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annual report online 1999



Chairman's
Statement

I was appointed Chairman of Údarás na Gaeltachta on the 6th January 2000 and consequently writing this statement became my responsibility even though the report relates to 1999.

Economic Development

The overall aim of Údarás na Gaeltachta's strategy for the Gaeltacht is to facilitate and support the development of strong, economically-viable Irish speaking communities where people can reach their full potential and enjoy a high quality of life.

Over the last 10 years there has been a 60% increase in the numbers working in manufacturing industry in the Gaeltacht where about 28% of the workforce are now employed. This represents a considerable achievement for a rural and peripheral area and compares very favourably with the experience nationally.

It is a situation that could hardly have been foreseen ten or even five years ago. Full-time employment in Gaeltacht companies has risen by 30% over five years, from 6,296 at the beginning of 1995 to 8,183 at the end of 1999.

1999 was an unprecedented year in the experience of Údarás na Gaeltachta's job creation activities: overall, a healthy level of 1,042 new jobs were created, the availability of job creation projects was comparable to previous years but, for the first time in the history of the organisation, job creation would have been considerably better but for labour shortages in some Gaeltacht areas. This suggests that we may have reached an employment plateau in manufacturing industry.

For the first time, there is now a distinct possibility that the job creation figures have peaked and that the number of new jobs created in future will not match the performance of previous years. We have reached the stage where it would not be prudent to approve any major new projects for certain locations as this would distort the local labour market and adversely affect existing companies.

Job creation policy can now place a greater focus on the quality of jobs rather than quantity of jobs. We have the opportunity to be more selective and this will enable us to attract higher quality jobs in line with the growing educational achievements and career aspirations of the young people of the Gaeltacht.

If we are to achieve our overall aim that people can reach their full potential and enjoy a high quality of life, new industries must emerge alongside the old. To achieve this we will need to take full advantage of what modern technology has to offer in the fields of computing, telecommunications, data processing, eCommerce, educational technology services and other knowledge and information-based activities.

There have been significant developments in recent years in developing a non-manufacturing service-based economy within the Gaeltacht in the audio visual, multimedia and cultural tourism areas but much more needs to be done if we are to reverse the outward migration of the most talented people, long a characteristic of almost all Gaeltacht communities.

The development of a modern services based sector within the Gaeltacht represents an enormous development challenge for Údarás na Gaeltachta comparable to the situation faced over thirty years ago. The challenge at that time of developing a manufacturing base was successfully met and sets a benchmark for the development of an information based economy in the years ahead.

It has to be said that there are no ready models as to how this can be done. To the extent that we work out successful responses to the challenge we will be breaking new ground from which other remote rural communities elsewhere in Ireland and Europe could benefit.

The most important and critical ingredient for the development of a modern economy is the availability of a young and educated work force: the Gaeltacht has this and we must ensure that it can retain it. But the Gaeltacht lacks many of the basic requirements central to the development of a modern economy. Many of the structural deficiencies within the Gaeltacht will take a number of years to rectify.

For example, there is a huge need to upgrade and modernise the Gaeltacht's physical, technological and educational infrastructure. There is also an urgent need to develop the social infrastructure where people can enjoy the kinds of services and lifestyles usually associated with urban areas while at the same time retaining all the advantages of a high quality and unique rural environment: there is a need to develop a number of town centres with increased shopping, social, leisure and entertainment facilities along with increased housing and living accommodation.

Language

The quality of infrastructure in the Gaeltacht will continue to be critical to the success of our efforts to push the economic benefits beyond the more advantaged, developed centres and to create new, modern services job opportunities.

While there have been considerable improvements in some areas in recent years as far as the quality of roads and telecommunications are concerned, much remains to be done as the efforts to date have been patchy and uneven.

Since the stated thrust of national development policy is now geared towards pushing a substantially greater proportion of new industrial investment towards the regions, we expect that the infrastructural investment programmes will now proceed apace. The success of the State development agencies in attracting job-creation enterprises to these areas depends on the upgrading of the infrastructure. The thirteen county 'Objective 1 Status' region offers a mechanism for achieving this throughout the qualifying 'half' of the country, which includes the Donegal, Mayo and Galway Gaeltachtaí.

