The Programme has a budget of 27 million ECU (over the 5 year period 1997 - 2001) for the implementation of a number of joint actions.

The objectives of the programme are:-

- (a) to improve knowledge about drugs and drug dependence, their consequences, means of prevention and risks relating thereto, and
- (b) to contribute to improving information, education and training aimed at preventing drug dependence and associated risks.

A major focus of activity in autumn 1998 will be European Drug Prevention Week, during which all Member States and EFTA countries will be involved in a range of activities, aimed at creating a greater awareness of the problems relating to drugs and focusing on the help which is available to young people and their parents.

### **Blood**

There is continued contact between relevant departments in this area, and the way is open for further contact as necessary.

### **Food Safety**

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland was initially set up on an interim basis in 1996. The Irish Government at its meeting of 7th October 1997 decided to establish a new Food Safety Authority of Ireland, to honour the commitment given in the Government's programme for its period of office. The functions of the new Authority, which will eventually replace the interim Authority established by the previous Government, will include the following;

the inspection, approval, licensing and registration of premises and transport involved in the preparation, processing and distribution of food at the manufacturing, wholesale and retail levels, and the inspection, sampling and surveillance of food;



the provision of advice, the conduct of food safety research and promotion and the general co-ordination of food control services; and

participation in liaison arrangements with agencies involved in the facilitation of trade in food, such as the Department of Agriculture and Food, Bord Bia etc.

Drafting of the necessary legislation is underway and the Minister for Health and Children anticipates its introduction during the next Dáil session. An Inter-Departmental Group has been established to examine how best to implement the transfer to the Authority of relevant functions at present exercised by other Departments.

The UK Government is also committed to the establishment of a food safety body. Following the publication of the "James Report" earlier this year, plans for the establishment of the UK Food Agency are currently being formulated. It is estimated however, that the necessary legislation will not be enacted until mid-1999.

The need to ensure the highest possible food safety standards in these islands was identified as a priority in the joint statement of intent issued by the Taoiseach and Prime Minister in the margins of the European Council at Noordwijk, Holland on 23 May, 1997. Contacts between the Irish and UK authorities in the area of food safety are ongoing. Officials of the Departments of Health and Children and Agriculture and Food recently met with the Deputy Secretary and Chief Veterinary Officer of the UK Ministry for Agriculture and Food (MAFF) in Dublin. Pending the establishment of both food safety bodies and the consequent introduction of formal structures for co-operation, it was felt that the most fruitful way to proceed in the meantime was in the sharing of scientific data in the area of food safety.



## HOMELESSNESS

At their meeting in London in May this year, the then Taoiseach and the Prime Minister identified a number of priority areas where the Governments should give consideration to further developing East/West co-operation. Measures to deal with homelessness was one of those areas, in particular for those Irish people in Britain affected by it, and consideration is now being given by the Governments to how best to progress this area. The Irish Embassy maintains close contacts with the responsible UK statutory agencies for the homeless in Britain, and Irish Departments have also taken steps to ensure that emigrants are better prepared.

The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Emigrant Advice Information and Counselling Service have recent leaflets with practical advice for people thinking of going to London. FAS, the training and employment authority in Ireland, recently produced an information pack of comprehensive and country-specific information about how to cope with problems of living and working abroad. In addition to the assistance available to Irish emigrants from the official social services of the countries in which they live, advice and assurance is also provided to homeless Irish people in the UK from many local voluntary Irish organisations whose valuable work is supported by grants from the Irish Government.

Among the grants provided by the Irish Government are grants allocated by the Dion Committee. Dion funding is allocated by the Irish Minister for Enterprise and Employment on the basis of recommendations from the Dion Committee (the title is the Irish word for "shelter"). In 1997, the Irish Government provided financial support of £600,000 to voluntary organisations providing advisory and welfare services for Irish emigrants in Britain. In particular, these grants support the employment of professional workers to provide advice, as well as practical assistance, to disadvantaged members of the Irish community. Since 1989, a small proportion of the grant has also supported key research into aspects of emigrant welfare problems. Grants totalling almost £5 million have been provided since 1984. Organisations which receive grant aid are not all exclusively Irish led nor are they all engaged in work with Irish emigrants.

