

In touch with EU



News from the Association

Focus on post-EIA

On Monday 5 March, an Extraordinary General Meeting of the European Information Association confirmed that the EIA will be dissolved by the end of this year.

The meeting also decided that steps should be taken to explore the possibility of establishing some new group to continue the sharing of experience and expertise that the Association has provided over the last two decades.

Eurotalk

As a first step, the Association's Eurotalk discussion list has been opened up to anyone willing to share their experience and expertise in handling EU information and/or who is seeking help with EU-related materials, websites etc.

The move is intended to provide a forum not only for discussing EU information issues, but also to gauge the level of interest in setting up some new group and what form it might take.

Since opening up Eurotalk, some 50 people have joined it.

Your views needed

The expansion of Eurotalk has not produced the anticipated discussion of what might follow the EIA. The success of any new group will depend on people getting involved, primarily

to seek or offer help. On that basis, the lack of contributions so far doesn't bode well for the future.

If you haven't already been in touch - either via the Eurotalk list or direct to me - then please make the effort now.

In particular, it would be helpful to know:

- what you expect from an EU information self-help group
- whether a virtual group is sufficient, or is it important to meet people face-to-face
- whether you would be willing to manage a website or contribute to a blog or forum

Feel free to ask questions, voice criticisms, volunteer your services ...

(Not all EIA members are signed up to Eurotalk. If you're not, please visit the JISCMail [Eurotalk page](#) and choose the 'Subscribe or Unsubscribe' option).

The EGM Minutes are now available in the Members Area.

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

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It's official:

EU documents , publications and sources

Mortgage Directive

In March 2011, the Commission proposed a Directive 'on credit agreements relating to residential property' (COM(2011) 142) to ensure better protection for mortgage borrowers. MEPs are now looking at the proposals and seem likely to broaden its scope by introducing chapters on financial education, performance of credit (i.e. what happens once people have signed a mortgage contract), and market transparency (traceability).

See: Press Release [20120223STO39233](#)

Poverty

The Commission has published a report 'on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion' (COM(2012) 107). It concludes that the EY2010 'succeeded in injecting new momentum into the fight against poverty and social exclusion in Europe' and that it 'highlighted the need for political commitment at the highest level and for reaching out to people not traditionally involved in social inclusion policies.'

See: [Report text](#)

TSCG

The Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG) in the Economic and Monetary Union was signed on 2 March by 25 of the 27 Member States (the UK and Czech Republic didn't sign). Intended to safeguard the stability of the euro area, the TSCG requires national budgets to be in balance or in surplus – with signatories ensuring that that rule is incorporated into national law within one year of the Treaty entering into force (which will be once 12 eurozone members have ratified it). The TSCG also provides for economic policy coordination and convergence, with the 25 Member States required to re-

port on their public debt issuance plans and to ensure that major economic policy reforms are discussed beforehand and, where appropriate, coordinated. Informal Euro Summit meetings will involve both eurozone countries and the other TSCG signatories. The target date for entry into force is 1 January 2013, with the intention being to incorporate the substance of the Treaty into EU law within the following five years.

See: [Treaty text](#)

Shadow banking

COM(2012) 102 is a Green Paper on Shadow Banking. The Financial Stability Board defines shadow banking as 'the system of credit intermediation that involves entities and activities outside the regular banking system'. The Green Paper sets out how existing and proposed EU measures address shadow banking activities.

See: [Green Paper text](#)

IPR Infringements Observatory

The European Observatory on Counterfeiting and Piracy was set up within the European Commission in 2009, as a platform for coordinating actions to protect intellectual property rights across Europe. Under a new Regulation, the Observatory is renamed the 'European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights' and is managed by the Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market (OHIM). The proposed change was published as COM(2011) 288, with the original name to be retained.