We welcome the recent Government initiative to stimulate the deployment of broadband technology nation-ally. We have expressed concern in the past that the Gaeltacht was handicapped by the lack of a high quality telecommunications infrastructure and that our efforts to build a modern services sector could be further hampered if the National Broadband Access Network excludes the greater part of the Gaeltacht from these telecommunications highways.

Acknowledgements

We in Údarás na Gaeltachta would like to express our thanks to the various organisations with which we work closely – community groups, other State agencies and departments, local authorities, third-level institutions and language organisations. Údarás na Gaeltachta's collaboration with these bodies is not only on a local and national basis, but on a European and international level as well. We acknowledge the valuable relationships we have built up with these organisations over the years and look forward to enjoying their co-operation in the years ahead, for the benefit of all.

I would like to thank the members of the board of An tÚdarás. My thanks also to the management and staff for their continuing enthusiasm and commitment in promoting the aims and operations of Údarás na Gaeltachta.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tadhg Ó hEalaithe'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Tadhg Ó hEalaithe, Chairman

June 15th, 2000



Overview

1995 1996 1997 1998 1999

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Net Fixed Assets	IR£000	79,095	83,645	91,813	102,617	108,389
Net Current Assets	IR£000	53	(200)	(523)	(1,893)	(705)
Full-time employment		116	118	116	116	116
Salaries and Pay (a)	IR£000	3,275	3,571	3,651	3,809	4,043

Subsidiary Industries and Associate Industries

Údarás Investment in Share Capital	IR£000	2,062	1,604	1,618	2,074	4,413
Grants Approved	IR£000	4,173	5,117	4,773	5,541	3,432
Grants Paid	IR£000	4,163	3,524	4,699	3,457	5,554

Large Industries and Small Businesses

Grants Approved	IR£000	20,148	10,451	17,387	14,332	12,597
Grants Paid	IR£000	7,983	6,883	8,190	6,226	7,486

Employment in Assisted Industries

Full-time Employment		6,835	7,439	7,854	8,174	8,183
Seasonal & Part-time Employment		3,940	3,877	4,110	3,485	3,604

Buildings

Expenditure on Buildings	IR£000	9,516	6,676	10,143	13,542	9,199
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Exchequer Funding (EU Funding included)

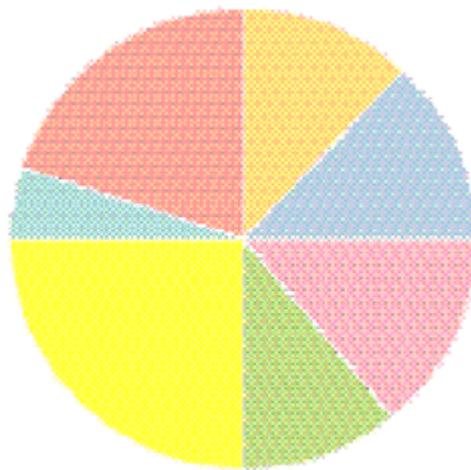
Grant-in-Aid - Current Expenditure	IR£000	2,490	2,642	3,000	3,205	3,450
Grant-in-Aid- Grants to Industry Advances/Grant-in-Aid - Capital Expenditure	IR£000	12,750	11,000	11,250	8,700	11,600
	IR£000	9,750	6,600	9,800	13,400	13,400

(a) Níl ranníocaíochtaí aoisliúntais san áireamh/Superannuation contributions not included

