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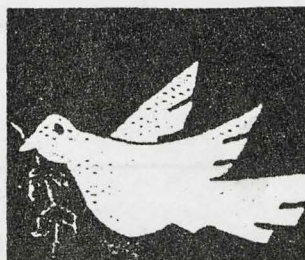
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**SPECIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR
PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE
BORDER COUNTIES OF IRELAND
1995-1999**

EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS



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SUMMARY SHEET

INFORMATION RELATED TO THE OP

TITLE OF OP: Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

DURATION OF OP: 1995-1999

NATIONAL AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OP

Department of Finance and Personnel in Belfast and
Department of Finance in Dublin

BANK ACCOUNT FOR PAYMENTS

For payments to Northern Ireland

TITLE: Paymaster General Cash Account
ACCOUNT NO: 25021001 Credit Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund
Account 12496
BANK: Bank of England
BRANCH: Threadneedle Street, London

For payments to Ireland

TITLE: Account of the Central Bank of Ireland
ACCOUNT NO: 480/9162/677/65
BANK: Kredietbank NV
BRANCH: Arenbergstraat 7 B-100 Brussels

STRUCTURAL FUNDS INVOLVED:

| | | |
|--------|------------|----|
| ERDF: | <u>YES</u> | NO |
| ESF: | <u>YES</u> | NO |
| EAGGF: | <u>YES</u> | NO |
| FIFG: | <u>YES</u> | NO |

OTHER COMMUNITY FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS: EIB

LOANS ESTIMATED: [130 MECU] OF WHICH EIB: 130 MECU

of which

PROJECT LOANS:
 GLOBAL LOANS:X.....

TO BE IMPLEMENTED AS AT IA? YES NO

DOES THE OP INCLUDE THE PART-FINANCING
 OF A NATIONAL AID SCHEME? YES NO

IS AID ALREADY NOTIFIED TO THE COMMISSION YES NO

DOES THE OP INCLUDE THE PART FINANCING
 OF (A) MAJOR PROJECT(S)?
 (REG. 4253/88 ART 16(2)) YES NO

DO(ES) THE PROJECT(S) CONCERN
 - INFRASTRUCTURE YES NO
 - PRODUCT INVESTMENT YES NO

IS THE INFORMATION REQUESTED BY
 REG. 4554/88 ART. 5 INCLUDED IN THE
 APPLICATION? YES NO

DOES THE OP INCLUDE THE USE OF
 GLOBAL GRANTS? YES NO

HAS A STANDARD CONTRACT BEEN
 ELABORATED? YES NO

TOTAL GRANT ESTIMATES (MECU)

| | YEAR 1 | YEAR 2 | YEAR 3 |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
| TOTAL | 27 | 118 | 155 |
| of which | | | |
| ERDF | 15 | 60 | 74 |
| ESF | 11 | 48 | 69 |
| EAGGF | 1 | 10 | 11 |
| FIFG | 0 | 0 | 1 |

PEACE & RECONCILIATION SPECIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME

YEARLY BREAKDOWN OF THE INTERVENTION

ERDF N° 950010005

ARINCO N° 95EU16005

Type of Intervention Community Initiative

Plan Type Decision (NI + IRL 20.7.95)

Region European Community

Currency MioECU

| | TOTAL COST | PUBLIC EXPENDITURE | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|--|---------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| | | Total | Community grants | | | | | National contributions relative to each fund | | | | | Private funds |
| | | | Total | ERDF | ESF | EAGGF | FIFG | Total | ERDF | ESF | EAGGF | FIFG | |
| | | | 1 = 2 + 13 | 2 = 3 + 8 | 3 = 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 = 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 | 9 | 10 | |
| 1995 | 37.398 | 36.504 | 27.385 | 15.014 | 10.963 | 1.271 | 0.137 | 9.119 | 5.003 | 3.654 | 0.416 | 0.046 | 0.894 |
| 1996 | 163.996 | 157.991 | 118.110 | 59.508 | 48.022 | 9.986 | 0.594 | 39.881 | 20.343 | 16.014 | 3.327 | 0.197 | 6.005 |
| 1997 | 214.500 | 206.787 | 154.505 | 73.772 | 68.859 | 11.155 | 0.719 | 52.282 | 25.384 | 22.941 | 3.718 | 0.239 | 7.713 |
| TOTAL | 415.894 | 401.282 | 300.000 | 148.294 | 127.844 | 22.412 | 1.450 | 101.282 | 50.730 | 42.609 | 7.461 | 0.482 | 14.612 |