See: Press Release [MEMO/12/208](#)



IT Agency

Established under Regulation (EU) 1077/2011, the 'European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice' has been officially inaugurated. Based in Tallinn, Estonia, its main task is to manage the Visa Information (VIS) and EURODAC systems, and – from 2013 - the second generation Schengen Information System (SIS II).
See: [Press Release IP/12/258](#)

Monti II Regulation

COM(2012) 130 is a proposal for a Council Regulation 'on the exercise of the right to take collective action within the context of the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services'. If adopted, the Regulation will lay down 'the general principles and rules applicable at Union level with respect to the exercise of the fundamental right to take collective action within the context of the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services.' It will not affect 'the right or freedom to strike or to take other action covered by the specific industrial relations systems in Member States'. The proposal aims to clarify EU-level principles and rules concerning the right to take collective action. Its scope includes the temporary posting of workers to another Member State, and restructuring and/or relocation involving more than one Member State. It is being referred to as the 'Monti II Regulation' – the original 'Monti Regulation' being Council Regulation (EC) 2679/98 'on the functioning of the internal market in relation to the free movement of goods among the Member States'. An associated proposal for an 'Enforcement Directive' seeks to increase the protection of workers temporarily posted abroad by improving monitoring of, and compliance with, Directive 96/71/EC on the posting of workers.
See: [Proposal text](#)

Climate database

The European Environment Agency (EEA) has launched the European Climate Adaptation Platform (CLIMATE-ADAPT) - an interactive, web-based tool designed to support policy-makers at EU, national, regional and local levels in the development of climate change adaptation measures and policies.
See: [CLIMATE-ADAPT website](#)

Cybercrime Centre

The European Commission has proposed that a European Cybercrime Centre be established 'to help protect European citizens and businesses against these mounting cyber-threats'. The Centre will be set up within the European Police Office, Europol, and 'will focus on illegal online activities carried out by organised crime groups, particularly those generating large criminal profits, such as online fraud involving credit cards and bank credentials.'
See: [Press Release IP/12/317](#)

ECI

1 April saw the official launch of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). Commission Vice-President šefčovič said: 'I am delighted that after all the hard work and long wait, Europeans will finally be able to launch Citizens' Initiatives by requesting their registration on the Commission's website.' He went on to describe the ECI as 'an unprecedented expansion in participatory democracy. It is a powerful agenda-setting tool in the hands of citizens. I hope it will also encourage the development of a genuine European 'demos', as citizens come together across borders to debate issues that are important to all of them.'
See: [Press Release IP/12/336](#)

Asylum

Eurostat data show that the number of asylum applicants registered in the EU rose to 301,000 in 2011, compared to 259,000 in 2010. Asylum applicants were mainly from Afghanistan (9%), Russia (6%), Pakistan (5%), Iraq (5%) and Serbia (5%).
See: [Press Release 46/2012](#)



Focus on ...

EPLO



Based in Washington DC, the [European Parliament Liaison Office with the US Congress](#) (EPLO) aims to maintain regular contact with US lawmakers.

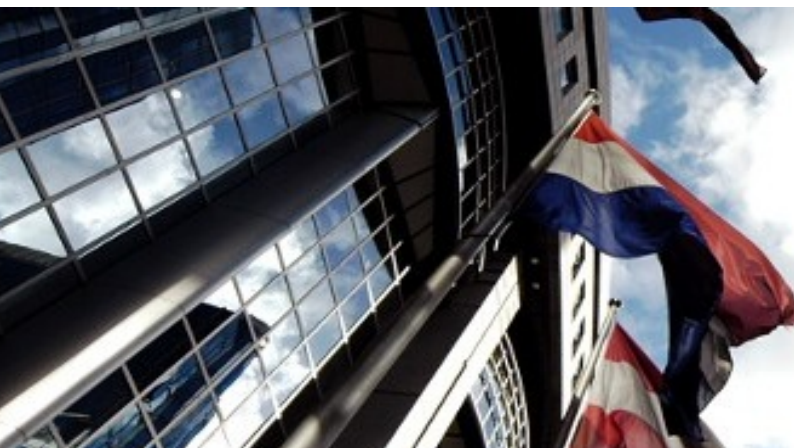
The Office was officially opened on 29 April 2010, and undertakes the following main activities:

- strengthening strategic links at all levels with US Congress bodies
- identifying key legislative issues of mutual interest and exchanging information
- preparing and assisting enhanced Parliament-Congress contacts
- improving mutual perception and understanding between administrations
- reinforcing cooperation with the EU Delegation in Washington DC*

The website offers a range of materials, including:

- brief details of EU-US Parliamentary relations
- links to the texts of EP Resolutions on transatlantic issues (since 2005)
- a selection of press releases issued by the EP press service and the office of the EP President (divided into 'EU-US relations', and 'Issues with impact in the US'; there is no significant archive - only press releases from 2010-2012 are available)
- a weekly newsletter - the 'Transatlantic Liaison Letter'

The main page also offers selected news items and videos.



EU-US Parliamentary relations

European Parliament in Washington DC



... has begun ... has considered ways to establish a direct presence ... European Parliament has voted on several occasions to ... would open a representative office.

... time when the ... horizon, this project was supported in the Millan Mon Report (in ... march 2009). In a follow ... the Secretary-General of the European Parliament decided to open ... an EP Liaison Office with the ... (EPLO) from January 2010.

Focus on ...

Margaret Thatcher Foundation

Margaret Thatcher's influence on UK-EU relations was profound.

Now, thanks to the Archive section of the [Margaret Thatcher Foundation](#) website, it is possible to read not only her famous speeches, but also to see associated notes, memos and other background documentation.

The collection brings together thousands of documents from archives around the world, most of which are declassified or previously unpublished. For EU-watchers, the significant section is 1979-1990, for which the archives are only now beginning to be opened - with many more pages to be added in coming years

Visitors to the site can, for example, read not only the September 1988 Bruges Speech (described as an 'explosive attack on European integration'), but also the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) file on the drafting of it).

Searching the Archive seems to be straightforward, with numerous options including pre-defined time periods (e.g. 'Since 1991: post-premiership'), and a tick-box subject selection. It's also possible to search for items according to their relative importance (key / major / minor / trivial).

The heading 'British foreign policy' includes four EU-related topics (with some 100-300 items in each):

- European Union (general) (308)
- European Union Budget (176)
- Economic, monetary & political union (225)
- European Union Single Market (92)

Not all items are directly related to MT. There are texts of Presidency Conclusions adopted after EU Summits, and documents relating to meetings between Edward Heath and Willi Brandt, and Heath and Georges Pompidou.

This is a fascinating site for anyone interested in political history and/or EU-UK relations. There are all sorts of fascinating things to be found, often in the form of commentary accompanying items in the Archive, including this summary (and links) from the 'Speeches, Interviews & Other Statements' section:

On 30 October 1990 she made the first of the [series of famous statements that marked the end of her premiership](#), rejecting Commission proposals at the Rome European Council with the words "[No, no, no](#)".

Margaret Thatcher

FOUNDATION



This is the website of the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, the largest contemporary history site of its kind. We offer free access to thousands of historical documents relating to the Thatcher period.

NEW: [Falklands War: the US 'tilt' 30 Apr 1982](#)

NEW: [MT's private files for 1981: whole release](#)

NEW: [MT's private files for 1981: Murdoch](#)

NEW: [MT's private files for 1981: Reagan](#)

Snippets:

News and views from non-EU sources

World Policy Institute

From: [Europe in the Throes](#)

In a detailed three-page memo published nearly two decades ago, an unnamed European Union official set about codifying just what constitutes a good banana. Few could have predicted that “Commission Regulation (EC) No 2257/94 of 16 September 1994 laying down quality standards for bananas” would ever attract much outside attention. Even by the lexicon of regulatory documents, it is a turgid read. It lays down technical specifications for fruit imported or grown in the EU: their size (“minimum 14 cm”), how their crown is cut (“not beveled or torn”) and their shape (“free from abnormal curvature”). The blameless Eurocrat behind it could not have guessed that his proposals, which became law the following year, would morph into a cause célèbre among detractors of the European Union.

