

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD1182

Title: Support for “London Higher Europe”

Executive Summary:

Support of up to £10,000 for London Higher (LH) as a contribution to its establishment of a Brussels-based representative to build up EU engagement by London’s Higher Education Institutions (HEI), increase the amount of EU funding received by those HEIs and strengthen the reputation of London’s Higher Education (HE) sector – and of London as a whole – with the EU institutions and other European stakeholders.

Decision:

That the Deputy Mayor, Policy & Planning approves the provision of up to £10,000 funding to London Higher for the year 2014/15 to be used as a contribution to the London Higher Europe initiative.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor’s plans and priorities.
It has my approval.

Name: Sir Edward Lister

Position: Deputy Mayor, Policy and Planning

Signature:



Date:

27.05.2014

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

London Higher is the umbrella body for over 40 of London's HEIs. Direct EU grant funding for research is probably worth over £50m per annum to London universities, while the overall economic impact of students and staff from the EU is much greater (see supporting papers). A few of the larger London HEIs account for the majority of grant funds received. The smaller institutions have little experience of bidding for EU funds and little, if any, resource to do so.

At the request of LH, London's European Office (LEO), has been working with LH over the past few years to step up their EU engagement, with the aim of raising the profile of London's HE sector and increasing the amount of EU funding received by London's HEIs. LEO has for example participated in LH's Europe Group and facilitated joint visits to Brussels by LH members. To take this to the next level, LH has now proposed to its members that they make financial contributions (relative to their size) to fund a joint post, based primarily in LEO in Brussels, to establish and intensify links to EU institutions and other stakeholders represented in Brussels. These stakeholders include other universities, major research institutes, cities and regions and businesses, all of which either have offices in their own right and/or are members of representative associations. A major role of these offices is to promote their expertise, lobby for particular funding priorities, and to find partners with whom they can form consortia to bid for EU funds. Bidding with partners from other EU Member States is often a requirement of the EU funding process.

The EU budget for the period 2014-20 has an increased focus on Research, Development and Innovation. EUR 80bn is available in the "Horizon 2020" programme for the seven-year period. There are also several smaller, though still significant, funding streams, such as ERASMUS+ (education, including exchanges of students and staff, and collaboration between institutions and between HEIs and business: EUR 14bn) and LIFE (environment and climate change: EUR 3.5bn).

So far, 10 HEIs have made commitments totalling around £30k for 2014-15 to the London Higher Europe initiative. While this is a major step forward, establishing an effective presence in Brussels takes significant time and effort. Additional funding from GLA of £10k, with the possibility of repeating this for a second year, would give the new resource a better chance of making an impact and thus securing larger and more sustained contributions from LH members. Apart from the direct benefit to London HEIs, aligning the London Higher Europe activity with LEO will increase London's profile with EU and wider European stakeholders and increase synergies with the GLA group's own bids for EU funds.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

The outline objectives for the London Higher Europe initiative are as follows. They are being refined by the participating HEIs in the London Higher Europe Steering Group.

- Provide participating HEIs with one-to-one guidance on EU engagement
- Promote London's HE capacity to the EU
- Facilitate HEIs' bids for EU funding, including help with technical and procedural questions and with finding bid partners from other Member States
- Assist HEIs in influencing future funding calls
- Strengthen funding for the London Higher Europe initiative itself

The main deliverable in the first year will be the development of action plans to increase EU engagement for each of the subscribing members of London Higher Europe. Resource will also be required for

communication of the initiative, for example by developing web-based material and organising meetings or events in London and Brussels.

3. Other considerations

a) key risks and issues

The LH secretariat (in particular Michael Reynier, Deputy Chief Executive of London Higher) will manage the London Higher Europe initiative. Ian Catlow, LEO's Head of Office, will act as an advisor to LH, will be a member of the Steering Group of London Higher Europe and will provide guidance, as necessary, to the consultant based at LEO's office in Brussels.