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION SPECIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Activities in Ireland

Curr : MECU

| SUB-PROGRAMME | Total Cost | Total Public | Total Commun | ERDF | ESF | EAGGF | FIFG | Total | State | Local Auth | Other | Private |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 1 (2 + 12) | 2 (3 + 8) | 3 (4 to 7) | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 (9 to 11) | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 1. Employment | 5,833 | 5,833 | 4,375 | 0,938 | 3,437 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1,458 | 1,458 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 2c. Urban and Rural Regeneration | 18,500 | 16,000 | 12,000 | 9,125 | 0,000 | 2,875 | 0.000 | 4,000 | 4,000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 2,500 |
| 3. Cross-Border Development | 32,200 | 30,000 | 22,500 | 15,937 | 5,313 | 0,625 | 0,625 | 7,500 | 7,500 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 2,200 |
| 4. Social Inclusion | 17,500 | 17,500 | 13,125 | 1,250 | 11,875 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 4,375 | 4,375 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 5. Productive Investment | 10,667 | 9,417 | 7,063 | 7,063 | 0,000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 2,354 | 2,354 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1,250 |
| 7. Technical Assistance | 1,250 | 1,250 | 0,937 | 0,937 | 0,000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0,313 | 0,313 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| TOTAL | 85,950 | 80,000 | 60,000 | 35,250 | 20,625 | 3,500 | 0,625 | 20,000 | 20,000 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 5,950 |

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION SPECIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME

SUMMARY FINANCIAL SHEET FOR SUB PROGRAMME

Curr : MECU

Activities in Northern Ireland

| SUB-PROGRAMME | Total Cost | Total Public | Total Commun | ERDF | ESF | EAGGF | FIFG | Total | State | Local Auth | Other | Private |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 1 (2 + 12) | 2 (3 + 8) | 3 (4 to 7) | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 (9 to 11) | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 1. Employment | 40,853 | 49,853 | 37,390 | 6,315 | 31,075 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 12,463 | 9,972 | 0,000 | 2,491 | 0,000 |
| 2a. Urban Regeneration | 25,260 | 25,260 | 18,945 | 18,945 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 6,315 | 6,315 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 0,000 |
| 2b. Rural Regeneration | 26,525 | 25,265 | 18,945 | 4,245 | 0,000 | 14,500 | 0,200 | 6,320 | 6,320 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 1,260 |
| 3. Cross Border Development | 31,004 | 30,004 | 22,503 | 13,935 | 7,318 | 0,625 | 0,625 | 7,501 | 7,501 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 1,000 |
| 4. Social Inclusion | 76,440 | 76,440 | 57,333 | 13,262 | 44,071 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 19,107 | 16,929 | 0,000 | 2,178 | 0,000 |
| 5. Productive Investment | 54,370 | 50,470 | 36,890 | 36,890 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 13,580 | 12,280 | 1,300 | 0,000 | 3,900 |
| 6. Partnership | 61,440 | 58,940 | 44,205 | 15,663 | 24,755 | 3,787 | 0,000 | 14,735 | 14,735 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 2,500 |
| 7. Technical Assistance | 5,052 | 5,052 | 3,789 | 3,789 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 1,263 | 1,263 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 0,000 |
| TOTAL | 329,944 | 321,284 | 240,000 | 113,044 | 107,219 | 18,912 | 0,825 | 81,284 | 75,315 | 1,300 | 4,669 | 8,660 |

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In the autumn of 1994, shortly after the cessation of violence in Northern Ireland, the European Commission created a special Task Force to look into further ways of giving practical assistance to Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland in consultation with the national authorities. The creation of the Task Force was a practical expression of the European Union's commitment to the peace and reconciliation process, which had been underlined in the statement of then Commission President Jacques Delors welcoming the cessation of violence.

