In touch with EU

European Information Association

News from the Association

EU information in the UK

The imminent demise of the Association coincides with the European Commission Representation in the UK renewing its interest in establishing a network for providers of EU information in the UK.

To that end, Antonia Mochan, Head of Communication, Partnerships and Networks in the Commission's London office, organised a meeting on 14 May to discuss options.

The meeting was attended by some 26 people, representing a wide range of bodies, including EDCs, EENs, Europe Direct, third sector, and law firms. It followed the structure of a brief discussion entitled 'Getting to grips with EU information in the UK', with much attention being paid to the results of a survey carried out by the Commission which showed a strong demand for networking among providers and users of EU information in the UK.

There was no 'big bang' decision made at the meeting. Building on the results of the survey (which attracted only 48 responses) and on comments from those present, it was agreed that there is interest in organising an annual conference and establishing a virtual forum (Eurotalk was mentioned as a possible tool, but LinkedIn was the preferred option).

The Commission is to contact those interested, with the aim of establishing a steering group. Membership of the group remains to be decided, but the Commission would like it to comprise two representatives for each of the main sectors concerned (which presumably means two for EDCs, EDs, EENs, NGOs etc - although that was not explicitly stated).

More information is expected from the Commission in the coming weeks and is likely to be posted on Eurotalk (if you're not a member, you can sign up to Eurotalk by visiting the JISCmail Eurotalk page and choosing the 'Subscribe or Unsubscribe' option).

Preparatory acts

The Association's Moodle pages now have a section on proposals for legislation, inlcuding brief videos on using PreLex and the Legislative Observatory. Access them via the members area of the website.

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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

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 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'.
See: Proposal text

'Internet of Things'
By 2015, the 'Internet of Things' (IoT) could comprise as many as 25 billion devices worldwide, with phones, cars, household appliances, clothing and foodstuffs collecting and sharing data wirelessly via the internet. Given the growth of the IoT, the European Commission has launched a public consultation to try and establish what framework is needed to develop its potential economic and social benefits, whilst ensuring adequate data protection. Comments are invited by 12 July. A Commission Recommendation on the IoT is scheduled for mid-2013.
See: Press Release IP/12/360

Football contracts
Described as 'a significant achievement for EU-level social dialogue in the professional football sector' an agreement between the social partners representing professional football aims to ensure that player contracts throughout Europe meet minimum standards.
See: Press Release MEMO/12/267

Public procurement
Electronic procurement (e-procurement) is defined as 'the use of electronic communication by public sector organisations when buying supplies and services or tendering public works'. The Communication 'A strategy for e-procurement' (COM(2012) 179) sets out a series of measures intended to achieve the transition to e-procurement in the EU.
See: Communication text

R&D statistics
The 143-page 'Science, technology and innovation in Europe' is divided into three main parts: Investing in R&D, Monitoring the knowledge workers, and Productivity and competitiveness. Focusing on the EU Member States, it includes comparative data for: Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States.
See: Publication page

Audiovisual Media Service Directive
COM(2012) 203 is the Commission's First Report on the application of Directive 2010/13/EU (the Audiovisual Media Service Directive). The Commission looks at advertising practices and the need for further guidance on Connected TV (i.e. internet-enabled TV), and commits itself to launching a public consultation on Connected TV in the second half 2012 and to revising its guidance on televised advertising during 2013.
See: Report text

Parliament's powers

The European Parliament's website, Europarl, now has information on the EP's supervisory and control powers. The page includes a brief overview of Parliament's role in relation to: the European Council, Council, Commission, Court of Justice, European Central Bank, Court of Auditors, and European Ombudsman. Relevant Treaty Articles are highlighted (extracts would have been more user-friendly than having to download the full Treaty), as are the pertinent EP Rules of Procedure, and a few examples are given to illustrate relations with the institutions (e.g. a video of President Barroso addressing the EP, and an interview with the Ombudsman). There is also a section on petitions and committees of inquiry.
See: Supervisory powers page

Business registers

The Council has adopted a Directive 'amending Directives 89/666/EEC, 2005/56/EC and 2009/101/EC as regards the interconnection of central, commercial and companies registers'. Proposed in February 2011 as COM(2011) 79, the new legislation will require Member States to ensure that information from business registers is provided in a standardised way throughout the EU.
See: Press Release 9648/12

Eurozone Portal

The websites of the Council and the European Council both now have a link to the 'Eurozone Portal'. The new site offers access to a range of materials on the eurozone, including statements and conclusions from European Council and Eurozone summits, press releases, and background documents.
See: Eurozone Portal

Eurostat yearbook 2012

The latest version of the Eurostat yearbook is now available on the Statistics Explained website. 'Europe in figures - Eurostat yearbook 2012' (the 16th incarnation of this statistical staple) offers a comprehensive selection of the statistical data available at Eurostat, divided into 13 chapters: economy and finance; population; health; education and training; labour market; living conditions and social protection; industry, trade and services; agriculture, forestry and fisheries; international trade; transport; environment; energy; and science and technology. This version is available before the corresponding pdf – and will be updated as new data become available.
See: Statistics Explained - Eurostat yearbook 2012

N-Lex survey

N-Lex offers a standardised gateway to the national law of 23 EU Member States. A summary of the results of an N-Lex satisfaction survey are now available in the EUR-Lex newsletter. Amongst other things, they show that almost 50% of respondents prefer to receive search results in their own language. There are also some suggestions for improving the service.
See: EUR-Lex newsletter

Europeana

The Council has adopted Conclusions 'on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation'. Focusing on the Europeana initiative, Ministers invite the Commission to 'continue to support Europeana as a common multilingual access point to Europe's digital cultural heritage' and call on the Commission, Member States and Europeana itself to raise awareness of Europeana amongst the general public and to promote the use of material accessible through Europeana 'for innovative purposes'.
See: Conclusions text

IPR

Regulation (EU) 386/2012 establishes a 'European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights' within the Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (Trade Marks and Designs). The Observatory was previously named the 'European Observatory on Counterfeiting and Piracy' and was launched in April 2009.
See: Regulation text

Focus on ...

