

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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RECONCILIATION FUND

Q59 Do you consider that the Fund as presently constituted fulfills our commitments to reconciliation in the Good Friday Agreement?

The government is working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agreement. Developing reconciliation and mutual understanding between and within communities in Northern Ireland and between North and South is an integral part of the Agreement.

The importance that the Government places on the work of reconciliation is reflected in a sizeable increase in the Subhead F1 Reconciliation Fund from £265,000 in 1998 to £2m in 1999.

As part of the Good Friday Agreement, participants undertook to "positively examine the case for enhanced financial assistance for the work of reconciliation". On that basis, a Government Decision in April 1999 increased the size of the Fund eightfold to £2 million. **The budget for 2000 is also £2 million.**

Q60 Do you envisage the Reconciliation Fund having an indefinite life?

The Agreement has afforded people the space within which they can discuss their concerns and fears. Building relationships between divided communities also takes time and investment.

It is therefore envisaged that the financial support of the Department for reconciliation projects will be required for the foreseeable future.

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Q61 What is the decision process and the criteria used in deciding which organisations to support?

Once applications are received, they are initially reviewed by the Department to assess whether or not they meet the eligibility criteria set out. The eligibility criteria as listed in the guidelines to the Fund are:

- reconciliation through education; courses; dialogue and culture;
- developing and maintaining meaningful cross-border links;
- promoting improved Anglo-Irish relations;
- promoting cross-community and inter-denominational activities;
- promotion of tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity;
- academic research aimed at promoting reconciliation, and
- contribution to political reconciliation.

On successful completion of the above stage, the applications are reviewed on a periodic basis by an Advisory Committee established for this specific purpose. The Committee comprises of representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform and the Department of the Taoiseach, as well as representation from the International Fund for Ireland. Recommendations for funding (partial or complete) follow consideration of the following:

- the strength of cross-community and cross-border elements projects contain
- the level of funding available each year
- the number and quality of applications submitted.

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The overriding aim is to ensure as widespread and equitable distribution of the fund as possible based on merit of the individual proposals. It is also considered important to assist small organisations involved in peace work.

The Committee then forwards its recommendations to the Minister for Foreign Affairs for final decision.

Q62 What financial controls are in place for the Fund?

Every group which is considered for positive funding is also visited by an official who makes a report to the Advisory Committee prior to any final decision regarding the organisation.

As a precondition of funding, all applicants receiving grants of over IR£5,000 undertake to provide audited accounts and/or financial reports (as relevant) at the end of the financial year.

The Fund is also continually reviewed in order to ensure best practice with regard to financial controls.

Q63 Will the Irish Peace Institute be receiving a grant again this year ?

I will be shortly announcing the next round of grants from this fund and can only say at this stage that this group are being actively considered. As the Chairman is aware last year this group made 2 applications for funding hich were successful, they were awarded a total of £48,000

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