In its deliberations, the Task Force considered the new opportunities and special needs arising from the cessation of violence and the developing peace process. It came to the conclusion that the European Union has a clear interest and vital role to play in maintaining the momentum for peace and reconciliation, not only for the benefit of the region most affected, but also for the wider benefit of the European Union as a whole. On the basis of this conclusion, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, to be implemented in the form of a Community initiative under the Structural Funds. It was proposed that the Initiative would run for five years, from 1995 to 1999, equivalent to the remaining period of application of the current Structural Funds programmes. Community funding amounting to 300 million ecus would be provided initially for a three year period, from 1995 to 1997. Further financing for the last two years would be subject to a review based on a Commission report. The principle of a special support programme and the allocation of financial resources for the period 1995-1997 were subsequently endorsed by the European Council of Heads of Government at Essen, in December 1994.

1.2 Following the adoption by the European Commission of draft Guidelines for the Initiative on 14 February 1995, the two Member States agreed to draw up a draft Operational Programme on a parallel timetable with the Commission's consultation on the Guidelines with the other EU bodies¹. This was informed by an extensive consultation exercise in both eligible areas. In Northern Ireland, a major element of the consultation process was a Conference in Newcastle, Co. Down, on 29 March 1995 which was attended by some 240 representatives of local bodies. In addition to the Conference, a total of 150 written submissions were received in response to a general invitation for interested parties to comment on the structure and content of the Programme. Similarly, in the border counties of Ireland, the Consultation Conference which was held in Ballyconnell on 20 April was attended by over 200 delegates, including participation from across the border in Northern Ireland. In addition to the two Government-sponsored Conferences, a further Conference was organised on behalf of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Policy, in conjunction with the European Commission. The impetus for the conference came from a Joint initiative of Northern Ireland's three MEPs, who had been closely associated with the work of the Task Force from the outset. The Conference, which brought together a very broad range of interests from both Northern Ireland and the border counties, was an important opportunity for the European Institutions to express, at the highest level, their ongoing support for the developing peace process. It was addressed, for the European Parliament, by Mr Gutiérrez Díaz, Vice President, and Mr Speciale, Chairman of the Regional Committee, and for the European Commission, by both President Santer and Mrs Wulf-Mathies, Commissioner for Regional Policies.

Further consultative exercises involving the voluntary and community sector were organised in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and in Ireland, by the Community Workers' Co-operative in association

¹ The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the Management Committee for Community Initiatives. The definitive text of the guidelines was finally adopted by the Commission on 16 May 1995.

with the Combat Poverty Agency. The views expressed during the extensive consultation arrangements, together with the submissions made to the EU Task Force, have proved invaluable in drafting this Programme.

1.3 In the following sections, detailed proposals are outlined for the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. These proposals are structured in a manner which reflects a standard ex-ante evaluation (or "prior appraisal") approach: the rationale of the Programme is outlined, followed by the aims of the Programme, its structure (individual measures and the proposed implementation mechanisms), objectives and key indicators. Finally appraisal, monitoring and evaluation arrangements are described.

CHAPTER 2 - RATIONALE

2.0 RATIONALE

2.1 In drawing together proposals for the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation the relevant authorities in both Member States have taken into account the overwhelming need to maintain the momentum for peace, the prevailing economic and social conditions in the eligible areas, the priorities set for the Initiative by the Commission, the results of the prior appraisal and the outcome of the consultation arrangements. All of these have combined to provide the rationale for the Programme.

Maintaining the Momentum for Peace

2.2 It was the opinion of the Special EU Task Force that "the European Union has a clear interest and vital role to play in maintaining the momentum for peace by means of a special support programme for Northern Ireland and the border counties". Indeed there is a forceful argument that the single most important constraint on Northern Ireland's economic and social development has been the existence of the community conflict in the region. During the 25 years of violent conflict, strenuous efforts were made by both Member State Governments to alleviate the worst effects of violence on the fabric of society. From a European Union perspective, Northern Ireland has been designated an Objective 1 region partly because of the adverse impact of community conflict on the socio-economic make-up of the region. The effects of violence have been felt at a number of levels, most tragically in the loss of over 3,000 lives. The conflict also had the malignant effect of polarising the Communities in Northern Ireland, which in turn has led to increased physical segregation of the population along religious lines, hampering efforts to promote cross-community contact and reconciliation, impeding the functioning of the labour market and making it more difficult to secure equality of employment opportunities. The Northern Ireland economy suffered immense adverse effects from the years of continued conflict. For example a recent report² assessing the economic impact of the conflict estimated that between 1973 and 1990 manufacturing employment fell by some 36% as a direct result of continuing violence. In addition, the report estimated the annual cost to the Northern Ireland economy of the conflict at around £350 million. Furthermore, the report also highlighted the considerable detrimental effects on the tourism industry.

