

# In touch with EU



## News from the Association

**Conference special** - catch up on what happened at our annual conference on 14 March, with news of changes to major EU websites including EUR-Lex, and details of our 2011 Awards winners ...

### **New Committee**

The Association's Annual General meeting saw three current Committee members re-elected. The full Committee therefore comprises:

Paul Clarke (Chairman)  
Ian Mayfield (Treasurer)  
Angeliki Stogia (Secretary)  
Maria Bell (Committee Representative 1)  
Kathy Pitt (Committee Representatives 2)  
Helen Young (Committee Representative 3)

### **Case law training course, 10 June**

£150 to EIA Members, £175 to others.

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

**Programme details and a booking form are on our website.**

### **Feedback**

Please send any comments etc about this newsletter to [eric@eia.org.uk](mailto:eric@eia.org.uk).

Eric Davies

EIA Coordinator



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

## Issue 7 - March 2011

# It's official:

## EU documents , publications and sources

### European Citizens' Initiative

The Regulation on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) has been published in the Official Journal as Regulation (EU) No 211/2011. Based on Article 11 of the TEU and Article 24 of the TFEU, the Regulation establishes the procedures and conditions required for the ECI and will apply from 1 April 2012.

See: [Regulation text](#)

### EP knowledge

The European Parliament has published the results of an EU-wide opinion poll on how much people know about the EP, opinions on how it works and what its priorities should be. Findings include: more men than women say they are aware of EP matters; people from more affluent social classes have a better knowledge of the EP; the best informed age group is 40-54, while the youngest age group feels itself least well informed.

See: [Press Release 20110228IPR14511](#)

### Consumer Scoreboard

The latest Consumer Scoreboard shows that, compared with 2009, fewer retailers are selling across national borders and that the gap between domestic and cross-border e-commerce is growing. Despite that, it seems that consumers are more confident in cross-border shopping once they have tried it.

See: [Consumer Scoreboard page](#)

### WEEE changes

The Council has agreed to change EU rules on waste electric and electronic equipment, with the aim of improving collection and recycling of used electronic devices and reducing illegal exports of such waste from the EU. Ministers have backed changes which would see collection tar-

gets rise to 65% of the average weight of electrical and electronic equipment placed on national markets. The scope of the legislation (the WEEE Directive) would also be extended to cover all electric and electronic equipment, including photovoltaic panels. Negotiations with the European Parliament are expected in the second half of 2011. See: [Press Release 7632/11](#)

### Gender equality

A 'European Pact for gender equality for the period 2011-2020' has been adopted by the Council. Reaffirming commitments to closing gender gaps in employment, education and social protection, promoting better work-life balance for women and men and combating all forms of violence against women, the Pact calls on the EU and the Member States to take measures aimed at: eliminating gender stereotypes, ensuring equal pay for equal work and promoting the equal participation of women in decision-making; improving the supply of affordable and high-quality childcare services and promoting flexible working arrangements; strengthening the prevention of violence against women and the protection of victims.

See: [Press Release 7349/11](#)

### European Patent Court

The Court of Justice has given its opinion on the compatibility of a proposed agreement on a European Patent Court with the EU Treaties. The agreement would set up a unified Patent Litigation System with a view to reducing the cost and complexity resulting from parallel litigation in several Member States and providing legal certainty by avoiding conflicting judgments.

See: [Press Release IP/11/269](#)

# Conference roundup



*Alex Warleigh-Lack, Professor of Politics and International Relations at Brunel University, again provided his views on significant recent developments and what to watch out for in the coming months.*

**Despite being thought of as a niche interest, the EU touches many aspects of our lives.**

For providers and users of information produced by and about the EU, it can be helpful to put developments in context: not only information-related initiatives such as new publications and databases, but also the political developments shaping the EU.

The presentations at our annual meeting were therefore intended to give insights into recent and future policy and institutional developments as well as expert opinion on EU information trends and sources.

