

# In touch with EU



## News from the Association

### Training courses

A reminder that we will not be arranging any public courses in the immediate future.

In recent years, we've generally found it difficult to attract sufficient numbers to our training courses to make them viable. A number of courses have had to be cancelled, due to lack of interest. Each time we cancel, we incur a cancellation charge - usually some hundreds of pounds.

Our most recent course, on case law, was much praised for the course content and the helpful, approachable trainers. However, despite the quality of the course, we had just five delegates and it lost money.

The Association's Committee has decided that we cannot continue to run courses at a loss. Therefore we do not intend to arrange any more public courses - although we're always happy to consider requests for in-house training.

In-house courses have a number of advantages. They can:

- save money
- minimise time away from work
- take place in a familiar environment
- be tailored to participants' needs

Whilst in-house courses are usually run for one company or institution, it is not essential that those attending are from the same organisation; inviting colleagues in the region to join in can significantly reduce the costs, and often works out cheaper per trainee than sending staff to scheduled courses.

### Discount - Online Information 2011

And a reminder also that EIA members can receive a **25%** early bird discount on places at the Online Information 2011 conference, if booked by 4 November - with a 15% discount for bookings made after that date.



### Feedback

Please send comments etc 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 ...*

# It's official:

## EU documents , publications and sources

### Enlargement statistics

Published by Eurostat, the 155-page 'Pocketbook on the enlargement countries' covers: demography, education, social conditions and labour force, national accounts and finance, agriculture, energy, industry, construction and services, transport, communications and information society, as well as external trade, research and development and environment. Data is for candidate countries and potential candidate countries for the period 2000-2009.

See: [Publication page](#)

### Consumer Rights Directive

The new Consumer Rights Directive, now formally adopted by the Council, aims to strengthen consumers' rights across the EU, particularly when shopping online. The Directive fully harmonises the list of information to be given to consumers and the right of withdrawal for distance and off-premises purchases. With some exceptions, consumers will have the right to withdraw from a distance or off-premises contract within 14 days without giving any reason and without any costs. Member States will have two years to implement the legislation.

See: Press Release [15257/11](#)

### EU law

The 'Report from the Commission: 28th Annual Report on monitoring the application of EU law (2010)' is now available on EUR-Lex as COM(2011) 588. Among other things, it reveals that, in 2010, the secondary legislation of the EU consisted of some 8,400 Regulations and nearly 2,000 Directives.

See: [Report text](#)

### Access to documents

Marking 'International Right to Know Day', the European Ombudsman has called on the EU institutions to be more pro-active regarding access to documents and information. The Ombudsman is concerned about the high number of transparency-related complaints he receives each year, with many EU institutions still being too reactive in their approach to public access.

See: Press release [17/2011](#)

### CAP reform

Plans to reform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2013 have been published by the European Commission. The proposals comprise 10 key elements:

- 1) Better targeted income support in order to stimulate growth and employment
- 2) Tools to address crisis management which are more responsive and better suited to meet new economic challenges
- 3) A 'Green' payment for preserving long-term productivity and ecosystems
- 4) Additional investment in research and innovation
- 5) A more competitive and balanced food chain
- 6) Encouraging agri-environmental initiatives
- 7) Facilitating the establishment of young farmers
- 8) Stimulating rural employment and entrepreneurship
- 9) Better addressing fragile areas
- 10) A simpler and more efficient CAP

See: Press Release [IP/11/1181](#)



### Football judgment

In its judgment in Cases C-403/08 and C-429/08 concerning football match broadcasts, the Court of Justice has responded to a request from the High Court of England and Wales for an interpretation of EU law. The first case (C-403/08) concerns a civil action brought by the Football Association Premier League (FAPL) against pubs that have screened Premier League matches by using Greek decoder cards and against the suppliers of such decoder cards to those pubs. The second case (C-429/08) has arisen from criminal proceedings against Karen Murphy, the landlady of a pub that screened Premier League matches using a Greek decoder card. In its judgment, the Court found that a system of licences for the broadcasting of football matches which grants broadcasters territorial exclusivity on a Member State basis and which prohibits television viewers from watching the broadcasts with a decoder card in other Member States is contrary to EU law. It also found that the screening in a public house of football match broadcasts containing protected works requires the authorisation of the author of those works. The judgment is intended to inform the decision-making of the national court.

