



european union

NEWS

April 14, 1998
No. 29/98

449(55)
449(51)

EUROPEAN COMMISSION WELCOMES NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE SETTLEMENT

Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, and Monika Wulf-Mathies, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, welcomed the peace settlement in Northern Ireland in the name of the European Commission and paid tribute to the persistence and determination of all the negotiators involved. The settlement shows that the will of the people for peace and cooperation is stronger than the divide.

The European Commission is proud that the European Union (EU) with its Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation helped to bridge the gaps and brought those together in cooperation who suffered the most under the violence of past times. The European Commission is committed to continue using the EU's Structural Funds to help future cooperation efforts and to make today's agreement a lasting success.

On July 28, 1995, the European Commission approved the Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland. It is by far the largest source of external support for the peace process in Northern Ireland. Annual support of ECU 100 million compared with ECU 15.5 million (\$20 million) received by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) from the USA in 1996 for instance, together with ECU 0.96 million from Australia, ECU 0.35 million from Canada and another ECU 20 million from the EU.

The Program's strategic aim is to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation by increasing economic development and employment, promoting urban and rural regeneration, developing cross-border cooperation and extending social inclusion. There are three channels for the distribution of aid. 45 percent of the money is allocated by government departments. 40 percent is allocated by voluntary bodies, and 15 percent by District Partnerships in Northern Ireland.

In 1995 1 ECU = \$1.30

Press Contacts: Willy Helin
Tel: (202) 862-9530

Ella Krucoff
Tel: (202) 862-9540