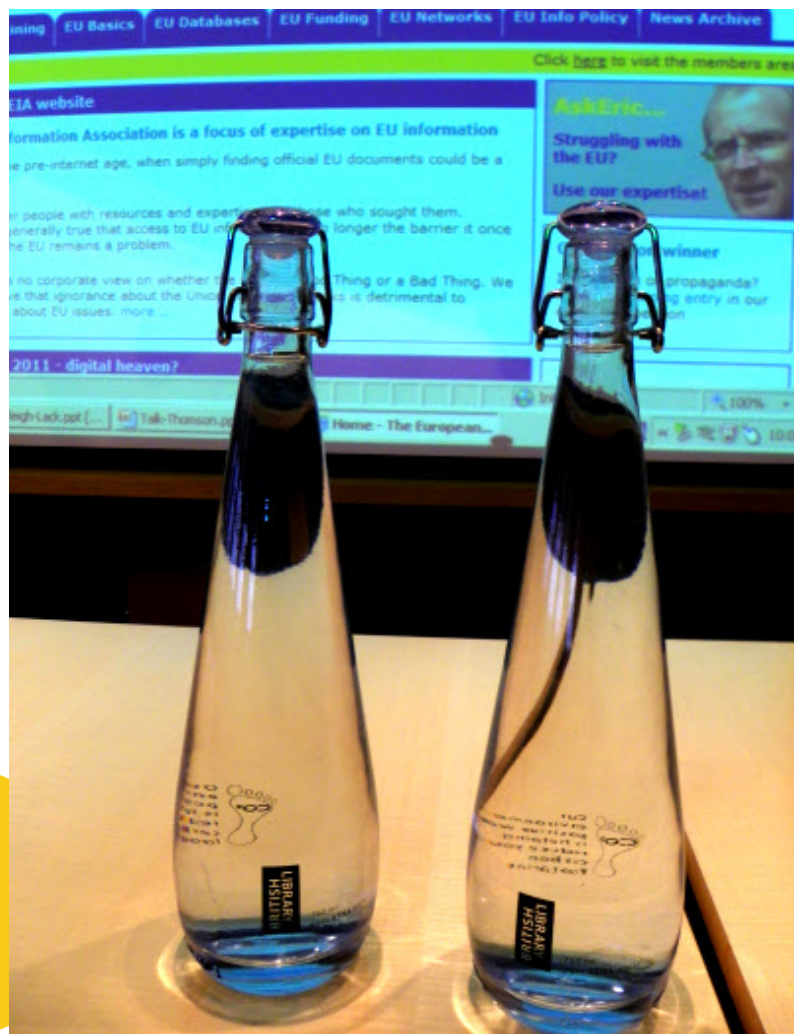
Having taken note of the feedback from the 2010 event, the number of presentations was cut to six, with the unexpected absence of Dominic Brett reducing the sessions to five and usefully allowing more time for questions to speakers.

## **2011 - digital heaven?**

That was the strapline to the meeting and while those present may have left feeling that paradise isn't yet in their grasp, it certainly seems to be getting closer.

Ian Thomson's comprehensive survey of developments showed just how wide the range of sources now is, with traditional materials such as the Official Journal and COM documents now supplemented by video news, blogs and Twitter.

Peter Schmitz, Head of the 'Enterprise architecture' Unit at the Publications Office described work which will shortly create a global search option covering the databases managed by the Publications Office: EUR-Lex, TED, EU Bookshop, and CORDIS.





Michael Duero revealed that the EUR-Lex website is to be re-launched, with a new interface, new search and new display options. He treated his audience to screenshots of the new service which, all being well, will be available in January 2012.

Our final speaker was Julian Oliver, Secretary General of the Fondation EurActiv, which provides EurActiv.com with guidance on editorial strategy and media independence.

Despite the huge volume of information pouring out of the EU institutions, it is often non-EU sources that we turn to for analysis, background and context. One of the most highly regarded of these sources is EurActiv.com.

Many of us marvel at not only the wealth of information EurActiv provides, but also at the speed with which it does so - often announcing developments before the official sources do so.

Mr Oliver gave some insights into the EurActiv operation, revealing, amongst other things, that its reporters will follow a story until a resolution is reached. So an article about a piece of draft legislation, for instance, won't be just a one-off, but will form part of a dossier, providing information on progress of the draft through its various stages.

