

# Missing the 'Big Bang' party

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Madam, - The Irish Times has given exemplary coverage of recent events at Cern, The European Organisation for Nuclear Research, with comprehensive articles, cartoons and other pieces all helping to raise public awareness of this outstanding international scientific centre.

It is a proud moment for Europe, as the experiments at the new particle accelerator will be watched with intense interest by scientists the world over for information on the fundamental structure of matter, and on the evolution of the early universe.

However, as your Science Editor Dick Ahlstrom points out, the participation of Irish scientists in this historic research will be severely limited by the fact that the Republic, almost uniquely among western European nations, is not a member of Cern. This oversight has decimated Irish research in particle physics, despite a proud tradition in the field (Ireland's only Nobel prize in science was awarded for the splitting of the atomic nucleus by Ernest Walton). More pragmatically, Irish high-tech companies are severely disadvantaged in bidding for the huge contracts available in engineering and information technology at Cern.

So much for our efforts to become a world leader in science and technology. - Yours, etc,

Dr CORMACO'RAIFEARTAIGH,

Lecturer in Physics,

Waterford Institute of Technology.

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