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Chairman's
Statement

Language

The Údarás na Gaeltachta Act of 1979 established Údarás na Gaeltachta. Section 8 (i) of that Act clearly stated that the organisation's primary function is to encourage the preservation and extension of the use of the Irish Language as the principal medium of communication in the Gaeltacht. Within this context An tÚdarás discharges its brief through a range of socio-economic activities. These include not only specific language and cultural initiatives but also industrial, aquaculture and seafood development and sustainable community development. The economic and socio-cultural brief is over-arched by and intertwined with State policy nationally.

The Irish language's position as a community language in the Gaeltacht is still fragile notwithstanding the buttressing it has received by the establishment of TG4, the extension of services on Raidió na Gaeltachta and the growth of a range of arts, cultural, educational and audio visual activities throughout the Gaeltacht.

The greatest impediment to the normalisation of use of Irish as the community language is its lack of status in official business due to the continued failure of State Bodies & Agencies to provide their services through Irish to Gaeltacht communities.

New legislation aimed at affording Irish its rightful place in public administration is still awaited. This proposed legislation must underpin a citizen's right to equality of provision of State services in either of the official languages of the State.

We are hopeful that the outcome of the work of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta will help to address some of the starker deficiencies in relation to the Gaeltacht and that the Commission's proposals will provide a framework within which Údarás na Gaeltachta can work with other bodies in strengthening Irish as the Gaeltacht's community language through carrying out their services through Irish and in the development of improved social, housing and leisure facilities within the Gaeltacht.

Job Creation

Approximately 1,000 new jobs were created in Údarás na Gaeltachta client enterprises in the year 2000 bringing the employment total to an all-time high of 8,251. However, this represented only a slight net gain on 1999 and confirms our view that, although the pattern is uneven throughout the Gaeltacht, job-creation overall may have reached a plateau.

The two challenges facing Údarás na Gaeltachta in relation to its job creation programme over the next few years are very clear.

It is necessary to strengthen the existing industrial base by continuing to support inputs into R&D, marketing, human resources development and strategy development in companies.

We also need to attract new-economy type projects that will stem the outflow of graduates and educated young people from the area and attract back some of those who left in recent years to seek this type of employment elsewhere.

There is intense competition for this type of investment from other parts of the country, most of which have much more advanced telecommunications infrastructure than the Gaeltacht areas. Last year, two such projects approved for Gaeltacht locations subsequently decided to locate elsewhere because of inadequate telecommunications infrastructure in the areas concerned and having failed to attract the required numbers of skilled employees.

While sectors such as aquaculture and seafood processing, cultural tourism, engineering and electronics sub-assembly, and indigenous service-type enterprises will continue to form a core part of the employment base in the Gaeltacht into the foreseeable future, it is vitally necessary that the Gaeltacht be equipped to get its fair share of the new technology-based investment. Training and infrastructure are central to this challenge.

However, there are major structural deficiencies which have to be addressed before the Gaeltacht can begin to benefit from the job-creation opportunities associated with modern service-based enterprises. Effectively, many parts of the Gaeltacht are excluded from the employment benefits that flow from the modern services economy. The modern service-based industries are almost exclusively attracted to urban areas. Here, however, lies a challenge not only for An tÚdarás but also for the Government.

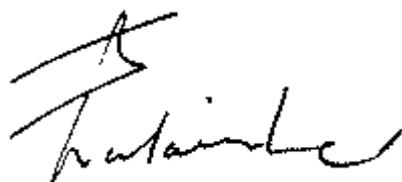
To facilitate the Government in addressing this problem in a focused and planned way we commissioned two major studies last year. One assessed not only the baseline but also the upgrading and funding requirements in relation to telecommunications infrastructure in the Gaeltacht. Currently, there is continued uncertainty surrounding the Government funded programme to provide fibre optics and Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) technologies to the Border, Midlands and Western regions. We have continued to highlight that delays or inequities in the provision of an adequate telecommunications infrastructure will further impede the investment promotion efforts of An tÚdarás and development agencies in other affected regions. This in turn constrains our job creation efforts, particularly in the provision of the much needed employment opportunities to stem the outflow of graduates and educated young people.