² The Economic Impact of the Northern Ireland Conflict, January 1994. DKM Economic Consultants.

Tourist revenues plummeted to such an extent that by 1992 revenue from tourism (after adjusting for inflation) was only 13% above 1967 levels. The overwhelming need to maintain the momentum for peace therefore forms the rationale underpinning this Programme. This section concentrates on how it is intended to achieve this objective.

Economic and Social Conditions

- 2.3 Both Northern Ireland and Ireland suffer from a range of fundamental economic and social difficulties. It is not the intention here to explore these weaknesses in-depth since they have already been discussed and documented at length in the Northern Ireland Single Programming Document (1994-1999) and in the Community Support Framework - Ireland (1994-1999). A synopsis of the most salient points is attached at Annex 1. The importance of the socio-economic difficulties in the context of the Peace Initiative is that disadvantage often feeds and sustains the conflict: it is frequently the most deprived areas which have suffered most and been most involved in the conflict. It is axiomatic, therefore, that socio-economic difficulties must be tackled if the peace process is to be embedded. Chief among these difficulties are high levels of unemployment (with a resulting need to encourage trade, job opportunities, training and investment) and social deprivation (requiring assistance for communities and individuals to break the cycle of disadvantage).

The Initiative Guidelines

- 2.4 In examining actions to be taken which will best underpin the peace process, the Member States concerned are not working from a blank sheet. A consultation exercise has already been undertaken by the Commission and the Guidelines propose certain priorities and measures. In general these are endorsed by both Governments. It is therefore agreed that, to underpin the peace and reconciliation process and to exploit the new opportunities and additional needs arising from the improved environment, the following priorities should be addressed:-

- * boosting economic growth and employment
- * promoting the improvement of the social and physical environment in urban and rural areas
- * exploiting opportunities for cross-border development
- * promoting pathways to reconciliation by encouraging social inclusion
- * enhancing existing facilities to promote productive investment and industrial development

It is also recognised that the Programme should benefit all communities in an equitable and balanced way while focusing more particularly on those areas and sections of the population most affected by the conflict and suffering most acute deprivation.

Prior Appraisal

In drawing together the proposals for the Programme, both Member States worked closely with the prior appraisers and took full account of the conclusions of their review. A copy of the salient points is attached at Annex 2.

The Consultation Process

- 2.5 As noted at paragraph 2.1, an important element in the *raison d'être* of the Programme is the outcome of the consultation process. The prospect of a Special Support Programme stimulated an incredible amount of interest in the eligible areas. This consultation process was welcomed by both Governments and was particularly valuable because of its inclusive nature. It was the overwhelming opinion of the majority of those consulted that a special programme was needed which would specifically address the need to maintain the momentum for peace. In addition grass roots community involvement was considered essential. Furthermore, those consulted emphasised that given the uniqueness of this "special" programme, the means of delivery should be equally innovative. This particular view is reflected in Chapter 4 of this programme document. Those consulted fully endorsed the priorities for the Initiative set by the Commission and its view that the Initiative should have an immediate and visible impact on the ground.

Northern Ireland

- 2.6 In Northern Ireland, consultation took the following form:-
- (i) Departmental discussions with as many as possible of the key groups which might be affected by the Programme;
 - (ii) a public advertisement placed in local papers asking any organisation wishing to make proposals on the content of the Programme to submit these to the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) before 14 April 1995; and
 - (iii) a conference held in Newcastle on 29 March 1995.

The following paragraphs summarise the main points made at the Conference and in the wider consultation.

The Newcastle Conference

2.7 At the Conference -

- (i) Consensus was almost complete on the issue of Social Inclusion. This was recognised by all workshops as the pathway to peace and reconciliation, the condition for a new beginning, the prerequisite for success in all the other priorities. More than a priority, it was seen as a value - the fundamental value which must underpin the entire Programme and for many, against which other actions should be audited. But it was also a task to be accomplished, an operational priority which all participants saw as fundamental.

