

In touch with EU



News from the Association

End of the EIA

The Association's Committee has decided that the EIA should be dissolved at the end of 2012.

The move is to be approved at an Extraordinary General Meeting on Monday, 5 March.

Background

Although there is still a significant interest in the EU and its activities, demand for the Association's services from its traditional market (i.e. information professionals) has been in steady decline over the past decade or so. That decline has been particularly noticeable in the last couple of years, as the economic crisis has seen budgets cut and organisations re-assess their spending priorities.

In addition, take-up of places on EIA training courses has been generally low over the past few years, with a number having to be cancelled or run at a loss; website visits have settled at ≤ 500 per week; sales of publications have fallen; and the membership has become increasingly passive.

EGM to be held on 5 March

The overall prognosis, therefore, is that there is insufficient demand for the Association's services for it to remain viable in its present form.

Although disappointing - and not made lightly - the decision to dissolve the Association is not entirely unexpected. The possibility of dissolution was discussed by the Committee in 2007, following the resignation of the Association's long-serving Manager, Catherine Webb. However, it was agreed at that time to keep the Association going, on the basis of moving to part-time, freelance staffing arrangements. Even so, it was accepted that there was no guarantee the Association would survive.

Sadly, membership has now dropped to a level (c120) at which the income generated is not sufficient to sustain the current part-time staffing model.

Only those attending the meeting in March will be able to vote on the motion to dissolve the Association.

EGM

Against that background, the Committee has therefore agreed that the EIA should be dissolved. Given that some current memberships do not expire until mid-2012, and that time will be needed to make appropriate legal and other arrangements, the target date for dissolution is 31 December 2012.

The Association is a member-based organisation, governed by a constitution and by rules stemming from its charitable status. It is therefore necessary to go through a formal process of dissolution.

The main requirement is for a decision to dissolve the Association to be formally approved at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), by a resolution passed by two thirds of the members present and voting.

An EGM is therefore to be held on the afternoon of Monday, 5 March, at Europe House, London. There will be no charge for admission to the meeting, which is likely to start at 14.00. An agenda will be available early in the New Year.

Transition

No new members are being accepted, but all existing memberships will be honoured until the EIA ceases to exist. There will be no 2012 conference and no more annual Awards made; no public training courses will be organised, but in-house courses will still be offered to anyone interested; the website will be maintained, with - at the request of the Committee - an emphasis on building up the Moodle online-learning content.

Future

Despite the inability of the Association to continue in its present form, the Committee felt that there might be some support for establishing a successor to the Association. No substantial discussion has taken place, but the possibility of creating something similar to Eudug was mooted. Membership would be open to anyone interested, probably in return for a small annual fee. The main benefit would be access to a forum for discussion and information sharing; the occasional meeting might be also be a possibility.

On that basis, the EGM agenda will therefore include an opportunity for those present to air their views - if any - on the possibility of forming a new group for information professionals interested in the EU.

Action

If you wish to attend the EGM on 5 March, please mail me. Details of the agenda will be made available early in the New Year, together with any other relevant information.

Only those attending the meeting in March will be able to vote on the motion to dissolve the Association. However, their views may be swayed by comments from others - so please get in touch with your views, even if you won't be able to attend.

Feedback on a possible successor to the EIA will also be welcomed - and will also feed into the EGM discussion.

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if you wish to attend the EGM on 5 March, please mail
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It's official:

EU documents , publications and sources

EU households

Statistics in Focus 52/2011 looks at living arrangements in the EU Member States. Average household size in the EU in 2008 ranged from less than two household members in Denmark to almost three in Bulgaria. On average, the largest households were found in the countries of eastern and southern Europe.

See: [Statistics in Focus 52/2011](#)

Education statistics

'Statistics in Focus' 54/2011 looks at trends in European education during the last decade. From 2000 to 2009 there was a significant rise in children attending pre-primary education and students could on average expect to stay 17 years in education. The number of students in compulsory education has fallen sharply in many countries, particularly in Eastern Europe. There are relatively more men in vocational training, with women tending to dominate in tertiary education.

See: [Statistics in Focus 54/2011](#)

Education, youth, employment

Eurostat's 'Statistics Explained' website now articles on education statistics and on the education and employment patterns of young people. The former presents data on EU education and training systems between 2000 and 2009, focusing on major trends at each educational level in terms of enrolments, education expectancy, teacher characteristics and graduates. The latter looks at situations regarding education and employment of people in the 18-24 age group.

See: [Statistics Explained website](#)

Nanomaterial Recommendation

The European Commission has adopted a Recommendation 'on the definition of nanomaterial' (2011/696/EU). The definition is considered to be important for determining whether a material should be considered a 'nanomaterial' as regards EU legislation or policy.

See: [Press Release IP/11/1202](#)

Consumer Markets Scoreboard

According to the latest Consumer Markets Scoreboard, the markets which are the most likely to be failing consumers across the EU are financial services, investments (including pensions and securities), mortgages and real estate services.

See: [Press Release IP/11/1221](#)

'Smart Borders'

The Commission has adopted a Communication which sets out the main options for using new technologies to simplify life for foreigners frequently travelling to the EU and to better monitor third-country nationals crossing EU borders. The 'Smart Borders' initiative would consist of: an Entry/Exit System (EES) which would record the time and place of entry and the length of authorised short stays in an electronic database, replacing the current system of stamping passports; and a Registered Travellers Programme (RTP) which would allow certain groups of frequent travellers from third countries to enter the EU, subject to appropriate pre-screening, using simplified border checks at automated gates.

