



Europe Direct

Annual Report 2010



Photo on the cover by Europe Direct Information Centre Coburg (DE)

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► Europe Direct: key figures in 2010

Europe Direct=

* **The Europe Direct Contact Centre:**

Almost 100 000 enquiries

+

* **Europe Direct Network:**

487 Europe Direct Information Centres

More than 700 000 personal contacts

More than 10 000 events

Almost 14 000 information products published (audio-visual, print, on-line)

401 European Documentation Centres

More than 2 000 events attended by 100 000 persons (students and general public)

397 Team Europe speakers

More than 3 500 speeches

More than 900 articles

More than 750 contributions to media



Foreword

Citizens' power in Europe

Citizens matter in the social, economic and political life of the European Union. The EU project is essentially about providing Europeans with the prosperity, opportunities and dignity they deserve.

To be successful, all political projects must have the support of the citizens. The EU can only exist and prosper if its citizens are backing it. Starting in the 1950s, the people who emerged from some of the darkest days in Europe's history decided to unite around the prospect of lasting peace and prosperity. This audacious goal has turned out to be an overwhelming success in the past 60 years. But as new generations grow up knowing only peace, what can the EU offer today? The challenge now is to earn the support of more than 500 million citizens by delivering concrete results and solutions to everyday problems.

One answer is to tap into the rights and benefits that are part of being a European citizen and go beyond national citizenship. People have the right to work, live and travel in 27 countries. The European project is about making the daily lives of citizens better and easier. Most recently, the Lisbon Treaty marked a real watershed: it underscores the vital role of citizens in advancing the EU. It empowers them and gives them new opportunities to raise their voice to the European institutions. And it challenges the EU institutions to create a real citizens' Europe.

By creating a "Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship portfolio" at the European Commission, President José Manuel Barroso has entrusted me with making EU proposals that are meaningful to citizens. I have already presented a whole range of initiatives to improve the lives of citizens across Europe. That is why, in October 2010, I prepared the first-ever EU Citizenship Report, mapping out a comprehensive list of the obstacles citizens still face when making use of their EU rights in their daily lives and the actions that the European Commission is taking to eliminate these barriers. I am working, notably, to ensure the procedural rights of all those who are arrested, strengthening the rights of victims of crime, making it easier for international couples to choose the law in case of separation, and breaking down borders that make it difficult for both consumers and small- and medium-sized companies to take advantage of the European Single Market – our biggest asset and the key driver of economic growth.

There are countless information and problem-solving networks at the EU level. But citizens favour a "one-stop shop." We are, therefore, gradually establishing a coherent information system linking the multiple networks in an efficient and user-friendly system.

A Citizens' Europe – a Europe for and by the people – can only be built successfully if we ensure that people know their rights and can exercise their rights.

To this end, the Europe Direct network, together with the Europe Direct Call Centre and "Your Europe-Citizens" Portal, act as information service that is accessible to all citizens, including the elderly and other vulnerable groups.



Viviane Reding

*Vice-President of the European Commission
Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship*

Introduction to Europe Direct

Direct to the citizen

Europe Direct, which provides valuable links between the European Union and its half a billion citizens, achieved a number of notable successes in 2010. Through Europe Direct Contact Centre and three decentralised networks which operate locally – Europe Direct Information Centres, European Documentation Centres and Team Europe speakers – the European project has been brought significantly closer to EU citizens.

The ability of the Europe Direct Network to tailor their communication at the local level continues to be crucial, given the national and regional diversity across the EU's 27 Member States.

Through Europe Direct, in 2010 the European Commission was able to pursue a citizen-centred approach by engaging directly with local communities. Likewise, in order to maximise the impact of their communication, Europe Direct members were able to focus their activities on the Commission's political priorities, while also relaying feedback from citizens to the Union's institutions. With strategic steering and support from the headquarters of the Directorate-General for Communication, the Commission's Representations in each Member State continued to manage and coordinate the networks at the national level.

Besides the grants awarded to Europe Direct Information Centres, which total a maximum of €11.4 million each year, the Commission also continued to provide tailor-made training on communication and EU policies, networking opportunities and support. Training topics in 2010 included 'Communicating EU action for combating poverty and social exclusion', while the annual general meeting in Antwerp on the theme of Citizens' Rights was attended by Vice-President Viviane Reding.

Last year also witnessed the launch of the network's high-profile intranet, which features weekly news, chats and forums created for the exchange of good practice and sharing ideas – a very useful tool that will help Europe Direct to continue its valuable work in the future.

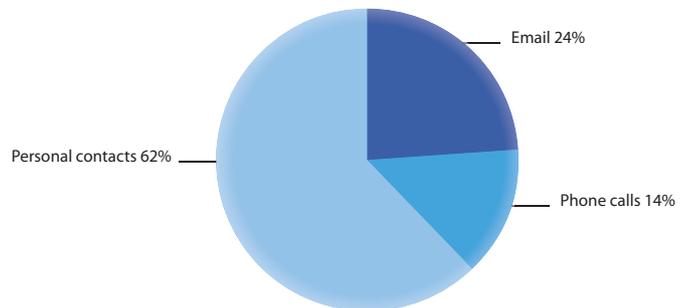
Europe Direct Information Centres: reaching out to citizens

2010 saw yet another increase in the number of information products published by the Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs), in line with their goal of becoming more proactive in their communication and outreach efforts.

