

[chairman's statement](#)

[overview](#)

[economy](#)

[community & culture](#)

[european activities](#)

[organisation & services](#)

annual report 2001

Chairman's
Statement

As the regional development agency for the Gaeltacht, An tÚdarás has a two-pronged statutory brief encompassing economic development and language and cultural maintenance. In the geographical terrain in which we operate both aspects of our brief present major challenges to the organisation at the present time – on the economic front inward investment is being adversely affected by turbulence and uncertainty in global economies particularly in the US – and Irish as a community language in the Gaeltacht is in a fragile state requiring the urgent and vigorous support framework of the Official Languages (Equality) Bill 2000 and of a strategic Government-led action plan. The current Programme for Government contains commitments in relation to these critical language issues.

Language Vitality and Resilience

There are some positive indicators of vitality and resilience by the language in various parts of the Gaeltacht and in various aspects of Gaeltacht life: TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta have helped to provide stability and status to the Irish-speaking community in the Gaeltacht and nation-wide as well as having an important economic role in the Gaeltacht; Independent TV/AV production companies producing programmes for TG4 have given Irish a strong psychological boost through their production activities and the employment they generate, particularly for young people; and a wide range of community, development, educational, arts and cultural organisations – including the Gaeltacht Summer Colleges which cater for in excess of 20,000 students per year and the pre-school groups catering for approximately 1,000 pre-school children annually – are all having a strong positive impact on the stabilisation and strengthening of the language at community level.

Three critical areas that need to be addressed urgently are the provision of services through Irish in the Gaeltacht by all State agencies; boosting education provision through Irish at both primary and post-primary levels in the Gaeltacht by providing the necessary curricular and specialist support services so urgently required; and providing a support-structure for Gaeltacht youth.

The Report and Recommendations of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta to Government are an important update and authoritative statement on the state of the language and the steps required to reverse its continuous decline as the community language of the Gaeltacht. They are also an important contribution to understanding the framework within which Údarás na Gaeltachta and other organisations are endeavouring to achieve economic, social, cultural and linguistic objectives. We welcome the leadership role envisaged by Coimisiún na Gaeltachta for An tÚdarás to champion the educational, linguistic, cultural, social and economic development of the Gaeltacht. We are in the process of preparing a detailed response to the Coimisiún Report and Recommendations and we expect to be fully involved in the process of detailed planning of the proposed action plan and in whatever implementation structure emerges.

Meeting the Jobs Challenge

The fact that last year the new jobs created were more than offset by job losses served to highlight the fact that the major challenge for the years ahead will be to maintain the plateau of almost 8,100 jobs that was reached in 1998.

Our planning and decision-making for the past number of years has been informed by the vulnerability of certain kinds of employment, particularly in the traditional manufacturing sectors. The inherent mobility of the manufacturing industries that choose to locate in Ireland, and the Gaeltacht in particular, is an advantage when attracting these companies in the first instance but a disadvantage when our competitiveness is changed due to economic prosperity and the emergence of new lower-cost regimes such as those in Eastern Europe,

North Africa or the Middle East. We achieved a high level of success in attracting manufacturing investment to the Gaeltacht in the seventies, eighties and nineties. However, the competitiveness of that sector, and particularly the sub-supply segment, began to dissipate last year at an accelerated pace with consequent job losses.

The closure in quick succession of a number of companies together with a high level of layoffs by other companies – particularly in the Donegal area – were heavy blows to the communities and employees concerned. A focused campaign of corrective action is required.

Changing Infrastructure

We are utilising two independent expert assessments of the telecommunications, physical, social and transport infrastructure in the Gaeltacht, and the funding necessary to bring these up to an acceptable national standard, to facilitate Government and government agencies in addressing the overall infrastructural deficit in the Gaeltacht in a focused and planned way. We are already addressing some of the priority deficits on an area by area basis.