The second study involves a comprehensive examination of the state of the physical, social and transport infrastructure and the estimated cost of upgrading these to national standards. We will be using this study to demonstrate to Government that a range of infrastructural constraints are impeding our job creation efforts as they are hindering the development of the sort of business environment demanded by a modern economy. There is also a need to develop the social infrastructure where the young, the old and the working population can avail of the social services that are essential to maintaining a high quality of life. An tÚdarás as the regional development agency is best equipped to address these issues in an integrated way.

In addition, notwithstanding the innovative efforts of NUI Galway to address the situation, the deficit in institutional arrangements to deliver third and fourth level courses in the Gaeltacht is seen by An tÚdarás as a significant drawback to the job-creation programme resulting in a continued weakening of the Irish language as a community language in the Gaeltacht.

Acknowledgements

We 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. We acknowledge the valuable relationships we have built up with these organisations, and with others on a European and international level, over the years and look forward to enjoying their co-operation in the years ahead.



Tadhg Ó hEalaithe, Chairman

24 July 2001



Overview

1996 1997 1998 1999 2000

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Net Fixed Assets	IR£000	83,645	91,813	102,617	108,389	116,842
Net Current Assets	IR£000	(200)	(523)	(1,893)	(705)	523
Full-time employment		118	116	116	116	113
Salaries and Pay (a)	IR£000	3,571	3,651	3,809	4,043	4,387

Subsidiary Industries and Associate Industries

Údarás Investment in Share Capital	IR£000	1,604	1,618	2,074	4,413	1,735
Grants Approved	IR£000	5,117	4,773	5,541	3,432	5,967
Grants Paid	IR£000	3,524	4,699	3,457	5,554	4,578

Large Industries and Small Businesses

Grants Approved	IR£000	10,451	17,387	14,332	12,597	11,280
Grants Paid	IR£000	6,883	8,190	6,226	7,486	9,306

Employment in Assisted Industries

Full-time Employment		7,439	7,854	8,174	8,183	8,251
Seasonal & Part-time Employment		3,877	4,110	3,485	3,604	4,054

Buildings

Expenditure on Buildings	IR£000	6,676	10,143	13,542	9,199	12,111
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Exchequer Funding (EU Funding included)

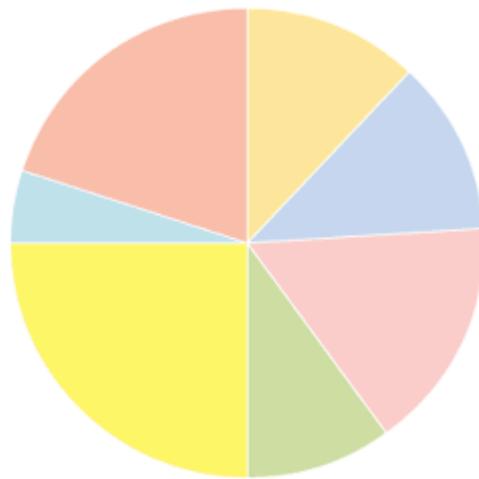
Grant-in-Aid - Current Expenditure	IR£000	2,642	3,000	3,205	3,450	3,910
Grant-in-Aid- Grants to Industry	IR£000	11,000	11,250	8,700	11,600	13,500
Advances/Grant-in-Aid - Capital Expenditure	IR£000	6,600	9,800	13,400	13,400	14,000

