

ECA hosts CIPFA Round Table (27 September 2010)

About CIPFA

By Mark Crisp



The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) is the professional body for people in public finance. It is the world's only professional accountancy body to specialise in public services. It has some 14 000 members of whom some 200 are based outside the UK. Many of these work in the Institutions, 15 in the ECA. There is a European Group that meets regularly and it is this Group that organised the Round Table to discuss the development of CIPFA's European Strategy.

The aim of the meeting was to identify ways in which CIPFA might increase its international influence for example by developing products and services tailored to meet the needs of EU institutions etc.

The Court experiences a lack of applications from young, qualified- accountants. In order to compensate for this ,it could offer professional training to recently recruited staff . A first step has been taken by the Court to allow a number of auditors to attend the Public Performance Auditing (Advanced professional certificate programme) offered by the Institut Universitaire International Luxembourg. CIPFA also offers A Certificate in International Public Sector Financial Reporting (IFRS AND IPSASs e-learning programme) which the Court's Professional Training Unit is currently evaluating.

For several years the Court has also been exploring the possibility of offering a Diploma in Public Sector Auditing, Finance and Accountancy. CIPFA, amongst others, is considered as a potential deliverer of such a course. During the last couple of years CIPFA has developed with the Court and delivered to many of the Court's auditors a training course in our performance audit methodology.

This area of professional training is of considerable importance for the Court given the wide background of its intake and the lack of clear professional diplomas that it can direct people towards.

INTERVIEW WITH MRS JAKI MEEKINGS DAVIS, CIPFA PRESIDENT

By Rosmarie Carotti



Mrs Jaki Meekings Davis, CIPFA President

R. C.: President, what is the role of CIPFA?

Jaki MEEKINGS DAVIS: In the UK there are 6 chartered accountancy bodies and CIPFA is one of these six CCABs. We concentrate principally on public finance accountancy; most of our members, but not all, work either in local or central government, for example in the National Health Service and in related public services.

R. C.: I understand that this visit here to the Court can benefit CIPFA and possibly bring new members for it but in what respect can it benefit the Court?

Jaki MEEKINGS DAVIS: Many of the people who are currently in post within the Court of Auditors are already our members. Last year at the meeting of the European branch of CIPFA, which has got people here and in Brussels, our members asked us to focus our efforts much



more clearly on continuing professional development for existing members to work in the Court or in other EU institutions, but also to think about the next generation of accountants that is coming through and make sure that we were producing a product that reflected your needs.

Today's two-part session in advance of the meeting of November is very much about understanding the longer term needs of your organisation, about the development of accountants and post-qualification training.

CIPFA, though being an accountancy institute, also does training at different levels for non-financial managers. People may come with other accountancy qualifications but they still need the public sector context within which the EU institutions are working. That is what CIPFA would be able to bring: that sense of how the whole public finance works, because obviously public finance starts with a vote in Parliament right through to the audit and the performance management.

The CIPFA qualification and syllabus covers the whole of that including governance as such of the public sector and the whole ethical code about procurement. If you went to other accountancy qualifications they would concentrate more deeply on a smaller section.

R. C.: How do you interact with other institutes which have similar aims in other countries?

Jaki MEEKINGS DAVIS: There are no other institutes for public finance accountancy. We are the only one in the world. There is no other member of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC). Because of our international strategy and globalisation gathering pace, now we are entering into agreements with other chartered accountancy bodies in other parts of the world. Examples are Canada, although the agreement has not yet been signed, and the Australian and New Zealand chartered accountants. We also have an agreement with the CPA Australia which is a certified public accountancy body and, interestingly, with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria. They realized that to be an accountant it is not sufficient to meet the needs of public sector financial management and governance. The Nigerians are particularly interested because many donors and the EU increasingly want to see better levels of governance and custody of public money. We also have training centres in Kosovo.

R. C.: You are the new President of CIPFA. When were you elected and for how long?

Jaki MEEKINGS DAVIS: I took this position in June this year and it is a one-year mandate, actually 13 months this year for unusual reasons. Before that I was on the CIPFA Council for 10 years and prior to that I was the Chairman of the Health Care Financial Management Association in the UK, which brings together all the English accountancy institutes in Health Service and represents Health Service managers. I have worked for local Government, trained in audit, internal audit, and I worked in the Health Service and in the Water Industry as well.

One of my messages is that to find the answer to our current financial crisis, which by the way is not UK specific, we need to work across the public sector and not be focused on just one sector, because the big savings will be made at the interfaces where different services come together and we have duplication.

For more information about CIPFA: www.cipfa.org.uk