

Welcome to the Europe Direct Newsletter

We are an information service for all things European. From small queries about what currency is used in other European Union (EU) countries, to in-depth information on the policies of the EU, we are here to help. There is a wealth of information available to you, much of it in the form of booklets that you can take away. We are based at Wrexham Library and you can contact us in a variety of ways: telephone, email via the web, or just call in. You will find our contact details on the last page of this newsletter and best of all our service is free!

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Quick Quiz

1. How many countries are members of the EU?

15, 25, 27

2. How many stars are on the EU flag?

12, 15, 20

3. What date is Europe Day?

March 25th May 9th June 4th

4. Which of these countries is not a member of the EU?

Switzerland, Romania, Hungary

5. What year did the UK join what is now the EU?

1957, 1973, 1978

answers on page 2

The European Year of Creativity and Innovation

2009 has been declared as the European Year of



Creativity and Innovation. This aims to raise awareness of the importance of creativity and innovation for personal, social and economic development, to share good practices, stimulate education and research, and promote policy debate and development. A further aim is to achieve long term results by focusing on educational measures. This not only includes scientific and technical measures but also the practical application of knowledge, innovative problem-solving, social or entrepreneurial innovation and creative and artistic thinking.

Activities will take place all over Europe which will be aimed in particular at young people, educators, companies and policy makers as well as the general public. The key message is that Creativity and innovation contribute to economic prosperity as well as to social and individual wellbeing.

The Year was launched with the slogan Imagine-Create-Innovate in Brussels on 5th December 2008 and in Prague on January 7th 2009, as the Czech Republic held the presidency of the EU at this time.

Imperial Measures

The endorsement by the European Parliament to extend indefinitely the use of the pint in UK and Ireland has been welcomed by the European Commission. The agreement also applies to the use of miles in the UK for speed indications, road distances and road signs.

Vice President Günter Verheugen, responsible for enterprise and industry policy, welcomed the announcement: "This is good news for people in the UK and Ireland who prefer to use pints or miles, as current practices will remain in place. Today's agreement will also ensure that imperial measurements can be indicated alongside metric a measure that will lower costs for industry by allowing the same labelling for all their exports, whether in the EU or elsewhere in the world."

Airlines must pay for flight delays

The European Court of Justice has ruled that air passengers are entitled to compensation if their flight is cancelled due to technical problems with the aircraft. A technical problem with an aircraft which leads to the cancellation of a flight is not covered by the concept of "extraordinary circumstances" exonerating air carriers. The only exception would be if the technical fault resulted from exceptional events beyond the airline's control, such as terrorism or sabotage.

The case was brought by an Austrian citizen against Alitalia.

In the UK, passenger complaints are handled by the Air Transport Users Council. Tel: 020 7379 7311 or www.auc.org.uk

Use of Welsh by the EU

On 20 November 2008 the Welsh Heritage Minister, Alun Ffred Jones, became the first person to speak Welsh at an institutional meeting of the European Union. He was speaking to the EU Council of Ministers on behalf of the UK delegation.

This landmark use of Welsh followed the approval on 15 July 2008 by the EU Council of Ministers of a new status for the use of Welsh as "co-official" language within the EU institutions. The agreement, at the request of the UK Government, initially related only to the use of Welsh in the Council but opened the door for negotiations with other EU institutions.

This step forward for Welsh was made possible in July 2005, when the EU Council created a new category of languages, next to the existing category of "official languages" (23 languages), called "co-official" languages. This was done at the request of the Spanish Government, who wanted to include Catalan, Bask and Galician in EU affairs. Co-official languages can receive certain services in the EU, such as interpretation during meetings, or the possibility for citizens to correspond with EU institutions in the language.

Since 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government worked hard on an initiative to include Welsh in EU affairs as a co-official language. Through the close collaboration between the UK Government and the Welsh Assembly Government this was achieved in the EU Council during July 2008.