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

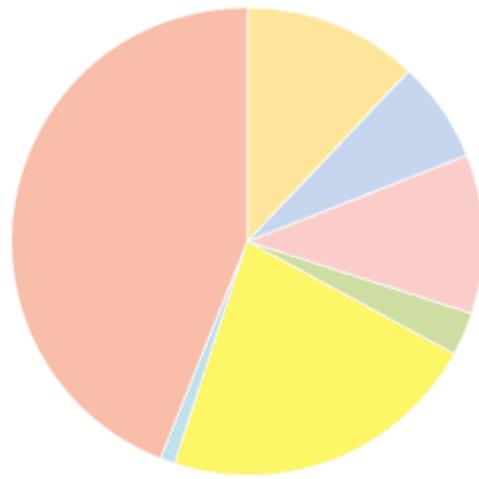
IR£1 = €1.2697

Full-time employment in assisted industries in 2000

New jobs created in 2000

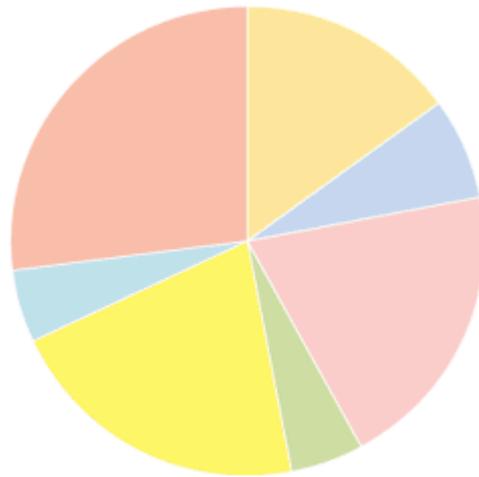


Total = 8,251



Total = 1,000

Grant approvals in 2000 by sector



Total = £17,247,137

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*



Economy

Approximately 1,000 new jobs were created in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the year 2000 in the natural resources, engineering, general manufacturing and modern services sectors.

Overall employment rose slightly again by a net increase of 68 jobs to bring the number of jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies to an all-time high of 8,251.

The number of part-time jobs increased by 450 (from 3,604 in 1999 to 4,054 in 2000). This indicates that some companies are meeting their labour requirements by employing part-time employees when presented with difficulties recruiting full-time staff.

Job Approvals

The number of job approvals for the year 2000 was 1,005 compared to 1,117 in 1999, continuing the downward trend seen last year. This represents another drop from the high average level of approvals experienced in recent years.

There is a brake on job approvals in the more attractive locations because there is not a sufficient labour reserve in those areas to promote projects that would employ more than 50 people.

Sources of Employment Growth

The strategy of "capability building" within the existing employment base continued to bear fruit, and in 2000 it was again the major source of new jobs: 711 or 71% of the new jobs created are attributed to expansions in the existing industrial base while the remaining 289 jobs (29%) came from new industry.

However, it was even more apparent in 2000 that many companies have been constrained in their expansion plans due to an inability to recruit and retain sufficient labour.

A significant number of firms have experienced skills shortages. This is a problem that first began to become evident about five years ago but has become particularly acute in the past two years.

Job Losses in Traditional Sectors

Similar to what is happening elsewhere in the country, employment in the traditional manufacturing sector is likely to continue declining in the years ahead. The main sources of the 932 job losses (or 11% of total employment) in 2000 were again recorded in the traditional sectors of fish processing, clothing, textiles, rubber and plastics.

Funding of Projects Approved

The 1,005 jobs approved in new projects and expansions will involve a total overall projected investment of approximately £59.7m including State assistance in excess of £20.8m (£17.2m in grant-aid and £3.6m in equity investment).

National Development Plan

The National Development Plan covering the period 2000–2006 finances the Capital Grants, Training and Land & Building expenditure of An tÚdarás. Unlike the previous plan which ended in 1999, the European Union does not co-finance An tÚdarás spending under these headings.

Some national programmes which are administered by An tÚdarás for Gaeltacht enterprises on behalf of the managing authorities such as the RTI programme (competitive research) and the FIG programme (seafood processing and aquaculture) are being co-financed by European funds.

In the accounts for 2000 a sum of £860,000 was received from the EU for expenditure in previous years (1994-1999) in respect of Training and Employment grants. The Exchequer funding of An tÚdarás in 1999 was supported by the European Regional Development Fund and that support would have amounted to approximately £8m payable in year 2000. Some further monies are still outstanding and should be received in 2001 & 2002.

The National Development Plan for the Gaeltacht called for the creation of 5,600 new jobs over the seven years to 2006, which averages at 800 jobs per year. In year 2000 we created a total of 1,000 jobs which is 25% above the annual target.

Cost per Job

The grant cost per job last year was £13,854 and the average cost per job over the past five years was £10,020. 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.

