



Newsletter
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What is Europe Direct?

Europe Direct Wrexham is an information service about Europe and the European Union. We provide a vast amount of FREE publications for all ages on all kind of subjects from the environment, European Parliament, opportunities for young people in Europe, travelling in Europe and languages. These can include maps, flag bunting and posters.

We provide packs for teachers to aid them in delivering topics on Europe and the European Union as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC).

Aside from the publications we also deliver FREE workshops on subjects such as history of the EU, what it does, how laws are made, the importance of learning modern foreign languages, business and trade and the environment. Workshops consist of various activities such as presentations, quizzes, map games, and design your MEP and European bag.

As well as workshops we can assist in organising European weeks, European assemblies, fun days and MEP visits.

The aim of this newsletter is to keep you informed of the services that Europe Direct can offer YOU. We also aim to keep you informed of any new policies, what the big topics are in the European Union right now, and what work we have been doing through workshops and attending meetings and events.

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In the next few issues we will be picking one of the European Commission's Ten Priorities for Europe. Those priorities are:

- A new boost for jobs, growth and investment,
- ✓ A connected digital single market,
- ✓ A resilient energy union with a forwards-looking climate change policy,
- A deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base,
- A deeper and fairer Economic and Monetary Union,
- ✓ A reasonable and balanced free trade agreement with the United States,
- An area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust,
- ✓ Towards a new policy on migration,
- A stronger global actor,
- A union of democratic change.



The priorities with ticks next to have been covered in previous issues. In this issue we will focus on 'A Union of Democratic Change'.

The European Commission's Ten Priorities for Europe

A Union of Democratic Change

One of the ten priorities of the Europe Union is of democratic change. There has been a growing perception in recent years, reflected in the results of European elections, that the EU is distant from its people and is overly bureaucratic. Citizens expect the EU to make a difference on the important economic and social challenges. The Juncker Commission's work programmes reflect this by considerably reducing the number of new initiatives, scrapping certain former proposals for new laws and re-examining existing laws.

The main objectives are:

- Creating a mandatory register for organisations and individuals lobbying the Commission, Parliament and Council.
- Working with the European Parliament and the Council to remove unnecessary red tape at both European and national level.
- Finding ways to deepen cooperation between national parliaments and the Commission.
- Reviewing the laws that oblige the Commission to authorise genetically modified organisms (GMOs), even when a majority of national governments is against this.
- Increasing the number of women in management and other administrative positions in the Commission.
- Proposing new laws only when they are needed and providing a clear European added value once the public has been consulted. For 2017 the Commission has proposed 21 key initiatives.
- Being fully transparent about what the Commission is doing (for example, Commissioners and senior officials publish details of their meetings: unprecedented transparency has been introduced for international trade negotiations).
- Examining existing laws and adjusting them where needed.

You can find more details at

https://ec.europa.eu/priorities/democratic-change_en

Get involved

Join in with EU consultations at:

http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm

Debate Europe at www.debatingeurope.eu

Make a legislative proposal with the European Citizens Initiative:

<http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome>

European Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange

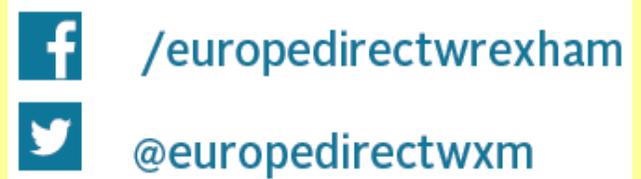
Once again we are running the Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange with schools from across the area and Europe. The exchange partners local schools with schools from different European countries who make and exchange a Christmas tree decoration. The project is now in its 11th time of running. This year there are 22 countries involved from 60 regions and over 300 schools taking part.

Schools are asked to make up to 30 decorations and information on Christmas in their area or country and send these out to schools that they are partnered with through the exchange.

The exchange helps children to learn about different cultures and how a familiar celebration can be slightly different with different tales and characters.

Advent Calendar

Keep an eye on our Facebook page and Twitter in December as we will be running an advent calendar full of decorations made by children in different European Countries. All the decorations are from the exchange. Some of last years are below.



Christmas Tree

From early December we will be putting up our Christmas tree at our base in Wrexham Library, full of the decorations we have received from schools across Europe. We will also display the material which comes with those decorations such as Christmas cards and booklets that the children have made explaining about how they celebrate Christmas in their country.



