

In touch with EU



News from the Association

Training courses

We're offering two courses in 2011. Both will take place in London, and both cost £150 to EIA Members and £175 to others. Places can be booked via our website, which also has programme details. The courses are:

Finding out about the EU, 18 February

Sessions include:

The European Union - what it is, what it does, how it works
Tracing policy and legislative documents
Tracing background and explanatory materials
Keeping up-to-date

The deadline for booking places on Finding out is Friday 14 January

Case law, 10 June

Sessions include:

Europe's supreme court
The fundamental principles of EU law
The General Court and the Civil Service Tribunal
Tracking case law
Links to national courts

Resource Centre

Our Moodle-based Resource Centre now has three online training courses available:

- 1 - What the EU is
- 2 - What the EU does
- 3 - How the EU works

As the titles suggest, these are essentially preparatory courses, focusing on the nature of the EU. They are intended to give essential background for succeeding courses, notably those on **Finding out about EU legislation** and **Finding out about EU policies**.

Corporate Members are permitted to give their users access to the Resource Centre. For Personal Members, use is limited to the named member.

The link to the Resource Centre is located in the Members' Area of our website. You'll need a username and password to access the site; if you haven't got them, or can't remember them, please mail eric@eia.org.uk.

Membership renewals

The bulk of renewal invoices will be sent out in January. Prices are £95 for Corporate membership, £25 for Personal and £15 Concessionary.

Feedback

Please send comments, criticisms etc about the newsletter to eric@eia.org.uk.

Eric Davies
EIA Coordinator

This newsletter can be printed, but the embedded URLs will be lost ...

Issue 4 - December 2010

It's official:

EU documents , publications and sources

Bureaucracy Green Paper

Publication of the Green Paper 'Less bureaucracy for citizens: promoting free movement of public documents and recognition of the effects of civil status records' (COM (2010) 747) marks the launch of a public consultation 'on matters relating to freedom of movement of public documents ... and recognition of the effects of civil status records'. The aim is to gather views ahead of legislative proposals aimed at improving how such records (including property deeds, birth certificates, marriage certificates, court rulings) are recognised when citizens wish to exercise their rights in Member States other than the one in which they were born. See: [Green Paper text](#).

Statistics explained

The Eurostat website Statistics Explained has added 'Organic farming statistics' and 'Asylum statistics' to its list of topics covered. The former looks at organic farming in the EU in 2008 and at more recent developments. The latter 'describes recent developments in international protection, presenting recent information on the numbers of asylum applicants and decisions on asylum applications in the European Union', with a focus on 'characteristics of asylum applicants (country of origin, age and sex distribution) as well as decisions on asylum applications.' See: [Statistics Explained website](#).

Poverty and social exclusion

The Communication 'The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion' (COM (2010) 758) 'sets out ways to help Member States move up a gear in fighting social exclusion.' See: Press Releases [IP/10/1729](#) and [Communication text](#).

Enhanced cooperation

Official Journal L343 of 29 December includes the text of the ground-breaking Council Regulation (EU) No 1259/2010 'implementing enhanced cooperation in the area of the law applicable to divorce and legal separation'. See: [Regulation text](#).

Following that success and the Council's failure to reach agreement on the proposed EU patent, the use of enhanced cooperation has been proposed in the area of patent protection. See: Press Release [IP/10/1714](#).

Citizens' Initiative

The Commission has welcomed agreement between the Parliament and the Council on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). The first initiatives will be considered from early 2012. See: Press Release [IP/10/1720](#).

Europol

The European Commission has adopted a Communication 'on the procedures for the scrutiny of Europol's activities by the European Parliament, together with national Parliaments' (COM (2010) 776). In it, the Commission 'supports the idea of creating a joint body through which the European Parliament and national Parliaments can exercise control over Europol.' See: [Communication text](#).

Environment policy

EU Environment Ministers have issued Conclusions on 'Improving environmental policy instruments', in which - amongst other things - they invited the Commission to prepare as soon as possible a second Environment and Health Action Plan (EHAP). See: [Council Conclusions](#).