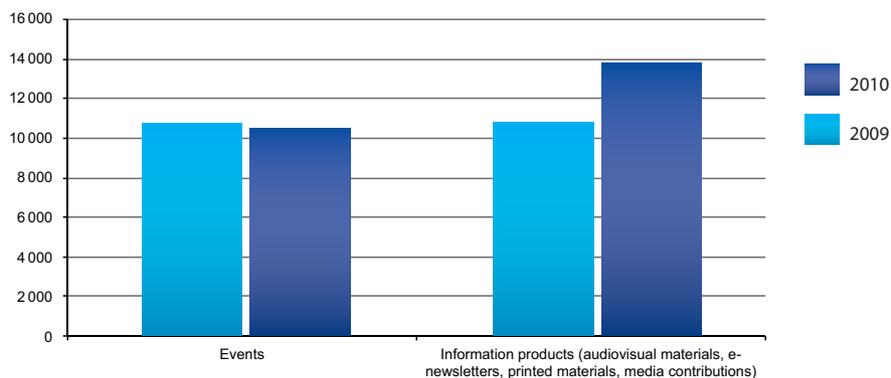
Together, they organised some 10 346 events and published 13 721 information products (audiovisual, print and online). In addition, the 487 EDICs made over 700 000 personal contacts, took over 160 000 phone calls and received more than 276 000 emails.

Events focused on a wide variety of issues, of which the three most popular were 'Education, Training and Culture', 'Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship' and 'Making the Lisbon Treaty work for citizens'.

Europe Direct Information Centres' contacts with the public



Europe Direct Information Centres' communication activities in 2010

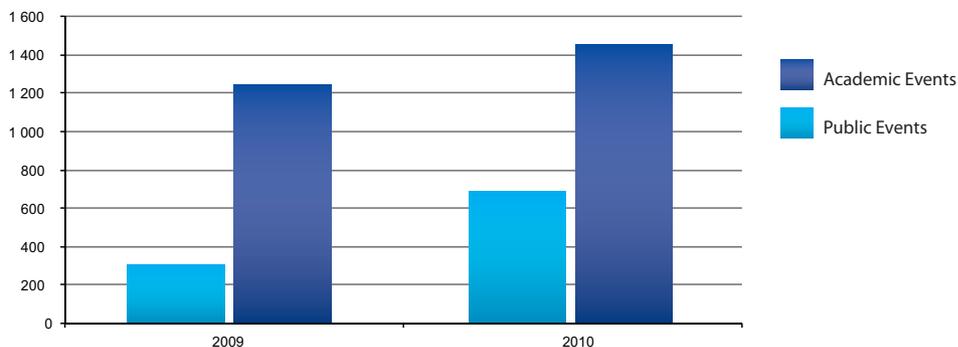


European Documentation Centres: another eventful year

European Documentation Centres (EDCs) organised over 2000 events (compared to just over 1 650 in 2009), which were attended by over 100 000 people. Over two-thirds (69%) of these were targeted at students, while the rest were aimed at the general public.

The top five organising countries for events intended for the general public were Italy, Germany, Spain, Bulgaria and Romania. Meanwhile, the top five for student-centred events were Spain, Italy, France, Sweden and Germany. The themes covered included 'EU documentation and websites', 'EDC collections', 'High-level research', 'EU institutions' and 'Guidance on studies or careers'.

Events organised by European Documentation Centres in 2010

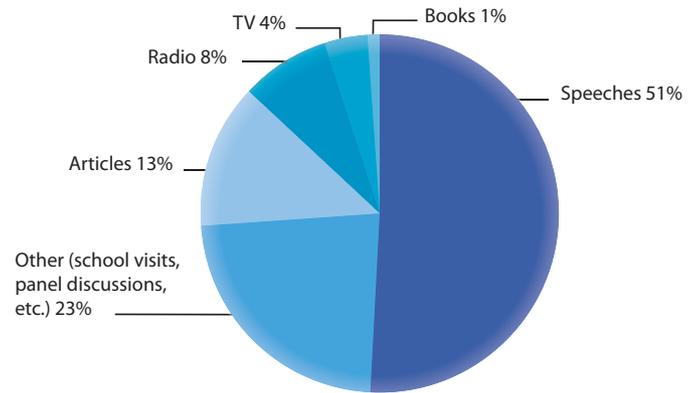


Team Europe: enlightening the public

Team Europe made a significant effort in 2010 to reach European citizens directly. In fact, 51% of their activities consisted of speeches – some 3 574 were given in 2010, up from 2 337 in 2009. In addition, Team Europe members wrote 920 articles and appeared 528 times on the radio and 239 times on TV, as against 588 articles, 421 radio broadcasts and 169 TV appearances in 2009.

The main topics covered during Team Europe presentations last year included general EU and institutional affairs, 'the Lisbon Treaty', and 'Education and Regional policy'.