Local Development Initiatives

Part-time and seasonal employment has played a significant part in 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, Community Employment Schemes (administered in co-operation with FÁS and local communities) have made a huge contribution in improving the fabric of community life and maintaining local morale through difficult economic circumstances. Last year, 30 schemes employed 538 people and had a value in excess of £4.5million. However, it is yet another sign of the improved employment situation that a number of FÁS schemes are currently under threat due to the very real difficulty in finding people to participate in them.

An important addition to the range of mechanisms available to drive forward local development initiatives is Údarás na Gaeltachta's involvement in the Social Economy. A full-time facilitator has been appointed to promote and co-ordinate support initiatives in this area. A total of 22 projects have been granted approval under the social support programme with an investment of £158,000.

Although the core objective for Údarás na Gaeltachta's Social Economy programme is to support local groups in the provision of community care facilities and services, many of the supported social economy initiatives will be sources of part-time and full time jobs, often within communities with limited employment opportunities.

Property Portfolio

The diversity of the property portfolio reflects Údarás na Gaeltachta's diverse 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 2000, An tÚdarás had 262,377 square metres of industrial space, of which 70,983 square metres (27%) were unoccupied (a number of large factories were undergoing refurbishment to adapt them to the needs of new client companies); 42,614 square metres are in poor condition, leaving 11% of space ready for new projects.

Demand for space

There was continuous high demand throughout the year for project space in every region of the Gaeltacht, particularly in the Cois Fharraige area.

Enterprise Units are being built in the lesser-developed areas in order to provide space for smaller high quality projects, generally in the services sector. During the year, enterprise units were built in Carna and in Casla and building is underway on units at Tír an Fhia and Scríb, in Co. Galway; and on Árainn Mhór, Co. Donegal.

Roofing

The roof replacement programme continued and 5,000 square metres of faulty or sub-standard roofs were replaced

Building Programme

Building work was completed on 8,377 square metres in 2000. 5,937 square metres were renovated during the year. Industrial estates at An Tulach (Co. Galway) Baile Bhuirne (Co. Cork) and a business park at Na Forbacha, (Co. Galway) were expanded during the year also.

Airstrips

Some design and pre-planning work is being done by Údarás na Gaeltachta on airstrips for the offshore islands. As well as the Gaeltacht islands work is being carried out on a consultancy basis for the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands for airstrips at Clifden and on Inishboffin and Clare islands.

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 furthering 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 companies, naíonraí (pre- school groups), community arts, youth organisations, language learners, writers, community events and festivals.

2000 Highlights

Companies in the Gaeltacht: Language audit

A survey was carried out on 236 Údarás na Gaeltachta supported companies to establish language capability and usage patterns among workers and management and to determine the disposition and policy of these companies towards the use of the Irish language.

The conclusions of the language audit were encouraging and it demonstrated that there was a correlation between the strength of the language in a community and the representation of Irish speakers in Údarás na Gaeltachta assisted companies in the same community. In general, where the language was strong in the community, the representation of Irish speakers in the companies was high: the reverse also applied.

Irish as a Marketing Tool

This scheme is run under "Fondúireacht an Údaráis" and each year support is given to about 12 companies to introduce innovative ways of using Irish on their products with assistance from marketing advisors and graphic designers. Examples of best practice are available for participating companies.

Irish language classes and courses through Irish

During 2000 there was a significant increase in the demand for courses. Of the 1,338 people who attended the different courses and the "ciorcail chomhrá" (conversation groups), 280 attended 25 different courses in 18 areas in the Donegal Gaeltacht; there were 20 different teaching programmes in the Connemara Gaeltacht, many in partnership with NUI Galway and community groups such as Pobal na bhForbacha, who have drawn up their own action plan to promote and maintain the language in the community. There was also significant progress in Irish courses and courses through Irish in the Munster Gaeltacht in partnership with Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne and Seirbhísí Teanga Mhúscraí. It is also a reason to be optimistic that a group such as Coiste Comhairleach Staid na Teanga is on the ground in Munster working to preserve the language. Nine teaching sessions were also arranged in north Mayo and Achill Island during the year.

Pre-Schools (naíonraí)

Five new pre-schools were established and there are now 85 naíonraí in operation throughout the Gaeltacht with in excess of 800 pupils. An tÚdarás plans to build 20 child care/family services centres in various areas in the Gaeltacht between now and 2006, under the organisation's capital programme. A submission was made to the Minister of State that An tÚdarás would act as an agent for the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in the development of child care schemes in the Gaeltacht, for which there is an overall budget of £250m available nationally.

