



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL COMMUNICATION

REPRESENTATIONS  
**Thematic Support**

# EUROPEAN DOCUMENTATION CENTRE ACTIVITY REPORT 2008

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The core tasks of the European Documentation Centres (EDC) are to provide academic students and researchers with guidance, training and access to European Union information and publications. The EDCs share information and tutor fellow colleagues in the other centres at national level, offer training courses on European Union decision-making processes and maintain common document databases. Thus this network adds a European dimension to the activities of the host universities. In practice, EDCs in EU27 had audiences of 36000 at seminars and training courses in universities and reached out to 20000 members of the general public in 2008.

In order to function well, the European Documentation Centres need studies, statistics, yearbooks and other substantial publications of all the Institutions. In many cases, the other Directorates-General and Institutions cannot provide these publications as they do not have adequate print runs. The main problem is lack of awareness; the other Directorates-General do not know what the European Documentation Centres do and thus are not prepared to disseminate their publications, especially the costly studies and monographs. Efforts have been made and still need to be made to raise awareness and make more publications available.

One solution to make the distribution of publications more efficient without changing the cost structure would be to develop the "specialised" EDC concept further. The EDCs already have the possibility to choose whether they wish to receive all available publications or specialise in a certain policy area and receive only publications concerning this area. The Publications Office has developed new specialisation categories and will contact all the centres to check their status and to offer them the possibility to change from "general" to "specialised" EDC. After this stocktaking of the EDC specialisations, it will be possible to give other Directorates-General a clear picture of how many copies of their publications would be needed by the EDCs.

New management orientations for the European Documentation Centres were agreed in February 2009 by the senior management of DG COMM and the Cabinet of Vice-President Wallström. The main change envisaged is the decentralisation of the management of this network from Headquarters to the Representations, which will, as of now, themselves evaluate the applications from potential new members. Similarly, signature of the related agreements will be the responsibility of the Head of Representation, instead of the Director General of DG COMM, as has been the case up to now.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The European Documentation Centre agreement stipulates that the EDCs have to report to the Representation on their activities once a year. This report is a summary of the questionnaires which the European Documentation Centres completed on their activities in 2008. The questionnaire is mainly the same as in previous years so as to be able to compare the results and so that the EDCs can prepare the data to fill in the report. However, the draft questionnaire was sent to the Representations and to the national EDC coordinators in order to obtain their comments and to update the questions before launching the survey.

The EDC activity questionnaire was open from the end of March to the 24th of May 2009 and the EDCs were able to complete an online survey form published on the Europe Direct intranet. During the two months that the survey was open, 201 EDCs completed the report. In addition to this summary of the EDCs' answers, individual reports are sent to the Representations which will be able to evaluate the activity level of their national EDC network and individual EDCs.