The following were suggested as priority measures:-

capacity building, development of self-confidence, employment of socially excluded people and groups, development of strategic models of community investment, and pilot action programmes. Moreover, early years provision and actions targeted on youth were frequently cited in discussion as key issues.

- (ii) There was one very significant divergence within the consultation exercise on the nature of actions meriting most expenditure. This was between the Productive Investment/Industrial Development workshops and the others. And lesser expressions of the same tension were also evident to some extent in the Cross-border and Rural Development workshops.

The divergence here was between those for whom the immediate priority was to regenerate the economy so providing the conditions of growth necessary to underpin peace, reconciliation and inclusiveness and those for whom this particular Community Initiative should pursue Social Inclusion directly. Both groups felt their priority should take the lion's share of resources. This division emerged as the most significant, substantive issue which still required resolution through further consultation and reflection.

This was not an argument about ends however. Even though the language of each discourse was profoundly different, this was essentially about means: how best to pursue peace and reconciliation. While supporting Social Inclusion as both a priority and a horizontal theme, the Productive Investment/Industrial Development workshop saw their own priority as the most effective means to attain these goals. They argued that this Initiative must address economic issues as well. They would not appear content to look

at other Initiatives for assistance. They were clear that peace gave new opportunities for investment and hence for peace, reconciliation and inclusion.

- (iii) Cross-border Development and Employment were seen, like Social Inclusion, as both priorities in their own right and as horizontal themes.

Employment was seen mainly as "creating jobs" - not as training. It was crucial that the Employment Priority should be pursued with vigour in its own right, and should involve radical, proactive measures that result in more jobs, particularly for those most excluded from society. It was seen as very important in rural areas and radical local employment initiatives were favoured in this regard.

Cross-border Development, it was felt, should not be confined to border areas, even if it should be concentrated there. But the theme did not emerge as strongly as might have been anticipated.

- (iv) No clear indication on the issue of the balance of funding was given beyond a call that Social Inclusion and Productive Investment take the bigger share. The discussion, in truth, did not in general reach this level of detail.
- (v) If there was virtually total consensus on the five main priority themes, and wide agreement on the comparative weight of Social Inclusion relative to these, then in general there remained insufficient clarity on prioritisation of measures to be pursued under each theme and on the linkages between the themes.
- (vi) Many preferred to defer prioritisation of measures to the local level at the stage of implementation. Some suggested a compromise, preferring some form of classical sub-programme. Others, while preferring to defer prioritisation of measures to implementation stage, felt the local level alone could not decide everything.
- (vii) The majority preference for the local was not without ambiguity. Many participants, representing non-Governmental agencies, preferred a community-based approach. But some workshops, notably Cross-border and Productive Investment/Industrial Development, also pointed out the importance of existing structures, particularly existing local development structures involving District Councils. And the Rural Development Group saw a role for the

emerging Local Action Groups (LAGs) throughout the region and for District Councils.

(viii) There was significant support for a parallel regional approach whereby regional partnerships would manage forms of funding and certain participants felt more traditional sub-programming mechanisms could, for some issues, be envisaged.

(ix) It was evident that certain difficulties could be posed where local and community-based partnerships refer to or overlap on the same "area". In short, how large is the "local" market for area partnerships? Would more than one dissipate local efforts? A commitment to a single area partnership embracing all relevant interests and with a special inclusion of community-based interests might prove useful. The issue then becomes the choice of reference area and how to balance all interests while prioritising a bottom-up, community approach in the spirit of Social Inclusion. Whether District Council areas are the suitable reference area remains, on the basis of the conference, open for discussion: at any rate, some flexibility seems to be preferred, and there was a clear feeling that areas must be sufficiently small to engage grass-roots participation. If a plurality of partnerships pertaining to the same area is to be considered, then some kind of functional differentiation between them might be desirable. But this poses disadvantages as well: a holistic and integrated approach might be lost and quasi specialised local agencies may take the place of genuine bottom-up development.

Despite the practical issues to be resolved, the idea of partnership commanded widespread consensus at the conference. Almost a value of solidarity, it was considered by most participants as the logical articulation not merely of the Social Inclusion priority but indeed of other priorities too. The Productive Investment/Industrial Development workshop also thought in terms of partnerships, albeit in the industrial context of linkages of collaboration and co-operation between enterprises large and small and research establishments.