Team Europe: contribution by media in 2010

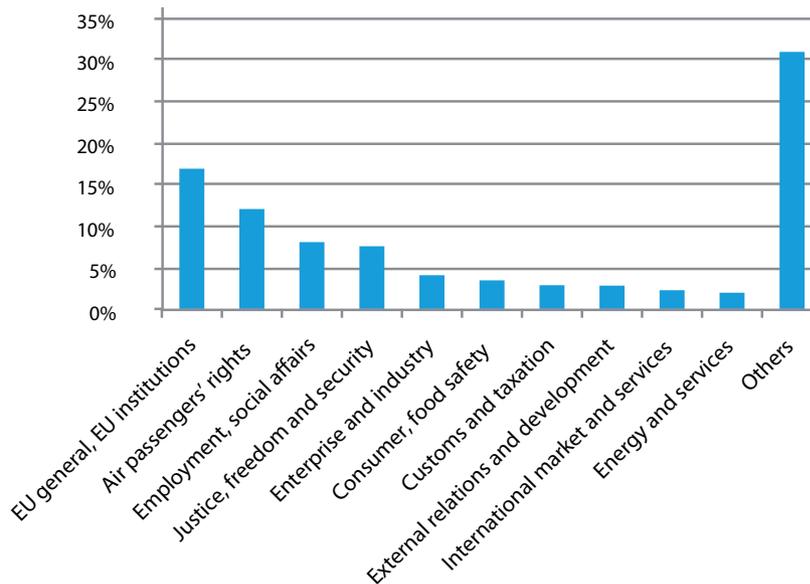


Europe Direct Contact Centre: direct answers to direct questions

The Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) based in Brussels received a total of 97 838 enquiries from citizens and businesses during 2010. Most arrived either by e-mail (53.1%) or by phone (44.2%). Enquiries received via the chat channel represented 2.7% of the total volume. The Contact Centre was able to answer most questions itself, although 12 121 were sent on to various Commission services and elsewhere for input from specialists.

The EDCC continued to respond in each and every one of the EU's 23 official languages, with the largest number of enquiries coming in English (36 110), French (15 488), and German (14 330). The top subjects were general EU issues, EU institutions, and Member States (17.8%), air passenger rights (13.8%), and employment, social affairs and equal opportunities (8.8%).

Europe Direct Contact Centre: Top 10 subjects of questions received



Europe Direct Information Centres

► *The EU's local face*

Explaining the value of Europe at the local level is of critical importance. With 487 offices across the 27 Member States, the Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) give the EU a local dimension. More information on their geographical distribution and contact information for each centre can be found at: <http://europedirect.europa.eu>

The mission of the EDICs is to provide citizens with tailored information on the Union, as well as to promote, as proactive communicators, an informed European citizenship and debate about the EU.

In terms of information services, the EDICs respond to citizens' queries and questions – either directly or by directing them to other information sources, such as the toll-free Europe Direct Contact Centre service and other more specialised networks – and distribute information materials produced by the European institutions.

The EDICs' communication and awareness-raising activities include organising events, creating information products, networking and co-operating with local stakeholders and the media.



© 5 EDICs in Belgium/Ryclevelde



The "SpEUmEUs" contest organised by five EDICs in Belgium

© 5 EDICs in Belgium/Ryclevelde

► At the heart of Europe

Europe Direct Vlaams-Brabant, situated in Leuven, is a part of the department for European Affairs in the province of Vlaams-Brabant. A number of its activities are focused on education and, as a result, the EDIC often co-operates with the University of Leuven as well as with primary and secondary schools in the region.

In 2010, the Centre, run by one full-time coordinator and a part-time assistant, organised three information sessions on 'European funding' and 'Working for the EU'. In March, a common activity shared by five Belgian EDICs involved setting up an on-line contest, known as 'SpEUrnEUs' (which means 'detective' in English), for children aged 10 to 12 years (see www.speurneus-webquest.be). Another collective action was the creation of an exhibition 'How Europe influences your daily life', which visited all five provinces.

In July, 50 citizens who just happen to live in a street named 'Europestreet' were taken on a visit to the European quarter in Brussels. The EDIC wanted to show them that the European Union is closer than people think, as well as being more important than they think, too.

In October, together with the University of Leuven, the EDIC organised a debate during which 200 people discussed the economic crisis with European politicians.

These activities demonstrate that being at the heart of Europe is more than simply a geographical description. Europe Direct Vlaams-Brabant is intent on bringing the spirit of European integration to the people through an array of innovative activities.



European Documentation Centres

► *The EU for academics*

The European integration project has become a significant research area in its own right. This is partly thanks to the work of the European Documentation Centres (EDCs), which have been promoting academic interest in the subject for decades.

With 401 offices across the EU, usually located in university libraries, the EDCs promote education and research on the subject of European integration, and encourage the academic community to get actively involved in the debate on Europe's future. They do not receive any

direct financial support from the European Commission, but participate in training and networking organised by the institution.

With staff well versed in EU issues and experienced in locating Union-related documentation, the EDCs are well equipped to provide students and academics with specialised personal assistance in locating relevant information according to their needs. They also serve interested members of the public, lawyers and journalists.



Europe Day quiz organised by EDC Cardiff

▶ Setting out priorities

The EDC at Cardiff University in the UK, for example, is keen to show that EDCs form a relevant and innovative European information network to serve both students and researchers within the university and outside in the wider community. Originally created in 1973, the EDC is run by one full-time professional and two part-time library assistants. Over the years, its focus has evolved, and in 2010 a new formal set of priorities was established.

The first of these concerns production of the electronic information service European Sources Online (<http://www.europeansources.info>). ESO is used not only by Cardiff University students and researchers but also by people all over Europe and worldwide.

The second priority is to train students and researchers at Cardiff University to become skilled searchers of European information whether in printed or, more likely, electronic format.

The third priority is to organise events with a European theme. For example, in 2010, the EDC organised the Annual Erasmus Reception, a Europe Day quiz along with a European film evening and discussion around the theme of the '2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion'. The EDC also took part in many European-themed events organised by other organisations in Cardiff.