The Head of the European Commission Office in Wales, Mr Andy Klom, was among the first to congratulate the UK Government and the Welsh Assembly Government on this achievement. He said, "I am delighted by the Council's decision on the use of the Welsh language within the EU. I know this has taken a lot of hard work from the Welsh side and I am looking forward to a similar agreement being approved on the use of Welsh within the European Commission."

Shortly after Welsh was first used at the Council, a further agreement on the use of Welsh was signed with the Committee of the Regions in November 2008, and the language was used in the Committee of the Regions for the first time by Nerys Evans, a Welsh Assembly Member for Mid and West Wales on 26 November. Negotiations also began with the European Commission and the European Parliament, and it is hoped that similar agreements will be reached with them, comparable to those already in place for the Spanish languages. This will mean:

- Ministers will be able to speak Welsh at the European Council
- Members of the Committee of the Regions will be able to speak Welsh at plenary sessions
- Citizens will be able to correspond with EU institutions in Welsh (if agreements are signed with all institutions)
- European legislation translated into Welsh may be sent to the Council for addition to its archives (right of legal deposit)

All costs associated with Welsh interpretation and translation will be borne by the Welsh Assembly Government.

For more information on this matter, please contact the European Commission Office in Wales on 029 2089 5020.

Article provided by Rachael Langlands-Brown, European Commission Office in Wales.

Welsh Publications

A number of European Union publications are now available in Welsh. There are currently 8 titles available and more are planned later in the year. Children's titles include the storybooks, Let Me Tell You a Secret About the Environment and The Blue Island, along with booklets for older children on the history of Europe as a continent and as a political union; Let's Explore Europe and Europe in 12 Lessons. Titles for adults include The EU What's in it for me?, Climate Change, and Panorama of the European Union which contains practical tips on travelling in another country along with a fold out map of Europe. All of these are available in English and in other languages such as Polish, French, German, Portuguese and can be ordered from the centre. Our contact details can be found at the back of this newsletter.

All booklets have been re-produced in Welsh by the European Commission Office in Wales and marks a step forward in providing Welsh Language publications both to schools and to the general public.



Quiz answers

1. 27
2. 12
3. May 9th
4. Switzerland
5. 1973

So how well did you do?

If you didn't do as well as you thought, you can brush up on your knowledge by picking up a publication from the centre. Useful booklets include How the European Union Works and Let's Explore Europe.

Institution in focus

The Council of the European Union

What is The Council of the European Union?

The Council is the European Union's main decision making body and works as much in the collective interest as in the interest of each member state. It brings together the ministers of the Member states and each country is represented at Council Meetings by a Government member responsible for the subject matter being dealt with, for example; foreign, financial, social affairs.

What are its main functions?

The Council has a decision-making and coordinating role. The Council of the European Union exercises legislative power, in many cases legislating jointly with the European Parliament. The Council concludes, on behalf of the community and the Union, international agreements between the EU and one or more states or international organisations. The Council coordinates the general economic policies of the Member states.

How does the Presidency of the European Council work?

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union is held by each Member State in turn. Each member state chairs the Council in turn for a period of six months (from January to June and from July to December, in accordance with a pre-established rota. The Council Presidency plays an essential role in organising the institutions work and in particular taking the legislation and political decision making process forward. It is responsible for organising and chairing all meetings including those of the many working parties and for brokering compromises.

Presidency Rota:

2009 January June: Czech Republic

2009 July- December: France

For more information, visit www.consilium.europa.eu

European Parliament Elections

European Parliamentary elections are due to take place across Europe between 4 and 7 June 2009. The UK Government has now confirmed that the date of the election in the UK will be **Thursday 4 June 2009**. On this day the whole of the UK will vote for MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) to represent us in Europe.

There are currently 785 MEPs, 78 of whom come from the UK, with 4 representing Wales. However should the Treaty of Lisbon come into force before the elections the number of MEPs in total will be capped at 750 plus the President of the Parliament. Seats will be distributed among countries according to "degressive proportionality", i.e. MEPs from more populated countries will each represent more people than those from smaller countries. No country may now have less than 6 or more than 96 MEPs. If the Treaty comes into force then further details of the implications on the number of seats in the UK and therefore in Wales will be available from the Europe Direct Centre.

