

Press Release

SCIENCE COUNCIL SETS OUT INVESTMENT PRIORITIES FOR 1999

The Irish Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (ICSTI) has issued a Statement to Government on priorities for investment in science and technology in 1999.

The priorities identified by the Council are as follows:

- **Industry Research and Development:** The Council welcomes the announcement of additional funds for the Research, Technology and Innovation Initiative and recommends that further monies should be provided in the event of any reallocation of Structural Funds in 1999. The Council also advocates a tax credit for industry R&D in order to compensate for the disincentive effect on R&D of a low corporate tax environment.
- **Industrial Design** is recognised as an important route to product innovation and competitive advantage. Increased funding of £6million should be provided.

- **Telecommunications Infrastructure:** Increased funding of £30 million to continue the development of broadband facilities and £3.8 million to upgrade the education and research network in third-level colleges to broadband technology.
- **S&T Skills and Expertise:** The necessary investment should be made to provide 800 extra computer science and engineering degree places and 1400 sub-degree places, as identified by the joint Forfás/HEA/FAS Expert Group on Future Skills. The Dept.of Education and Science should assume responsibility for funding post-graduate students and establish a special programme for post-doctoral research. A single body should be established to co-ordinate third-level research funding between the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Education and Science.
- **Science in Schools:** The necessary resources should be made available to implement the new science curriculum at primary level. At second level, special resource teachers should be used in the training of science teachers and additional resources should be allocated to improve laboratory facilities and provide teachers for physics and chemistry. An allocation of £0.5 million should be provided towards a network of Science Centres.
- **Public Sector Research:** Government should allocate additional resources for research in support of national strategic objectives.

ICSTI Chairman, Dr. Edward M. Walsh, welcomed the progress that has been made in recent years on increasing public funding for scientific research and for industrial innovation and expressed the hope that spending in 1999 would again target the areas which are most in need and which will provide the best return to the economy. He concluded that 1999 would be a critical year for public funding of science, technology and innovation in the run-up to negotiations on a new Structural Funds programmes. So many of the current science and technology programmes are critically dependent on EU funds that the Government must ensure that adequate funding for these programmes continues through a new Structural Funds programme or from national exchequer or private sources.

ENDS.

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