Over the next few years the decline of the manufacturing sector is predicted to continue apace and the replacement industries will be progressively sourced in the information technology sector and will depend more and more on the requisite telecommunications infrastructure being in place and on the availability of a workforce with the requisite education, training and skills. By its very nature a new technology infrastructure, based on new skills and technology, will take time to develop. However, we have embraced the challenge to develop an economy that has a core of modern-traded services enterprises employing high-skilled employees. A similar challenge was faced over thirty years ago when the foundations were laid for a strong manufacturing base. Our development strategy for the next five years also aims to fully exploit the employment potential of marine and other natural resources – the social economy, the arts, cultural and linguistic tourism, education, leisure and recreation activities as well as information technology.

There are ongoing problems with regard to the continuity, sufficiency and quality of the electricity supply as a basis for further development, particularly in Donegal, Mayo and Galway. If we are to satisfy the energy needs of the changing and growing industrial base, and of new investment much of which will be technology driven, we need to have improvements in the electricity as well as the telecommunications infrastructure. It is critical that steps are taken to address these needs as a matter of urgency.

Education and Opportunities

Education, training and technology are among the critical challenges of the years ahead. An Údarás will be investing more resources not only in accredited courses delivered in collaboration with third-level institutions but also in a wide range of courses to be delivered locally (by traditional and new electronic methods) as part of the provision towards expanding Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.

The drain of the most educated young people from the Gaeltacht has serious implications from both an economic and language development perspective. Difficulties in retaining them require a complexity of interventions outside the scope of a single agency such as Údarás na Gaeltachta. Investment in social infrastructure and the provision of relevant third-level education courses within the region are measures which would impact positively on this situation. An Údarás will play an active role in progressing the concept of an Irish language university for the Gaeltacht, based mainly on a network of outreach centres.

Partners in the Development Process

We wish to share our vision of a vibrant Gaeltacht with our partners in the development process, especially with the Gaeltacht communities, the businesses, the Local Authorities, the education and training institutes, and with

other organisations that have an important role in local and regional development. The future prosperity of the Gaeltacht and the social, economic, and cultural development and enrichment of the Gaeltacht has enormous potential benefits for the region and the nation as a whole. There is a need for a partnership approach to turn this vision into reality and Údarás na Gaeltachta is willing to provide sensitive and energetic leadership in order to achieve this ambitious objective.

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, and look forward to enjoying their co-operation in the years ahead. Our thanks also to the staff who worked diligently to provide a high standard of service to the public and our clients.

Liam Ó Cuinneagáin, Chairman

4 July 2002



Overview

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
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Údarás na Gaeltachta

Net Fixed Assets	e 000	116,578	130,297	137,626	148,389	162,719
Net Current Assets	e 000	(670)	(2404)	(895)	(664)	(259)
Full-time employment		116	116	116	113	107
Salaries and Pay (a)	e 000	4,636	4,836	5,133	5,570	6,158

Subsidiary Industries and Associate Industries

Údarás Investment in Share Capital	e 000	2,054	2,633	5,603	2,203	1,959
Grants Approved	e 000	6,060	7,036	4,358	7,577	6,026
Grants Paid	e 000	5,966	4,355	7,052	5,813	5,737

Large Industries and Small Businesses

Grants Approved	e 000	22,077	18,198	15,995	14,323	15,449
Grants Paid	e 000	10,399	7,940	9,505	11,816	11,007

Employment in Assisted Industries

Full-time Employment		7,854	8,174	8,183	8,251	8,093
Seasonal & Part-time Employment		4,110	3,485	3,604	4,054	4,234

Buildings

Expenditure on Buildings	e 000	12,879	17,195	11,680	15,378	19,175
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Exchequer Funding (EU Funding included)

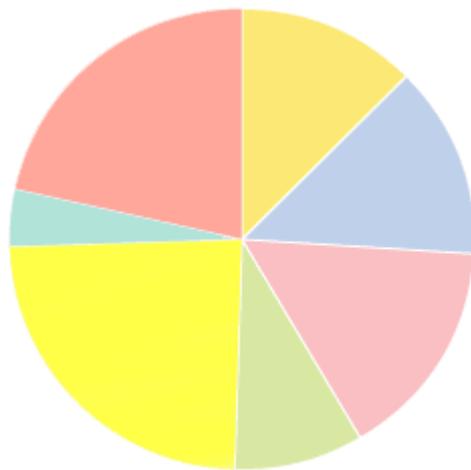
Grant-in-Aid - Current Expenditure	e 000	3,809	4,070	4,381	4,965	6,297
Grant-in-Aid- Grants to Industry	e 000	14,285	11,047	14,729	17,141	15,999
Advances/Grant-in-Aid - Capital Expenditure	e 000	12,443	17,014	17,014	17,776	19,617