See: Press Release [102/11](#)

### EU Criminal Policy

In the Communication 'Towards an EU Criminal Policy: Ensuring the effective implementation of EU policies through criminal law' (COM(2011) 573), the European Commission presents a framework for the further development of an EU Criminal Policy under the Treaty of Lisbon. The Commission identifies a number of guiding criteria, including: criminal law must always remain a measure of last resort, criminal law sanctions should be reserved for

particularly serious offences, and criminal law measures must be sensitive to fundamental rights.

See: [Communication text](#)

### Development aid

Changes to the way in which the EU delivers aid to developing countries are proposed by the Commission in the Communication 'Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change' (COM(2011) 637). The associated Communication 'The future approach to EU budget support to third countries' (COM(2011) 638) 'sets out a new policy on budget support and puts forward policy proposals for an EU coordinated approach.

See: [COM\(2011\) 637](#)  
and [COM\(2011\) 638](#)

### Common European Sales Law

The European Commission has proposed an optional Common European Sales Law to help break down barriers to cross-border trade and promote consumer choice and protection COM(2011) 635.

See: [Proposal text](#)  
and [associated Communication](#)

### Employment statistics

The 115-page Eurostat pocketbook 'Labour market statistics' highlights various aspects of the labour markets, including the situation of individuals and households, gross and net earnings, labour costs incurred by enterprises, labour demand, and labour market policy interventions.

See: [Publication page](#)



## 6EAP

The Council Conclusions 'Assessment of the sixth community environment action programme and the way forward: Towards a 7th EU environment action programme' welcome the Commission's final assessment of 6EAP (COM(2011) 531) and invites it to present, by January 2012, a proposal for a 7th environment action programme (7EAP).

See: [Conclusions text](#)

### Funding proposals

The European Commission has adopted proposals for a legislative package on cohesion policy. Spanning 2014-2020, it is intended to boost growth and jobs across the EU by targeting investment on the Europe 2020 priorities under Partnership Contracts between Member States and the Commission.

The various parts of the draft legislative package, announced on 6 October, are now available on EUR-Lex. In order of COMdoc number, they are:

[COM\(2011\) 607](#): Proposal for a Regulation on the European Social Fund;

[COM\(2011\) 608](#): Proposal for a Regulation on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (2014 - 2020);

[COM\(2011\) 609](#): Proposal for a Regulation on a European Union Programme for Social Change and Innovation;

[COM\(2011\) 610](#): Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification,

simplification and improvement of the establishment and implementation of such groupings;


[COM\(2011\) 611](#): Proposal for a Regulation ;on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal;

[COM\(2011\) 612](#): Proposal for a Regulation on the Cohesion Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1084/2006;

[COM\(2011\) 613](#): The Future of the European Union Solidarity Fund;

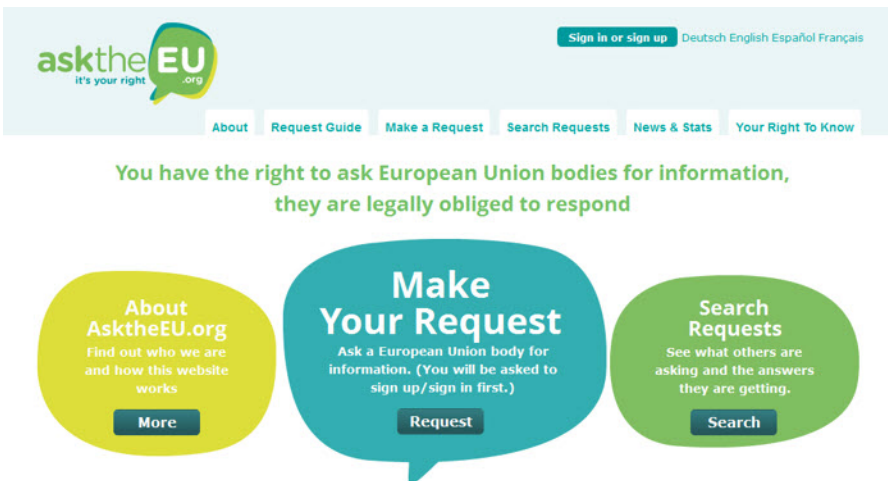
[COM\(2011\) 614](#): Proposal for a Regulation on specific provisions concerning the European Regional Development Fund and the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006;

[COM\(2011\) 615](#): Proposal for a Regulation laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.



