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Dublin to light up the sky for new EU members



Inset: how a searchlight display – part of the cultural programme – will look.

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Eighteen searchlights will illuminate the sky over Dublin with artistic designs in the fortnight prior to the accession of the 10 new member-states to the European Union on May 1st, the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, Mr O'Donoghue, has announced.

"People from the city, the country and around the world will be invited to light up the sky," the Minister said as he launched the cultural programme for Ireland's European Presidency at the National Gallery yesterday.

The lighting designs will be computer-operated and the Minister said they would comprise one of the world's largest on-line artworks.

"Individuals who go on-line will be able to put together their own fabulous and imaginative light designs by operating 18 searchlights located along Dublin's docks via simple instructions on the website.

"Every six seconds a new design will be rendered on the sky for all to see while a large screen will display the signature and comments of the authors. This will go live for the two weeks running up to May 1st, presenting designs from dusk to dawn."

He predicted the events organised for May 1st – "The Day of Welcomes" – would "resonate throughout Europe and the wider world". "It is a day when the spotlight will be very firmly on Ireland," he added.

Each of the new member-states will be "welcomed" officially into the EU with cultural celebrations in different Irish cities or towns that have been "twinned" with the 10 accession countries. The list of towns and countries is as follows: Bray (Cyprus); Cork (Slovakia); Drogheda (Latvia); Lim-

erick (Slovenia); Galway (Estonia); Kilkenny (Lithuania); Killarney (Czech Republic); Letterkenny (Poland); Sligo (Hungary); and Waterford (Malta).

On Friday, April 30th, Dublin, will be the venue for "20 minutes of the largest fireworks spectacle in the European calendar" presented by Groupe F, a leading European pyrotechnics company.

"Dublin will also see St Stephen's Green transformed into a colourful bazaar with marquees, stands and stages making up 'The European Fair' on Saturday, May 1st," the Minister said.

There are plans also for "a major rock concert of Irish and international musicians" in O'Connell St which is intended to be broadcast jointly through the whole of Europe by RTÉ and the BBC. The cultural programme will not be confined to Ireland and begins in Prague on Saturday with a performance by Bell XI, a rock band from Celbridge, Co Kildare.

On Monday in Brussels, the Minister opens an exhibition organised by the Dublin-based Gallery of Photography as well as a literary exhibition called "In Other Words" and featuring texts in different languages composed in Ireland between the 7th and the 20th centuries, in Irish, Latin, French, English, and Ulster Scots.

Later on Monday, the formal inaugural concert of the Irish Presidency will be given in Brussels by the traditional music groups, Danú, sharing the stage of the Flagey Concert Hall with the sean nós dancer, Seosamh Ó Neachtain.

Irish artists, musicians, dancers, writers and film-makers will travel to each of the 10 accession states, "encouraging closer cultural ties with our new European neighbours". Artists and groups from the new member-states will, in turn, visit Ireland for displays and performances of their works.