

# In touch with EU



## News from the Association

### Case law course - last chance!

The bookings deadline for our 'Case law' course on Friday 10 June has been extended. Bookings will now be taken until 5pm on Monday 6 June, via our [Training](#) page.

Amongst the issues addressed in the packed, value-for-money programme, are:

- How the Court of Justice works
- The role of the Advocate-General
- Jurisdiction of the General Court and the Civil Service Tribunal
- Appeals to the Court of Justice
- The fundamental principles of EU law (including direct application, and primacy of EU law)
- Tracking case law (important cases, and how case law is published)
- How and why cases are sent to the CJEU
- Tracking the stages of a case

Practical sessions, under the guidance of expert trainers, will give plenty of opportunity to use the sources demonstrated.

The price for EIA members is £150.

### Membership deadline

31 May is the deadline for payment of 2011 invoices sent out in January and February. Thanks to those who've re-

sponded to the reminders sent out in early May - those who've not paid or been in touch will be removed from our membership list.

### Free publications

EIA Members can access our pdf publications free of charge via our website. They include a compendium of our 'How To' guides. Compiled in December 2010, the compendium brings together guides on how to:

- 1 - use the Official Journal
- 2 - find a Directive
- 3 - trace COM documents
- 4 - trace EC case law
- 5 - trace national implementing measures
- 6 - access and use the institutions registers
- 7 - find out about EU funding
- 8 - find out about the ERDF and ESF in the UK
- 9 - find out about EU contracts & tenders
- 10 - trace EU statistics
- 11 - research the EU (a guide for students)
- 12 - keep up-to-date with the EU

### Feedback

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

Eric Davies  
EIA Coordinator

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# It's official:

## EU documents , publications and sources

### Neighbourhood Policy

A new European Neighbourhood Policy has been launched, setting out 'the main priorities and directions of a revitalised ENP strategy which seeks to strengthen individual and regional relationships between the EU and countries in its neighbourhood through a 'more funds for more reform' approach - making more additional funds available, but with more mutual accountability.'

See: Press Release [IP/11/643](#)

### Intellectual property

The Commission has adopted a 'comprehensive strategy' to revise the legal framework in which intellectual property rights operate. The Commission aims to 'strike the right balance between promoting creation and innovation, in part by ensuring reward and investment for creators and, on the other hand, promoting the widest possible access to goods and services protected by IPR.'

See: Press Release [IP/11/630](#)

### Telecoms, internet

The Commission has issued a number of press releases setting out developments in telecoms policy to be implemented by 25 May, covering consumer rights, privacy protection for internet users, and competition in telecoms markets.

See: Press Release [IP/11/622](#)

### Heritage

EU Culture Ministers have agreed to launch a 'European Heritage Label' to highlight sites that celebrate the history

and development of the European Union. The first sites to receive the new Label will be announced in 2013.

See: Press Release [10294/11](#)

### Crime victims

To help ensure that victims receive a minimum level of rights, support and protection, a draft Directive seeks to establish minimum EU-wide standards, covering issues such as protection, support, access to justice, compensation and restoration.

See: Press Releases [IP/11/585](#)

### EU@UN

On 3 May, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution upgrading the status of the European Union's participation in the UN. The agreement will allow EU representatives to speak at the General Assembly on behalf of the EU Member States.

[EU@Un website](#)

### Ombudsman's report

The European Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2010 shows that the highest number of complaints about EU administration were received from Germany and Spain. The Ombudsman received 2,667 complaints in 2010 - down from 3,098 in 2009. Concerns about lack of transparency in EU institutions - including refusal to release documents or information - accounted for 33% of complaints.

See: Press Release [11/2011](#)

# Focus on ...



[Parliament in Action](#) is a new website launched by Toute l'Europe.