Assistance is also provided to those organisations which provide services to the homeless population, particularly those which span both sides of the Irish sea. The FOYER concept of a mix of accommodation and training facilities for young people (generally in the 18 - 26 age bracket) has been raised by several voluntary bodies and one of these, Cara Irish Housing Association which is based in the U.K. and provides services for Irish people there, is developing a proposal to provide a FOYER accommodation complex/hostel in Cork. Cara is in on-going discussions with Cork Corporation on this.

Training facilities and a tie-in with employment opportunity services are essential aspects of FOYER developments and consideration is also been given by the appropriate Irish Departments to developing the appropriate linkages.



## SOCIAL, COMMUNITY AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

Co-operative measures between the Irish Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (D/SCFA) and the UK Department of Social Security (DSS) continue to develop.

In late 1996, the UK authorities proposed a high-level **Memorandum of Understanding between Ireland and the United Kingdom** which would strengthen current joint efforts, in fighting fraud. This followed a joint review of 1,500 potentially fraudulent social security cases which led to significant savings. The then Irish Minister, Mr De Rossa, was favourably disposed to this proposal and asked that officials meet in the first instance to address the issues involved in framing such a memorandum. A meeting between officials from the D/SCFA, the UK DSS and the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency took place earlier this year to progress this matter. Issues relating to data protection and national legislation are being examined at present.

There has been increasing contact, over the last year, between the Child Benefit Offices in Ireland and their UK and Northern Irish counterparts. Mutual assistance in combating fraud has met with significant successes. Daily contact is also maintained between these offices in relation to the notification of new claims. Meetings at official level have also been held aimed at strengthening existing contacts and gaining a working knowledge of each other's Departments.

Reciprocal arrangements also exist between the **Medical Review and Assessment Section of the D/SCFA and the Pensions and Overseas Benefits Directorate of the DSS**. Under these arrangements, medical referees from the D/SCFA carry out medical assessments, on request, on DSS recipients of illness and incapacity benefits resident in Ireland. Equivalent arrangements are in place for beneficiaries of illness and incapacity payments from the Irish Department who are resident in the United Kingdom.

Progress has been made on the electronic exchanges of information between the two organisations this year. Information is now exchanged electronically to speed up the processing of claims in the Sickness, Child Benefit, Invalidity and Old Age Pensions area. Such links are facilitating the exchange of data necessary to establish entitlement to insurance benefits in the area of sickness benefits. In addition, in 1997, both organisations have successfully implemented similar electronic exchanges of insurance history details, in respect of pension claims, under the EU TESS (Telematics in Social Security) programme.

### Six Countries Social Security meeting:

Both Ireland and the UK participate in the so-called Six Countries Group of officials. This provides a valuable, approximately annual forum for top officials from Australia,



Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the USA to share experiences and discuss and explore issues of mutual interest and concern in the field of social protection, policy and operations. Ireland hosted the meeting for the first time this year in September and it proved to be very useful and successful in every respect.

### Community Development

The responsible Departments in Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are involved in a joint training project focusing on community development evaluation methods. The project originates in a commission by the DHSS NI to the Scottish Community Development Centre to develop an evaluation methods and training package for community development in the Northern Ireland context. Subsequently, that Department canvassed for support to launch a joint follow-up project. The follow-up project involves funding a "cascade" training programme to be delivered to selected people involved in community development in each of the five areas over a three-year period. The training programme in Ireland will commence early next year. Its purpose is to disseminate the skills needed to apply the evaluation framework. It will be targeted at people involved in community development on the ground but also at relevant Departmental officials.

### Anti-Poverty Strategy

The UK Government has established a unit to co-ordinate efforts to tackle the problems of social exclusion. Its overarching aims will be to promote effective co-operation between central government departments, their agencies and local government and others running programmes at local and area level and to shift the focus of programmes more towards preventing social exclusion. In addition, it will make recommendations for changes in policies, programmes and machinery. The Prime Minister launched the Social Exclusion Unit on 8 December.

The Irish Anti-Poverty Strategy, which was launched in April 1997 and put in place for the first time, a cross-departmental national strategy designed to place the needs of the poor and the socially excluded at the top of the national agenda. It contains specific medium to long-term goals to tackle poverty and social exclusion in five key areas - educational disadvantage, unemployment, income adequacy, disadvantage urban areas and rural poverty - and provides measurable targets by which to gauge the achievements of the Strategy in alleviating poverty through concentrating on these areas.



