

FROM: PS/Ian Pearson
08 September 2004

cc: See Distribution List

Chris Stewart – E

MEETINGS WITH MEPs, 6 SEPTEMBER 2004 – BAIRBRE DE BRUN

Ian Pearson had an introductory meeting with Bairbre de Brun. Tony Canavan, Bill Pauley, you and I supported the Minister.

2. The Minister said he was keen for all three MEPs to make use of existing resources: if Bairbre de Brun needed any assistance or information, she was welcome to call on officials. Tony Canavan explained that the office in Brussels kept in close contact with MEPs' advisers and produced analysis papers both on a regular and an ad hoc basis. They were also happy to provide other briefing on request. de Brun asked if the briefing prepared in February could be sent to her. **[Action: Tony Canavan please]**. She said that once she had her office up and running, she would get her assistant to make contact with the OFMDFM Brussels office.

4. de Brun asked what the timescale was on Peace II. Bill Pauley explained that the consultation closed on Friday. A cross-border Committee of officials would then study the results and put forward proposals. Departments wanted the response by 17 September, so that they could go back to Brussels by the end of the month. The reason for the tight timescale was that approval was needed from both the Commission and the Parliament before the end of the year. The mid-term evaluation of Peace II had been completed, and the intention was to use that to make changes. For example, much of the consultation had revealed demand for a greater focus on reconciliation, and a simpler programme. Efforts had been made to streamline the process, but more could be done. There was an issue with funding for Local Strategic Partnerships. de Brun said that Sinn Fein had a paper of proposals for improving the Peace II programme: for example, they wanted more clarification on how "reconciliation" was defined. Bill Pauley agreed to send her the definition used by the Committee. **[Action: Bill Pauley please]**. de Brun asked about the



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monitoring of the programme. Bill Pauley said the Department had built up a very good database taken from the application forms.

5. de Brun asked about progress on the rest of the structural funds. The Minister said there was still some way to go. The key issue for Northern Ireland was limitations on state aids. He was keen to work with MEPs on that issue.

6. de Brun thanked the Minister and noted that she would want to discuss rural development with him at a later date.

Signed

CATHY CLEMENTS

Private Secretary

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cc: PS/Ian Pearson (B&L) – O
Paul Sweeney – E
Tony Canavan – E
Bill Pauley – E
Alan Whysall – O
Jonathan Margetts – O
Alison Coey – E
William Dukelow – E
Paul Geddis – E
Gareth Nicholson - E



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