

International Fund for Ireland: Community financial contributions 2007-2010

2006/0194(CNS) - 21/12/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE: to continue providing the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) with EU contributions for a further 4 year period (2007-2010).

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Regulation 1968/2006/EC concerning Community financial contributions to the International Fund for Ireland (2007 to 2010).

CONTENT: the International Fund for Ireland ("the Fund") was established in 1986 by an Agreement between the Irish and UK governments in order to promote economic and social advance, and to encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland, in implementation of one of the objectives specified by the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 15 November 1985.

The EC has provided financial contributions to the Fund from 1989. For the period 2005 to 2006 EUR 15 million was committed from the Community budget for each of the years 2005 and 2006 in accordance with Council Regulation 177/2005/EC, which expires on 31 December 2006.

The peace process in Northern Ireland requires a continuation of Community support to the Fund beyond 31 December 2006. Accordingly, the Regulation provides that the financial reference amount for the implementation of Fund for the period 2007-2010 is **EUR 60 million**. The Community contribution to the Fund will take the form of financial contributions for the years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, thus terminating at the same time as the life of the Fund. In allocating the contribution the Fund will give priority to projects of a cross-border or cross-community nature, in such a way as to complement the activities financed by the Structural Funds, and especially those of the PEACE programme operating in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland. The contribution must be used in such a way as to bring about sustainable economic and social improvement in the areas concerned. It must not be used as a substitute for other public and private expenditure.

The Fund strategy launched for the final phase of its activities (2006 – 2010) and entitled "Sharing this Space" focuses on four key areas: building foundations for reconciliation in the most marginalised communities, building bridges for contact between divided communities, moving towards a more integrated society and leaving a legacy. Consequently, the ultimate aim of the Fund and of this Regulation is, therefore, to encourage inter-community reconciliation.

An assessment reviewing the closure provisions of the Fund will be carried out before 1 July 2008.

The Commission will represent the Community as an observer at the meetings of the Board of the Fund. The Fund will be represented as an observer at the Monitoring Committee meetings of the PEACE programme, and of other Structural Funds interventions as appropriate.

The Commission will administer the annual contribution, which will be paid in instalments as follows:

- a first advance payment of 40 % will be made after the Commission has received an undertaking, signed by the Chairman of the Fund's Board, to the effect that the Fund will comply with the conditions for the grant of the contribution set out in the Regulation;
- a second advance payment of 40 % shall be made six months later;

- a final payment of 20 % shall be made after the Commission has received and accepted the Fund's annual activity report and audited accounts for the year in question.

A contribution from the Fund may be allocated to an operation which receives or is due to receive financial assistance under a Structural Funds intervention, only if the sum of that financial assistance plus 40 % of the contribution from the Fund does not exceed 75 % of the operation's total eligible costs.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 1 January 2007 and it expires on 31 December 2010.