In addition 2010 saw the first interns coming to work in the Cardiff EDC. These young students from all over Europe typically worked for a few months on various projects as part of a scheme which has proved a great success. They have also created a dedicated webpage to better inform the potential candidates. In all these ways, Cardiff EDC is succeeding in raising its profile and showing that the EDC Network can be a useful information resource going forward.

More information: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/insrv/edc/index.html>



Team Europe

► *Independent speakers on EU issues*

Since the 1980s, the EU has had an informal network of grass-roots speakers who explain the policies and themes of European integration to the general public, academia, the business community, the public sector and civil society.

Team Europe, as it is known, is a speaker service which is made up of 397 independent speakers across the EU. They do not receive speaking fees or other direct financial support from the European Commission but participate in training and networking organised by the Commission.

They are specialised in different topic areas related to the Union and can be invited to speak at public events, to moderate debates, or to take part in panel discussions. Team Europe was revamped in 2009 to make it a younger, fresher and more dynamic network where the rotation of members is one of its guiding principles.



Isabel Valente in action

© Isabel Valente

The importance of integration

Isabel Valente, a very active Team Europe member based in Portugal, has made a significant contribution to informing citizens about many issues relating to Europe.

For example, she was recently involved in the creation of an online journal called *Debater a Europa (Debating Europe)*, in association with the EDIC Aveiro, the Jacques Delors European Information Centre and the European Commission Representation in Portugal, among others. This biannual publication both analyses and debates European issues while trying to create room for dialogue. The goal is to contribute to greater awareness of the European integration project.

"I think it is very important to have partnerships in civil society and also with European networks," says Isabel. "And the support which the European Commission Representation in Portugal gives us is fundamental to ensuring our activities continue with quality."

Another integration-focused project involving Isabel has been the organisation of an exhibition called 'Portugal e a Europa: uma história contada através dos selos portugueses' (Portugal and Europe: a story narrated through Portuguese stamps). This aims to raise young people's awareness of Portugal's gradual integration into the EU, by exhibiting stamps that commemorate important moments of integration, from joining the EEC to the present day. This travelling exhibition is split into two parts; the first will visit all the schools on the island of Madeira, while the second will go to schools in continental Portugal.

Last year, Isabel Valente either wrote or contributed to nine books about the European Union, along with 17 articles and book reviews. She also made several appearances on TV and radio and gave over 70 speeches to schools, universities and city halls.



The Europe Direct Contact Centre

➤ *Just a phone call away, or an e-mail if you prefer*

The Cardiff European Council decided to launch Europe Direct in 1998. In the beginning, there was only a very small team to handle calls, and there was a different telephone number for each Member State.

Since 2003, citizens have been able to reach the Europe Direct Contact Centre via the single, free-of-charge telephone number 0800 67 89 10 11 from anywhere in the Union. From outside the Union, the EDCC can be reached on +32 2 299 96 96 at normal phone charges. Enquiries can also be made via e-mail and webchat. The e-mail service is available at <http://europedirect.europa.eu>, where users can send questions and will receive a response within a few days. Both the telephone and e-mail channels operate in all 23 official EU languages.

In addition, there is a web assistance service, accessible via the same website, where users can go online for a direct 'chat' with a Europe Direct agent who will provide them with an answer in 'real-time'. This service is available in English, French and German.

Overall, about 45 people are working to operate, run and manage the multilingual Contact Centre. Most of them are communication officers dealing with actual enquiries, but there are also staff who deal with training, documentation, management, contracts, quality control, obtaining answers from specialised services, and so on, since citizens' enquiries can – and do – cover the whole spectrum of EU matters.

The Commission's Directorate-General for Communication, which is responsible for managing the Contact Centre, has concluded co-operation agreements with a number of other services to ensure that citizens who have very specific enquiries will receive an answer via Europe Direct without having to take their question from one place to another. It is all done for you by the Europe Direct team, so that citizens can benefit from a real 'one-stop-shop' when making an enquiry.



Mairéad Ní Mhaolagáin on call

© EU

Making it happen

Mairéad Ní Mhaolagáin, a sociology and French graduate, joined the Europe Direct Contact Centre after completing a traineeship at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture just over three years ago.

In her current role as a Communication Officer at the Contact Centre she responds daily to enquiries on all aspects of EU affairs in English, French and Irish. Her tasks range from providing tourists with advice to helping small businesses find funding opportunities. The Contact Centre also receives many enquiries on topical issues of international interest so it is very important that all Communication Officers stay abreast of current affairs.

In addition to these more varied enquiries, as a member of the Contact Centre's Research Enquiry Service team, Mairéad spends much of her time providing individual researchers and research-oriented organisations with specialised advice on EU funding opportunities under the Seventh Framework Programme.

After three years, Mairéad still enjoys the job as much as she did on the day she started. As the Contact Centre answers enquiries in all of the EU's official languages, the workforce is very diverse. In the Research Enquiry Service team alone, she has worked alongside colleagues from Finland, Bulgaria, Malta, Slovenia, France and Germany. According to Mairéad: "It is very rewarding to hear first-hand from enquirers about their experiences living in the EU and to know that, at the end of every day, the Contact Centre has helped many more people benefit from the opportunities living in the EU has to offer."



2010 in Focus

➤ *From recovery to growth*

Europe and many other parts of the world are emerging from what has been called the 'Great Recession', the worst global economic crisis since the Wall Street crash of 1929. It left Europe reeling, with the EU's GDP shrinking by 4% in 2009, and industrial production dipping by a remarkable 15%, leading to higher unemployment and social upheaval.