Factbox: European Parliament

Wales currently has 4 MEPs who represent the population of Wales. Wales is their constituency.

The European Parliament is elected every five years by the people of Europe to represent their interests.

The main job of Parliament is to pass European laws. It shares this responsibility with the Council of the European Union, and the proposals for new laws come from the European Commission

Parliament has the power to dismiss the European Commission.

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) do not sit in national blocks, but in seven Europe-wide political groups.

The main meetings of the Parliament are held in Strasbourg, others in Brussels. Like all other EU institutions, it works in all 23 official EU languages.

The Parliament elects the European Ombudsman, who investigates citizens' complaints about maladministration by the EU institutions.

Useful resources you may have missed!

Debate Europe



Debate Europe is your chance to air your views on Europe and to help give direction to the future of Europe. The online forums give you the opportunity to share your thoughts with staff from the various EU institutions and also to talk to other people. The topics of debate reflect the biggest challenges currently facing Europe. For example Do you think it's going in the right direction? Are the institutions making a difference where it really counts? Are they being overly meddlesome in trivial areas and not meddlesome enough in others, such as securing jobs and protecting consumers? Where do you stand on the climate change debate? Where do you see Europe's borders ending?

To join in go to <http://europa.eu/debateeurope/>

Citizens Signpost Service

<http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights/>

The Citizens Signpost Service offers people tailored made information and advice on their rights within the internal market. So if you are on the move in Europe and have queries over rights of residence, obtaining your pension, benefitting from medical care or social security cover, car registration and driving licence the service can point you in the right direction.

When you ask a question an expert will clarify the relevant rules and direct you to the body which can best help solve the problem.

The service is completely free and can be accessed via telephone and email. Tel: 00800 67 89 10 11 or send an email via the website.

Europa

Europa is the Internet gateway to the European Union. This site contains all the information made available on the internet by the different institutions and bodies of the EU. There is something for everyone with handy guides and factsheets explaining all aspects of the EU including policies and the role of the institutions. Children can also access parts of the site which are designed especially for them and are often broken down into themes to help them learn about other countries, the history of Europe and about helping the environment. Many parts of the site have booklets which can be downloaded or you can head over to the bookshop and order the booklets, many of which are free of charge.

Other features of the site include free access to databases which were once subscription only. These include, EUR-LEX which is a database of European Law, and Tenders Electronic Daily which provides information on opportunities to tender for contracts in different European countries, including the UK.

Access it at www.europa.eu

Europarl TV

www.europartv.europa.eu



Launched in September 2008 EuroparlTV is the European Parliament's own TV station broadcasting via the internet. There is both live and archived material on the four channels available. The channels are:

Your Parliament: aimed at those with a particular interest in politics at the EU level, such as informed citizens, industry groups, social partners, lobbyists, academics as well as those working in the EU institutions.

Your Voice: for the general public

Young Europe: aimed particularly at school-aged children,

Parliament Live: providing continuous coverage of live events in the Parliament, such as debates in the plenary sessions. Links to the audiovisual archives of previous sessions are also available.

The aim of EuroparlTV is to bring Parliament closer to European citizens in a modern and creative format.

Europeana

www.europeana.eu

Europeana is the European digital library, museum and archive. Called "A common access point for Europe's digital cultural heritage", the site will provide access to 2 million digital objects, including film material, photos, paintings, sounds, maps, manuscripts, books, newspapers and archival papers. The digital content will be selected from that which is already digitised and available in Europe's museums, libraries, archives and audio-visual collections.



The site launched in November 2008 but had to close due to the overwhelming demand from users trying to access the site with 10 million hits an hour. The site will be relaunched in 2009. Until then previews of the site, how it works and examples of the content can be viewed on the development part of the website. To access this go to <http://dev.europeana.eu>

EU Tube

<http://youtube.com/eutube>

A dedicated channel on YouTube, EU Tube makes a range of videos illustrating the main issues in Europe available to the public. With nearly 200 videos on the site covering topics such as the founding of the European Union, climate change issues, consumer and youth issues, to celebrations of European films there is something for everyone. The clips are informative, practical and provide insight into the workings of the EU.