## DEFENCE

The Irish Chief of Staff meets the British Chief of Defence Staff on a formal basis at least once a year, apart from meetings in the wings of international meetings. During the visit to London in February last by the then Irish Minister for Defence, the Secretary General of the Irish Department invited the Permanent Under Secretary at the British Ministry of Defence to visit Ireland and it is planned that such a visit will take place in January next.

Contact between the respective forces of each country continues to be extensive and beneficial in this area and cover the following main areas:-

Training Irish personnel undergo courses at military establishments in Britain on a wide variety of subjects, including tactics, weapons, logistics, etc., while British service personnel have attended courses at the United Nations Training School Ireland (UNTSI) and participated in the International Shooting Competition of the Permanent Defence Forces.

Exchange of information - usually on a technical matter such as disposal of bombs and explosives.

Naval Service - formal and informal contacts covering Fishery Protection, Search and Rescue, Courtesy Calls to Ports.

Air Corps - Search and Rescue co-operation.

In 1997, contacts between the respective forces including ongoing contact in the area of training, including attendance at over twenty training courses; two liaison visits between the Irish Air Corps and the RAF in the area of Search and Rescue and three training visits to the UK by Air Corps personnel; and goodwill calls by naval vessels of both countries.

FINANCE/TREASURY AND PUBLIC SERVICE**The Anglo Irish Exchange Scheme for Civil Servants**

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by representatives of Ireland and the UK on 19 October 1984. The purpose of this Memorandum was to "*promote and provide guidelines for exchanges of civil servants between the two countries in the interests of improving mutual understanding*". It has also been found that the scheme provides a useful opportunity for officers to broaden their range of experience in specialist areas of work of relevance to their parent Department.

Under this Scheme, civil servants from Ireland may be seconded to the UK civil service for six months or more, with a reciprocal arrangement for civil servants from the UK to be seconded to the Irish civil service.

Since the programme began, it has evolved over time as mutually agreed between the Irish Department of Finance (previously by the former Department of the Public Service) and the UK Cabinet Office. For example, exchanges are not limited strictly to the civil service: secondments to areas of the public service outside the civil service can be arranged in certain circumstances - e.g. to FAS and the Health and Safety Authority and some exchanges have been for less than six months. The grading of officials who may take part in the programme was not specified in the Memorandum, other than specifying that they should have several years' experience involving opportunities for taking responsible decisions and that younger civil servants should, where possible, take part.

A summary of the exchanges which have taken place to date is shown below:

**Exchanges by Irish civil servants:**

1985/86	3
1987	1
1990/91	1
1993	1
1994	1
1995	2
1997	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>



**Exchanges by UK civil servants:**

1985/86	2
1987	1
1990/91	1
1993	1
1994/95	5
1996/97	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>

Both the Department of Finance and the UK Treasury are currently considering extending the scheme of staff exchanges which operates between them under this Scheme.

**European Monetary Union**

A number of informal exchanges of information have taken place between Irish and UK officials involved in the preparations for EMU. These included a visit to Dublin by two officials from HM Treasury on 29 April 1997 to examine the preparations being made at national level by the Irish Authorities.

**Financial Services**

There is on-going informal co-operation between officials in the Department of Finance and in HM Treasury in relation to financial services issues at EU level.

The National Treasury Management Agency have had a number of discussions on technical issues with the Bank of England on recent and prospective structural developments in the Irish and UK bond markets and the recently announced plans of the UK authorities to establish an agency to take on a number of debt management responsibilities.

## TOURISM

As part of the East/West co-operation initiative, a meeting was convened in June, 1996 between top level representatives from the then Department of Tourism and Trade, Bord Fáilte, the Department of Economic Development in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), the then Department of National Heritage and the British Tourist Authority (BTA) to discuss co-operation in tourism development in the islands.

A further tripartite meeting involving senior representatives of the above organisations has been arranged for 30 January next, to take place in Dublin. This meeting will involve representatives from the newly constituted Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation in Ireland and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in the UK.

Since the earlier meeting, follow-up action is taking place as set out below:

### British Travel Trade Fair

The BTA invited Bord Fáilte to join the British Travel Trade Fair in Birmingham, participating as a sub-section of the NITB stand. Bord Fáilte very successfully participated in the Fair and hope to continue to do so.

