

European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo da Vinci)

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report acts as a summary report regarding the Leonardo Staff Exchange Programme 2009, and seeks Member endorsement of proposals for a further submission for European Commission (EC) funding to support a new programme for 2010.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Note the completion of the 2009 Exchange Programme;
- b) Endorse proposals for the programme to continue into 2010; and
- c) Should the proposals be endorsed:
 - i) Provide an indication of the thematic subject areas to be explored during 2010 by Member/officer groups; and
 - ii) Nominate Members to participate within the programme (ideally not less than 2 and not greater than 4).

3 Background

The EC has created¹ the Leonardo Da Vinci Programme² that provides funds for the exchange of European citizens between member states, for personal development. The Programme, initially launched in 1995, is part of the EC's new Lifelong Learning Programme and is designed to build a skilled workforce through European partnerships.

¹ Council Decision of the European Union (1999/382/EC), Article 2

² Call For Proposals (Directorate-General For Education And Culture) Under The Second Phase of The Leonardo Da Vinci Programme - (EAC/11/04)2

Leonardo funds trans-national work placement, exchanges and the development of training materials with the objective of improving the provision of Vocational Education and Training (VET) across Europe. It focuses on raising the quality and relevance of VET, and provides an opportunity for organisations involved in VET to build European partnerships, exchange best practice, increase the expertise of their staff and develop the skills of learners. The Programme is open to the entire spectrum of subjects covered by vocational education and training.

Proposals may be submitted by public and private bodies and companies, which are involved in training or concerned by vocational training issues, brought within an international partnership. This covers:

- Vocational training establishments
- Centres and bodies at all levels, including universities
- Research centres and institutions
- The business sector
- Non-profit making organisations, and
- Voluntary bodies etc.

Since 2006, the EC has funded the placement of over 100 elected Members and staff from Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to ten European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Portugal and Spain).

4 Leonardo Staff Exchange Programme 2009

The Leonardo Staff Exchange Programme 2009 has enabled a total of 25 elected Members and staff to undertake one-week international exchanges to fire and civil protection organisations operating in five European countries.

The programme, now in its fourth year, has proven to be highly successful and beneficial to the personal development of those who have participated. As in previous years, the programme is open to all staff and has been promoted and operated on the basis of cross-departmental working groups. During 2009 the following exchange visits took place.

Thematic Research and Personal Development Visits

Amstetten Fire Service, Austria

In September 2009 two elected Members, accompanied by two officers, visited Austria and were hosted by Amstetten Fire Service. Amstetten is a wholly volunteer fire service, operating with approximately 120 firefighters, who crew in excess of 20 fire and rescue vehicles from one fire station. The group visited a number of professional and volunteer Austrian fire services and explored a variety of ways of working with volunteers that would be considered unconventional within the context of the UK's fire and rescue services. The experiences gained during this visit offers the possibility of exploring the adoption of alternative and innovative working practices here in Shropshire.

Lodz Provincial Fire Service, Poland

The Service has developed a unique and innovative reciprocal partnership with Lodz Provincial Fire Service. The impetus for this project stems from the increasing number of fatalities and injuries arising amongst the growing Polish community in the UK. National research³ has found that of all the European citizens, who live or work in the UK, Polish communities were potentially at higher risk and had the lowest understanding of the risks associated with fire. In September 2009 a group of four Shropshire Fire and Rescue staff visited Lodz to gain a greater understanding of Polish culture and their attitude towards fire safety. As a reciprocal Leonardo arrangement, in early December 2009 a team of 5 Polish fire officers visited Shropshire and have worked in partnership with our staff to engage more closely with the local Polish community. This has led to development of locally targeted fire safety initiatives.

Regensburg Fire Service, Bavaria, Germany

A group of five members of staff visited Regensburg Fire Service in September 2009. The group included a firefighter from each watch at Wellington Fire Station, together with their Station Manager. Personnel at Wellington specialise in vehicle extrication techniques and had previously identified a training need to gain a greater understanding of modern vehicle construction. The group visited several vehicle manufacturers (Regensburg is home to BMW) and manufacturers of vehicle safety devices in Germany and Austria. As an objective of their visit, the group have developed a 'Brigade Training Lecture Pack' that raises awareness of modern vehicle design and in-built safety devices (e.g. airbags, seat belt tensioners, crumple zones etc).

Humanitarian Aid and Personal Development Visits

These visits were undertaken by staff on a voluntary basis. All planning and preparatory work was done in their own free time and they used their holiday entitlement for the visits.

Kóka Volunteer Fire Department, Hungary

Hungary has the highest recorded levels of fire death in Europe,⁴ twice that of the UK. In September 2009, and continuing the Service's previous efforts to support the reduction of deaths and injuries from fire in Hungary, a group of 5 staff and the Chair of the Fire Authority travelled over 1,300 miles to the small village of Kóka. Upon arrival, the group donated a redundant fire engine to the local community and trained local volunteer firefighters in the use of the donated equipment and vehicle. The group, en route to Hungary, stayed with fire services in Germany and Austria.