(x) The issue of monitoring was linked closely to the structure of the Programme itself. Most agreed on the need for quantifiable and qualitative benchmarks. Visibility, additionality, measurability, accountability emphasised by speakers from Government and the European Commission alike provoked no protests but in general this was not the language of the conference. And yet it was recognised that these most all be part of the Programme and that monitoring must pay heed to them.

The question of who should monitor, like the question of who should implement, was inevitably bound up with the issue of Inclusion. The preferred option seemed to be to involve all significant groups, Governments, non-Governmental organisations and social partners and the European Commission, in monitoring and managing the Programme. Articulated in its most systematic form this would involve a single merged monitoring and consultative committee made up of both Governments, the European Commission and all significant actors on a representative basis. But for many participants variations of this were acceptable. The details mattered less and the promise of transparency, fairness, and effectiveness sufficed.

- (xi) A final, major issue related to participants' desire for speedy actions capable of giving rise to long-term positive effects. Speed and sustainability as major determinants of the choice of actions (and groups) to be supported will have implications for prioritisation of expenditure. The conference did not get to grips with this issue.

Overall Conclusions

A considerable degree of consensus was reached regarding the Initiative. Conference delegates emphasised that the programme of actions should be focused on the overall aim of promoting peace and reconciliation, and there was a strong plea that the funding under the Peace Initiative be truly additional. However, there was little consensus on the division of funding between priorities or on the means of delivery. Delegates did however emphasise that funding should be targeted on areas/people most disadvantaged/affected by the conflict and that any delivery mechanisms chosen should include considerable grass-roots involvement.

Wider Consultation within Northern Ireland

- 2.8 In addition to the Newcastle Conference, over 150 submissions were received by Government as a result of the public advertisement mentioned at paragraph 2.6 above. Departments also had discussions with key groups. Although a few references to submissions are given below, it should be emphasised that the bodies quoted were only some of many organisations which forwarded comments and the fact that they are quoted here gives them no special prominence.
- 2.9 The voluntary sector in Northern Ireland welcomed the emphasis placed on social inclusion in the Guidelines. The Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust advocated that "the ethos of social inclusion should form the trademark of the Special Programme". The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action referred to social

inclusion as the "driving force" behind the new Initiative, and viewed social inclusion as the underpinning theme throughout the initiative. Similarly, a number of Women's groups/associations in Northern Ireland emphasised "social exclusion as a major negative factor in our society", highlighting a number of sources of social exclusion in Northern Ireland including gender, ethnic origin and disability. The women's groups commented that social exclusion in Northern Ireland, whether on a political, cultural or religious basis - has been exacerbated by the problems of twenty five years of conflict. These views are reflected in the strategic framework of the Programme - the promotion of the social inclusion of those who are at the margins of social and economic life is seen as a key objective towards achieving the strategic aim of the Programme.

2.10 The views of Northern Ireland's business community and employers' organisations are also important considerations behind the Programme's rationale. While welcoming the overall thrust of the Guidelines and "the crucial objective of reconciliation", the CBI Northern Ireland emphasised that a strong focus on employment creation would be desirable, and viewed "employment as being a major contribution to reconciliation". In addition, the CBI NI advocated that by creating employment certain measures can contribute to each of the other development priorities set by the Commission. Similarly, the Institute of Directors emphasised that "economic development leading to employment and prosperity is itself a motivation to continue the peace". Furthermore, the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, particularly emphasised the need to target the problem of long-term unemployment. With these views in mind, exploiting the opportunities and addressing the needs arising from the peace process in order to boost economic growth and social and economic regeneration is a further strategic objective of this initiative.

Consultation in the Border Counties

2.11 In the border counties, the consultation process involved:-

- an invitation to the Border Regional Authority to make a submission; a considerable amount of work involving a series of meetings was carried out by the Authority and its EU Operational Committee, which includes representatives of the Local Authorities, the social partners and the community and voluntary sector and a detailed submission was made;

- a conference held in Ballyconnell on 20 April 1995; and
- discussions with a range of groups in the region.

