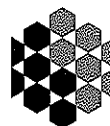


FROM THE MINISTER



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
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1 July 2011

AQW 1136/11-15

Mr Lyttle has asked:

To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the departmental schemes, projects or initiatives since May 2007 that have received co-operation from (a) a Republic of Ireland Government Department, or its agencies; and (b) any Republic of Ireland nongovernmental organisation; and (ii) the departmental schemes, projects or initiatives for which he intends to seek co-operation from these bodies.

ANSWER

Information on the departmental schemes, projects or initiatives since May 2007 that have received co-operation from a Republic of Ireland Government Department or its agencies are listed in Annex A. There were no schemes which received co-operation from any Republic of Ireland nongovernmental organisation.



Regarding future plans, whilst there are no specific additional schemes in the pipeline, my Department will continue to liaise with colleagues in the Republic of Ireland across the range of our responsibilities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Farry', written in a cursive style.

Dr Stephen Farry MLA

Minister for Employment and Learning

Annex A: Departmental schemes, projects or initiatives since May 2007 that have received co-operation from a Republic of Ireland Government Department, or its agencies.

- 1) The Department funds the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to provide advice and support in the area of vocational qualifications, and a very helpful five-nation leaflet, 'Qualifications can cross boundaries', has been produced by CCEA and partner organisations to further understanding of the different qualifications frameworks across the UK and the Republic of Ireland, with agreement and cooperation from the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.
- 2) The Department plays an active role in the implementation of a number of European Commission-led initiatives in the field of vocational education and training. Mutual support and advice forms the bedrock of the implementation of these initiatives, including between the four UK nations and the Republic of Ireland.
- 3) Since May 2007, my Department has provided around £50k to support the work of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS). SCoTENS is jointly funded by my Department, the Department of Education and the Republic of Ireland's Department of Education and Skills (DES). SCoTENS brings together thirty-eight colleges of education, university education departments, teaching councils, curriculum councils, education trade unions and education centres on the island of Ireland with a responsibility for and interest in teacher education. It has supported a wide range of research, conference and exchange projects since it was founded in 2003.
- 4) My Department also administers the All Ireland Scholarship Scheme in Northern Ireland on behalf of The Trustees. DES administers the Scheme in the Republic of Ireland. The All Ireland Scholarships were established with a donation of €30 million from J P McManus for application in the provision of third level education scholarships, spread on a county by county basis throughout the island of Ireland.

- 5) My Department also supports Universities Ireland by providing funding of approx £25k per annum to the Centre for Cross Border Studies, which is the secretarial support for Universities Ireland. This is matched by DES.
- 6) The nine universities on the island of Ireland established Universities Ireland to promote co-operation and collaboration among universities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and to enhance their reputations internationally.
- 7) As a founding partner, my Department has committed to contributing £15k annual for the periods 2009/10 – 2011/12 to the Undergraduate Awards Ireland and Northern Ireland (UAINI). Established in 2008, UAINI recognises and rewards Ireland's most innovative young knowledge creators and catalyses the development of the brightest young undergraduates across the island of Ireland's nine universities. The initiative is aimed at enhancing the island of Ireland's prospects of becoming a leading global knowledge economy by creating entirely new and unique incentives and rewards for undergraduates, through economic and corporate recognition, monetary bursaries and internship and employment opportunities.
- 8) In November 2008, my Department and DES co-hosted and funded a conference on the theme of student and teacher mobility under the Bologna Process in The Grand Hotel, Malahide, Dublin. The Higher Education Authority in Dublin organised the event on behalf of both Departments. My Department's financial commitment was £15k.

The Bologna Process is an agreement dating from 1999 to establish a world-class European Higher Education Area. The Process encourages European countries to reform their higher education systems and make them more competitive. It also promotes close collaboration between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Europe and increased mobility for students, researchers and staff.

- 9) Under the Strengthening the All-island Research Programme, which ran from September 2008 until 31 March 2011, my Department provided over £17m to support twelve socially and economically relevant cross-border R&D projects. The programme was developed in close consultation with Republic of Ireland Government officials and was part-funded through the "Funding for Innovation" stream to which the Irish Government contributed generously.
- 10) My Department is funding six projects under the US-Ireland R&D Partnership, a rolling programme for which funding commenced in

July 2009, and is committed to funding future successful projects to a maximum limit of £320,000 per project. Funding for the Republic of Ireland partner institutions is provided by Science Foundation Ireland, an agency of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

- 11) The EURES Cross Border Partnership has received co-operation from An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS), the National Training and Employment Authority in the Republic of Ireland. The EURES Cross border Partnership was established in 1997 to provide an information advice and placement service for jobseekers and employers interested in cross-border working or recruitment. In particular, it addresses information gaps in relation to taxation and social security entitlements and assists employers access a larger pool of labour.
- 12) The Department conducted a fundamental policy review of the systems for resolving workplace disputes here in Northern Ireland over the period 2008-2010. During the course of the review the Department held discussions with officials from the ROI's Department for Enterprise, Training and Employment (DETE) and one of its NDPBs, the Labour Relations Commission(LRC)."
- 13) My Department jointly hosted the All Island Skills Conference, entitled 'Building Better Skills Together', on 9 October 2008 in conjunction with the Republic of Ireland's DETE and Department for Lifelong Learning. The Skills Conference examined skills issues from an all-island basis and highlighted best practice in cross-border co-operation.

The Conference provided a platform for the launch of the 'All Island Skills Study' which was taken forward jointly by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs in Ireland and the Northern Ireland Skills Expert Group.

- 14) My Department jointly commissioned research with DETE, Invest NI, Intertrade Ireland, Forfas and the Management Development Council in the Republic of Ireland to assess management practices in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The 'Management Matters' research, published in 2009, shows key areas where firms might significantly improve their management practice.
- 15) In 2008 and 2009 my Department also offered the opportunity for 10 private sector middle-managers to participate on the Leaders for Tomorrow programme. This Centre for Applied Learning programme, included study at Harvard University, and mainly

catered for Civil Servants from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

- 16) My Department also contributes to the inter-Governmental and inter-Departmental North-West Gateway Initiative. The initiative was formally announced in May 2006 and officials have sought to find ways in which the Executive and Government in the Republic of Ireland, working in co-operation, can attract new employers and economic benefits to rejuvenate the region.