³ Source: CLG FRS Circular 25/2009
(http://www.fireofficers.org.uk/downloads/fireservicecirculares/england_wales/2009/FRSC25_2009.pdf)

⁴ Source: World Fire Statistics 2008
(<http://www.genevaassociation.org/PDF/WFSC/GA2008-FIRE24.pdf>)

Dolany Volunteer Fire Department, Czech Republic

To support the work of volunteer firefighters in other countries, the Service formed a new partnership for 2009 with Dolany Volunteer Fire Department, which is located in the east of the Czech Republic. In October 2009 a group of six staff travelled approximately 1,200 miles to Dolany and donated a redundant fire engine to the local community. The group, en route, stayed with fire services in Germany, prior to spending a week training Dolany volunteer firefighters in the use of the donated equipment and fire engine.

The 2009 programme is now in the process of a formal evaluation and closedown. A 'Leonardo Celebration of Success' event is planned for Monday 25 January 2010 (from 7.00 until 9.00 pm), when each group will deliver a summary presentation, supplemented by a full written report of their findings and recommendations. The event will be attended by Ms Karine Jacques, who is the head of the EC Leonardo Programme within the UK. Ms Jacques will present each participant with a certificate and commemorative gift marking their achievements. Fire Authority Members will be formally invited to attend this event and will have the opportunity to receive more informative details regarding the 2009 exchange visits and meet with the participants.

5 Proposals: Leonardo Staff Exchange Programme 2010

With only a few months to the closing date (5 February 2010) for 2010 applications for Leonardo funding, preparations have commenced to assess the viability of developing a new and varied exchange programme for 2010.

Subject to the endorsement of the Fire Authority, it is proposed to seek EC approval to deliver the following outline programme:

Member/Officer Development

It is proposed to undertake one or more visits to existing European partner fire and rescue services (operating in Austria, Germany, Spain or Poland). The visits would be aimed at researching and benchmarking thematic aspects of service provision provided by the Fire Authority, to that undertaken elsewhere in Europe. The aim of the visit would be to identify areas of notable practice and innovation that could be transferred to Shropshire.

Humanitarian Aid Visits

One of the most successful areas of the Service's Leonardo programme to date has been the humanitarian aid projects to Hungary and the Czech Republic. Subject to the continuing support of the Fire Authority's provider of leased fire appliances (who kindly donated three redundant fire engines to the programme during 2008 and 2009), it is hoped to transport further redundant vehicles and equipment during 2010 to new partners operating in Bulgaria, Poland and Romania. As with previous visits, all participants within the proposed 2010 humanitarian aid visits will be volunteers, taking holiday entitlement to participate.

It is also proposed to engage a local Shropshire college within the programme and involve students in preparation of vehicles and equipment to be donated. Following vehicle preparation, a small group of students (under the supervision of a college lecturer) would join our staff for the visit to the recipient country.

Visits proposed for 2010 will be open to all Members and staff and will take place during June to October. Acceptance and selection for the programme is via completion of an application form. Each visit will be a minimum of one-week's duration. The Leonardo programme meets all travel, accommodation and reasonable subsistence requirements.

Members are requested to consider the above proposals, indicating their endorsement for the programme to continue into 2010, and, should support continue:

- i) To give an indication of the thematic subject areas to be explored during 2010 by Member/Officer groups; and
- ii) To nominate Members to participate (ideally not less than 2 and not greater than 4).

6 Financial Implications

The European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme has an overall budget of €6.97 billion; of which 25 percent is allocated to Leonardo based projects.

Organisations, who secure funding are entitled to up to 75 percent of the respective placement costs from the EC, with the organisation contributing the remaining 25 percent. Management and administration time incurred in delivering the programme may form part or all of the 25 percent contribution made by the organisation.

To date all Leonardo staff exchange programmes operated by the Service have done so on a cost-neutral basis, with management and administration time factored to account for 25 percent of the programme's overall budget. The proposals set out above for 2010 programme will operate on a similar basis, with no expected additional budgetary implications.

During 2009 two Volvo fire engines and associated equipment were donated to volunteer fire services operating in Hungary and the Czech Republic. The vehicles were not under the ownership of the Fire Authority, but owned by a leasing company that benevolently donated them to the programme upon expiry of existing leasing agreements. Equipment, which was obsolete, was donated by a number of other fire and rescue services and/or equipment providers. There were no cost implications to the Fire Authority nor disposal of Fire Authority assets of value.

7 Further Information

Further details regarding the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme may be accessed at:

Lifelong Learning Programme:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html#call

Leonardo Programme:

<http://www.leonardo.org.uk/>

8 Legal Comment

The Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 was established by Decision (No - 1720/2006/EC) and was signed by the Presidents of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union on 15 November 2006, It was published in the Official Journal (No L327) of the European Union on 24 November 2006 and came into force on 14 December 2006.

The Fire Authority is eligible to apply for funding through the provisions of Decision No 1720/2006/EC.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed previously.

10 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

11 Background Papers

Background and progress reports have been periodically reported to the Fire Authority since 2004 and may be viewed at the Service's website:

<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/engine/managing-the-service/cfa/fire-authority-view.htm>

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity	*	Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial		Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*