2.12 Within the regional administrative structure recently introduced in Ireland the eligible area in Ireland, consisting of the border counties of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo, has been formed into the Border Regional Authority area. Unlike the other seven regional authority areas in Ireland it does not form a homogenous unit, being principally defined by the border it shares with Northern Ireland. In many ways the individual counties comprising the Border Region have a greater affinity with their counterparts directly across the border than with other regions in Ireland. It is not so remarkable, therefore, that the views expressed by Northern representative bodies were echoed across the border not only in the conclusions arising from the workshops involved in the Ballyconnell Conference but also in the course of written and oral submissions. The views, although emanating from diverse bodies, without exception supported the broad thrust of the five priorities set out by the Task Force and enshrined in the Guidelines.

2.13 The Social Inclusion Workshop at the Ballyconnell Conference considered that Social Inclusion should be the biggest priority within the Initiative and that activities should concentrate on development of people. Social Inclusion should be taken into account in all Measures under the Initiative. To assist in this process Social Inclusion should be taken into account in the output and performance indicators from the beginning. The Workshop concluded that an emphasis on Social Inclusion could make considerable progress towards reconciliation.

2.14 The Urban/Rural Regeneration Workshop stressed the need for a bottom up approach and that the funding should be seen as clearly additional. Funding must reach the most disadvantaged and should not only build bridges between the border communities but also build bridges within communities. Again, Social Inclusion was felt to be the most important theme of the conference and one which should be included not only in this measure but in all measures.

2.15 The Cross-border Development Workshop saw the need for the Initiative to be "people-oriented". Projects should be directed towards young people, community groups and the disabled. It was particularly desirable to involve the young people as the older age groups tended to be more entrenched in their views. Consequently, there was greater scope for reconciliation among young people. Large

infrastructural projects would quickly use up all the limited resources available under the Initiative and should be excluded. However, there should be room for small-scale projects which would directly benefit local people. This is particularly true in the case of improvements to county roads and would also include local North/South electricity interconnectors.

2.16 The Productive Investment Workshop stressed that priorities should be locally-driven, particularly where potential for market expansion was identified, and not be entirely constrained by national policy perspectives.

2.17 The Employment Workshop agreed that activity should be locally-concentrated and controlled. Activity should be on a small scale, well-publicised, transparently administered, and the chosen agency should be accessible to all. The priority was to create long-term sustainable jobs, particularly in the services sector.

2.18 In its submission, the Border Regional Authority said that it regarded the following considerations as especially important:-

(i) the need to use the Initiative to promote reconciliation, both cross-border and cross-community, which must ultimately occur between people, i.e. people meeting each other, doing business with each other, exchanging experience, addressing shared problems, and visiting each other's regions;

(ii) the need to focus the Initiative on communities, areas, problems and opportunities associated with peace process, and not merely on socio-economic development generally however worthy this may be;

(iii) the need to differentiate the Initiative from the many EU-assisted national, regional and local development programmes operating in the Region;

(iv) the need to minimise further proliferation of new institutional structures in the already "crowded landscape" of development in the Region. In particular account must be taken of the existing activities of national government departments and agencies in the Region, of local authorities, and of new local development bodies (LEADER Groups, County Enterprise Boards and Partnership Companies) and of programmes of the IFI.

2.19 The Authority said that the two key aspects of strategy relate to what the Initiative should fund, and how it should be managed. The Authority's views on these matters were as follows:-

(i) with regard to content, while adopting all five EU priorities, the Authority would organisationally encapsulate these within the 2 areas of:-

- * urban and rural regeneration (broadly defined);
- * cross-border development.

The other priorities, namely employment, social inclusion and productive/industrial development should be incorporated as horizontal themes within these two, and in particular should be used as project selection criteria under the Sub-programmes.

(ii) regarding management of the Initiative, the Authority proposed a genuinely "bottom-up" approach whereby organisations and communities in the Region can be involved in decisions about the Programme over and above what occurs in mainstream Operational Programmes. This would facilitate the requirements for:-

- * a participative, inclusive approach;
- * differentiation from other Operational Programmes.
- * minimal addition to existing administrative structures;
- * empowering, inspiring and energising demoralised communities.

2.20 These views are only a small sample of the many submissions received by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Belfast and the Department of Finance in Dublin. However, the overwhelming consensus of all those consulted endorsed the view that the prospect of lasting peace requires particular efforts to overcome the effects of the disruption of normal economic and social relations. By addressing these challenges, the Programme aims to help secure a lasting peace.