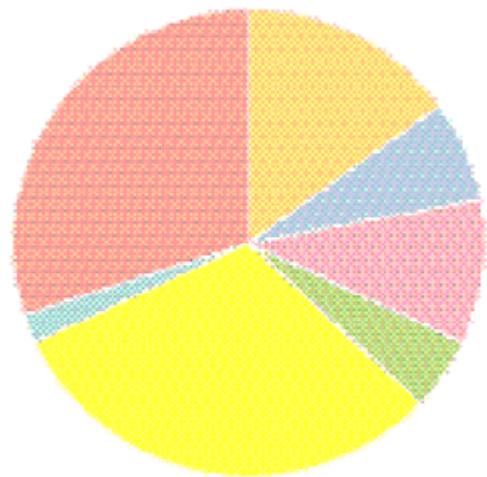
IR£1 = ≈1.2697

Full-time employment in assisted industries in 1999

New jobs created in 1999

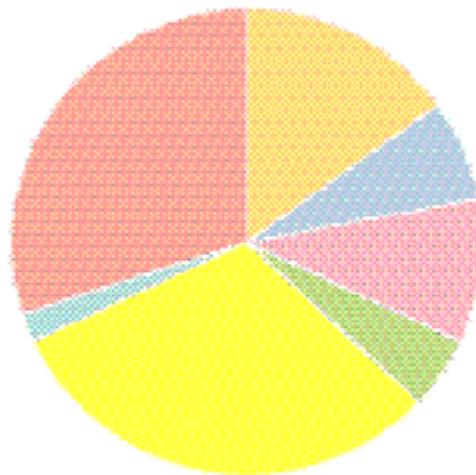


Total = 8,183



Total = 1,042

Grant approvals in 1999 by sector



Eochair [Key]

- Acmhainní Nádúrtha/*Natural Resources*
- Bia/*Food*
- Déantúsaíocht Eile/*Other Manufacturing*
- Teicstílí & Éadaitheoireacht/*Textiles & Clothing*
- Innealtóireacht Mheicniúil/*Engineering*
- Ruibéar & Plaistigh/*Rubber & Plastics*
- Seirbhísí/*Services*

Total = £16,029,079



Economy

In 1999, 1,042 new full-time jobs were created in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies, consolidating the record employment levels achieved in recent years. The new overall level of 8,183 full-time jobs is marginally above the previous year's all-time high, effectively representing a stabilisation in Gaeltacht employment.

Part-time and seasonal employment increased by 119 jobs to a new record high of 3,604 in 1999 (from 3,485 in 1998). Two significant movements within this figure are that the modern services sector regained most of the job losses incurred in 1998 with an increase of 167 jobs: fish farming and fish processing continued the trend from the previous year and a further 14 jobs were lost. (Fish-farming is projecting a major expansion in full and part-time employment by 2001.)

Job Approvals

Job approvals in 1999 were 1,117. This represents a drop from the high average level of approvals experienced in recent years. An indication of the overall economic well-being of the Gaeltacht (in line with the national experience) is that there is now limited scope in the Gaeltacht to absorb major projects.

Sources of Employment Growth

This strategy of 'capability building' is reinforced by the fact that in 1999 the existing employment base was again the major source of new jobs: 750 of the new jobs created are attributed to expansions in the existing industrial base while the remaining 292 jobs came from new industry.

As a result of strategies being pursued over the past ten years, significant numbers of jobs have been created in the emerging modern services sector. This has been achieved against a background of restricted opportunities because of infrastructural deficiencies for the attraction of certain types of modern services to an area such as the Gaeltacht. The modern services sector again experienced considerable buoyancy during 1999 with 325 new jobs coming on stream. Even when job losses are taken into account, the sector experienced growth of 14%.

The Operational Programme for Industry

The 1,042 jobs created on the ground is almost 75% above Údarás na Gaeltachta's annual target of 600 jobs under the Gaeltacht Sub-Programme of the Operational Programme for Industry. Over the five year period, the cumulative target for the Gaeltacht was the creation of 3,000 jobs: in fact, 5,947 jobs were created: almost double the target.

Cost per Job

The grant cost per job last year was £12,000 and the average cost per job over the past 5 years was £9,300.

In addition to capital grants, the cost per job reflects expenditure on training, employment, research and development grants excluding Measure 1/RTI. Cost per job in Údarás na Gaeltachta-assisted companies is generally in line with the national average for small to medium-sized industries.

Funding of Projects Approved

The 1,117 jobs approved in new projects and expansions will involve a total overall projected investment of approximately £51m including State assistance in excess of £19.2m (£16m in grant-aid and £3.2 in equity investment).