The site has four main elements:

- Understanding how the European Parliament works (includes 'How the EP works', 'Parliament's main dossiers', 'Glossary')
- Follow the committee work of MEPs (includes 'What is a committee?', 'The committees' work')
- Experience the plenary sessions (includes 'What is a plenary session?')
- Give your opinion on European current affairs (link to 'EP Wall')

In addition, there is a small 'Latest news' section and links to some EP news items.

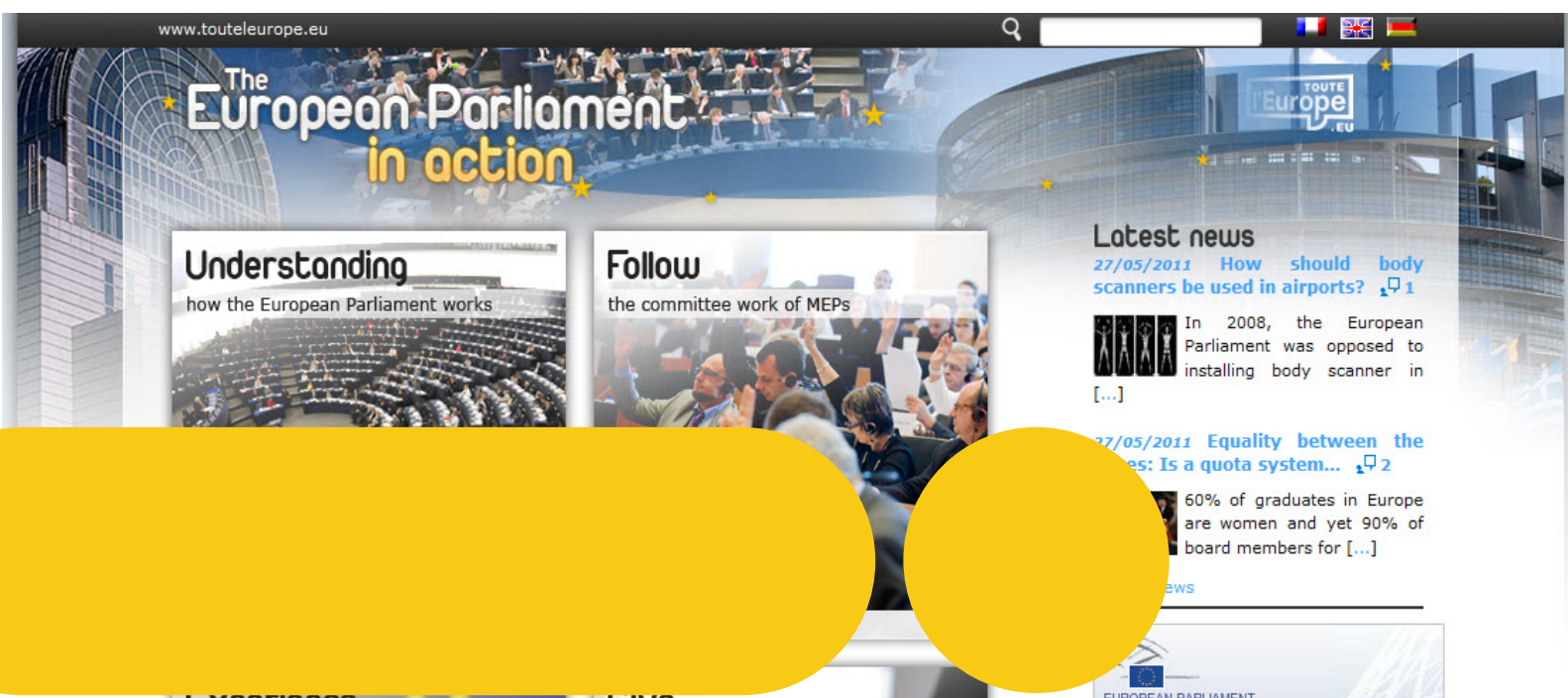
There's also a link to the [Touteleurope.eu](#) website (which describes itself as 'The foremost French website on European affairs'), but there appears to be no information on it about the 'Parliament in Action' initiative.