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

¤1 = IR£0.787564

Full-time employment in assisted industries in 2001

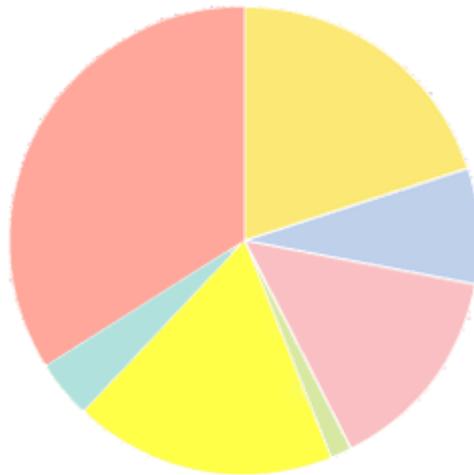
New jobs created in 2001



Total = 8,093

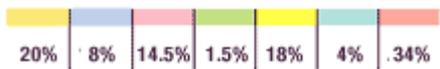
Total = 1,000

Grant approvals in 2001 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 = e 21,475,481



Economy

Approximately 1,120 new jobs were created in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in 2001 in the natural resources, engineering, general manufacturing and modern services sectors.

Overall employment fell by a net 158 jobs: this represents a decrease of less than 2% on the employment base, from an all-time high of 8,251 in 2000 to 8,093 in 2001.

The number of part-time and seasonal jobs rose to 4,234 (from 4,054 in 2000).

Job Approvals

The number of job approvals for the year 2001 was 864 compared to 1,005 in 2000, a continuation of the downward trend seen for the past two years.

The average rate of job approvals has been decreasing due to a number of reasons: a slowdown in the level of new project enquiries due to uncertain and unsettled global economies and a decrease in expansions generated by the existing industrial base; a shortage of skilled personnel for the growth sectors, particularly in the more developed Gaeltacht areas, and the inadequacy of basic infrastructural requirements such as telecommunications and physical access.

Sources of Employment

The strategy of capability building within the existing employment base continued to bear fruit, and in 2001 it was again the major source of new jobs: 813 or 72% of the new jobs created are attributed to expansions in the existing industrial base while the remaining 310 jobs (28%) came from new industry. However, it was even more apparent in 2001 that many companies were constrained in their expansion plans due to an inability to recruit and retain sufficient labour.

Changing Industrial Base

Changes in the industrial base are resulting in job losses (1,280 in 2001) in both the new and traditional sectors. For example, a sectoral analysis shows that the highest rates of both job creation (295) and job losses (476) were in the engineering and electronics sector: this is mainly a result of a good performance by companies with their own products and a very high rate of job losses in those companies acting as sub-suppliers to the electronics industry.

The modern services sector once again also showed a high rate of job creation (294) and job losses (236). This appears to be a feature of the service industry where jobs can be generated rapidly in times of growth and lost quickly when conditions get difficult.

In order to address the telecommunications infrastructure deficit in Gaeltacht areas, Údarás na Gaeltachta submitted three project proposals for funding by the Department of Public Enterprise under the National Development Plan for areas in Donegal and Mayo that are unlikely to be serviced through other agency initiatives.

Analysis of the figures also shows the continuing decline of the textiles sector as an employer. It now accounts for just about 700 jobs overall, compared to 1,100 jobs five years ago when, even though it was already in decline, it represented 15% of overall employment. The erosion of such a significant traditional employment base only serves to underline the success that has been achieved in other areas, where against the backdrop of major industrial change resulting in the flow of certain types of industries from Ireland to countries with lower cost regimes, the Gaeltacht employment base still grew by almost 45% over the past ten years.