Traditions from Different Countries

In **Greece** people often decorate boats rather than trees.

In the **Netherlands** presents are brought by Sinterklaas who arrives on a steamboat on the canal in Amsterdam, the last Saturday in November. On 5th December, children put their shoes next to the fireplace and fill them with hay and carrots for Sinterklaas' horse. The next day, the shoes are filled with presents.

Cyprus has a small creature called the Kalikantzari. They are mischievous and prey upon people only during the 12 days of Christmas from 25th December to 6th January.



On 6th December, 15 EU countries celebrate Saint Nicholas who arrives on a donkey. Countries celebrating Saint Nicholas are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

In **Italy** on the eve of January 6th the Good Witch, La Befana, comes on her broomstick. She rewards good children with sweets and bad children with charcoal or bags of ashes.

In **Poland**, they leave an empty place at the table as a sign of their unity with their deceased families. It is also a sign of their willingness to welcome a lonely person at their meal.

In **Romania**, the Christmas tree represents the source of life. The fir tree is supposed to be the biggest the family can find.

In **Spain** they eat the Roscón de Reyes, a traditional cake-style pastry, the night before or morning of 'Reyes' (King's Day), to celebrate the Epiphany.



The tradition of bringing a tree into the home was started in **Germany** as was the advent calendar. In the mid-19th century German Protestants made chalk marks on doors or lit candles to count the days leading up to Christmas.

In **Finland** on Christmas Eve, the Declaration of Peace is read which encourages people to behave peacefully and respectfully. The reading of the declaration is broadcast on Television and Radio.

FREE Christmas Workshops

To tie in with the European Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange, we are offering FREE Christmas workshops to those schools who missed out on joining in with the Exchange this year. A workshop usually lasts about an hour and includes a presentation about how another European country celebrates Christmas, a traditional Christmas story from that country and we make a Christmas decoration from that country too! The countries we are offering this year are:

- ❖ Sweden
- ❖ Germany
- ❖ Greece
- ❖ Poland

We did them last year and they were a huge hit! So, contact us as soon as possible to get us booked in to come to your school!

Telephone: [01978 292361](tel:01978292361)

Email: europedirect@wrexham.gov.uk

NEW PUBLICATIONS

The EU and the refugee crisis



This useful publication gives background to the refugee crisis and outlines what the EU is doing. This includes trying to resolve the root causes of the crisis as well as greatly increasing aid to people in need of humanitarian assistance both inside and outside the EU. Steps are being taken to relocate asylum seekers already in the EU, resettle people in need from neighboring countries and return people who don't qualify for asylum. The EU is improving security at borders with a new border and coast guard, tackling people smuggling and offering safe ways for people to legally enter the EU.

Useful Publications



Map of Europe

A handy A4 size map of the European Union with flags of the member states.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Various workshops at local schools are planned, including Christmas workshops.
- Careers events at local schools planned.
- On Tuesday 14th February we will be attending a jobs fair at Glyndwr University.
- On Tuesday 28th February we will be attending another careers event at Glyndwr University.

Brexit

In this part of the newsletter we will include any news on Brexit and what it may impact and we will try our best to answer any questions you may have. We have recently attended some training sessions on what Brexit may affect:

- If any applications to Erasmus + are made in 2017, the funding will last until the end of your trip. So, if you apply for a three year programme, you will receive all funding.
- The Supreme Court has announced that the Welsh and Scottish governments will have a say on how Article 50 will be triggered.

If you have any question, please contact us and we will do our best. The contact details are below:

Workshop Examples:

European Fairies (Ages 3 - 11, 1 hour session)

How well do you know Europe? (Ages 11+, 1 hour session)

'Europe and the European Union - what's that?' (Ages 11-18, 1 hour session)

Design a European Cotton Bag (Ages 7-14, 1 Hour session)

European Postcards (Ages 8-11, 1 hour session)

Design Your Own Politician (Ages 11-16, 30 minute session)

Design your own European Citizen (Ages 11-16, 30 minute session)

Design an EU flag (Ages 8-11, 30 minute session)

Erasmus + Strategic Partnerships for Schools (for teachers)

E-Twinning (for teachers)

European Parliament London FREE Visits

Parliamentarium - European Parliament's Visitor centre - Brussels

If you are interested in having Europe Direct Wrexham come and do presentations, attend events, or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us on the details below:

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