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Press release

Date: 23 June 2006
Title: Wales cracks da Vinci Programme

Projects in Wales designed to encourage vocational placements and exchanges abroad have secured an exceptional share of the €14 million Euro of funding available through the Rounds 1 and 2 of the 2006 Leonardo da Vinci Mobility Programme.

The seven projects, which include locating HE students in work placements and arranging for workers to enhance their vocational training in other European countries, not only constitute 9% of the funded projects in the first round - they have also attracted around 10% of the total 2006 budget available for such projects in the UK after just *one* round of bidding.

Successful Round 1 projects include a Cardiff University programme for marine geography undergraduates to undertake practical training and work placements in Greece and a scheme by Coleg Gwent to send art, design and media students to Germany for work experience in media and publishing companies, in order to better understand European industries.

In addition, Airbus UK has embarked on a unique project between big business and FE, where Airbus apprentices trained in Deeside College will have an opportunity to enhance their training and develop their skills with Airbus Germany, France and Spain.

Roger Carter, Head of Economic Development at HEFCW, said:

“Courses which offer work placements abroad are increasingly appealing to prospective students, who are always on the lookout for further or higher education options that add value to their final qualification and better prepare them for the workplace.”

One organisation which has enjoyed continued success in attracting Leonardo funding has been Llangollen-based ECTARC. Now established as a Centre of Excellence in European Training Programmes in Wales, ECTARC made the UK shortlist at the recent 2nd European Quality in Mobility Awards for its top quality Mobility project from 2003. The project aimed to enhance individual work skills through a European experience, thus contributing to “The Learning Agenda” of Wales and its economic and social growth.

Sharon Thomas, Executive Director of ECTARC, said:

“We were delighted to be one of the five short-listed Mobility projects from the UK which were put forward for this prestigious award, which was judged by an international selection panel. We are pleased that our achievements have been recognised in this way, especially since we have enjoyed working with Leonardo since the second phase of the Mobility programme started six years ago.”

ECTARC has once again found success during the first round of the 2006 Leonardo da Vinci Mobility Programme, securing funding to recruit 100 recent graduates and young workers from all over Wales to complete European work placements in a wide range of sectors.

The encouraging number of applications and increased success rate for Wales in Round 1 of the Programme in 2006 is partly thanks to the Leonardo da Vinci National Agency providing more focused support than ever before, with dedicated British Council staff working closely with promoters in Wales.

Organisations and institutions in the UK have had a second opportunity to bid for Leonardo funding in 2006. The deadline for submissions of Round 2 projects was 9 June 2006 and details of the successful projects will become available over the coming months. The European Commission also announced recently that there will be even more opportunities for higher education institutions in Wales and beyond to bid for funding through its new Integrated Action programme for Lifelong Learning, which will include Leonardo, in 2007.

Assisting Welsh higher education institutions win funding from EU programmes will be a new Brussels-based resource. Welsh Higher Education Brussels (WHEB), situated in the heart of the EU district of the city, will build closer links with a wide range of other stakeholders, promoting Welsh excellence in pursuit of Europe-wide goals.

Paul Harris, WHEB Head of Office, said:

“It is an immense privilege to begin an exciting new venture in which higher education in Wales has come together to provide a common interface with the EU.

“A quarter of the annual £700,000 for the EU Integrated Action programme for Lifelong Learning will be spent on Leonardo until 2013. WHEB will now work to build the capacity of Welsh HEIs to benefit in particular from the new features of the programme, which should come on-stream from 2009.”

End.

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Leonardo Mobility Projects in Wales

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Notes to Editors

1. Background - HEFCW

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body, established in May 1992, which assumed responsibility for funding higher education in Wales on 1 April 1993.

Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the Council is responsible for the administration of funds made available by the Assembly in support of the provision of

education, the undertaking of research by higher education institutions, and the provision of prescribed courses of higher education at further education institutions.

Under the Education Act 1994, the Council is responsible for accrediting providers of initial teaching training for school teachers and commissioning research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, the Council provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.