Unveiled in 2010, the Europe 2020 strategy provides the EU with a roadmap to exit the crisis. Given the crucial importance of this new strategy, Europe Direct has been closely involved in communicating it.

Cataloguing local European successes

The Union's various funding programmes and instruments finance a vast array of local projects across Europe. To highlight the importance of such investment, **EDIC Landkreis Osnabrück (DE)** published a brochure showcasing EU-funded projects in the Lower Saxony region.

The publication, of which a thousand copies were distributed, features 15 projects which focus on environmental protection, science, stimulating the economy and even the arts. In addition, it contains a general overview of how EU funding works and takes a sneak preview of the post-2013 period when the Union will introduce a new generation of programmes and instruments. The popularity of this brochure reflects the growing local interest in EU-funding opportunities, and its contents provide a realistic view of just how this funding is distributed and put to good use.

A fair chance to find work

One in ten EU citizens is unemployed, but the problem is even more acute among younger people: 20% of under-25s in the Union are out of work. To help tackle this issue locally, for the third year running **EDIC A Coruña (ES)**, with the support of the regional government, organised a European Job Fair (28 October-5 November 2010).

In fact, the 2010 fair was held online, and presented ten virtual stands where employers, students, universities and public institutions could meet to explore local job openings and mobility opportunities in

other parts of Europe. This effort resulted in the collection of nearly 2000 CVs. In addition, a general meeting was held with local and regional stakeholders and a round table was organised on entrepreneurship and innovation.

The job fair and related events elicited a lot of local media attention and were promoted through social networking sites and other platforms.



© EDICA Coruña (ES) / Diputación de A Coruña (Provincial Government)

Disability is no handicap

As part of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, **EDIC Entre Douro e Minhob (PT)** co-managed a project, in collaboration with an organisation supporting handicapped children. It targeted youth, the aim being to promote a debate on the social inclusion of young disabled people.

The organisers held monthly workshops, from January to June 2010, which informed disabled young people about the EU, biodiversity and climate change, helped them to improve their communication skills and sought to boost their confidence and self-esteem. The project also held a forum and exhibition entitled 'Pathways to Freedom' which included, among other things, artwork produced by the disabled youth.

Village life

In the second half of 2010, under the auspices of the Belgian presidency of the EU, **EDIC Namur (BE)** constructed its very own 'European project village' which showcased some 30 Union-funded projects.

A conference and debate focused on five main themes: Europe and local development, the environment, the economy, regional economic development, and the future of the EU. Among the panellists and speakers were Isabelle Durant, Vice-President of the European Parliament and Belgian senator and author Francis Delpérée. Around 400 people attended both the village and the conference.

Nurturing business skills

Entrepreneurship is crucial to Europe's capacity to prosper, create jobs and grow. However, not enough Europeans are going into business for themselves – a recent Eurobarometer opinion survey found that the majority of Europeans are not interested in starting their own company.

As young people are the EU's future entrepreneurs, **EDIC Bistrita (RO)** decided to take action to target them. In October 2010, the EDIC organised the Bistrita Junior Entrepreneur trade fair to help young and budding Romanian entrepreneurs develop their business skills.

For the duration of the preceding summer, 50 local teenagers produced handicrafts which they then sold at the fair. In a bid to teach the youngsters about social responsibility as well as entrepreneurship, the junior entrepreneurs donated their profits to a local charity that supports disabled children. This gesture also underlined the importance of volunteering, which is the theme of the 2011 European Year. In addition, the fair served to raise local awareness of EU issues.

Taking a stand against poverty

EDIC Douai Nord (FR) called on local citizens to take to the streets for a symbolic march against poverty on 17 October 2010, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty which last year focused on the theme 'From poverty to decent work: bridging the gap'. The march took place in the context of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Following the walk, local NGOs and civil society organisations which specialise in poverty-related issues were given an opportunity to inform the public about their work. Donations were also collected for a local charity.

The EDIC members hope that its action will inspire others in the French Europe Direct network to organise similar actions during 2011.

Calling all Europeans

EDIC Gävleborg (SE) co-organises an annual event, 'Europe is calling', which seeks to inspire young people and raise their awareness of the opportunities presented by free movement within the EU, whether it is to study, work, train or volunteer.

Scheduled to take place during Europe Week in May, in 2010 the event attracted 70 young adults. One crucial ingredient of its success was the talk given by the young 'inspirers' who had recently been abroad to work or study.



2010 in Focus

► *Climate, environment and energy*

The environment, including climate change, has long been a top priority for the European Union. This importance is reflected, for example, in the fact that one of the three pillars of the new Europe 2020 strategy is 'green', i.e. sustainable, economic growth. In addition, with the environment under stress and conventional energy sources becoming scarcer, finding alternative – especially renewable – energy resources and boosting energy efficiency are also key priorities.

In a concerted effort to combat climate change, the EU has been implementing policies and initiatives aimed at cutting Europe's greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, the Union has been pursuing very ambitious goals for years. These include the so-called '20-20-20' target: a 20% reduction in EU greenhouse gas emissions compared with 1990 levels; extracting 20% of Union's energy mix from renewable sources; and reducing primary energy use by 20%, through energy-efficiency measures and new technologies.