Focus on ...

eu 2011.hu

1 January sees the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU move to Hungary.

Available in Hungarian, English, French and German, the eu2011.hu website is officially described as 'a comprehensive portal, where anyone interested may access information about events organized by the Hungarian Presidency, and may use its services. In comparison with earlier Presidency web sites, the site will host up-to-date, current affairs articles, background documents and will have less content that is accessible elsewhere on the Internet.'

So we can look forward to a slimmed-down Presidency site, especially as it appears to be maintained by 'four journalists and a photographer', rather than the expected hordes of techies.

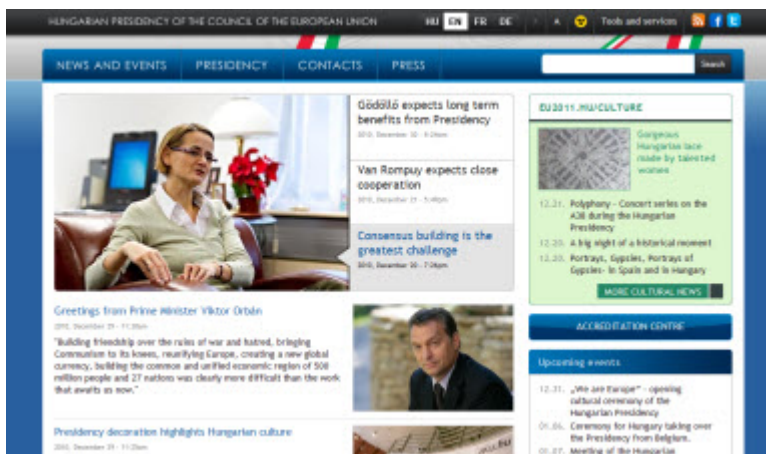
Facebook and Twitter feature, and there is the promise of 'leading Presidency team members' blogging, so that readers 'will be able to follow behind-the-scenes events through their posts.'

The structure of the site is said to be simpler than that of the previous Presidencies, with just four main menu options ('News and events', 'Presidency', 'Contacts', 'Press'). Although the site is intended to help the work of journalists and delegation members, it also aims to allow citizens to 'gather straightforward information not only about the Presidency's work, but also about the functioning of the EU, its main policies and objectives.'

First impressions are that the site might well offer an interesting take on EU affairs, with perhaps less of the formality of other Presidency websites and a touch more realism. Take for example the first blog entry by journalist Urkúti György, which includes this statement:

'It really seems to be going against common sense to launch a blog about the world's most complex economic-political association. Incomprehensible technical jargon, subjects that seem to have little in common with everyday life, meager readership statistics, entries drowning in boredom, and sooner or later: inevitable fatigue. Failure is pre-programmed.'

But can he and his colleagues make the EU interesting? We must wait and see what the next six months bring.



Archive of European Integration

Update on AEI from its Editor, Phil Wilkin, received 8 November 2010:

We at the Archive of European Integration (AEI) are not considering the digitization and uploading of large numbers of EU documentation because we don't know what the EU depends to digitize next. Correspondence with the EU Bookshop leads us to believe they may begin scanning retrospectively again soon, but we have no verification or indication of what they might focus on. For the next several months, we will be scanning and uploading items on the theme of Development Policy from the 1960s-on. We will cover Development in general, but also EU relations with regions and individual countries. If anyone hears of any plans the EU has for digitization, we would appreciate it if you would let us know.

Website: <http://aei.pitt.edu>

Q&A

Our AskEric service gives EIA members the chance to pose their questions to our EU information experts. Whether it's simple or complex - if you're having trouble finding the answer, try AskEric ...

This query was recently submitted:

One of our users has asked about the new legislative procedures. She wants to know the difference between the ordinary legislative procedure and the special legislative procedure. Can you help?