Funding of Projects Approved

The 864 jobs approved in new projects and expansions will involve a total overall projected investment of approximately £57.65m (≈73.2m) including State assistance of £19.8m (≈25.1m).

National Development Plan

The National Development plan covering the period 2000-2006 finances the Capital Grants, Training and Land & Building expenditure of An tÚdarás.

An tÚdarás operates three measures under the plan: Assistance for Industry, Training and Land & Buildings.

Some national programmes 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 co-financed by European funds.

The National Development Plan for the Gaeltacht calls for the creation of 5,600 new jobs over the seven years to 2006, an average of 800 jobs per year. In 2001 we created a total of 1,123 jobs, 40% above the annual target.

Cost per Job

The grant cost per job last year was £11,304 (≈14,353) and the average cost per job over the past five years was £10,361 (≈13,156). 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 Programmes (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, 24 schemes employed 435 people and had a value in excess of £4.14m (≈5.26m). 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. Twenty six projects have been approved to date under the social support programme with total funding amounting to more than £158,000 (j180,000).

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 and a substantial land bank for future development purposes.

At the end of 2001, An tÚdarás had 289,381 square metres of industrial space, of which 27,172 square metres (9.5%) were unoccupied; 19,857 square metres are in poor condition, leaving 9.4% of space ready for new projects with 2.5% ready for immediate occupation by industrial tenants.

Demand for space

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 completed in Scríb and in Tír an Fhia, Co. Galway, and in Árainn Mhór, Co. Donegal, and funding was provided for the development of a craft centre in An Mám, Co. Galway. Local offices for Galway County Council were completed in An Cheathrú Rua. A new services centre is being built in conjunction with Mayo County Council in Gob a' Choire, Achill Island. Building work also commenced on Phase 1 of the media park in An Spidéal, Co. Galway, and a business park in Baile an Mhuilinn, Co. Kerry. Phase 1 of the Marine Tourism Centre in Machaire Rabhartaigh, Co. Donegal, was completed and a new factory was built for Folláin Teo. in Baile Bhuirne, Co. Cork, during 2001.

Roofing

The roof replacement programme continued and 7,430 square metres of faulty or sub-standard roofs were replaced.

Building Programme

Building work was completed on 11,211 square metres in 2001 and 22,267 square metres were renovated.

Airstrips

Some design and pre-planning work is still being done by Údarás na Gaeltachta on airstrips for the offshore islands. Work was carried out on a consultancy basis for the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for airstrips at Clifden and on Inishboffin, Co. Galway, and on Clare Island, Co. Mayo.

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.

2001 Highlights

Fondúireacht an Údaráis/ Use of Irish in Companies

This scheme encourages Gaeltacht companies to initiate various activities both in their companies and in their communities to encourage and promote the use of Irish: 120 companies participated this year and the overall winners were Socos Teo., an office supplies company in Indreabhán, Co. Galway and Nemeton, a television production company from An Rinn in Co. Waterford.

Irish language classes and courses through Irish

During 2001, 800 people attended various language courses and the 'ciorcail chomhrá' (conversation groups). There is a continuing demand for these classes in all areas and at all levels. Support is also given to instrumental music classes and other aspects of the arts which are taught through the medium of Irish.

Pre-Schools (Naionrai)

There continues to be a growing demand among parents for the provision of pre-school education through Irish (naíonraí). There are now in excess of 900 pupils benefiting from this early education service throughout the Gaeltacht.

Childcare Support Scheme

In order to ensure that the Gaeltacht working community has access to quality childcare through the medium of Irish, An tÚdarás has approved a childcare support scheme. Under this five year programme An tÚdarás plans to facilitate the development of up to 20 child care/family services centres in various Gaeltacht areas between now and 2006 through fully utilising the funding for this purpose available through the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Quality in Early Education

Training courses accredited to the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) are being provided to ensure the availability of fully qualified staff. Twenty six pre-school directors in Donegal and Munster are currently following a two-year childcare training programme with FETAC under the auspices of An tÚdarás.

Youth Activities

As a continuation of the efforts of An tÚdarás over the past number of years to establish a new working and administration structure for Gaeltacht youth organisations, Údarás na Gaeltachta, in conjunction with Foras na Gaeilge, commissioned a research programme to ascertain the needs of Gaeltacht/Irish language youth organisations. The research commenced in November 2001 and the results are expected before the end of 2002.

