



**An Chartlann Náisiúnta**  
**National Archives**

**Reference Code:** 2021/96/25

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Accession Conditions:** Open

**Copyright:** National Archives, Ireland.  
May only be reproduced with  
the written permission of the  
Director of the National  
Archives.

PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF IRELAND  
TO THE EUROPEAN UNION  
AVENUE GALILEE 5  
1030 BRUSSELS

TEL: (322) 218.06.03

FAX: 218.13.47/219.42.66

cc PST  
RSS; FF-Lay  
AS O'Uglin  
AJF Fahey  
M Masey  
E Murray (6 ret)  
J...  
Amb L...  
Connellon AJ

TO : DFA, Anglo-Irish

ATTENTION: Gerry Corr

FROM : Peter Gunning

TOTAL NO. OF PAGES (INCLUDING THIS PAGE): 4

Attached for information is a copy we have obtained of the intervention to be made by the Commission during the EP debate in Strasbourg this week on support for the peace process in Northern Ireland.

I understand that it went through a number of drafts over the weekend in consultations between various Commission services, including the Cabinet of Commissioner Flynn. The texts accompanied by a sidebar represent additions that were made in this process.

29 September 1994



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Member of cabinet  
Office of Bruce Millan

4754505

### THE PEACE PROCESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Two weeks ago, you, Mr President, made an eloquent and moving statement before this House on the peace process in Northern Ireland. You emphasised that the European Union is built on values; values of peace and democracy and of respect for diversity. These are values which we all share but they can never be taken for granted. They have to be continually reasserted and applied.

In Northern Ireland we are now witnessing the restoration of these values after years of bitter conflict, a conflict which has blighted the lives of people in Northern Ireland but whose impact has been felt further afield. On behalf of the Commission I want to pay tribute to the people of Northern Ireland who, even at the most difficult times, never lost confidence that progress could only be made through dialogue and reconciliation. We commend their courage.

We are now entering a new era. It is undoubtedly a difficult time and many issues remain to be resolved. But at last there is the prospect that their resolution will come through the normal democratic processes. There can surely be no other way.

The Joint Declaration of the United Kingdom and Irish Prime Ministers on 15 December 1993, which launched the present peace process, recognised the need to lay down a framework for peace based on a number of key principles articulated by both governments. It is worth noting that point three of the Joint Declaration recognises that "the development of Europe will, of itself, require new approaches to serve interests common to both parts of the island of Ireland, and to Ireland and the United Kingdom as partners in the European Union."

The Commission has always been keenly aware of the implications of the situation in Northern Ireland, not only for the citizens of the Member States concerned, but for the European Union as a whole. President Delors has on a number of occasions declared the Commission's full commitment to the peace and reconciliation process, most recently in a public statement

following the IRA's announcement of a complete cessation of violence. In this declaration the President reiterated the Commission's view that the achievement of peace in Northern Ireland would bring many social and economic benefits, not only to the region and the Member states concerned, but also to the European Union as whole. He indicated that the Commission would consider, in consultation with the two Member States most directly concerned, how best its continued support and assistance can be shown through additional financial and other measures.

The Union has of course already been giving substantial support to Northern Ireland, principally through the Structural Funds as part of the Union's policy of economic and social cohesion. A feature of this assistance has been the need to address the disruption to and the distortion of the region's economy caused by the conflict. High levels of unemployment and urban deprivation in Northern Ireland not only damage the lives of the people concerned but they nourish feelings of bitterness and mistrust.

The all-Ireland dimension and cross-border links have been an important feature of the Structural Funds. But we have also focussed funds directly on community reconciliation and urban regeneration, targeting them on the areas of greatest disadvantage. Northern Ireland received over 1 billion ECU from the Structural Funds between 1989 and 1993 and the Commission agreed a six year programme at the end of July with European Union funding of over 1.2 billion ECU. Further assistance under Community Initiatives will be agreed in the coming months. These include INTERREG for cross-border economic cooperation and discussions are currently under way with the authorities concerned to boost the resources available for the programme for the Northern Ireland-Republic border.

Prolonged and lasting peace will undoubtedly be of benefit to the economies of both-sides of the border. Business leaders are keen to build on this potential and a delegation from employers' organisations in the North and the South was in Brussels yesterday to discuss with the Commission ways in which cross-border trade can be increased. TransEuropean Networks too have a role to play and funding for cross-border transport and energy links is foreseen in the Structural Funds programmes.

However while the Structural Funds are the main source of European Union support, our contribution to the International Fund for Ireland demonstrates the Union's recognition of the very particular situation in Northern Ireland. The Fund was set up by the two governments following the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1986. It is unique in that it is run by an independent non-political board and that it is entirely dedicated to the promotion of

reconciliation between the two communities through dialogue and social and economic advance.

The International Fund for Ireland helps local communities to take control of their own social and economic circumstances, specifically in the areas most severely affected by the troubles, usually by providing grants which generate further support from public and private sources. The Commission is represented on the Board with observer status as are the United States, Canada and New Zealand which also contribute to the Fund. The US and the EU are by far the biggest contributors, on a broadly equal basis. Australia has recently indicated that it will contribute to the Fund.

The 15MECU annual contribution which the European Union has been making to the International Fund for Ireland has an important symbolic and political, as well as practical, impact. This is why the Commission took the political initiative to give the EU contribution a legal basis for our continuing commitment and we are grateful to the Parliament for its support.

To underline the EU's support for the peace process in the light of the recent historic developments, the Commission agreed last week as a first step to propose that the contribution for 1995 should be increased to 20MECU. We will propose an equivalent contribution in 1996 and 1997, to reach a total of 60MECU for the three years. I am sure we can count on the Parliament's support for this too.

This should be seen as first practical response towards helping the peace process. The Commission, with the help of a newly created task force and in consultation with the Member States most closely involved, is examining how to develop its policies further and refocus them in support of reconciliation with a view to proposing an appropriate package of measures in a second stage.

In closing, Mr President, may I again pay tribute to those who are working for lasting peace in Northern Ireland. The path will not be an easy one but all those involved are assured of the continuing support and commitment of the rest of the European Union.