Local Development Initiatives

Over a five year period, part-time and seasonal employment increased from 3,298 at the beginning of 1995 to 3,604 in 1999: it is worth noting that in the first

half of the decade there was a major expansion in part-time employment, particularly due to the expansion of job/income enhancement opportunities in mariculture: a strategic priority for recent years has been to maintain these levels: this was achieved: at the end of decade, the employment figure of 3,604 working part-time or seasonally is almost twice the 1990 figure (1,890).

Part-time and seasonal employment is a significant part of Údarás na Gaeltachta's response to the income needs of communities and makes a particularly important impact in many of those communities where the Irish language is strongest as a community language.

In addition to part-time and seasonal employment, 28 Community Employment Schemes were administered in co-operation with FÁS and local communities. These employed 521 people and had a value in excess of £4m. In addition to the huge contribution that they make in the development and enhancement of community recreational, heritage and environmental projects, these schemes also play an important role in maintaining local morale and improving the fabric of community life.

Property Portfolio

The diversity of the property portfolio reflects the diverse nature of Údarás na Gaeltachta's role as a regional development agency. The portfolio includes not only a substantial holding of industrial estates, factories and office premises but also three airstrips with ancillary services and a range of specifically commissioned properties. These include the Mara Beo aquarium in An Daingean and specialised fish processing facilities in Kerry, Galway and Donegal; craft centres in An Daingean, An Spidéal and Cill Charthaigh; television studios in An Daingean, the Telegael facilities, TV training studios and the Ros na Rún soap opera set in An Spidéal.

At the end of 1999, An tÚdarás had 254,000 square metres of industrial space, of which 28,300 square metres (11%) were unoccupied. 15,200 square metres (6%) are in poor condition, which leaves 5% of space ready for new projects.

1,433 square metres of new space was completed in 1999.

New Buildings

There was continuous demand throughout the year for project space in every region of the Gaeltacht with few empty buildings available and very little space currently in the Cois Fharráige area of Co. Galway or in the Baile Bhuirne/ Baile Mhic Íre area of Co. Cork. In excess of £1m has been allocated for two factory buildings in Baile Bhuirne to accommodate the expansion of two existing enterprises (Folláin Teo and Mark Éire BV Teo).

There is a new enterprise unit earmarked for Oileán Chléire.

There is a growing demand for buildings suitable for businesses other than the traditional industrial ones: for example, demand for office space and space suitable for computer businesses is growing steadily.

Good progress was made in the provision of new enterprise units in lesser developed areas and work is either in progress or ready to start in: Carna, Casla and Tír an Fhia, Co. Galway; in Tearmann, Co. Donegal; Baile na Buaile, Co. Kerry and Oileán Chléire, Co. Cork

Plans are currently being prepared for new buildings at: Scríb, Co. Galway; Eachléim, Co. Mayo; Cill na Martra, Co. Cork; Dún Géagáin in Southwest Kerry.

An old knitting factory in Ros Muc, Co. Galway is being purchased with a view to redeveloping it.

Building Refurbishment

Work necessary to refurbish and modernise buildings constructed during the seventies was continued and 5,493 square metres were completed. There are still buildings to be refurbished in all parts of the Gaeltacht and this work will continue for some years yet.

Roofing

The roof replacement programme continued and 8,777 square metres of faulty or substandard roofs were replaced.

Industrial Estates

Plans are being prepared to redevelop and extend the estate in Tír an Fhia, Conamara. Arrangements were made to purchase land in order to facilitate this redevelopment. Development work was carried out on the industrial estates in Baile na Móna, Co. Donegal and Baile Bhuirne, Co. Cork.

Airstrips

Design and preplanning work was carried out for proposed airstrips for the islands of Tory, Inishboffin, Clare Island and Clifden on behalf of the Department of Arts, Culture, Gaeltacht and the Islands.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Head Office Development

Plans were prepared for a new multi-purpose boardroom at Head Office which will be built during 2000. The new boardroom is designed to facilitate training programmes, seminars, conferences and occasional public meetings.

A decision was taken to develop a new Business Park at Baile an Mhuilinn, close to An Daingean, which will provide space for services and computer projects and it is intended to transfer the Údarás na Gaeltachta offices to the same complex.