Green vision

In light of dwindling energy supplies and environmental strain, renewable energy and energy efficiency are important EU policy priorities. However, in many parts of Europe, especially rural areas, awareness of these issues tends to be low. To address this, **EDIC Põlvamaa (EE)** co-organised a conference on putting renewable energy development plans into practice. The occasion gathered together more than 250 participants from across Estonia. The event was divided into several sessions outlining visions for the future, including sustainable energy options, such as 'passive housing' and bio-energy villages, as well as practical, real-life experiences in the fields of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Cleaning up before the party

Good parties are notorious for creating a mess, and many hosts and hostesses are often left with the daunting 'morning after' task of cleaning up. Parties also cause a lot of pollution. To raise awareness of this and to encourage children and teenagers (and their parents) to party more sustainably, **EDIC Leeds (UK)** co-organised a creative initiative called 'Party without pollution'.

During the event, the party's sound system, games console, TV and lights were all hooked up to three bike generators. No party is complete without party games, and the EDIC tested everyone's skills with the 'Bin Sling Saloon', a recycling game. In addition, everyone who came to the party received a special wristband and had a chance to win a solar-powered toy.

Other activities and games were featured on different days. Country-side Rangers were on hand to help everyone make their own dragonflies and to try and identify mysterious natural objects. Even Thermo, the city's very own energy-saving superhero, made a special appearance. Everyone could see just how much heat they each produce on his high-tech thermal camera and chest-mounted display screen. Over the course of the event, nearly 2 000 people joined in the party.

Diversity to promote biodiversity

EDIC Modena (IT) teamed up with a diverse spectrum of local partners – the European Commission, local authorities, academia, civil society organisations and private foundations – to organise a ten-day event intended to highlight the importance of biodiversity and other environmental issues.

The varied programme focused on numerous issues, such as EU financial instruments targeting the environment, actions aimed at the preservation of local ecosystems, climate and energy policies, rural development, as well as food safety.

The various events included a seminar, two lectures, an open-air party, two book presentations, an info day, a web conference with a third country, and more. In addition, the activities were tailored to appeal to the different target audiences. For example, the party was organised in a large 'social garden' which proved particularly appealing to families.

Picnic with the animals

On the occasion of the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010, **EDIC Pest (HU)** teamed up with an environmental NGO to organise a biodiversity picnic at a local mini zoo. With the animals looking on, more than 100 picnickers listened to a presentation on the importance of biodiversity and participated in a quiz.

To put this newly acquired knowledge into practice, the participants took part in a live animal show, where they learnt about the characteristics of Hungarian wild animals, after which they were quizzed again.

The EDIC also set up a stand providing more information about the EU along with entertainment for children and adults alike: board games, slides, table soccer, mini table tennis, etc.

A questionnaire taken after the event revealed that most participants had enjoyed it. The picnic also grabbed media attention, with 20 articles published about it beforehand and a television crew on hand during the event to make a short film.



A day out to celebrate biodiversity

© EDIC Pest (HU) / Pest Megyei Területfejlesztési Kft

A climate of understanding

EDIC Larnaca (CY) co-organises the city's annual Environment Week. In 2010, the Week's activities attracted over a thousand participants and focused on the theme of climate change. One activity took local schoolchildren on a nature walk along the Larnaca salt lake to learn about the area's flora and fauna. Other pupils staged plays with environmental themes, while the older ones were invited to seminars on climate change and how the environment affects our quality of life.

In a nearby forest, young people planted trees, while elsewhere 700 kindergarten children sang, danced and took part in a procession. The penultimate day was a voluntary cleaning day, during which volunteers cleaned up public parks, the beach and the nature path around the salt lake. The Week ended with a parade during which flowerpots and information materials were distributed.

Talking to the wind

On the occasion of the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010, Irish EDICs co-hosted the national 'soapbox' speaking competition on the theme of wind energy. Regional play-offs took place at the individual EDICs and the final was held in Dublin. The seven finalists each won a trip to Brussels to find out more about the EU institutions. The events proved to be a huge success, reaching a broad audience.

Colour scheme

Life on earth is colourful in its kaleidoscopic diversity, but an increasing number of animals are endangered. To illustrate such natural wealth and highlight the threats to young children, **EDIC Valmiera (LV)** co-published a colouring book for young children featuring Europe's protected animals.

The book was published to mark the International Year of Biodiversity and sought to find a fun way to encourage children to develop an early interest in nature and the environment. This and other books were distributed at ten interactive events organised by the EDIC which were attended by 200 children.



Children's workshop on endangered animals

© EDIC Valmiera (LV) / Valmieras Biblioteka

2010 in Focus

► *A citizens' Treaty*

The new Lisbon Treaty seeks to transform the EU into a responsive and inclusive Union for all of its citizens, to make its institutions more efficient, to cope with common challenges and to bolster Europe's position on the global stage.

The new Treaty contains a set of reforms designed to help EU institutions to meet the challenges of an enlarged Union and to tackle, both efficiently and effectively, the demands of a rapidly changing and interconnected world, such as globalisation, climatic and demographic changes, as well as security and energy.

The Lisbon Treaty reinforces democracy and freedom in the EU and its capacity to promote the interests of its citizens on a day-to-day basis. For example, it strengthens the role of citizens in policy-making and calls for their active participation through dialogue, consultation and the European Citizens' Initiative. It also underwrites their fundamental and democratic rights by making the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights legally binding.

Given the importance and complexity of the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in December 2009, the Europe Direct networks were proactive throughout 2010 communicating its significance to citizens.

