

Comment

School staff training: the opportunities offered by National Agencies in European countries

Chris Souvlis

The SEDEC project brings together the expertise of professionals in the fields of science training and citizenship education. They come from a range of institutions and diverse European countries. Their proposal for EU funding to support their work was submitted in March 2005 and received favourably by the European Commission.

As the project's external evaluator, as well as one of the managers of the EU's funding in the UK, I've been privileged to observe the close collaboration of these experts as they work together on developing new ideas and strategies for teaching Science in a dynamic way which also reflects our common European heritage. As they enter the final stages of developing materials and the training course, which is an agreed output for the project, it is timely to remind Jcom readers about the European funding available for educators who may wish to benefit first hand from the work of the partnership.

In future years, the training course developed by the SEDEC team will be available to educators — primarily teachers — from across the EU for the benefit of their professional development. The European Commission recognises the value of such up-skilling and provides funding which must be applied for at the national level through the National Agencies for their Lifelong Learning Programme.

In due course the SEDEC training course will be advertised and participants recruited. Prospective participants will be able to apply for a grant, called a Professional Development In-service Training Grant from the National Agency in their own country.

In fact an organisation is contracted in each member state of the European Union to administer the EU funding within that National jurisdiction. Known as National Agencies, these bodies receive the funding agreed for their particular country from Brussels and use it to fund participation of their nationals on collaborative, educational activities. This includes the participation of their educationalists on training courses in other EU countries.

A list of National Agencies across Europe and their contact addresses can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/lp/national_en.html

Four annual deadlines for applications are imposed. Typically, applicants must apply 3 to 4 months prior to their course in order to request funding. National Agencies will be able to give accurate details of deadlines at the appropriate time.

Applicants must be involved in school education and can apply for up to 1500 Euros for a one week training activity. Money can be requested to cover the participants travel and subsistence as well as any charge for the training course itself.

The application form is updated yearly and the most current form should be used when applying for funding.

An example of the current application can be found at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/comenius-professional-development-application-form>

I would encourage any professional involved in the teaching of science and/ or citizenship to consider attending a SEDEC training course. (The authors of these articles will be able to keep you updated as to the timing of such training if contacted by email.)

Participants will benefit from the work and experience of those involved in a range of specialisms, from museum education to teacher training to pure science. And of course, the real benefactors ultimately will be the pupils of those who attend. They will have the chance to also reflect on a new perspective on Science-looking at the scientific achievements which we all share across Europe as part of our common, cultural heritage.

Author

Chris Souvlis is a Senior Programme Officer at the British Council in London, UK. He began working in the Education and Training division there in 1999. Most of his work there has involved administering different actions of the European Socrates programme (now the Life Long Learning Programme.) His responsibilities have included overseeing the promotion, administration and reporting to the UK and EU authorities for Comenius 2.1 University level projects, administering Comenius in-service training grants for British participants (including teacher job shadows and EU in-service training courses) and managing the Arion Study Visits programme in the UK.

His current focus is on in-service training for teachers to expand the teaching of languages in English Primary schools-currently a UK government priority. He is the external evaluator for the SECEC project. E-mail: Chris.Souvlis@britishcouncil.org.