

# **European and External Affairs Committee**

Date: 25 March 2004

Time: 09:00

Venue: Committee Rooms 3 & 4, National Assembly Building, Cardiff Bay

Title: Information about links and twinning arrangements between Wales and other countries

## **Purpose**

1. This paper gives information about links and twinning arrangements between Wales and other countries.

## **Action**

2. Members are invited to note the contents of the paper.

## **Background**

3. At the European and External Affairs Committee on 26 February members discussed the value of links and twinning arrangements with other countries. It was agreed that Members' Research and Committee Services would explore what information could be made available to members on links and other twinning arrangements in Wales. The information that has been collated is set out below.

## **Local Government International Bureau**

4. The Local Government International Bureau (LGIB) acts as a link between the European Union and the Welsh Local Government Association. LGIB provides a wide range of services for local authorities, updating them on European and International issues and assisting them in their international links and partnerships.

5. The organisation's website includes a database listing twinning arrangements between towns in Wales and overseas. The database also has a search function. The list is due to be updated on 30 April. The website address is [www.lgib.gov.uk/](http://www.lgib.gov.uk/).

# **Educational Links Within The EU**

## **SOCRATES Programme**

6. The SOCRATES programme is Europe's primary education programme and involves approximately 30 EU countries. It was established to promote language, learning and to encourage mobility and innovation. The programme also allows access to education for all people, to be able to gain recognised qualifications and skills.

7. SOCRATES targets all aspects of learning and all abilities, from nursery to university and also including more informal educational paths. The educational establishments involved are able to open up to new ideas and practices e.g. building partnerships with establishments in other countries. The programme includes various schemes including COMENIUS (School Education) and ERASMUS (Higher Education).

8. COMENIUS encourages co-operation between schools and the development of staff as well as promoting the learning of languages and intercultural awareness.

9. ERASMUS is designed to support higher education activities and support the exchange of students and teaching staff.

## **Leonardo da Vinci**

10. The EU's Leonardo da Vinci programme encourages collaboration between organisations involved in vocational training, aiming to improve the standard of training and develop the skills and mobility of the workforce.

11. Detailed information is available on the participation of individual educational institutions in Wales. The information is in the form of detailed spreadsheets to be read in electronic format, and have been provided by the Assembly Office in Brussels. The data includes:

- Welsh schools participating in the COMENIUS scheme (2002-2003)
- Welsh institutions participating in ERASMUS (1991-2002) - number of incoming and outgoing students and teachers, and compared with England, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Breakdown of Welsh students participating in ERASMUS by educational subject area (including age and gender breakdown) and as a proportion of the UK total
- Welsh colleges and universities participating in the Leonardo scheme (2000-2003)

12. Members should contact Members' Research and Committee Services if they would like electronic

copies of the data.

## **Spring Day in Europe**

13. Spring Day in Europe is an initiative to promote learning and debate in schools about the European Union and EU Member States. The activities allow schools to work together as partners and pupils to connect with each other and discuss their views. Of the 92 schools in the UK that are registered for the initiative to date, three are in Wales: Pencoed Comprehensive School, Ysgol Gynradd Ffairfach, Llandeilo, and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn, Llansawel.

## **International Education Links**

### **The Welsh Centre for International Affairs**

14. The Welsh Centre for International Affairs is aware of partnership initiatives across Wales. Examples of organisations involved in partnership work are Global Connections in Pembrokeshire, and Dolen Cymru, which establishes links between schools in Wales and Lesotho. A list of more than 60 schools in Wales that are linked with schools in Lesotho is available. The West Wales European Centre also produces an e-mail newsletter 'Llais Europe' which includes news of partnership projects and advertises partner searches.

### **The British Council Wales**

15. The British Council Wales provides access to the network of British Council offices overseas in 110 countries and works to establish international partnerships that draw on the strengths of Wales in education, the arts, governance, knowledge and information, language and science. The Committee will be receiving a presentation from the Country Director of the British Council in Wales at its meeting on 25 March 2004.

## **Recommendation**

16. That the Committee notes the paper and contacts Members' Research and Committee Services directly for copies of the information referred to in the contents.

Contact point

Members' Research and Committee Services