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Community Interpreting and Advocacy Project Builds on 50 Years of European Union

2007 marks the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome which created the European Economic Community and led to the establishment of the European Union (EU). Although the EU has developed since 1957, growing from 6 to 27 members, today's member states remain united around core values and work together towards common goals. The European Social Fund (ESF) was set up to achieve one of these goals, namely, to increase employment and promote occupational and geographical mobility. ESF has played an important role in increasing economic growth and social cohesion in the EU through supporting the people of its 27 member states to improve their skills and job prospects.

Increased geographic mobility throughout the EU and the world has changed London significantly over the last 50 years. One LSC Pan London ESF Programme 2 project working to increase social cohesion between London's multinational communities is the 'Community Interpreting and Advocacy Programme', led by the Mary Ward Centre. The Programme provides high quality training to unemployed people from minority ethnic groups who want to work as community interpreters. Once employed, they use their new skills to help members of their language communities to access essential public services such as health, social services and housing. So far interpreters have been trained in a number of European languages including, French, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak and Spanish; as well as a number of other languages from around the world. To date the project has helped 130 students start courses with an 87% retention rate and 102 students have achieved their qualifications.

To date ESF has helped over 664,500 people in London develop their skills and improve their employment prospects. Disadvantaged Londoners are receiving further support to enter and progress in the employment market from the 54 projects funded through the LSC Pan London ESF Programme 2.

ENDS

For further information contact:

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Notes for editors

1. The signature of the Treaty of Rome on 25 March 1957 created the European Economic Community and led to the founding of the European Union. Fifty years later, the member states are coming ever closer together. While remaining diverse in culture, language and traditions, their unity is based on common values: freedom, democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and equality. This year, the EU's unique achievements are being celebrated with a range of special events. This is a unique opportunity to better understand the present and to look towards the future of the EU. For further information visit: <http://europa.eu/50>
2. The 'Community Interpreting and Advocacy Programme', led by the Mary Ward Centre, aims to provide unemployed ethnic minority beneficiaries with customised accredited training and employment provision in Community/Health Interpreting and Bilingual Advocacy. This enhances their skills base and enables them to access interpreting/advocacy employment opportunities, within the public, private and voluntary sectors across London. A full range of interpreting, translation and advocacy courses are available from all project partners; CALAT, Mary Ward Centre, WEA and Select Training. For more information, visit: www.marywardcentre.ac.uk/Special-Projects.asp
3. Further information about the LSC Pan London ESF Programme 2, can be found at www.LondonO3.ecotec.co.uk or can be obtained from the Pan London Objective 3 Team (0845 630 8699; LondonO3_2@ecotec.co.uk). The programme was launched in 2006 and has been funding 54 skills and employment projects since August 2006. The programme builds on the Pan London 1 round which ended in December 2006 and funded 66 projects helping over 20,000



Londoners over the past two years; for further information, see contact details above. Both programmes are managed by ECOTEC on behalf of the London Region Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

4. The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. They are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. They have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world-class standards. Their vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, they work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country. For further information, visit: www.lsc.gov.uk.
5. The European Social Fund (ESF), is one of four Structural Funds designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union. The current programmes run from 2000 to 2006. ESF will provide about £4.5 billion in Great Britain, (£3.5 billion in England) in this period. To date Objective 3 ESF has helped 664,514 people in London of which 371,393 were women, 359,772 were members of London's black and minority ethnic community, and 60,969 were people who had a disability or learning difficulty (source: Department for Work and Pensions).
6. ESF's main purpose is to support the annual UK Employment Action Plan, which sets out how UK policies and initiatives take account of the Employment Guidelines established within the European Employment Strategy. ESF is channelled through three Structural Fund Objectives and the EQUAL Community Initiative.
7. ECOTEC is an international company providing services in research, consultancy and programme management with over 200 people working from offices in Birmingham, Brussels, Cardiff, Leeds, London, Madrid, Manchester and Turkey. The company works for a wide range of public and private sector clients throughout the UK and Europe. ECOTEC is a member of the ECORYS group with 18 offices across 10 European countries. Further information is available on www.ecotec.com.