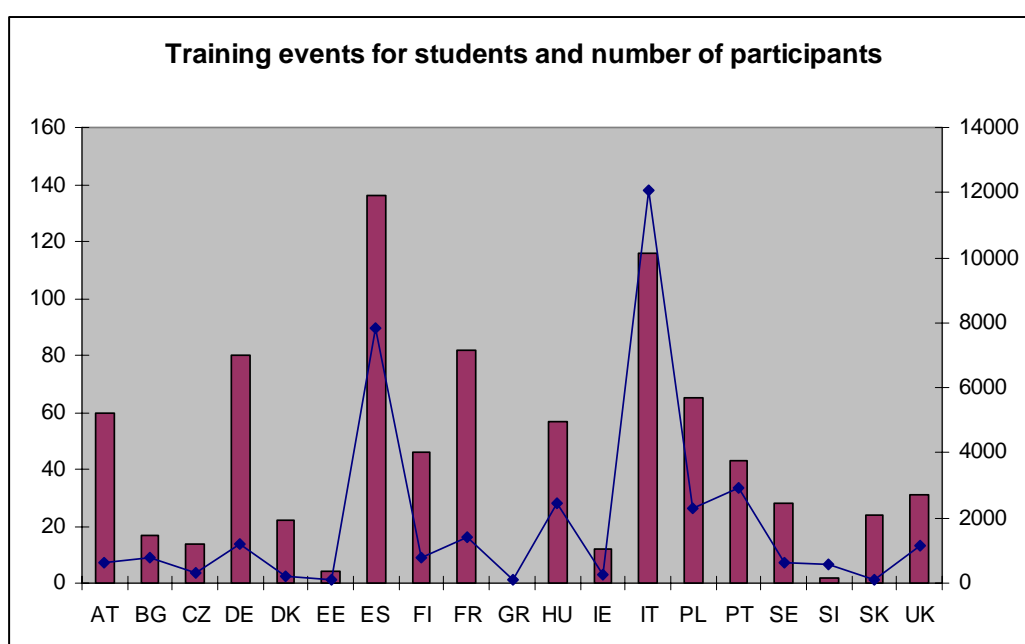
## 2 EDCS AT WORK

### 2.1 Promotion of study and research in European integration

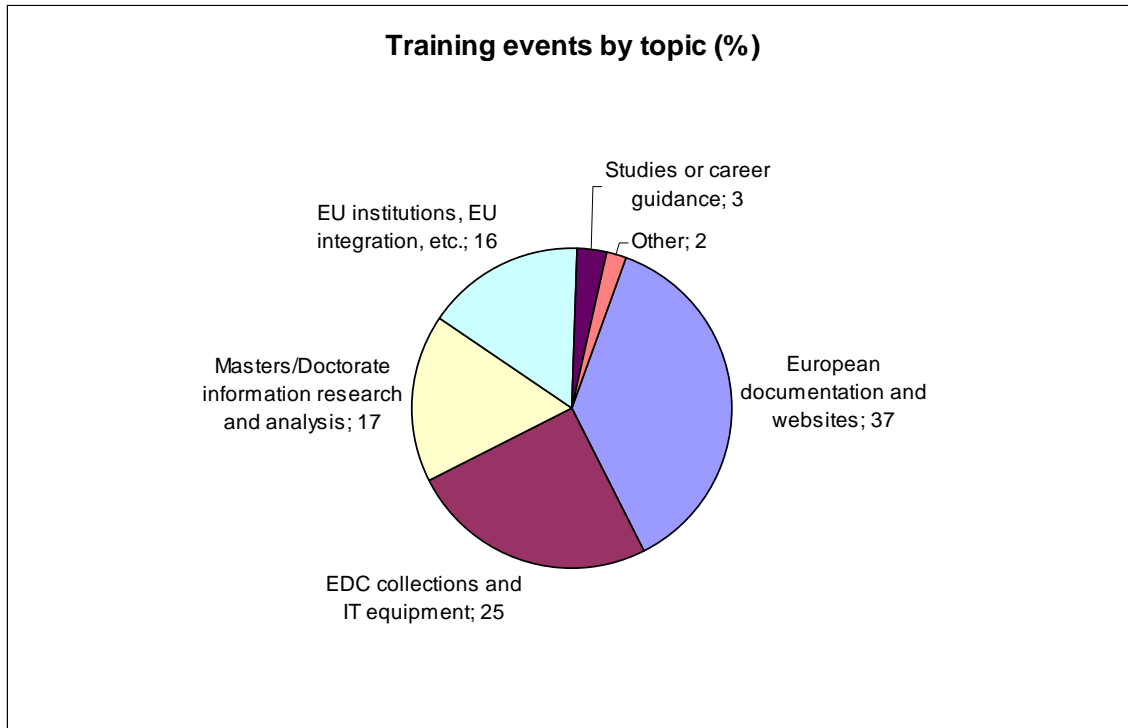
The main task of the EDCs is to *"promote and consolidate teaching and research in the field of European integration"*.

All the EDCs who participated the survey assist students in finding information and documents on EU issues and more than half of them also produce their own learning materials and teaching aids for EU-related studies. Almost half (45 %) had their own bibliographies and databases or participated in projects to create these kinds of tools.

EDCs organised 840 teaching and information events and training courses for 36000 students in 2008.



The most common subject of the EDCs' training activities are sources of EU information. This covers presentations on both online and printed materials. EDCs often offer introductions to their facilities and services for newcomers or for students who have joined EU study programmes. This is the second most important group of training events. In addition, they also offer more detailed analysis on European sources for the master's and post-graduate students and presentations on EU policies and institutions.



Examples of a training programme organised by an EDC:

*A credit-giving university course of 15 course points was developed together with the department of political science; lectures were given to law students and students in European studies. (Sweden)*

*A 50-question quiz, related to the law of the European Union for entering an exam prepared by a professor of the college. The EDC is also preparing a quiz of 30 questions on the subject of the European Union. Filling in questionnaires (to improve the work of Eurlex, Eurostat etc.). (Hungary)*

*Several training sessions for school classes using EU-related topics to train basic scientific skills; several basic introductory lessons for student beginners; two complex systematic semester long courses for law students teaching law research, EU-information retrieval being a strong component. (Germany)*

*International congress on Governance on May Day. Jean Monnet Course on Corporate Governance and Corporate Responsibility. Jean Monnet Course on Human Rights and Human Rights Cases. Practical Sessions on EU Documentation at the Faculty of Politics. Practical Sessions (7) on EU documentation at the Faculty of Economics. (Spain)*

Only 35 % of EDCs can indicate how many theses or dissertations on EU issues were produced at their university. These EDCs report 3000 documents in 2008 which makes an average of 42 per centre.