AskEric answered:

According to Article 289 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) the ordinary legislative procedure 'shall consist in the joint adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of a regulation, directive or decision on a proposal from the Commission.' So it refers to what we would usually think of as the 'Co-decision process', using the 'Community method' of decision-making, with the Commission, Council and Parliament participating in the 'institutional triangle'.

So what of the special legislative procedure? The Statewatch [Guide to EU decision-making and justice and home affairs after the Treaty of Lisbon](#) refers to 'special legislative procedures' (i.e. in the plural). It notes that most EU legislation must be proposed by the Commission, but that 'there are a few cases where legislation can be proposed by the European Parliament, Member States, or other bodies.'

'The special legislative procedures are', it says, 'not governed by standard rules, but by different rules in each of the legal bases which provide for such procedures. There are about 30 cases of special legislative procedures set out in the Treaty. The idea of a special legislative procedure is that the Council and EP are still each involved in the adoption of legislation, but subject to different rules than those which govern the ordinary legislative procedure.'

Further details are given in the Guide - which is an excellent example of how useful unofficial materials can be in explaining the workings of the EU.

Snippets:

News and views from non-EU sources

EUbusiness

From: [Hungary, under fire over media law, takes over EU presidency](#)

Hungary takes the helm of the European Union in January even as its prime minister is under fire for a whole string of policies, from his handling of the economy to a contested new media law.

The challenges currently facing the 27-nation bloc are daunting enough: the eurozone debt crisis, the integration of the Roma minority, and tough negotiations over the EU's long-term budget.

European Policy Centre

From: [The European Citizens' Initiative: next step, implementation](#)

On 15 December 2010 the European Parliament formally adopted the rules for the implementation of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). Parliamentarians voted for a series of changes to the initial Commission proposal with the intention of making the ECI as 'user-friendly' as possible. The authors of this commentary ... argue that the final rules will place politically sensitive burdens on the Commission while offering the EP new opportunities to engage with its voters.

EurActiv

From: [EU lawmaking reform gives Brussels more power on trade](#)

European Commission plans to reduce member states' influence on the EU's day-to-day decision-making by re-

forming the so-called 'comitology' procedure were yesterday (16 December) approved by MEPs, shifting power over key trade decisions like multi-million euro import tariffs away from national governments to the EU institutions.

Notre Europe

From: [From institutional Reform to Mass Politics or How to Engage Citizens in the Union of Lisbon](#)

The 'citizen issue' has been a concern of most institutional reforms, especially since the 2001 Laeken Declaration made it particularly prominent. It is in this perspective that the powers of the European Parliament have been regularly extended. The Lisbon Treaty goes even further by making the co-decision procedure the rule and giving national parliaments a specific task in the control of subsidiarity. Time will be needed to see whether these changes have an impact on the involvement of citizens. But in an era of no treaty reforms, it is time to think about the political dimension of EU policy-making, about 'mass politics' rather than institutional developments.

euobserver

From: [Ashton picks Finn to be EU 'spymaster'](#)

Ilkka Salmi, the 42-year-old head of the Finnish security service the Suojelupoliisin, has been appointed as the new director of the EU's intelligence-sharing bureau, the Joint Situation Centre (SitCen).

The move all-but-completes EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton's top line-up in the European External Action Service (EEAS).

EIA Conference

14 March 2011, British Library, London

£30.00 EIA members, £45.00 others.

Places limited;
book online at
www.eia.org.uk

Listen to:

Professor Alex Warleigh-Lack, giving an overview of EU policy and institutional developments;

EIA President Ian Thomson, presenting his annual review of recent developments in EU information provision and resources;

Michael Duero, highlighting recent developments on the EUR-Lex website;

Julian Oliver, giving insights into the website EurActiv.com;

Dominic Brett, speaking about the Commission's current information priorities.

The event will also include presentation of the EIA's annual EU Information Awards.

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EU bulletin

Your daily feed of EU cases, regulations and
as they happen.

Adopted Legislation

Regulation concerning the arms embargo
on the Islamic Republic of