

JOINT STATEMENT OF INTENT ON
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE IRISH AND BRITISH GOVERNMENTS

At their meeting in London on 8 May 1997, the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister agreed to intensify cooperation between the two governments.

The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach noted that there was already a substantial degree of cooperation in many fields, including policies aimed at tackling long-term unemployment, consumer affairs, health and medical issues, education, culture, the environment, the fight against drugs and crime, civil law matters, processing of social security payments and measures to combat fraud, youth and school exchanges, and transport links.

They agreed that cooperation in the above areas should be maintained, and that the two governments should in particular consider options for cooperation in the following areas:

1. the search for ways to benefit from the potential of new information and communication technologies in education, having regard to progress towards the Information Superhighway and proposals in the United Kingdom for a new National Grid for Learning and University for Industry;
2. the enhancement of the skill and added-value potential of the workforces;
3. having regard to the Common Travel Area in these islands, detailed cooperation in the fight against organised crime;
4. measures to deal with the issue of homelessness, with particular reference to those Irish people in Britain affected by it;
5. ensuring the highest possible food safety standards in these islands;
6. strengthened cooperation in environmental issues.

Meetings at official level have already taken place on a number of the issues identified and further such meetings are envisaged. The primary responsibilities for taking forward cooperation lies with the Ministers, Departments and Agencies most directly affected. Meetings at Ministerial level will be arranged when they can productively take place.

The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister welcomed the initiative of Encounter in organising, with Leargas and the Youth Exchange Centre, a Youth Conference in Dublin from 6-8 June. They hoped that this conference would contribute to an enhancement in cooperation in the youth sector between both countries.