Community
and Culture

The preservation and strengthening of Irish as a living language in the communities of the Gaeltacht and its transmission to the next generation forms the basis of Údarás na Gaeltachta's policy. All of the organisation's activities have at their core a language maintenance and development objective. Recognising the fundamental role played by the community in the furtherance of this objective, many of the specific activities are rooted in community development and in community-based activities.

The Language and Culture development section administers a range of programmes aimed at promoting and developing the Irish language and culture. Among these are support schemes for Gaeltacht-based companies, naíonraí (pre-school groups), community arts, youth organisations, language learners, writers, community events and festivals.

1999 Highlights

Business in Irish (Gnó le Gaeilge)

Initiatives continued during the year to encourage Gaeltacht-based companies to use Irish in the advertising and labelling of goods and in their publicity material.

Irish language classes and courses through Irish

More than 60 Irish language courses and 'ciorcail chomhrá' (conversation groups) were organised to try to meet the massive demand from people wanting to learn Irish. Other social events were also organised through Irish. Part 2 of 'Abair Leat' (a handbook for Irish language teachers) was published in book and tape format. A short film on the use of the Irish language was produced by adult students from overseas. A language service (Seirbhísí Teanga Mhúscraí) was established in Múscraí in the West Cork Gaeltacht, in co-operation with the local development organisation, and Irish language training is to be provided through it for teachers involved in adult education.

In Carna, Co Galway, Irish language courses formed part of the EU INTEGRA programme. The courses consisted of television skills, business studies and tourism training and were attended by 16 local people.

Pre-Schools (naíonraí)

The naíonra (pre-school) training course run in 1998 was repeated in 1999 for naíonra directors in the west and was also delivered in Munster and Donegal. A total of 63 naíonra directors in the Gaeltacht are attending these courses, the purpose of which is to provide directors of naíonraí with recognised accreditation in this important area.

There were more than 800 children attending naíonraí in the Gaeltacht areas in 1999. Six new naíonraí were established in Donegal this year and the numbers of children attending in other regions rose significantly.

In co-operation with the Linguistics Institute of Ireland (Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann), a study of the benefits of naíonra attendance was published entitled Luathoideachas Trí Ghaeilge sa Ghaeltacht (Early Childhood Education through Irish in the Gaeltacht)

Youth Services

Youth services are seen as an informal educational medium for young people. There is a serious lack of Gaeltacht-based youth services and training in the current system. Although this has been recognised and will be addressed by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and by the Department of Education and Science, An tÚdarás has, in the meantime, established 'The Confederation of Gaeltacht Youth Organisations'. Assistance was also granted to

'Óige an Iarthair' - a youth leadership scheme in the West.

Partnership with the Arts Council (An Chomhairle Ealaíon)

A comprehensive community arts programme was ongoing during the year as a result of the partnership established with An Chomhairle Ealaíon in 1997. In our submission to The Arts Council for the period 1999-2001, An tÚdarás requested that the Gaeltacht be recognised as a region in its own right for funding purposes and that Irish language Gaeltacht-based arts be dealt with on their own merits. This submission was not accepted and funding for Irish language arts for the whole country received only a small increase (£150,000 or 0.3% increase). This compares with a 26.3% increase across the board in funding provided to An Chomhairle Ealaíon for this period.

Other Initiatives

In a move to increase support for language based arts, An tÚdarás established a subsidiary company, Suairc Teo, through which support funding was provided for 23 arts projects throughout the Gaeltacht. Some of these projects in turn attracted further funding from the Arts Council and other organisations.

Literary Competitions and Festivals

Seven Gaeltacht students who were awarded prizes in Gaeltacht-based literary competitions were also awarded prizes in 'Oireachtas na Gaeilge' competitions in 1999. Sponsorship and assistance is provided to a wide range of local festivals. These are, in effect, community efforts to promote heritage, culture and language.

Social Economy/Community Development

Further progress was made on the development of the social economy brief and a full-time executive was appointed in November to facilitate the further development of social service provision, working in close co-operation with Gaeltacht communities and the Community Development Officers.

Údarás na Gaeltachta co-ordinated a response from Connemara community groups to the invitation from the Western Health Board for submissions in respect of its ten year strategic plan for the provision of 'Primary Health Care Services'. The community groups' submission concentrated on the structure of services in Gaeltacht areas and the necessity to deliver these services through Irish. This was the only submission received by the Board from the general public.