2. Further Education Colleges

HEFCW directly funds some higher education provision within Further Education Colleges (FECs). Funding for their HE provision forms only a very small part of the income for FECs. The mainstay of financial support for these institutions is the Welsh Assembly Government. For this reason, the Council has never sought to moderate the funding outcome (by uplifting to GDP) for these institutions in terms of their higher education provision. This means that year-on-year funding for higher education provision in FECs can vary considerably as a consequence of their performance in terms of student numbers.

3. Leonardo da Vinci Programme

The Leonardo da Vinci programme aims to improve the quality of vocational training systems and practices in Europe. The programme supports projects that develop initial and continuing vocational training in European co-operation. The second phase of the Leonardo da Vinci programme runs from 2000 to 2006. The total EU budget for the programme is 1,15 billion Euros over seven years.

Mobility projects are for:

a) Placement of students and trainees

- placements of people undergoing initial vocational training in vocational training institutions and enterprises abroad;
- work placements abroad for students in higher education; and
- work placements for young workers and recently qualified persons in vocational training institutions or enterprises.

b) Exchanges for trainers

- between enterprises and vocational training institutions; and
- between enterprises and vocational training institutions with a view to developing language and cultural competencies.

Projects in Wales funded through the Round 1 of the 2006 Leonardo da Vinci Mobility Programme in the UK:

Cardiff University – Sending 8 Marine Geography undergraduates to Greece to complete a training placement on applied Marine research in the Eastern Aegean Sea. This project, through the practical training and work placements of undergraduate students of Marine Geography from Cardiff University, will contribute to the assessment of current biodiversity in key marine habitats centred around the islands of Arki and Ikaria in the Eastern Aegean Sea.

Coleg Menai – 50 Welsh baccalaureate students to Spain to complete the Work Placement aspect of the WBQ Core (in a range of sectors) alongside undertaking the 'Individual Investigation' module and studying the language (in this case Spanish).

ECTARC – Llangollen has established itself as a Centre of Excellence in European Training programmes in Wales. For the 2006 project ECTARC will recruit 100 recent graduates and young workers from all over Wales to complete European work placements in a wide range of sectors. ECTARC has partners in Germany, Poland, France, Spain, Estonia and Italy amongst others and a number of graduates and undergraduates from HEIs in Wales have participated in its programmes over the years.

Coleg Gwent – 15 FE students studying within the Art design and Media department of Coleg Gwent to go to Germany to successfully complete a three week work experience within media and publishing establishments as used within the dual system framework of Munich. The project intends to help the next generation to become more knowledgeable and have a greater understanding of European industries, whilst encouraging involvement in vocational training and improving quality of training provision.

Aigles Training (Barry, Cardiff) – intend to recruit 80 young workers and recent graduates mainly from South Wales to complete 3 month work placements in a range of sectors to improve work experience, enhance skills and promote European mobility.

They have partners in a range of countries and have been promoting mobility projects for a number of years.

Deeside College – are promoting a Trainer Exchange project to the Netherlands. A project to facilitate and exchange of good practice on vocational training in Retail between the UK and the Netherlands. It will allow a group of 15 training professionals and HR managers to undertake a one week exchange that will include, Job shadowing, company visits, exchange of materials and discussions on gaps in provision and the possibility of developing European wide qualifications in retail. The beneficiaries will be made up of retail HR and Training managers and professional retail trainers.

Airbus UK – this is a unique project between big business and FE. Airbus apprentices are trained in Deeside College and the two organisations collaborate on this Leonardo project to send 30 of their apprentices to Airbus Germany, France and Spain. The apprentices will all be from the aircraft manufacturing sector both craft and engineering trainees. This project will pilot a scheme to allow trainees from Airbus UK to develop their skills and enhance their training by undertaking 2-3 months in an Airbus facility in another member state country to complete activities that will constitute part of their apprenticeship. This will include both vocational i.e. NVQ level 3/4 and or Key Skills activities i.e. Improving own learning, Problem solving and Team working.