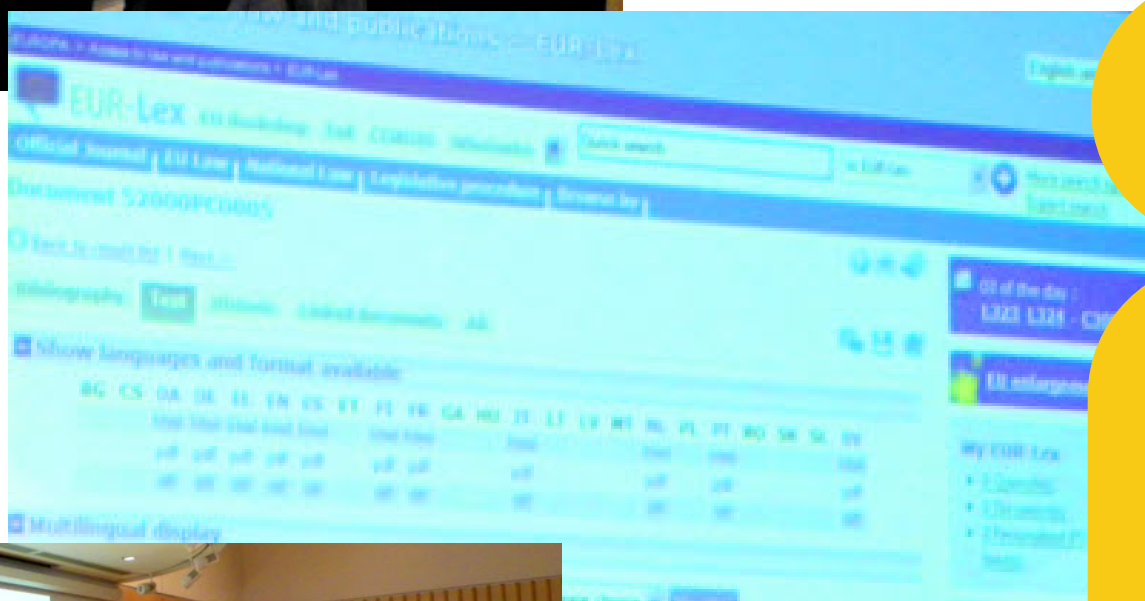
## Council bloggers

As if to emphasise the increasing importance of web 2.0 technologies, the week before the EIA Conference a pilot project saw two bloggers accredited to report on a Council meeting.

The two were live blogging and live tweeting during both days of the 9-10 March Competitiveness Council.

One of the participants, Ronny Patz, was reported on the [Social European Journalism Blog](#) (where the meeting is referred to as the 'European Council on Competitiveness!'), as saying that the bloggers' presence 'can bring some freshness to European information. This information could be done in a more informal way and maybe bloggers could finally interest a new public.'

Brief details also at [bloggingportal.eu](#).



# Awards

Winners of the Association's Awards for Excellence in European Information Provision were announced at the 2011 annual meeting. Presented annually, the Awards are intended to raise standards of EU information provision and alert EIA Members to new sources of information.

There was no presentation of the EIA Award for Outstanding Contribution to EU Information or of the Helen Greer Prize, for achievements by a European Documentation Centre Librarian.

Joint winners of the 2011 Awards for Excellence in European Information Provision were the **European eJustice portal**, and the **Manual of European Environmental Policy**. Further details are available on our website; the following excerpts are taken from the presentations made by Grace Hudson and Ian Thomson respectively:

The eJustice portal was established as a result of the Council Action Plan on European e-Justice 2009-2013, which seeks to improve access to justice. The plan identified potential benefits from using information technologies to streamline processes and improve communication and cooperation between users of legal information. This should reduce legal costs as well as simplifying and speeding up cross border proceedings.

Although there is already a significant amount of material available on the site, this

is seen as the first stage in the development of an enhanced tool. Future plans include information on victims' and defendants' rights, and on the handling of road traffic offences in different countries. Citizens will be able to make cross-border small claims or payments online. Issues such as e-signature and e-identity are being tackled to enable the developments to take place.

