



meeting	Administration Committee	
date	26 April 2006	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, REGENERATION

ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN TEXTILE COMMUNITIES (ACTE)

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for attendance of one member at the ACTE Executive meeting on 20/23rd May 2006 in Lodz, Poland.

Information and Advice

Background and Objectives of ACTE

2. ACTE is a non-profit making Association set up in 1991 at Guimareas, Portugal and brings together more than 50 local authorities within textile/clothing regions in Spain, Italy, France, Portugal, Belgium, UK, Croatia and Greece. The General Assembly of Igualada in July 2005 also approved memberships from the Consell Comarcal de l'Anoia, the Consorci de la Vall del Ges, Oris i Bisaura in Spain, the City Halls of Lodz, Tuszyn, Piotrkow Trybunalski, Tomoszow Mazowiecki in Poland, the City Hall of Verviers in Belgium, the Provincias de Milano, Macerata Novara, y Pistoia in Italy.
3. ACTE's aims are to encourage European policies to be adopted in order to modernise the sector within a competitive environment and create links and partnerships between European companies and textiles regions.
4. The activities carried out by ACTE have been numerous, both at a political level through a number of policy statements and at a local level through economic, social/cultural development programmes. ACTE has established itself as a credible, knowledgeable and influential body and continues to secure access to many of the key decision makers and policy shapers in Europe and the UK.

5. Councillor Chris Winterton is currently the UK Vice-President of ACTE and Aija Gagans, Manager, Nottinghamshire International Clothing Centre, acts as the UK National Co-ordinator for ACTE. The UK Vice President of ACTE attends the executive meetings to represent the interests of clothing, textile and footwear areas. He has been actively involved in the work of ACTE and has had a key role in shaping its policies and campaigns. There is also a very real threat of clothing and textile areas not only losing Structural Fund eligibility but also losing State Aid designation. Councillor Winterton represents the UK interests through ACTE in his role as a member of the Alliance for Regional Aid (AfRA), which represents the interests of its members in all issues relating to regional policy and particularly as it impacts upon traditional industrial areas and sectors.
6. ACTE, through an invitation from the European Commission, is participating in the High Level Group (HLG) on the future of textiles after the enlargement of the EU and the liberalisation in 2005. The High Level Group was formed in October 2003 when the European Commission adopted a Communication on the future of the textiles and clothing sector in the enlarged European Union. The High-Level Group has a mandate to formulate recommendations on initiatives to improve the conditions for the competitiveness of the European textile and clothing industry.
7. Meetings at 'sherpas' level are convened by the Commission Services. They are co-chaired by Directors of DG Enterprise and DG Trade and focus on a detailed agenda proposed by the secretariat in agreement with the Commission Services concerned. In the meeting the 'sherpas' discuss subjects of main concern and prepare proposals for actions/policy measures which serve as a basis for decisions to be taken by the High Level Group at following plenary sessions. The co-chairmen inform the 'sherpas' on decisions taken at the preceding plenary session of the High Level Group. The High Level Group brings together top decision-makers on textiles and clothing from the enlarged Europe. It is co-chaired by Commissioners and consists of members from member states, industry, trade unions, retailers, importers and distribution, ACTE and MEPs.
8. ACTE is leading a working group on regional policy and has recently participated at the 'sherpas' level of the HLG meeting in Brussels. The representatives of the European Commission presented the recent actions and measures regarding trade and industrial policy in response to last year's recommendations of the HLG. The centre of the discussions were about the EU position at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) conference in Hong Kong in December, relations with China and the upcoming release of a proposal on origin labelling for third countries' imports.
9. ACTE meets the cost of accommodation and expenses at such meetings for Councillor Winterton and flight costs are kept to a minimum. A further

400 Euros (£280) are reimbursed annually for Councillor Winterton on proof of receipts for activities undertaken on behalf of ACTE. Meals within the programme for the officer are met by ACTE.

Costs

10. The approximate costs associated with each meeting are as follows based on a three/ four day stay depending on flight times:

Description	Cost for Member	Cost for Officer
Flights from East Midlands (cheapest available fare) approx.	£35	£ 35
Subsistence per day per member	£68 (£17x 4)	0
Accommodation	0	£270 (£90 x 3)
Travel to and from airport	£60 approx	£ 60 approx.
<u>Car parking</u>	<u>£36</u>	<u>£ 36</u>
Total	£199	£401

The cost of £199 for the Member will be met from the Members' budget with the Leader Portfolio and the cost of £401 for the office will be met from the Skills, Enterprise and Business Support budget in the Regeneration Portfolio.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, Crime and Disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material; they have been described in the text of the report.

Recommendation

- 12 It is recommended that approval be given for Councillor Winterton to attend the next ACTE Executive meeting in Lodz Poland on 20-23 May 2006.

Nigel Hamshere
Assistant Director, Regeneration
(Contact Officer: Aija Gagans)

Director of Resources' Financial Comments (CC)(PB)

The financial implications are outlined in the report.

Legal Services' Comments(PDH 090306)

It is within the delegation to this Committee to consider the proposed expenditure set out in this report.

Background Papers Available for Inspection

- Minutes of the Croatian Executive meeting
- A position paper from EURATEX –“ Structural Adjustments in the European Textile and Clothing Industry.

Electoral Divisions Affected

All