# Focus on ...

**AsktheEU.org** was launched on International Right to Know Day, 28 September. The site is claimed to 'radically simplify' the process for making requests under Regulation 1049/2001 regarding public access to Parliament, Council and Commission documents.



Registered users of AsktheEU.org complete a request on the site, which is then sent by e-mail to the relevant EU body. All requests and responses are made public. The site is available in English, French, German and Spanish.

Users can rate responses, and help is available for anyone not satisfied with a response and who wishes to appeal or to complain to the European Ombudsman.

The website has been created by Access Info Europe (AIE), an international human rights organisation based in Madrid. The official launch of the

site was marked by AIE's Executive Director, Helen Darbishire, sending a message to DG Trade: 'Please send me information about the negotiations [sic] mandate for the EU India free trade agreement.' DG Trade acknowledged receipt of the request - which immediately started the clock ticking for the response deadline.

When visited in mid-October, there were 13 requests listed on the site, with a wide range of topics covered (note there is a keyword search option, but no list of keywords; browsing a list of 13 items is easy enough - finding relevant items from hundreds will be much harder).

One example is that of a journalist asking for details of progress with Macedonia's accession to the EU, including contacts for further information (there is much information and documentation on the Commission's Enlargement website, including contact names; this looks like a case of someone not looking hard enough).

Another example is of someone asking for a list of public holidays which will affect the EU institutions in 2011 and 2012 (this information is published in the Official Journal and can be quickly found via a search engine; again, this looks like the person concerned just hasn't tried an approach which for most of us would be second nature).

Access to documents remains a significant issue for the EU. Despite the Regulation (currently under review), there are numerous cases of people and organisations having trouble obtaining them; Statewatch and The Guardian are two notable organisations that come to mind. So any initiative which will help improve access is to be welcomed.

Access to 'documents' is, however, not the same as access to 'information'. Looking at the requests sent via the website, many require a more comprehensive response than it will be possible to make just by supplying a selection of documents. The site claims that, by making answers publicly available, EU officials won't have to answer the same request repeatedly. However, many of these requests are so badly phrased and arguably inappropriate that staff may find themselves spending much time trying to formulate appropriate responses - or offering as little as they can get away with (the response to the 'Macedonia' request mentioned above simply gave contact details for Commissioner Füle's Spokesperson Team).

Given that many queries could be answered by Googling, checking Commission websites, or by contacting the numerous official EU information points (Europe Direct, EDCs etc.) there's a strong case for this site having some filtering system for requests - and for informing visitors of the wide range of options available for finding information themselves. And at this stage, it seems that those behind this initiative would benefit from learning more about EU information sources!

# Book review

## The European Parliament

Richard Corbett, Francis Jacobs and Michael Shackleton  
8th edition  
[John Harper Publishing](#)

*Reviewed by Prof Juliet Lodge, University of Leeds*

Just under 60 years ago, the forerunner of today's European Parliament met for the first time: the European Coal and Steel Community's Common Assembly had but 78 members drawn from the nominees of the six founding members' national parliaments. They could have only dreamt of the authority the federal European Parliament would one day come to possess, and many would probably have not wished it to become more than the 'fig leaf' talking shop that it once was. How today's European Parliament – the European Union's co-legislature with the Council of Ministers – became the legislative power it is today, is detailed in this book.

Written by insiders, it is the authoritative work on the workings, organisation, role and powers of the European Parliament. Dr Richard Corbett, a former official of, and Member of, the European Parliament is now advisor on constitutional questions to the President of the European Council. He is a pre-eminent expert of treaty and constitutional changes, able to explain with great clarity some of the most arcane aspects of the European Parliament's workings. Francis Jacobs and Dr Michael Shackleton are now respectively Heads of the European Parliament's Information Offices in Ireland and in the United Kingdom.

This 8th edition of their now classic guide is complemented by a website which provides updates to this latest incarnation of their work: [www.europesparliament.com](http://www.europesparliament.com).