The EDCs were asked what kind of questions they normally answer and how complicated they are. 40 % of the questions were reported to be simple and quick to answer, 32 % required specialised hands-on assistance, while 28% of questions were complicated and required expert knowledge and research work by the EDC staff.

*Enquiries tend to be more complex now as the simpler questions are able to be dealt with online. (The UK)*

Many survey participants reported that their host Universities and "customers" are satisfied with their services.

*The EDC work is appreciated because the Centre is an important intermediary between users and European documentation and legal databases. We have also developed a questionnaire that measured user satisfaction and the users' assessment is good. (Italy)*

*The host organization administration regarding the EDC work is always positive (Italy)*

*The EDC makes the EU visible for the students and other library users in their own familiar environment. Information about EU matters can be found on the Internet but it helps a great deal and enhances the interest in EU matters to have an actual physical place to visit and an actual person to contact and ask assistance from. The students find the information retrieval training courses and materials about EU information sources very useful and relevant for their studies. (Finland)*

*L'Université approuve totalement le travail du CDE et souhaite continuer à promouvoir la connaissance des questions européennes au niveau de l'ensemble des étudiants. (France)*

Some EDCs mention the lack of resources, financial or human, as a reason not to be able to organise training for students. Financial constraints were a major problem for 23% of the EDCs and lack of personnel for 25% of the centres.

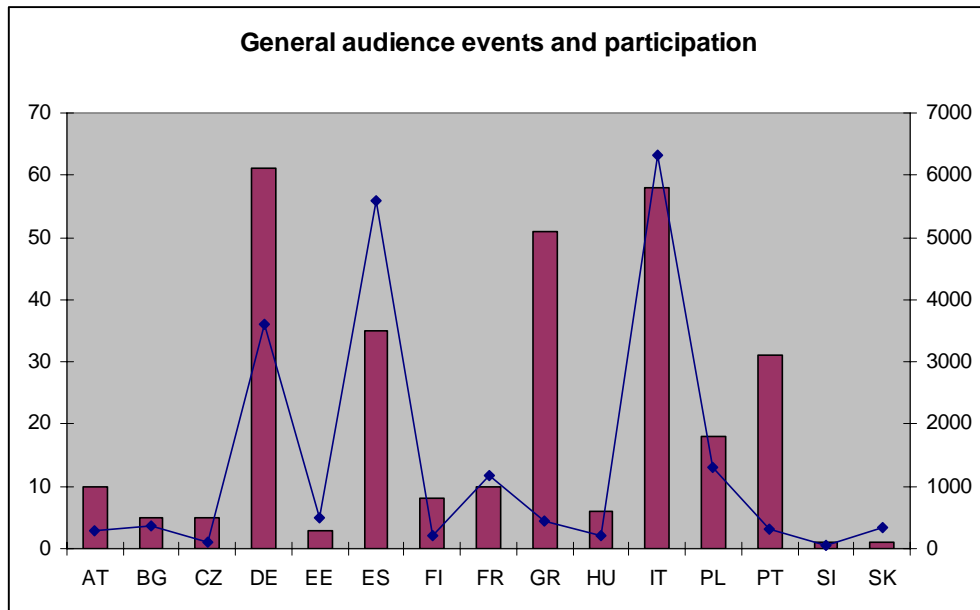
*Although the host organization recognizes the added value of the EDC in the promotion of European studies and research, it is becoming apparent that the University's commitment and financial contribution is much more in comparison to the EC contribution. (Greece)*

*Sometimes the work of the EDC isn't accredited enough (Sweden)*

## **2.2 Communication with the general public**

According to the EDC agreement, one of the objectives is to "participate in the debate on the European Union, where appropriate with other European information relays and networks". To meet this objective, the EDCs need a lot of cooperation with the

Representation and with the other information networks as they do not have their own resources. In 2008, almost a third (28 %) of the reporting EDCs were present at events outside the university, for example by having information stands at fairs. There were altogether c. 300 events like this with over 20000 participants.



Most of the EDCs (81 %) also answer questions from the general public and not just the academic community. According to their agreement, “*the EDCs should make information on the EU and its policies available to the public, both university-based and other*”). In most of the countries the universities and research centres allow open access to the general public to visit the EDC and 96 % of the centres report that their premises and collections are open to anyone, which is a bit more than in the previous survey.

In most cases only students and university staff as well as some other well-informed people know how to find and use the library. The EDCs are part of the Europe Direct information network and should use signposting to signal this to the general public; 83 % of the EDCs reported that they use signposting at the entrance to the EDC premises but only 22 % at the entrance to the host structure. However, most of them (87%) promote the EDC inside their host structure by other means (posters, leaflets) and 53% in their city or region.