Quality in Early Education

Twenty four pre-school directors started a two year childcare training programme with Chomhairle na gCailíochtaí Gairmoideachas under the auspices of An tÚdarás. Twenty-two pre-school directors from the Donegal and Munster Gaeltacht are in the second year of courses to provide them with a recognised accreditation in this important area. Five pre-school directors from Mayo are in the first year of the course.

Preliminary work is complete on a training programme in childcare, which has the Irish language as a central part, for parents with children attending pre-schools.

Youth Activities

On examining the continuous demand for comprehensive leisure time and training services facilities in Irish for the age groups 8-12 and 12-18, additional efforts were made to establish suitable structures in co-operation with other responsible State bodies and to provide a budget for them. Discussions are still in progress. As an interim measure, An tÚdarás employed youth officers for the Múscraí area and the Connemara Gaeltacht in 2000.

Regional Youth Committees were established in Connemara and Donegal, similar to Seirbhísí Óige Múscraí in the south.

Language Based Arts

The three year community arts programme, established in partnership with An Chomhairle Ealaíon, came to an end in 2000 and another three year programme was agreed which will make £1m available for the development and promotion of language based arts in the Gaeltacht between now and 2003.

Suaire Teo

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

Artists in Residence Scheme

From January to May, the artist Seán Ó Laoghaire worked as artist in residence at Scoil Náisiúnta an Ghleanna in West Kerry and an exhibition of project output, Mná na Sceilge was mounted at Siamsa Tíre in Tralee.

A resident writer in Inis Mór spent four months facilitating primary and second level pupils in producing "Scríbhneoirí Árann".

Schools Events

Music Network: Six primary and second level schools are participating in a pilot project with Music Network in Corca Dhuibhne. Music Network is also organising concerts in the area and in Connemara.

Scríob Chleite: Scríob Chleite encourages writing in Irish for second level school students. The County Councils and An Chomhairle Ealaíon are financing this scheme in partnership with An tÚdarás. Cathal Ó Searcaigh, Louis de Paor and Rita Ann Higgins were among the writers giving workshops in 30 schools.

Youth Activities

Youth Drama: A drama weekend for young people was organised in association with Eagraíocht Náisiúnta Drámaíochta Óige (National Association for Youth Drama) out of which it is hoped to arrange a long-term theatre studies project in the area.

Comhluadar: A group of young artists from the Rinn Gaeltacht organised a group exhibition in the Dungarvan Arts Centre.

Literary Competitions: Six Gaeltacht students who were awarded prizes in Gaeltacht-based literary competitions were also awarded prizes in 'Oireachtas na Gaeilge' competitions in 2000.

Ceardlann na gCraisbealach: This gallery and artists studio, based at Fál Carrach, Co. Donegal, went from strength to strength: as well as workshops for young people, eight exhibitions were organised plus a film club.

Music Schools: Two music schools ("Cumar" in Connemara and "Ceol na Locha" in Tuar Mhic Éadaigh) of master classes in traditional music for young people were supported by some of the top musicians in the country.

Arts Festivals

Féile na Bealtaine: has been organised on an annual basis since 1995 in Chorca Dhuibhne in county Kerry. It was initially a weekend festival but has over the years developed into a week long arts festival that is recognised as one of the major arts festivals in the country. The programme combines the best in music, drama, literature, visual art and open air celebrations coupled with debates on major political issues.

Féile Phléaráca: is a very successful community arts festival run annually during the month of September. The festival is a celebration of the traditional and contemporary arts in the Connemara Gaeltacht and events are organised over a large geographical area from Bearna to Carna. The programme combines the best in music, drama, literature, visual art and open air celebrations with particular emphasis on the traditional arts.

Féile an Earagail: has put emphasis on the running of activities through Irish in the Donegal Gaeltacht over the last two years.

Féile Iorrais: included workshops for children in conjunction with Púca Puppets and a literary competition: local traditional musicians and traditional musicians from Conamara as well as four international groups participated in the festival where the emphasis was again on entertainment through Irish.