The volume helpfully begins by placing the European Parliament's evolution in historical context, complete with timeline up to the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty which confirmed the European Parliament's legislative authority across most areas of EU legislation. It goes on to outline the background to the direct election of the European Parliament, how Members are elected, the unequal ratio of MEPs to population (as wide as 800,000+ in Germany to 68,000 in Malta) and the composition and relative size of the party groups.

The problem of linguistic diversity (23 official languages and over 1.8 million pages translated in 2008 alone) is tackled, but no suggestion made as to how costs might be mitigated by the adoption of key working languages prior to the next round of enlargement.

Detailed explanations of the Parliament's organisational structure, its seat, secretariat, relative roles of its President, committees, party leaders, officials and so on provide insight into how and why its working methods have evolved as they have and how and why they are effective. A gold mine of data is provided regarding the committees and the party groups in further chapters. Inter-parliamentary delegations and the role of plenary sessions complement this. The Parliament's powers are incomplete and there are clearly too many MEPs and associated officials, bureaucrats, interns etc. Pragmatic and realistic reforms on these sensitive matters are required.

The EU's legislative process is now far simpler than it was before the Treaty of Lisbon. The role of national parliaments in scrutinising EU legislation has gradually, and relatively recently, improved and a chapter is devoted to this.

The European Parliament's all-important budgetary powers which provided the first lever for expanding its quest for legislative influence in the 1970s are examined, before a chapter explores its role in the appointment and dismissal of the EU Commission, scrutiny and control over the executive, and role as a platform for foreign dignitaries.

In conclusion, the authors stress that Parliament's role in constitution-making continues: it is there to promote democratic practice and hold the executive to account.

This book remains the most accessible and comprehensive analysis of the European Parliament to date and is a must for anyone wanting to probe its history, composition, organisation, challenges, role, functions and power in the European Union.



# Snippets:

## News and views from non-EU sources

### Statewatch

From: [Analysis: EU: Mandatory data retention: update and developments](#)

Perhaps the most well-known comment on the Data Retention Directive is that of the European Data Protection Supervisor, who referred to it as “the most privacy invasive instrument ever adopted by the EU in terms of scale and the number of people it affects.” This statement reinforced the arguments made by numerous civil society organisations, individuals and politicians.

It is because of the highly invasive nature of the surveillance and monitoring permitted by mandatory data retention that the directive was annulled or suspended by court decisions in several Member States.

### EUbusiness

From: [EU launches controversial world aid reform](#)

The European Commission unveiled sweeping changes to the distribution of EU aid, drawing concern from international charity groups worried that the shift could come at the expense of the neediest people.

The reform also calls for a shift to focus on key growth sectors such as agriculture and energy, but the non-governmental group ActionAid said this would benefit EU companies while it would have “questionable impact” for the poor.

### EurActiv

From: [Brussels vague on rural spending for 2014-2020](#)

The European Commission's proposal for the €101.2 billion European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) in 2014-2020 has few specifics on how this money should be spent, in marked contrast with the prescriptive regulation for the EU's regional development and social funds.

### Euobserver

From: [Cracks show in EU austerity doctrine](#)

If the subtle change in emphasis in the EU's discourse on austerity is to be believed, some in the bloc are beginning to be much more open to policy options beyond public-sector cutbacks.

### European Policy Centre

From: [Analysis of the Multiannual Financial Framework \(MFF\) 2014-2020](#)

In this paper Fabian Zuleeg and Elisa Molino analyse the European Commission's proposals for the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework, investigating their potential implications for regional and local authorities.

# ONLINE INFORMATION 2011

Join thousands of visitors from around the world and take the opportunity to **discover new suppliers**; discuss and **negotiate new deals with existing providers** and find out about the **new products and services** they are launching.

Join us in our new venue, **the National Hall, Olympia** for:

- **More than 150 international exhibitors** displaying a wide range of cutting edge products, services and technologies
- **A free educational seminar programme** which includes sessions on Content Management, Enterprise Search, Business and Legal Information, STM Information, ePublishing & eBooks, Library Management and Social Media Marketing plus information masterclasses, career development talks and independent case-studies
- **The Online Information Conference** runs alongside the exhibition. Learn from our expert speakers on the hot topics of the day including opening keynotes from **Craig Newmark**, Founder of Craigslist and **Rachel Botsman**, Author of 'What's Mine is Yours – The Rise of Collaborative Consumption'

## Online Information 2011 covers



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