Europe Direct Wrexham Activities

Find out what we have been doing.

Europe in Wrexham Schools

Europe Direct, as the official distributor of EU publications, resources and workshops works closely with schools in the region, introducing European issues to pupils as part of the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship initiative which has been introduced into the curriculum. All services are free of charge and workshops can be tailored to different age groups.

Recently Europe Direct Wrexham spent the Day at Acton Park Infant school, where all pupils had a go at an art and craft based activity as part of their ECO week. The workshop titled 'We are Europeans' entailed all children



choosing a EU member state to represent through a model fairy, decorating them in national costume, flags, foods of that state or famous people. Children



were asked to think about what language their fairy may speak, what the weather was like in their fairy's country and what their favourite food may be. All pupils received a Europe goody bag on completion and overall the workshop

proved to be a great success and lots of fun was had by all!

Please contact the centre if your school, youth club or after school club is interested in hosting a Europe workshop.

The centre can also provide free resources for teachers to help in the teaching of citizenship and other topics such as the environment. We can also inform schools of other European programmes which are aimed at schools such as e-twinning, language assistants, exchanges and trips to Brussels.



Wrexham's Twinning Celebration

The 20th September 2008 saw Wrexham hold its first ever public twinning celebration, organised by Europe Direct as part of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Queens Square, Wrexham was the venue for the twinning market which was set up to allow the local community to find out more about Wrexham's rich cultural heritage in relation to its twinning agreement, between Märkischer Kreis, Germany and Racibòrz, Poland and the opportunities it creates.



Organisations which have previously participated in twinning activity were on hand to share their experiences as well as a host of live performances, by Welsh band Grasshopper, Contorion Rhos Choir and Wrexham Fencing Club, to name a few. Local community radio station, Calon FM hosted the event which was closed by the world class Froncysyllte Male Voice Choir, who were one of the first acts to ever visit Germany as part of the twinning.



Overview of 2008

In 2008 the centre organised or participated in over 46 events. This ranged from holding a pub quiz in May to test people's knowledge of Europe and the European Union, to celebrating Wrexham's Twinning links, to a climate change seminar for local businesses. Information stands have been held at various venues and events where people can talk to staff, ask questions about the EU and pick up useful information on a range of topics. Schools have benefited from the supply of publications to help teach about the environment, languages, citizenship and democracy and as mentioned the centre has provided workshops on these topics to various schools.

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Diary Dates

Feb 21st - International Mother Language Day
April 29th - International Dance Day
May 9th - Europe Day
June 1st-7th - Recycle Now Week
June 5th - World Environment Day
June 15th-28th - Refugee Week
September 26th - European Day of Languages
October 13th -19th Local Democracy Week
Nov 17th-23rd - Enterprise Week

Enterprise Europe Network Wales



Who are we?

Launched in 2008 by the European Commission, the Enterprise Europe Network combines and builds on the former Innovation Relay Centre and the Wales Euro Info Centre (established in 1995 and 1987 respectively.)

The new integrated network offers a “one-stop shop” to meet the EU trade information needs of SMEs and companies in Europe, and that includes those here in North Wales. This network is unique in both terms of its wide geographic reach and the range of integrated services it provides to SMEs and other business actors. The network has over 200 contact points in the EU Single Market of 27 countries plus the candidate countries of Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. All offices are connected through a secure computer system that makes the flow of information across borders easy.

How can we help you?

We can supply information on, and help in accessing EU policies, programmes and funding opportunities through a range of tools such as:

Business Partner searches within technology
Business Co-operation database for cross-border trade link-ups
Tender information service for alerting you to public sector tenders in the UK and across the European Single Market
Information about EU legislation e.g. CE Marking, packaging regulations
Collaborative R & D services
Grantfinder database

Contact us

Offices are located in both North Wales in Mold and South Wales in Cardiff. Our contact details are:

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