Further Language Based Arts Projects

Aisling Gheal: An tÚdarás and Co. Cork VEC jointly sponsored a community-based 'singer-in-residence' scheme to promote sean nós (traditional style) singing among young people in Múscraí.

Trasnú: This showcase of major artists from the Donegal Gaeltacht opened at An Grianán Theatre in Letterkenny and moved to Expo 2000 in Hanover where the all-Irish event featured artists such as Altan, Mairéad and Triona Ní Dhomhnaill, Cathal Ó Searcaigh, Aoife Ní Fhearraigh, Dónal Lunny and dancers Seosamh Ó Neachtain and Fíona Ní Ghallchóir.

Ealaín Mór Glas (Sculpture Project): Four pieces of sculpture, representing aspects of local culture, have been installed on Bealach na Gaeltachta in Donegal. This pilot project draws on the skills of artists in the localities, giving them an opportunity to work together.

Doras: 'A Celebration of Life' is the title of the pilot project that Doras is currently organising for the over 60s in An Spideál and An Cheathrú Rua: supported by the Western Health Board and Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Social Economy

The Social Economy is a relatively new area of investment and support for Údarás na Gaeltachta. Because of the rural nature of the Gaeltacht areas, their geographical locations and the special linguistic needs of their communities, deficient social infrastructure adds to the disadvantage of all groups with special needs in the Gaeltacht. Údarás na Gaeltachta aims to supplement the provision being made by other agencies where it is felt the current provision is inadequate

in the context of the Gaeltacht's special needs and to provide the primary support where no provision currently exists. Our objective is to help voluntary community groups develop social services that will allow people within Gaeltacht communities live independently in their homes or within their community and enjoy a high quality of life.

A full-time facilitator was appointed to promote and co-ordinate support initiatives. Twenty two projects have been approved to date under the social support programme with total funding amounting to more than £158,000. To date, many of the projects approved for funding involved equipment upgrading within existing facilities such as day-care centres. A number of feasibility grants were also approved to assist groups in identifying the need, and drawing up plans, for project development in this sector.

At year end there were 54 workers on FÁS schemes working on 19 projects providing services to the elderly.

In co-operation with the local communities, partnerships were being developed with organisations such as the Health Boards, the Irish Council for Social Housing and local development agencies as well as Government Departments such as the Department of the Environment and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

New projects in the pipeline being facilitated at year end included social housing schemes, various health/community centres, day-care centres for the elderly, enterprise units, a heritage centre, a nursing home, a waste recycling project, day-care centres for children, pilot rural transport projects, folklore collection and energy conservation. Helping local groups to identify sources of funding for these projects is an important part of the role of the facilitator and the Regional Offices staff.

Arising from the work of An tÚdarás with the community care groups in the social economy sector, An tÚdarás made a submission to the Western Health Board in relation to the Board's new strategy, "Services for Older People - A Strategy for Health and Wellbeing 2001 - 2006". Submissions were also made regarding the Rural Transport Initiative and County Council Housing Strategy.

Community Co-Operatives

More than twenty local community organisations throughout the Gaeltacht are recognised under the community co-operatives scheme. An annual administration grant is paid to each recognised co-operative to enable it to implement an agreed development or service-provision plan in its area of operation. The co-operatives are important community development facilitators and play an influential role through their range of local activities in securing Irish as a community and business language.

Muintearas

Muintearas is an education and training project providing support services to primary schools and to the communities in the Gaeltacht. It is a partnership between Údarás na Gaeltachta, who provide it with an annual administration grant, and the Department of Education and Science who facilitate the secondment of more than 30 teachers to Muintearas to enable the provision of support services to schools. The project places particular emphasis on young people, on children with special needs and on a wide range of courses which enable members of the community to develop their personal skills.

The Resource Teaching Scheme for Gaeltacht primary schools was developed by Muintearas. It also developed the first Irish language phonics scheme as well as a wide range of curricular material based on dialects to buttress the work of teachers in securing the future of Irish as a community language.

