

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: POLICY AND RESOURCES EUROPEAN WORKING GROUP	Subject: ECOS-OUVERTURE PROGRAMME - UPDATE
From: CHIEF EXECUTIVE	
Date: 27 January 1998	Ref: CE/002/005/002

1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to update members of the Working Group on the Council's current involvement with the Ecos-Ouverture programme regarding current and potential applications for funding.

2 Background

The Ecos-Ouverture programme consists of a network to assist the local, regional and city authorities in the EU to establish contact and to develop co-operation with their counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe.

Funding is available for transnational partnerships concerning activities such as exchange of experience, training officers and elected members, and seminars on topics such as local democracy, transport, environmental protection, urban planning and social policy.

3 The Molserv Project

The Council's involvement to date with the programme has been through the Molserv project, which took place in Chisinau, Moldova, and was a vocational training and regional development project to urgently review the needs of the most vulnerable children and families and to lay foundations for social work services.

The project was carried out in partnership with Piemonte Regional Council in Italy, Bacau County in Romania, and the Chisinau Municipality of Moldova.

The Social Work department of North Lanarkshire Council were the lead for the project having inherited it from the former Strathclyde Regional Council after the project had been awarded 40,000 ECU (£26,800) by the Ecos-Ouverture programme. The Council then played an integral part in the development of the project along with the Romanian Orphanage Trust.

The project was extremely successful in the development and shaping of child welfare services in Chisinau which do not rely so heavily on institutional care but more on family-based forms of care. Various training workshops and study visits took place and the end result has been the creation of a childrens' department in Chisinau.

The project was included in the COSLA Guide to Transnational Programmes as an example of best practice.

4 Partnership Project in Demonstration Social Services Development

Following on from the success of the Molserv project, the Council, through the Social Work Department submitted another bid to the Ecos-Ouverture programme for funding at the September 1997 call for proposals to build on the achievements of the last project and to provide the necessary support services for the newly created childrens' department.

This project involves Highland Council, Piemonte Region in Italy, the European Childrens' Trust, Bacau County Council in Romania, Chisinau/Cricova Municipality of Moldova, and the Tiraspol Town Council in Moldova, as partners. North Lanarkshire Council, through the Social Work Department, will also lead on this project.

The bid was not ultimately approved although a follow-up bid may be made to the next call for proposals, the date for which has not been set by the European Commission.

In the interim, discussions are taking place with the partners in the project, and the Ecos-Ouverture staff to identify a way to progress the project with a view to re-submitting. The creation of the Childrens' Department in Moldova has led to an urgent need for trained managerial and operational staff and projects such as this one which aim to make the required technical assistance a reality by empowering and enabling the principle EU local authority partners to transfer skills and exchange of experience are extremely important.

5 Mures County Council - Proposed Joint Ecos-Ouverture Project

In August 1997, the President of Mures County Council in Romania, having visited North Lanarkshire, contacted the Chief Executive with a request to potentially develop an Ecos-Ouverture funded project with the authority. South Lanarkshire Council were also contacted.

Since then, by way of telephone calls and correspondence, project ideas have been discussed and it is hoped that we will have an indication in the near future of whether Mures County still wish to progress a project in conjunction with North Lanarkshire and, if so, the exact form that this is intended to take.

Initial interest would appear to be in the development of a project which would in some way support the proposed modernisation of the local public administration in Mures County, and encompass training for staff within the administration. Should a bid to Ecos-Ouverture be feasible, and, following further clarification from Mures County, contact will be made with appropriate departments within the Council and a more detailed proposal drawn up with a view to submitting an application to the next round of the Ecos-Ouverture programme once the European Commission advise of a call for proposals.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the European Working Group :-

- (i) Notes the current situation regarding the Council's involvement with the Ecos-Ouverture Programme generally
- (ii) Notes the progress in respect of the Mures County Council proposal


Chief Executive

Local Government Access to Information Act

For further information on this report, please contact Heather Koronka, European Co-Ordination Officer, on 01698-302270.