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.

Muintearas pioneered a new model of learning support/resource teaching which included the development of educational software material to be used with individual pupils as well as with classes. 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 Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, 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 on various schemes during the past year and approximately 80 people attended training courses and employment related schemes.

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. To date emphasis has been placed on developing services for the elderly and other groups with special needs.

Twenty six projects have been approved to date under the social support programme with total funding amounting to more than £142,000 (j180,000). A number of feasibility grants were approved to assist groups in identifying the need and the drawing up of plans for project development in this sector. An tÚdarás also sponsor a number of Community Enterprise schemes and at year end there were 48 workers on FÁS schemes working on 18 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, third-level institutions 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.

In partnership with the Western Health Board and the North-Western Health

Board, An tÚdarás has been involved in a number of joint initiatives, such as health promotion days, carers information days, information days for people with special needs and social care courses. An tÚdarás and MFG (LEADER) jointly funded an accredited social care course in Gaoth Dobhair, Co. Donegal and An tÚdarás has agreed funding for a third-level social care course in Carna, Co. Galway.

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. During 2001 work commenced on the development of day care/health centres in Baile na Finne and Oileán Thoraigh and also a nursing home in Carna, Co. Galway. These developments received funding from An tÚdarás, Health Boards and other relevant agencies.

Údarás na Gaeltachta has been involved in a number of rural transport projects. For example, An tÚdarás is a partner in the ARTS EU project and also in BEALACH - the local transport initiative which received funding for the development of rural transport initiatives in the Connemara area.

The Arts Programme: 2001 Highlights

A new Gaeltacht arts scheme with funding in excess of £1m (≈1.27m) was launched in May 2001. This follows on from the pilot language-based arts scheme operated by An tÚdarás in conjunction with the Arts Council since 1997.

An Arts Facilitator has been appointed in each Gaeltacht Region for the three years 2001-2003 to assist artists to perfect their projects.

The Arts Development Scheme will give individual artists and arts groups working within the Gaeltacht the opportunity to seek funding for arts projects in various disciplines.

Under the Major Projects Scheme special emphasis is laid on the development of various disciplines in the Arts: among these are 'Drama in Education', 'Arts as a Facility for the Elderly', a major Gaeltacht visual arts exhibition, directory of arts services for the Gaeltacht community, Youth Theatre Company, 'Creative Writing for Young People' and the arts arising from the Gaeltacht oral tradition.

In addition to the above, a five year plan will be formulated during the period of co-partnership and the educational needs for Gaeltacht Arts will be examined.

The following are the main events funded during 2001:

Literature

Creative writing for young people was developed through the scheme Scríob Chleite, operating in most Gaeltacht postprimary schools. In Múscraí (Co. Cork) the scheme was linked with a project involving Omeath, Warrington and Co. Cork. Two pupils who took part in Sríob Chleite travelled to Warrington to perform their work under the theme 'A New Beginning' at the advent concert.

An tÚdarás' support for 'Gradam Litríochta Cló Iar-Chonnachta' was announced for the coming two years. The primary aim of this competition is to assist writers in the Irish language to attain an extremely high standard of writing and to ensure that works from the competition are published.

Music

Assistance was provided for a 'sean-nós singer in residence' scheme in Corca Dhuibhne and Múscraí and assistance was also provided to the National Symphony Orchestra's visit to Corca Dhuibhne.

Sean-Nós na nÓg, a major concert of young Gaeltacht sean-nós singers, was held as part of Éigse Dhiarmuid Uí Shúilleabháin. This concert also involved links with young singers from Scotland and Armagh in conjunction with Iomairt Cholm Cille.

Drama

An application was accepted from the drama group Spiorad to undertake the development of a pilot scheme Drama in Education.

Amharclann na nÓg in Corca Dhuibhne completed a feasibility study on the opportunities and implications of youth theatre in Corca Dhuibhne.