Bordering on the historic

In just a quarter of a century, the Schengen Agreement has led to the disappearance of borders across Europe, with today's Schengen area covering 25 countries and 400 million people. As a result, in June 2010, the Luxembourg village which gave the agreement its name opened its very own Europa Schengen Museum to mark the 25th anniversary of that pioneering accord. The local EDIC helped to organise the inaugural event which was attended by Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Vice-President Viviane Reding, and European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek, and covered by 180 journalists. In the remaining months of 2010, the museum drew nearly 20 000 visitors.

Colourful collaboration

Every year, Pardubice in the Czech Republic holds its Week against Racism. In this context, the **EDIC Pardubice** organised its own Multicultural Week which sought to highlight the hidden treasure of cultural diversity scattered across the region and in so doing to promote tolerance and understanding.



Multiculturalism in the Czech Republic

This popular event brought together native Czechs with foreigners living in the region to share 20 different activities, including exhibitions, concerts, an international karaoke show, various kinds of workshops, lectures, the building of a Mongolian yurt, the reading of a Vietnamese fairy tale, documentaries, foreign delicacies, an international football tournament and dance performances.

Learning tolerance

With the aim of challenging and combating prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination, **EDIC Vratsa (BG)** carried out a communication campaign on tolerance and non-violence in schools. The initiative targeted Bulgarian teachers, pupils of various age groups, their families and the regional media.



Teaching tolerance in Bulgaria

Within the framework of this initiative, the EDIC organised special training workshops for teachers on how to teach anti-discrimination, non-violence and tolerance. The teachers who participated in the training were invited to plan public lessons on the themes, the best of which would be filmed and screened. The winning lesson plan – which was performed in front of the general public and media – was entitled *Chaplin – The Kid: An old movie with an eternal message*.

The EDIC also organised a photo contest for pupils called 'Europe is for everyone'.

The Lisbon Treaty for beginners

The Slovenian Europe Direct network, led by **EDIC Maribor**, created their very own Lisbon Treaty for dummies comic book to mark its first anniversary on 1 December 2010. Each of the comic strips in the collection focuses on a relevant aspect of the Treaty – such as the Citizens' Initiative, solidarity, climate change, local elections, etc. – and 'translates' the formal language of the document into fun and witty stories.

Some 6 000 copies were printed and were due to be distributed by the various EDICs in the course of 2011 at public events, such as through information stands or during school visits. The Slovenian EDICs will use this opportunity for their own events, organising, for example, an exhibition on this theme or a workshop for secondary schoolchildren to meet the author of the comic book, learn about the Lisbon Treaty and then draw their own comic strips on the topic of the European Year of Volunteering 2011.



Comic book about the Lisbon Treaty

2010 in Focus

► *Communicating the EU*

In addition to raising people's awareness of specific issues, one of the core activities of the Europe Direct networks is to communicate the European Union in general and bridge the gap between citizens and the EU's institutions.

Multinational youth debate Europe

A youth forum hosted by **EDIC Duisberg (DE)** brought together 150 students from the region to meet other young people from Poland and Lithuania to discuss pertinent issues related to the EU, such as labour migration, clean air, cross-border education, languages, inter-cultural dialogue, better urban environments and more. Following these initial debates, the young participants developed their visions for a better EU of tomorrow which they then went on to debate with four German Members of the European Parliament.

The forum proved invaluable for all those who took part. For the students, it provided them with a chance to interact with young Europeans from other countries, gain insight into how the EU operates, learn more about their rights as European citizens, and feel closer to the Union's institutions. For MEPs, the gathering was a useful opportunity to connect with young people and get direct feedback from citizens.

Europe for real grown-ups

Austrian EDICs have produced an audio book targeted at senior citizens to inform them about the benefits the EU brings them. The CD, of which 30 000 copies were produced, is made up of 17 tracks of between three and six minutes each. In addition to providing general information on the EU in Austria, which is geared towards older people, the audio book contains a wealth of information on a wide range of issues, including enlargement, energy saving, the environment, the economy, consumer protection and transport.

The audio book presents a wide range of information which indicates just how much the EU does for various age groups, including senior citizens. It also analyses how much or how little truth there is in popular myths and prejudices about the EU.

Opening a debate on Europe

EDIC Karditsa (EL) held a number of what it calls 'open social debates' which brought together members of the public, stakeholders from various sectors and walks of life, as well as local journalists to discuss a number of important EU-related issues. The topics for debate were chosen by the stakeholders themselves.

Based on this choice, the organisers selected suitable panellists to take part in the discussions and invited media professionals to put their questions to the panels. The journalists then reported on the open social debates in their respective media, thereby disseminating the results to a wider audience and raising awareness of the various issues in question.

Putting the you into EU

The 'EU and you' travelling stand and related activities visited a number of Finnish towns to raise awareness of the European Union and its work. Coordinated by the Commission Representation, the initiative involved the entire Europe Direct network in Finland.

The number of participants exceeded all expectations. They visited information stands, watched interviews, attended seminars and swayed to musical performances. In addition, regional radio and TV channels brought the events closer to thousands of local listeners and viewers, and national TV transmitted part of the programme.

The recipe for the initiative's success was careful planning and the involvement of numerous dedicated partner organisations and bodies. In addition, the prominent personalities and speakers who took part played an important role in raising the profile of 'EU and you'.

Europe over coffee

EDIC Steinfurt (DE) organised a 'Europe café' to provide citizens of all ages with the opportunity to connect with EU issues and meet European decision-makers at all levels. The café's first gathering in May 2010 attracted over 100 guests who got together to discuss, in small groups, issues related to European identity and what Europe means to its citizens.