### Joint UK/Ireland Promotion

Bord Fáilte, at the invitation of the BTA, supported the Waterfront Britain Campaign for 1996. Through negotiations, the campaign evolved into Waterfront Britain and Ireland in 1997 and Bord Fáilte participated more fully. The 1998 campaign is under discussion at present.

There also continues to be a positive exchange of information and statistics between Bord Fáilte and the BTA.



## AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

There continues to be a significant level of contact on an East/West basis at both Ministerial and official level in this area. On 21 July and 24 October 1997, Ministers from the two Governments met to discuss a number of issues, including agriculture. In subsequent official discussions on rabies control, it was agreed that the two Departments should keep each other informed about their assessment of possible changes to quarantine arrangements. If and when changes were made, the aim should be to preserve a single common area for quarantine purposes. The Irish and British Ministers for Agriculture also met in London on 5 December to seek a resolution to the blockading of British west coast ports against Irish beef imports by British farmers.

### BSE

There have been a number of contacts at both Ministerial and official level between the U.K. and Ireland concerning the possible lifting of the EU ban on exports of live cattle/beef from the United Kingdom which entered into force in March 1996. In particular, the implementation by the United Kingdom of the framework agreed at the Florence Council of June 1996 for eradication of the disease in that country has been discussed, as have a number of proposals made by the UK to the Commission as part of its programme to obtain the lifting of the EU export ban.

### Food Safety Structures

The response to consumer concerns in both countries following recent food scares has resulted in proposals in both the United Kingdom and Ireland for major changes in the statutory and administrative structures applicable to both food safety policy and enforcement.

A detailed note on the establishment of Food Safety Authorities in Ireland and the UK is provided under Health.

### Veterinary Medicines

Discussions have taken place at official level between the enforcement authorities in both the United Kingdom and Ireland with a view to ensuring that distribution rules for veterinary medicines are observed and applied on a common basis to the greatest extent possible.



## ARTS, CULTURE AND BROADCASTING

### Culture

The Taoiseach and the British Foreign Minister launched the "Go See Award" in Dublin on 3 November. The Go See Award was created by the Irish Arts Council and the British Council in Ireland to enable arts managers and creative and interpretative artists to travel between Great Britain and Ireland in order to develop professional contacts and explore touring exchange or co-operative ventures. The launch was followed by a meeting which brought together the Directors of the Arts Council in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Northern Ireland and of The British Council, to discuss cultural and artistic matters of common interest to England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Officials of the Irish Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht and officials of the then Department of Heritage in the UK also met on 7 March this year to discuss issues of common interest. These included their respective plans for extending current deposit arrangements for books to other forms of library material (e.g. films, CD Roms). Discussions are currently taking place between officials of both Departments with a view to establishing an appropriate mechanism for co-operation in this area. This may involve the establishment of a joint working group.

Within the context of East-West co-operation on training for the film industry, a new organisation entitled *Moonstone* has been established and is dedicated to developing the skills of screenwriters and directors in Ireland, Scotland and throughout Europe. This new training model has, in turn, drawn from the Sundance Training Institute model in the United States which was developed by the actor, Robert Redford, to assist the growth of the independent sector. This organisation will be based in Edinburgh and Dublin and an Irish Chief Executive has been appointed. The company has been established with the assistance of the National Training Committee for Film and Television, Scottish Screen, and a Scottish film production company, Freeway Films. It has also secured funding under the EU Media II Programme in which Ireland participates. The aim of the initiative is to provide a significant training opportunity for new screenwriters and directors drawn from the partner countries. The participants will work with leading screenwriters and directors from the USA and Europe on a one-to-one basis and will benefit from seeing key scenes from their work rehearsed with actors, shot on video, edited and screened for discussion and analysis. It is intended that scripts which emerge from this training process will be ready to attract production finance.



## Broadcasting

Since its inception, the Irish language television station, Teilifis na Gaeilge (TnaG) has established strong working links with other partners in Celtic language broadcasting and television production at council and executive level.

In the set-up phase, Comhairle TnaG and the newly appointed management of the station sought the advice of Welsh and Scots colleagues. The experience and expertise of the Welsh language Channel, S4C, established in 1982, has been of particular benefit, since that Channel, providing programming in a Celtic language, has so many parallels with TnaG. The initial contacts with S4C have been developed and deepened since TnaG began transmission in November, 1996.