There is no overlap with any existing support mechanism or service. LEO provides support and advice on EU policy and funding to the GLA group. Individual London HEIs work to a greater or lesser extent on EU funding, though even the larger HEIs do not have a permanent Brussels presence. For the moment, it is the smaller institutions, or those less well-known internationally, which have signed up to the initiative and that is where the greatest assistance is required, though even the more experienced HEIs ought to be able to benefit from increased recognition of London's HE capacity at EU level. There are various organisations representing UK universities in Brussels, including the UK Research Office (UKRO) and the European Universities Association. None of these provides services tailored to London's HEIs, still less to individual universities, nor do they promote London's HE capacity as such. A number of UK universities are already directly represented in Brussels: e.g. the Greater Birmingham and West Midlands office represents six West Midlands HEIs; Wales Higher Education Brussels represents all the Welsh Universities in Brussels.

b) links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

The initiative is consistent with the role of LEO as expressed in the GLA Business Plan: to monitor and influence EU policy and identify opportunities for London to obtain EU funding.

c) impact assessments and consultations

The initiative has been developed by LH and its members in consultation with LEO and is supported by a study commissioned by LH which concluded, amongst other things, that "Consideration should be given to developing and enhancing the collective representation of London HEIs in Brussels for promotion and championship of their interests" (see supporting papers).

4. Financial comments

4.1 Approval is sought for the allocation of grant funding of up to a maximum of £10,000 in 2014/15 to LH as a contribution towards the London Higher Europe initiative.

4.2 The grant will be resourced from the Central Programme Budget for 2014/15 and officers are finalising the funding agreement that will govern the grant award.

4.3 Further approval will be sought if it is proposed to continue support for the project in 2015/16.

4.4 In addition, accommodation in the Brussels Office will be provided free of charge (with an estimated value of £3k per annum). It is anticipated that, if the project is successful and the accommodation required, LH would pay rent at a later stage.

4.5 Any changes to this proposal, including budgetary implications will be subject to further approval via the Authority's decision-making process. All appropriate budget adjustment will be made.

4.6 Officers in LEO will be responsible for managing the proposed grant award and ensuring that all the associated expenditure & grant monitoring arrangements comply with the Authority's Financial Regulations, Contracts & Funding Code, and Funding Agreement Toolkit.

5. Legal comments

Power to Undertake the Requested Decision

Under section 30 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (the 'Act') the GLA, after appropriate consultation, is entitled to do anything that will further the promotion, within Greater London, of economic development and wealth creation, social development and the improvement of the environment.

Furthermore, section 34 of the Act allows the GLA to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of any functions of the GLA. In this case, the provision of up to £10,000 to London Higher in order to build up EU engagement by London's HEIs and increase the amount of EU funding received by those HEIs, as well as raise their international profile, may be viewed as being calculated to facilitate and conducive and incidental to economic development and wealth creation.

Funding

The proposed grant of up to £10,000 to London Higher may be viewed as a conditional gift rather than a contract for services and supplies. Paragraph 4.8 of the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code requires that the funding be distributed fairly, transparently and in accordance with equalities obligations. Furthermore, the officers must ensure that an appropriate funding agreement is put in place between the GLA and London Higher before any commitment to the funding be made.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

LH will contract consultants to implement the first steps of the initiative from April 2014, in particular by interviewing the participating HEIs and establishing an EU engagement plan for each of them. The overall objectives for the initiative will be reviewed in summer 2014 in the light of these plans and further detailed planning will be done.

Activity	Timeline
First meeting of LH Europe Steering Group	13 March 2014
Delivery of initiative starts	13 March 2014
Interviews with participating HEIs to refine objectives and agree action plans with each institution	April-June 2014
Development of communication strategy	From April 2014
Initial review, based on interviews with HEIs	Summer 2014
Initial implementation of action plans	Sept-Dec 2014
Review of first year's activity and call for further funding from HEIs	Jan-Mar 2015

Appendices and supporting papers:

Study prepared for London Higher on the impact on London HEIs of engaging with Europe:
http://www.londonhigher.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/EuropeImpactStudy_FullReport.pdf

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Note: This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after approval or on the defer date.

Part 1 Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Ian Catlow has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Sarah Gibson has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

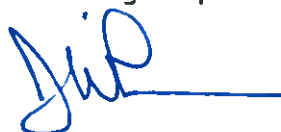
The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature



Date

22 May 2014

PI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