Assistance was granted under the Arts Development Scheme to the actor Diarmuid de Faoite to enable him to perform his one-man show Pádraig Ó Conaire throughout the Gaeltacht.

Assistance was granted to the play 'Oíche Ghealaí' by Cathal Ó Searcaigh and produced by Pádraic Breathnach. The project was administered by An Grianán Theatre based in Letterkenny and the play was performed there and throughout the Gaeltacht.

The Visual Arts

The Gaoth Dobhair Arts Committee commenced work on the development of an arts centre in Carraig an tSeascain, Gaoth Dobhair. The centre will house an exhibition space, a studio and workshop.

Renovation work is being carried out by the Tory Artists on Derek Hill's studio. It is intended to develop a museum in honour of the life and work of the artist and the status he gave to painting on Tory Island.

A series of visual arts workshops commenced, under the direction of the group Doras, in Áras Mhic Dara (Residential/Day Care Centre for the Elderly) in An Cheathrú Rua, Co. Galway. This aspect of the arts is among the main elements which Ealaín na Gaeltachta is trying to promote and if it succeeds it is hoped to extend it to other Gaeltacht areas.

The Community Arts Festivals

Support was given to several major Gaeltacht arts festivals, among them Féile Phléaráca Chonamara, Co. Galway, Féile Iorrais, Co. Mayo, The Errigal Arts Festival, Co. Donegal, Éigse Dhiarmuid Uí Shúilleabháin, Co. Cork, and Féile na Bealtaine, Co. Kerry.

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.

European Projects

The Framework Research and Development Project TETRIS (Technology Transfer and Innovation in SMEs), under the INNOVATION priority, was completed and concluded with a detailed study for the application of a database to the monitoring of seaweed harvesting and processing in the Gaeltacht. This was based on the experience of one of the partner organisations in the project – CRPA Spa. in Emilia-Romagna, Italy. The Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology who took part in the project also developed the application of a Rapid Prototyping service for small enterprises based on the experience of DEMOCENTER in Modena, Italy. The application of the Benchmarking Microscope Tool for small enterprises in the Gaeltacht was developed further through the network with partners in Italy and Portugal.

The results of the studies into natural resource-based projects which was funded by the European Commission through the ALTENER programme (1999-2000) led to applications under the Fifth Framework under the priority of Sustainable Development. In addition, Comhlacht Forbartha Áitiúil Acla/ The Achill Island Local Development Company received assistance through the Mayo Energy Agency of Mayo County Council to take part in a project under the SAVE Programme to develop local plans for 100% renewable energy supply.

The project by Comharchumann Inis Meáin Teo. to establish a desalination plant on Inis Meáin, Aran Islands, with the electrical energy supplied by wind turbines, was approved by the European Commission under the Fifth Framework Research and Development Programme. A subsidiary company of the co-op, Fuinneamh Glas Teo., was established for the purpose of operating the desalination plant to supplementing the water supply on the island. The electrical energy needed for the plant will be provided by the wind turbines and the surplus electricity will be sold into the national grid. The partners in the project include ESB International and two Danish technology companies – Tech-Wise and Danvest.

The European Commission provided funding through the European Social Fund to assist in the development of local employment partnerships in a co-operation initiative between Údarás na Gaeltachta with the City and County Enterprise Board in Galway. The project partnership was initiated by the regional employment office in Osterholz, near Bremen in Germany. It included partners in Greece and Spain.

An tÚdarás in partnership with Human Dynamics KG, a private consulting and research company in Vienna, Austria, was successful in the Regional Partnership Programme for Latvia under the European Commission's PHARE Programme. Specialists from An tÚdarás will assist the regional development agency and their staff in the Latgale region during the preparation for that country's preparation for membership of the European Union.



Organisation
and Services

Staff

At the end of 2001 An tÚdarás employed 107 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 has been agreed with the Department of Rural, Community and Gaeltacht Affairs and is being prepared for publication. A revised corporate development plan, based on the strategy statement, is also in preparation for publication.

Freedom of Information Act, 1997

Údarás na Gaeltachta was brought under this Act on January 21st, 2001. Requests for information under this Act should be addressed to Freedom of Information Office, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Na Forbacha, Gaillimh.