The e-Justice Portal is already making a welcome contribution to access to justice across EU Member States. As well as providing information, it also offers practical tools. We look forward to its value being further enhanced by future developments but, even at the current stage of its development, we are pleased to recommend it as an excellent new resource and delighted to give it the 2011 EIA Award for European Information Sources.







*Pictured are Andrew Farmer, IEEP and Veruschka Selbach, Earthscan*

Those of us who have worked in the world of European information for many years and who have needed to take an interest in the growing amount of environment law adopted at EU level will no doubt have come across a most useful loose-leaf reference title called *Manual of Environmental Policy: the EU and Britain*.

Published by the UK arm of the Institute of European Environmental Policy (IEEP), it offers, in an authoritative and very clear manner, periodically updated information about the development of each piece of EU environmental legislation and its implementation in the UK.

There has now been a major step forward: Earthscan and the IEEP have launched an online and interactive version, as the [Manual of European Environmental Policy](#).

Transforming a well-established and respected print source into an electronic format was clearly an obvious step. However, the technical and editorial challenges are considerable. The judges think that the *Manual of Environmental Policy* makes that transformation very successfully and will be of great service to those researchers, stakeholders, NGOs and others who need to follow the development of European environmental policy.

The *Manual* is a worthy winner of one of the EIA Awards for European Information Sources for 2011 and the European Information Association would like to congratulate IEEP and Earthscan for investing in, and creating, such a significant and useful European information source.

**EIA Members are eligible for a free trial of the Manual. Sign up via the [Manual website](#).**

**JUSTIS**  
PUBLISHING

**Celebrating 25 years of full-text online European information provision**

For their sponsorship of our conference and annual Awards, we're grateful to UK and European legal information specialist [Justis Publishing](#), which celebrates its first quarter of a century this year.



# Snippets:

## News and views from non-EU sources

### **euobserver**

From: [Denmark eyeing referendum on euro](#)

The EU's economic convergence plans are forcing Denmark to reconsider its euro opt-out, with a referendum on "modernising" Copenhagen's relation with Brussels possibly taking place by June.

With plans for a "Competitiveness Pact" currently being drafted by EU institutions to replace a Franco-German draft on pensions harmonisation and constitutional "debt brakes", Denmark does not want to be left out of the decision-making process, due to not being in the single currency.

### **EurActiv**

From: [Who runs EU energy policies?](#)

The EU is putting in place an ambitious energy policy in a bid to improve security of supplies and achieve bold CO2 reduction targets. But how does the EU decision-making process function on energy-related issues? And what is the role of the industry sector and interest groups?

### **EUbusiness**

From: [Anxious Europe examines nuclear safety after Japan quake](#)

With some 150 reactors scattered across the continent in half as many nuclear power plants -- some located in seismic areas -- the European Union convened emergency talks Tuesday of energy ministers, national nuclear safety officials and big nuclear companies.

### **Presseurop**

From: [EU will protect your 4am party shame](#)

"EU to force social network sites to enhance privacy," headlines the Guardian, after justice commissioner Viviane Reding, in a speech to the European parliament, announced she would enshrine a "right to be forgotten online" for internet users.

### **European Voice**

From: [Parliament's place is in Strasbourg](#)

Some MEPs have chosen to adopt an amendment on the European Parliamentary calendar for 2012 and 2013. This means reducing the number of sessions of the Parliament in Strasbourg.

This vote is deeply regrettable, unfounded and ill-timed; it goes against what citizens and MEPs themselves expect from the construction of Europe.

### **European Policy Centre**

From: [EP electoral reform: a question of trade-offs](#)

Changing the rules of the electoral game has long been considered a prerequisite for enhancing the popular legitimacy of the European Parliament. In this Policy Brief Corina Stratulat and Janis A. Emmanouilidis analyse recent proposals for an electoral reform brought forward by the EP. Weighing benefits and risks, the authors support the idea to elect 25 additional MEPs from an EU-wide list arguing that this would add another important 'brick' to the Union's democratic construction.