See: [Press Release IP/11/1234](#)

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Based in Valladolid, Spain, the company Gateway S.C.S. has been disseminating information on EU funding opportunities for nearly 10 years under the name [Euroalert.net](#).

The free service provides details of funding available via EU programmes and initiatives, and of public procurement contracts published by central and local government, together with news of associated developments. There is also a section devoted to legislation published in the OJ L.

The main sections of the website are: 'Hot Topics!', 'News', 'EU Funding', 'Govt. Contracts', 'EU Law' and 'More contents'. Each is sub-divided, with links to sub-sections displayed on the line below the main menu.

Euroalert.net divides the world of EU policy and legislation into 22 subject sections. The full list is displayed as appropriate, e.g. when selecting the 'By category' option from the 'News' heading, or the 'What's hot on ...' option from the 'Hot topics' menu. A correlation table is provided, together with background information on the topic headings (choose 'EU Funding' - 'EU policies').

News is offered by week, month and year (though there doesn't seem to be an archive available, so only the current year is covered).

Under the heading 'EU Funding', visitors can browse details of 'Calls for Proposals', 'EU programmes' and 'FP7 Calls', together with an overview of the EU budget ('EU Funding Sources').

The section 'Govt contracts' provides details of opportunities currently open and about to close. There's also an introduction to the Common procurement vocabulary (CPV).

A slightly odd section is the one on 'EU Law', which appears to list every item published in the OJ L series. That is every item - the 'light type' acts as well as the more substantive ones. In a service largely devoted to funding opportunities, this seems out of place and to offer no significant added value. Why not just select the - very few - pieces of legislation concerned with funding programmes, budget etc?

Although the site is free to access, a 'Shop' section offers visitors the opportunity to subscribe to a number of fee-based newsletters and reports.

Overall, if you - or your users - need to keep abreast of funding opportunities and tender notices, then Euroalert.net is well worth looking at.



Book review



How the EU Institutions Work and ... How to Work with the EU institutions

Edited by Alan Hardacre
[John Harper Publishing](#)

Reviewed by Dr. Evangelia Koundouraki,
Information Specialist, European University Institute

This book comes at a very appropriate moment and provides a practical guide to understanding the complexity of the EU policy and decision-making after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

As the result of co-operation between a team of experts in EU public affairs, it addresses in a systematic and easy-to-understand way the question of how EU policy- and decision-making is made by the main EU actors.

The book's contribution is twofold: first to explain the complexity of multi-level governance in the EU and second to suggest how to set up or improve an existing "lobbying strategy" that would enable interested representatives (or lobbyists) to influence policy agendas and affect EU decisions.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part of is devoted to the presentation and modus operandi of the key EU institutions – European Commission, European Parliament, Council of the EU and European Council – followed by a brief introduction to other EU institutions and bodies.

In the second part of the book, the authors analyse the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (or 'new' co-decision procedure) and the new comitology, both as formal procedures and informal practices.

Finally, by presenting the major European information sources (websites and registers) of the different EU institutions and the current and future 'regulatory' framework for lobbying, the third and last part of the book addresses the question of how to work with the Union's institutions and decision-making processes.

The book will be of interest to academics teaching EU politics, information professionals dealing with enquiries on how the EU works, new officials of the EU institutions needing a single reference work on EU public affairs, and interested parties (law firms, NGOs, think-tanks etc.) having to deal with the EU institutions and wishing to shape their policies.

Snippets:

News and views from non-EU sources

European Policy Centre

From: [Eurozone exits no longer taboo](#)

The realisation that exiting the euro zone is no longer taboo does not 'only' affect Greece: it is also a significant step for the entire euro area, in both positive and negative terms. On the one hand, fear of being forced to leave the common currency increases the ability of governments and the EU institutions to exert influence on those countries that are not playing by the rules – although the potential leverage is admittedly smaller with respect to some of the bigger and more economically powerful countries. On the other hand, breaking the exit taboo undermines the overall credibility of the euro zone and risks even more negative market reactions, especially if investors fear that other countries might eventually also end up like Greece.

EurActiv

From: [EU's 'ethical business' blueprint raises expectations](#)

An EU blueprint to increase businesses accountability on environmental and social matters has raised expectations among NGOs that welcomed the "change of tone" in the European Commission's approach but remained cautious on the implementation.

Presseurop

From: [Germany, the hobbled giant](#)

It dictates the agenda of EU summits, defines the rules, makes an entire continent wait, and always ends up imposing its will. With the euro crisis Germany finds itself alone at the head of the Union. But is it up to this new role?

Notre Europe

From: [President Barroso's Road Map](#)

The "state of the Union speech" recently delivered by José Manuel Barroso has come right on cue to remind us of the European Commission's crucial role; and this, in particular, at a time marked by crises of every kind. It illustrates a particularly useful strategic vision and puts itself forward as a road map offering us a number of significant points of analysis and guidelines for the future.

European Voice

From: [Mission impossible: from Lux to Brux?](#)

This month saw the launch of a publication from a newish think-tank in Brussels. Counter-intuitively, for a think-tank that is headed by members of the European Parliament and is largely funded by the Parliament, it calls for a cut in Parliament's own spending. [...] Their third big-ticket spending target is "EU propaganda".

Euobserver

From: [Praise be to EU summits. You'll miss them when they're gone](#)

The EU has always liked summits. Summits helped create it, and have been the medium through which it has evolved. Summits have always been how the Union resolved its problems – let them fester for a while, generate a bit of theatre, and then bring together political leaders to thrash out a deal to save the day. Where would the EU be without its summits?



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