On Inis Meáin, in the Aran Islands, progress is being made on the development of a holiday homes scheme and a tourism centre under the auspices of the local co-operative and a strategy for cultural tourism is being developed.

Grant assistance was provided to Comarchumann Inis Meáin Teo as part of an EU funded study into the development of new opportunities on the island based on marine resources. The work carried out will act as a foundation stone for the possible future development of a seaweed farming project and the co-operative has already obtained a farming licence.

Údarás na Gaeltachta is taking part in a study (in co-operation with Bus Éireann, An Post and an independent consultancy) on the improvement of passenger transport facilities in rural areas. The study is similar to work being carried out in other European countries under the EU VIRGIL programme.

Co-Operatives

During the year the Co-Operatives Management Grant Scheme was re-assessed and the level of grants were substantially increased in line with the new expanded community development role of the co-operatives within their communities. A new incentive/grant scheme was initiated to enable Co-Ops to address issues of social exclusion or disadvantage within their areas and funding was provided to some co-ops to enable them to clear historical liabilities arising from the provision of non-profit-making services in their areas. A new scholarship

scheme for trainee co-op managers was initiated in association with the Training Division of Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Centre for Co-Operative Studies in the National University of Ireland, Cork.

Muintearas

This education and training research project, established in 1980 at Tír an Fhia in the islands district of south west Connemara, is active in Galway, Mayo, Donegal and Kerry. Muintearas has particular expertise and experience in the areas of primary school education and vocational training at community level.

The project implements a wide range of training and education programmes which aim to upgrade personal skills in every sector of the community and to alleviate disadvantage in a rural comm-unity context and particularly in the education sector.

Within the spectrum of Muintearas activities are programmes in early childhood education, a support network for resource teachers, European Union vocational training programmes, the development of curriculum support materials, new technology communications training, special education support programmes, advisory services for young people, the development of skills in child-care and community employment programmes.

During last year special programmes were initiated and directed towards developing business and enterprise skills among women, computer and multi-media skills among young people and training people as language and class assistants for primary schools.

Muintearas is supported mainly by Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Department of Education and Science. It also generates significant income from European Union funded programmes.



European
Linkages

Mainstream Activities

Údarás na Gaeltachta's aims to strike a balance between economic objectives and social and cultural needs. In executing the industrial development aspect of its strategy, An tÚdarás implements the sub-programme for Gaeltacht Development under the Operational Programme for Industry (a). Other 'mainstream' elements of the strategy are within the scope of the Operational Programme for Fisheries (b) and the Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development (c).

(a) Operational Programme for Industry (ERDF)

This sub-programme contains three measures:

(i) Finance for Industry, which covers An tÚdarás' grant schemes for capital investment, R&D, feasibility studies, interest subsidies and equity investment. In 1999 An tÚdarás paid out £7.5m of which up to £3.3m may be reclaimed from the EU.

(ii) Advisory Support Services which cover the provision by An tÚdarás of a range of professional, advisory support services to both start-up enterprises and established companies. The cost to An tÚdarás in 1999 was £1.8m of which up to £1.3m may be financed by the EU.

(iii) Land and Buildings provides co-finance for the development of the industrial floor space and associated infrastructure that is necessary to underpin the industrial development programme for the Gaeltacht. In 1999 An tÚdarás spent £9.5m on this measure which is co-financed by the EU up to £0.9m.

(b) Operational Programme for Fisheries (FIFG)

These grants support the development of aquaculture under the Operational Programme for Fisheries. The co-financing, which in the Gaeltacht goes mainly to fish processing and aquaculture, is paid up to a level of 35% of eligible approved expenditure. During 1999 total grant in aid paid by the EU to Gaeltacht companies was £0.9m.

(c) Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development

An tÚdarás participates at local level in the initiatives being undertaken under this Programme through its representation on local area-based partnership companies.