Contact has also been established with the other television broadcasters in Wales and Scotland: BBC Wales and BBC Scotland. In addition TnaG have established close working relationships with STV, Grampian and HTV, the ITV franchise holders in the Celtic nations. Contacts between TnaG and other Celtic broadcasters operate on a number of levels:

- (i) on specific new programming productions;
- (ii) through the acquisition of preproduced programming for revoicing into Irish and transmission on TnaG;
- (iii) through the sale of preproduced TnaG programming to Celtic broadcasters;
- (iv) formally, through the Executive Committee of the Celtic Film and Television Association, an international body where TnaG and other broadcasters are represented and under whose aegis the annual Celtic Film and TV Festival is held;
- (v) through the Association of Celtic Broadcasters, an ad-hoc grouping of public service broadcasters which meets to discuss the potential for co-producing individual programmes or series;
- (vi) as partners with TnaG in joint applications to the EU MEDIA II programme and other international support agencies for projects (both programme and technical) of mutual interest.

In the area of original programming mentioned in (i) above, four commissions involving co-production with broadcasters from other Celtic regions have taken place to date.

Under (ii) above TnaG has acquired preproduced programming from Scotland and Wales across a range of strands: Drama, young people and current affairs and these have been reversioned into Irish and successfully broadcast on TnaG.

Under (iii) above, TnaG, has sold four of its own programmes for broadcast in the UK.

The award-winning comedy drama C U Burn has been shown on S4C, the documentary Cinniúint de Gallai has been sold to BBC Wales and the mountaineering and travel series Cuairt na Cruinne and An Bealach ó Dheas will be shown by the satellite Travel Channel which is available in the UK. Discussions on the possible sale of other TnaG programming to UK broadcasters is continuing.

### Columba Initiative

During former President Robinson's visit to Scotland in June of this year, the Scottish Office Minister with responsibility for the Gaelic language, Mr Brian Wilson, announced the establishment of the Columba Initiative. Its aim is to strengthen ties between Scottish speakers of Gaelic and Irish speakers on the island of Ireland, North and South, on the basis of exchanges and contacts between the two language communities. Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, Mr Éamonn Ó Cuív, also met with Minister Wilson on 21 October for further discussions and there will be continuing contacts between officials on this Initiative.



## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

There is a wide range of contacts between officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) Office and the Northern Ireland Office and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs on areas of mutual interest. While the focus of the relationship is on Northern Ireland and foreign policy matters, particularly the EU, the Department and the FCO also facilitate contact between other Government Departments in the two countries on a wide range of bilateral issues.

Both the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs met with the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he visited Dublin on 3 November 1997. The discussion covered the forthcoming British Presidency, European, international and bilateral issues. The then Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs visited London in May 1997 shortly after the British General Election and met with the new Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to discuss EU issues.

The Minister of State at the Irish Department, Ms Liz O'Donnell, met with the Secretary of State for International Development when she visited London on 6 November, 1997. Their discussions focused on development issues due to arise in the Development Council. Both their predecessors also met in February 1997.

The permanent heads of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Office have had bilateral meetings in the past and it is hoped to arrange an early meeting between the Irish Secretary General and the new Permanent Under Secretary of the FCO.

The Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Council Working Group on Education and Culture, which is jointly chaired by the Department and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, met twice in 1997, in Belfast in February and in Dublin in November. A number of issues were discussed including recognition of the Irish Language on the curriculum in England and Wales, Youth Sector Co-operation and Commemoration of 1798.

The *Encounter* organisation was set up by both Government to organise conferences on economic, social and cultural areas of common interest, with a view to promoting mutual understanding and good relations between the peoples of Ireland and Britain. *Encounter* is jointly funded by the Irish and British Governments and in 1997 held conferences on "Youth Work" in Dublin in June and on "Religion, Secularism and the Civil Society" in September in Oxford. *Encounter* also hosted a round table in December in Co. Down on "National Identity and Media Representation". A detailed note on this has been provided under the youth exchanges sector in Education.

The Taoiseach and the British Foreign Secretary met in Dublin on 3 November where the subjects discussed included European and international, as well as bilateral issues. During the meeting, the excellent co-operation to date on all issues between the current UK and Irish Governments was recognised. Minister of State the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs. Liz O'Donnell also met with Secretary of State for International Development on 6 November to discuss the Development Council.