They were joined by a panel of EU officials who answered citizens' questions. They included MEP Markus Pieper, former Minister for Europe Wolfram Kuschke, Committee of the Regions' member Werner Jostmeier and Heinz Jansen, a deputy head of unit at the European Commission's Economic and Financial Affairs DG.

"Time and again, we hear that Europe is far away and we have no influence on the decisions in Brussels," said District Administrator Thomas Kubendorff. "We want to change this. The Europe café allows personal contact with EU decision-makers."

► *Coping with a crisis*

When the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano propelled large quantities of volcanic ash into the atmosphere in April 2010, the ensuing closure of large parts of European airspace for several days saw many passengers grounded. In large numbers, they turned to the Europe Direct Contact Centre for information about their rights. The number of questions increased sharply (+232.8% in comparison with the previous month), and the EDCC acted quickly and efficiently to handle this unforeseen event. It showed that the EDCC can cope well and respond to such events, with the help of the responsible Commission services, in this case Directorates-General for Communication and Mobility and Transport. The communication and information officers at the Centre worked extra hard, and the responsible Commission services in the Directorates-General for Communication and Mobility and Transport did their best to support them with model answers, replies to particularly complicated questions, and anything else that might help.

Remedy for success

'Europe in a pill' is a series of short radio programmes which presents EU-related issues in bite-sized chunks. Produced by **EDIC Gorzów Wlkp (PL)**, the five-minute clips were transmitted on local radio.

One episode, broadcast on 28 October 2010, was devoted to the economic crisis and the solutions Poland and the EU are pursuing to address it. The programme covered the Polish and European stimulus packages, introduced what regional authorities were doing to combat the recession, and featured a high-ranking official who talked about how crucial EU support was to regional recovery.



2010 in Focus

Working for Europe

Three Pan-European Working Groups were set up in 2010 to focus on media relations, Web 2.0 tools and electronic repositories of EU information. In recognition of an excellent kick-off in 2010, the mandates of all three groups have been extended into 2011.

Getting the message out

The Working Group on media relations, comprising 22 EDIC representatives, was set up to help the Centres reinforce their relations with local/regional media and to benefit from the experience of other members through the promotion of good practice.

To this end, a survey was carried out to establish the main network trends in terms of media relations, and to identify 18 examples of good practice that demonstrate EDIC success stories with local and regional media. These examples have been compiled in an e-catalogue to inspire and share good practice with fellow network members.



Engaging with the web

The Working Group on Web 2.0 tools, made up of 22 EDIC representatives, was created to help EDICs make better use of Web 2.0 and social media in order to reach a wider group of citizens. The working group also aims to contribute to the promotion and visibility of EDIC activities at the regional/local level.



The Working Group has been involved in the preparation and promotion of a survey examining the use of Web 2.0 tools by EDICs, as well as in the selection of 13 examples of good practice which could be adopted by other network members. These good practices have also been gathered in an e-catalogue to illustrate the encouraging take-up of Web 2.0 activities in the EDICs' daily work.

Going electronic

The Working Group on electronic repositories of information sources and documents on EU issues comprises 17 EDC representatives. Group members are looking at new electronic means of holding information and examining the possibility of further developing their content.

During 2010, they focused on the repositories in order to identify existing information and to explore the possibilities for future development. In 2011, the group aims to draft concrete proposals to develop common and European-wide document repositories.



2010 in Focus

► *Striving for communication excellence*

The Commission helps members of the Europe Direct network achieve their mission by providing tailor-made training on communication and EU policies, networking opportunities, both online and face to face, and support with a wide range of information materials and publications.

Excellent knowledge of EU matters together with good communication skills and know-how on how to adapt messages to a local audience are prerequisites for the successful functioning of the Europe

Direct networks. The training sessions organised by the Commission provide first-hand information from high-level EU experts and include practical sessions on how to communicate specific European Union topics. There are four such training seminars each year for EDICs, one for EDCs and one for Team Europe. Topics in 2010 included: Communicating EU actions for combating poverty and social exclusion, Communicating EU actions in the field of 'Justice, Freedom and Security', 'Citizens' right to access to information', and 'Citizens' EU'.



Annual general meeting of the Europe Direct Information Centres in Antwerp, with Viviane Reding.

Spreading the word

Networking activities (in the form of annual general meetings) give members the opportunity to exchange good practice and develop co-operation, with a view to reinforcing the network's European dimension. The 2010 annual general meeting was organised in Antwerp, Belgium for all EDICs around the 'Citizens' rights' theme. European Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding attended this meeting to further encourage the EDICs in their efforts.

Last but not least, the network has a high-profile intranet with weekly news items relevant to members and citizens alike, plus chats

and forums to enable the exchange of good practice and sharing information and ideas. Members also receive regular e-newsletters which present topical issues, such as the 2011 Year of Volunteering, in an interesting mix of background information, interviews, good practice, events, feedback from members and a 'communicators' toolkit' for further research. In addition, regular fact sheets on EU policy matters help to keep the network up to date on facts, figures and recent developments, as do other promotional materials which complement the network's privileged access to various EU publications.



The panel debate 'citizens rights' with the participation of (from left to right) Ms Daly and Mr Nymand Christensen from the European Commission, Mr Van Den Brande from the Committee of Regions and Ms Valean Member of the European Parliament

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This Annual Report summarises the activities, achievements and successes of the Europe Direct in 2010.

Europe Direct groups together the Europe Direct Contact Centre and three decentralised networks which operate locally: Europe Direct Information Centres, European Documentation Centres and Team Europe speakers on EU affairs.

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