Labour Web

Established in 1996, Labour Web is dedicated to European social law, industrial relations and the welfare state. Based in Italy at the Massimo D'Antona Centre for the Study of European Labour Law, Catania, it has grown from a database of EU legislation and case-law into a site offering a range of materials including Commission documents, statistics, reports, and press releases.

This well-organised site is divided into four main sections:

- EU social law
- EU employment policies
- Data, reports and studies
- Press releases

The first of these sections is the most extensive, and contains subsections on:

- EU political addresses (i.e. Presidency and Council Conclusions)
- EU legislation in force
- EU case-law
- EU preparatory acts
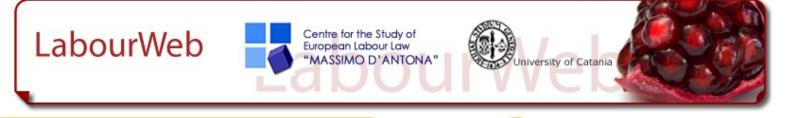- EU non-binding acts
- Social Dialogue

Although it's not immediately obvious, all the headings act as links, so clicking any of them takes you to a 'results' page, where relevant documents are listed. This means that it is possible, for example, to browse all current legislation by clicking the 'EU legislation in force' heading, rather than having to use one of the more specific sub-headings ('Directives', 'Regulations', 'Decisions').
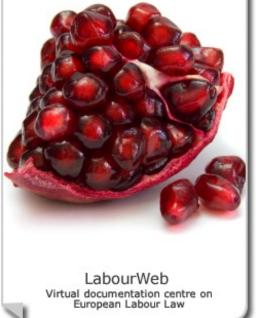
Documents on the site have been copied onto the Centre's server, so Labour Web is effectively archiving material. There are some exceptions to this 'in-house' rule: for proposed legislation, the texts of COM and SEC docs are on the Centre's site, but links are also provided to the relevant page on PreLex (labelled 'Interinstitutional dossier'); for Directives, a link is provided to the relevant 'National Execution Measures' page on EUR-Lex.

Another nice touch is that related documents are highlighted, so that the entry for a Regulation will have a link to the proposal on which it is based.

Documents appear to be available in English and often also in Italian.

Browsing the collection, it's easy to forget that it has a specific interest, and that the documents available are only a small part of a much larger corpus. However, within its limitations, this is an excellent site which does its job very well indeed.

LabourWeb
Virtual documentation centre on
European Labour Law

LabourWeb

Centre for the Study of
European Labour Law
"MASSIMO D'ANTONA"

University of Catania

Snippets:
News and views from non-EU sources

EurActiv
From: Report calls for action at Rio to reverse biodiversity free fall
The European Union is pushing an agenda for Rio that includes binding targets for the expansion of sustainable energy to developing nations, a shift to a more resource-efficient economy and biodiversity protection. It also wants to strengthen the UN Environment Programme to give it more muscle to monitor and enforce treaties.
However, EU officials have recently acknowledged that they face high hurdles in achieving the EU's goals.

Euobserver
From: Malmstrom: Europe "too cowardly" to confront homophobia
EU home affairs commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom has said Europe is "too cowardly" to stand up to mounting homophobia.
"I must say that what is going on now, in recent years, makes me quite scared. We hear ... homophobic speeches and reports of violence against LGBTI people. What we are witnessing is not a society [moving] towards openness and tolerance. It is rather the opposite."

European Policy Centre
From: Comitology reform: setting the record straight
In this Commentary … Corina Stratulat and Elisa Molino argue that the Lisbon Treaty has made comitology more transparent, streamlined and democratically legitimate. However, the system will always be complex and involve trade-offs – such as legitimacy vs. efficiency, simplicity vs. legitimacy, or politicisation vs. efficiency. For this reason, the authors maintain that calls for future reform will have to take stock of the inherent limits and intended purposes of the comitology system.

Notre Europe
From: Trade Policy in the EU's Neighbourhood. Ways forward for the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements
This study by Iana Dreyer assesses the trade policy of the European Union (EU) in its neighbourhood and formulates proposals for the "Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements" (DCFTAs) that the EU is currently offering to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy and in response to the democratisation processes in the region.

Statewatch
From: Observatory: the Regulation on access to EU documents: 2008-ongoing
In 1997 the Amsterdam Treaty promised to "enshrine" the public's right of access to EU documents but in 2001 we only got half the cake. If the Council and the Commission get their way we will be left with just a few crumbs. Access to documents is the life-blood of a healthy, vibrant, democracy which encourages informed consent and dissent. Instead the Council wants an unaccountable democracy bereft of content and meaning.