There is, however, some background in EP Press Release [20110513STO19331](#), which states that the new site 'publishes news and background information in French, English and German', that it will 'provide editorial coverage of the plenary sessions and interactive graphics on the work and powers of the Parliament', and also that it won't cover the EP's legislative work in detail.

The site is worth a look, though whether it offers anything genuinely useful is a moot point. There are some quirks which make it far less appealing - and useful - than it might be. Hopefully, some are just teething problems - like the absence of English and German versions of the 'fun and informative graph' showing how the EP works.

Perhaps of more concern is the absence of any explanation about the initiative and what it aims to do - an approach which seems to have crept into some of the pages too, with some (notably 'The committees' work' and 'Plenary') presenting articles with no explanation, background or context. Given that the target audience appears to be those who are not overly familiar with the EP, that seems remiss.

Let's hope the site didn't cost much to put together.



## 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 question was received recently:**

I am trying to find out at what rate or value each EU member state has set its Low Value Consignment Relief or LVCR.  
Member states can decide to set it between €10 and €22. This administrative relief is governed by Article 23 of Council Directive 2009/132.

### **Eric's somewhat apologetic response was:**

It seems there's no easy answer to this.

Unusually, the Directive doesn't specify a date for implementation, neither does it appear to require Member States (MS) to set a rate for LVCR – the term used is 'may' not 'must'.

I therefore suspect there is no guarantee that all Member States will set a rate.

According to the [National Execution Measures](#) page on EUR-Lex for the Directive, some Member States don't believe they need to adopt new legislation; many others have not yet provided any information on national measures to the Commission.

If you wish to pursue this, I think the best approach will be via your own network - EEN members may be able to identify legislation (possibly draft) in their own countries for you.



# Snippets:

## News and views from non-EU sources

### European Policy Centre

From: [The European External Action Service and the United Nations: a missed opportunity for self-promotion](#)

After months of delay, the European Union has finally acquired an upgraded status at the United Nations. In this Commentary, Megan Kenna argues that the European External Action Service (EEAS) missed an opportunity to promote this success in response to its many critics. Although the passing of the UN resolution shows that the EU has effectively communicated its objectives within the General Assembly, now the EEAS must better communicate among EU leaders and to its European public.

### Notre Europe

From: [The EU, its acts and its "methods"](#)

As every year, "Europe Day" invites us to discuss the EU's real-world impacts and to analyse its methods and growth as an organisation. The current news agenda is particularly stimulating, with wide-ranging debate about the euro and, more recently, tensions over the "Schengen zone" – another emblematic symbol of European integration. The EU acts, reacts, adapts. Meanwhile doubts and questions persist among its citizens.

### EurActiv

From: [EU copyright policy smacks of censorship, argue critics](#)

The EU is on a downward path to endorsing Internet censorship as it will ask Internet service providers to help stop online piracy, argue lobbyists and digital rights campaigners on the eve of new copyright regulation.

### Statewatch

From: [Regulation on public access to documents: the European Commission is the problem](#)

The European Commission (which is now dominated by centre-right EPP Commissioners) has proposed that the definition of a "document" is restricted to cover only the final version of a document which is "formally transmitted" (and would exclude documents concerning prior so-called "internal discussions"). In other words, citizens and civil society would never see which ideas are accepted or rejected or who proposed or opposed what - totally undermining democratic accountability.

### euobserver

From: [MEPs side with commission over limits to farm subsidies](#)

Members of the European Parliament's agriculture committee have thrown their support behind commission plans to limit farm payments under a reformed common agricultural policy (CAP), but warned against future increases in bureaucracy for farmers.

### Presseurop

From: [Regulate nuclear, not bananas](#)

The EU harmonises regulations on fruit and vegetables, but not on nuclear energy. After Fukushima, it's madness that member states continue to decide nuclear safety standards alone, laments a German journalist.