European Union Funding

In all, the Gaeltacht received approximately £10.2m from EU funding sources during 1999. These include the Structural Funds, which are part of the Community Support Framework (CSF), and are paid out under a number of sub-programmes, primarily Operational Programme for Industry (ERDF), Human Resources (ESF) and FIFG (FEOGA) grants in aid. The emphasis continued on promoting strategies with a European dimension to overcome or reduce problems associated with peripherality. Arising from these the Gaeltacht benefits through programmes such as LEADER, NOW, HORIZON, RACE, YOUTHSTART, ADAPT, INTEGRA, ALTENER and the Special Peace and Reconciliation Programme (funding on these is paid directly to the organisers).

Human Resources (ESF)

The grants paid out under the scheme include vocational training and recruitment incentive grants. Up until this year the EU contributed up to 75% of eligible expenditure and in 1999 An tÚdarás received £0.8m directly from the EU as its contribution to the co-financed expenditure.

NASC

This is a partnership between Údarás na Gaeltachta, the County Councils of Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, Cork, Galway Corporation and the National

University of Ireland Galway.

Information Dissemination

The NASC Brussels Office disseminated policy briefs to the partner organisations including Regional Policy, Employment Guidelines, Regionalisation in Ireland, the National Development Plan and the Structural Funds Guidelines. Programme briefs were circulated including briefs on Community initiatives (Interreg, LEADER, Equal and Urban), Civil Protection, LIFE, CAPS and the Fifth Framework Programme. Thirty 'partner searches' were circulated and approximately 90 'calls for proposals' were disseminated to the partners.

Steering Group: a new chair of the Steering Group, Joe Gavin, Galway City Manager, was appointed, replacing Michael McLoone, Donegal County Manager.

European Participation: the Brussels office continued to co-operate with organisations such as EURADA, CPMR, TTI, RETI and IFA (Brussels Branch). The Director of the Office was re-elected as a Member of the Board of Directors of EURADA for another two years. Ongoing contact was maintained with the European Commission with particular emphasis on DG Agriculture, DG Enterprise, DG Environment, DG Regional Policy, DG Information Society and DG Education & Health.

Website: the NASC website site is now available on-line at www.nasc.ie.

TeTrIS Project (Technology Transfer and Innovation in SMEs: This project aims to develop new ways of promoting innovation and technology in small industries by making 'best-practice' techniques available to them in areas such as benchmarking for small companies, achieving highest standards in food industries and rapid proto-typing: funded under the EU's Technology Development Framework, the transnational partners are located in Italy, Portugal and Spain.

Local partners include small businesses and industrial development organisations in the Gaeltacht and the Technology Institutes of Galway-Mayo and Letterkenny. Target completion date is end 2000.

LEONARDO-EMOR Project: Arising from the results of the project 'Building on our Community' (HORIZON Programme 1996/97 in Gleann Cholmchille, Co. Donegal), this project is developing training in mainly traditional construction skills in partnership with Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and Dúchas; a German crafts training school is project manager.

PHARE/TEMPUS: Údarás na Gaeltachta is working in partnership with regional development organisations in Hungary in the provision of advice and training as the country prepares itself for admission to the EU.

Alternative Energy Sources: Údarás na Gaeltachta is working in partnership with organisations in Britain on the identification of alternative energy sources in a project supported by ALTENER and INTERREG.

Eurogise: The Eurogise project, which is examining the use of spatial planning in European regional development, continued.



Organisation
and Services

Staff

At the end of 1999 An tÚdarás employed 116 people. Within the constraints applying to the recruitment of staff in the Public Service in general, every effort is made to make suitable job opportunities available to handicapped people. Special assistance is also available to industrial projects providing jobs specifically for disabled people.

Equality

Údarás na Gaeltachta is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and all jobs in the organisation are open to men and women. An equality programme has been developed over the years which has generated a positive approach to equality in the organisation. Arising from this programme, An tÚdarás operates a number of schemes which provide staff with options in relation to meeting their career and personal needs, such as job sharing and career breaks.

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989

In accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989, Údarás na Gaeltachta has a written safety statement and continues to implement appropriate measures to protect the safety and health of all employees and visitors within its own offices.

The Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995

In accordance with the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995, members of the Board and all staff holding designated positions have completed statements of interests in compliance with the provisions of the Act.