The following were the main areas of work that Muintearas was involved in

during the past year: early childhood development programmes, the Resource Teaching Scheme, a development programme for early school-leavers, development of educational software, action-based research on the training needs of specific target groups in the community development process, and certificate-based training programmes in conjunction with third-level institutions. These schemes and programmes were run with the support of a variety of funding sources including Údarás na Gaeltachta, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands, FÁS, Cumas/ADM, the Department of Education and Science/ The National Lottery, the European Union and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Muintearas employed 23 full-time staff during the past year and approximately 80 people attended training courses and employment related schemes.



European
Activities

General

With the implementation of the National Development Plan 2000-2006, there are significant differences for An tÚdarás with regard to the impact of European policies. This arises because: i) the National Development Plan is now more comprehensive and spans a longer time period than previous programmes; (ii) there has been a decline in the importance of Structural Funding and on the amount of co-financing available; (iii) there is a new regional level monitoring system (NUTS II); (iv) and it is proposed by the Commission that the Community Initiatives will have a simpler structure from now on - in effect there will be three programmes:

Rural Development through LEADER-PLUS, Human Resources Development through EQUAL, and Regional Development through INTERREG III

Although work had begun on the LEADER- PLUS programme, at the end of year 2000, notices for Equal and Interreg III were not yet complete: it is expected that these will commence before the end of 2001.

In general, it is in the European policies initiatives, outside of the Structural Funds, where it is most beneficial for An tÚdarás to be involved. These include:

The Framework Programmes for Technology Development: developing various technology; industrial development and with greater emphasis on R&D and innovation; the improvement of living standards in the EU.

Education and Training: Greater emphasis has been placed on lifelong learning programmes.

Enlargement of the EU: The Commission has established special programmes to promote inter-regional strategic partnerships.

European Projects

The TETRIS (Technology Transfer and Innovation in SMEs) project, with project partners from regional development organisations in Italy, Spain, and Portugal is coming to an end, and three areas of best practise have been developed - Benchmarking: for small business; Rapid Prototyping: the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology are developing this service with partners in Italy and Spain; and Food Standards and Technical Knowledge: a system in Italy established a website that provides information about the quality of milk for farmer suppliers and detailed research is being carried out by TETRIS in partnership with a Gaeltacht company to determine how this information system could be applied to the seaweed industry.

Gaeltacht Infrastructure and Natural Resources

Two ALTENER projects are examining basic infrastructure and natural resources in the Gaeltacht. In north/west Donegal the potential to become self sufficient in renewable energy is being examined (in partnership with the ESB and Donegal County Council), and energy renewable activities (bio-mass) are being examined in the Gaeltacht and the North West of the country in a pilot study with the co-operation with Comharchumann Dhúiche Sheoigeach on wood waste from sawmills and forestry activity in this region.

In north-west Mayo opportunities for the development of energy projects will arise around the new gas pipeline and the electricity generating station at Béal Átha Chomhraic.

Human Resources - Vocational Training

The EMOR project is developing vocational training in construction courses

concerned with heritage buildings in the Gaeltacht based on a similar project in vocational schools in Germany, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The Heritage Department in the Galway/Mayo Institute of Technology is running the project with support from the EU LEONARDO programme.

TEMPUS Programme with Pecs Regional Development Institute, Hungary: Executives from An tÚdarás and lecturers from NUI Galway presented courses in Hungary for civil servants and regional development officers in partnership with the Pecs Institute and the University of Pannonius with funding from the European programme TEMPUS. Graduates from the course paid a study visit to NUI Galway, the western regions and the Connemara Gaeltacht.

PHARE Programme

An tÚdarás, in partnership with an economic development organisation in the Netherlands - NEI B.V, and a training organisation in Budapest in Hungary, provided a training programme in regional development to civil servants in Hungary through lectures and workshops in Budapest, Galway and Brussels (NASC offices) with funding from the PHARE programme.



Organisation
and Services

Staff

At the end of 2000 An tÚdarás employed 113 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.

Strategy Statement and Corporate Plan

The new strategy statement was agreed by the Board and is currently with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. A revised corporate plan, based on the strategy statement, is currently in preparation.

Study of Physical and Social Infrastructure

This study, being carried out by Fitzpatrick Associates, involves a comprehensive examination of the state of the physical, social and transport infrastructure and the estimated cost of upgrading these to national standards. It will form the basis of submissions to Government for the next ten years.