



COMMISSION  
OF THE EUROPEAN  
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ISEC/20/87

26 October 1987

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## *Press Release*

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**EMBARGO:** Not for publication or broadcast  
before 14.00 HOURS BST, TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER 1987.

### NORTHERN IRELAND GETS £21 MILLION FROM EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Special five-year programmes involving advanced telecommunication services in Northern Ireland and development of alternative energy sources in the Province have been approved by the European Commission, it was announced in Brussels today.

Biggest allocation of £15.35 million goes to developing advanced telecommunications services under the STAR programme (Special Telecommunication Action for Regional development). This involves provision of an optical fibre ring around the Province and its connection by optical fibre to Dublin and the United Kingdom mainland.

Eighty per cent of the aid will be spent on telecommunications infrastructure investments, the rest on promotion and demand stimulation.

In addition to the number of jobs directly created, investment under the STAR programme is designed to improve the Province's competitiveness as a place for industrial investment. It will also help offset the disadvantages from which Northern Ireland suffers as a result of its geographical location on the periphery of Europe.

Northern Ireland's own energy potential from peat, biomass, wind, water, solar and other renewable sources is to be stimulated under the VALOREN programme (Valorization of Endogenous Energy Potential) also of five years' duration. The Commission has approved the allocation of £5.74 million from the ERDF in a programme designed to advance development in certain less-favoured regions of the European Community.

In addition to the new jobs directly created, notably in peat extraction and processing, the measures to be financed under VALOREN will reinforce steps already taken to mitigate the effects of high energy costs on the economy of the Province.

For more details contact: European Commission's Press and Information Office  
01-222 8122.

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