EUbusiness

From: [Regulation on Over-the-Counter Derivatives and Market infrastructures - guide](#)

EU legislation to make trade over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives safer and more transparent was approved by an overwhelming majority in Parliament on 29 March. Derivatives trading is widely believed to have contributed to the global financial crisis. The draft regulation had been provisionally agreed by Parliament and Council negotiators on 9 February.

Statewatch

From: [FRONTEX Observatory](#)

Frontex is the common name for the European Agency for the Management of Operational Coordination at the External Frontiers of the Member States of the European Union. The term Frontex derives from the French for external borders, *frontières extérieures*. The agency's work is based around improving and strengthening border security systems at the land and sea borders of the European Union. In the words of the agency itself, “the activities of Frontex are intelligence driven. Frontex complements and provides particular added value to the national border management systems of the Member States.”

The purpose of this Observatory is to analyse and document the role and activities of Frontex.

EurActiv

From: [EU opens to first citizens' initiatives amid criticism](#)

Civil society groups have complained about the prohibitive administrative and security procedures of filing a European Citizen Initiative (ECI) as the EU prepares to venture into participative democracy on Sunday (1 April) by opening the first petitions to registration.

European public sector trade unions will be the first to file a petition on Sunday by demanding that EU institutions declare water and sanitation a human right and keep it out of internal market rules.



European Policy Centre

From: [The European Economic Area revisited](#)

The European Economic Area (EEA) is the EU's closest relationship with neighbouring countries. Membership of the EEA gives members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein – access to the Single Market by transposing EU laws into their own legal order. Meanwhile Switzerland, EFTA's other member, has bilateral agreements with the EU to similar effect.

Although these arrangements have worked well for nearly 20 years, questions are now being asked. Access to the Single Market for non-EU members comes at a price, both budgetary and in terms of a 'democratic deficit'. In Norway, a recent report has triggered public debate about the EEA for the first time. Iceland is negotiating for full membership of the EU. The agreements with Switzerland have encountered difficulties. So the EU's Council of Ministers plans to review the EEA and related agreements by the end of this year. Meanwhile, those in Britain who want the UK to leave the EU consider the EEA as a model.

EurActiv

From: [Tobacco rule changes will boost crime, industry warns](#)

European Commission plans to clamp down on the tobacco industry, set to be published later this year, will boost criminal activity, according to an industry-funded report out today (3 April).

The report, titled 'Transcrime', examines plans under consideration in Brussels to force plain packaging on cigarette packs, to push health-related costs onto the tobacco companies and to ban displays of cigarettes from vending outlets.

euobserver

From: [EU commission struggling to attract top economists](#)
So few people are applying for jobs in the European Commission that the official in charge believes it will soon no longer be possible to guarantee a high calibre workforce where all member states are fairly represented.

EU commissioner Maros Sefcovic, in charge of administration, says salaries for the commission are too low to be attractive to candidates from rich member states.

PressEurope

From: [A bogeyman called Europe](#)

Europe is where they do away with the infirm elderly, and where cruise line captains are the first to jump ship in the event of an accident. It is the place where the ailing euro continues to be a source of contagion for the rest of the world and where the economy is strangled by cumbersome and prohibitively expensive welfare states. Worse of all, it is a place where the future of the young generation is sacrificed.

Notwithstanding 65 years of good and faithful service, America's longstanding European allies are being pilloried in the US presidential primaries, where no Republican campaign speech is complete without a fresh attack on a European whipping boy.

PressEurope

From: [The nebulous world of European agencies](#)

Lacking in transparency, costly, and subject to conflicts of interest: the independence of more than 20 EU specialist agencies has led both to financial difficulties and a loss of democratic control, argues Die Presse.