*There is no staff time to promote the EDC to the general public and very little to promote it to the University. Much of the promotion is by word of mouth. (UK)*

*We would be very glad to support the European Commission in its communication activities, organising more promotional events (but in order to guarantee this support we need funds, which are even more difficult to obtain at local level). (Italy)*

*9th May was celebrated with a special event as the Day of European studies department and the 15th anniversary of the discipline at the University. The EDC took part in the event organization and dissemination of hand outs – brochures, folders, leaflets among students, faculty members and citizens. The centre's work was promoted in interviews to the local press representatives and an exhibition was arranged. (Bulgaria)*

The EDCs' location often makes it difficult to tell the difference between the centre's visitors and visitors to the main library or the other university premises thus the centres cannot count their visitors. Only 48% were able to give a rough estimate of how many visitors there were in 2008. This total was 87000 visitors or more than 1200 visitors per centre.

### 2.3 EDC Collections

EDCs started as libraries of official EU publications. Managing and enriching the print collections are naturally still a central part of EDC librarians' tasks.

The EDC collections should be separately identifiable either via the catalogue or physically on separate shelves. Four fifths of the centres (72%) have organised their EU materials in one single collection while the rest of the EDCs have them mixed in with other publications. 84 % of respondents replied that the EDC collection is separately identifiable in the library catalogue.

The availability and selection of publications distributed by the Publications Office OPOCE always provokes a lot of discussion and comments and this survey is not an exception. The comments are even contradictory depending on the tasks and orientations of the EDCs. Anyhow, the main complaint is clearly the lack of substantial priced publications (books, monographs, studies, printed version of the Official Journal, etc.) Some examples of the comments:

*We need more paper publications (electronic publications are insufficient) for students, professors and researchers about EU law (reports, law studies...).* (France)

*We would like material that is more adapted to the academic world. Reports and legal documents are more useful than information leaflets.* (Sweden)

*How much longer before print EDCs become obsolete?* (UK)

On the other hand, there are centres that need also the lighter general public leaflets and brochures and appreciate e.g. the privileged access to EU Bookshop which they can use to place bulk orders or leaflets.

*We would like to get more materials about EU issues for public distribution.* (Italy)

*No problems. I am very pleased regarding the privileged users online procedure for ordering official publications at OPOCE.* (Italy)

However, the EU Bookshop service could be developed to provide EDCs with more specific publications:

*We would appreciate privileged access to individually selected media from the EU-bookshop.* (Germany)

The EDCs are encouraged also to enrich their collections with other acquisitions and materials in addition to the standard OPOCE distribution. In the survey, 75% of the



EDCs answered that their collections included materials other than the free publications from OPOCE.

### **3 EDC STAFF, NETWORKING AND RELATIONS WITH THE COMMISSION**

Almost all EDCs have a qualified librarian in charge of the everyday work and the management of the EDC. In addition, they often share staff with other parts of the university library or have part-time and full-time trainees helping to run the EDC. EDCs employed an average of 2,5 other staff in 2008. Average working time is 43 hours per week while the centres are open approximately 50 hours per week. Under the agreement, EDCs are required to keep the centre open a minimum of 20 hours a week and this requirement does not pose any problems for them.

The strength of the EDCs is the staff's professionalism and fact-finding skills. These skills need to be updated regularly, so the Commission tries to offer training at the national level in Representations and/or at headquarters level in Brussels. Most (81%) of the respondents to this survey had participated at a meeting or training session in Brussels or in a Representation in 2008 and several commentators wished the training programme to be continued. This issue was mentioned often in the free form comments in the survey.

*First of all, we would like to underline that we do appreciate the role of the Commission and of the Representation in Poland in organizing training meetings for the EDC staff at national and international level. ...The librarians can enlarge their competence as modern and updated information staff, and not limit themselves to librarian tasks, especially now when the role of EDCs as only documentations centres is changing towards reference centres on European issues. Thanks to such trainings they can increase their competence in the field of European integration and information resources related to this process, and then their serve users better. (Poland)*

*The training seminars are very useful for us. The Annual Meetings inform us about all new European matters and we hope that the fruitful cooperation with the European Commission Representation in Greece will continue. (Greece)*

*...more advanced training seminars on an annual basis... (Greece)*

Very important added value which the EDCs give to the hosting universities is the exchange of information and best practice between the centres. In many countries they have websites, discussion groups and written guidelines and they offer tutoring for newcomers. The vast majority of the EDCs (80 %) participate in this kind of activity with the EDCs in their own countries but cooperation over the borders is much less frequent and only 33 % report cooperating with the EDCs in other countries.

To reach out to the general public, EDCs need cooperation with other networks and more than half (57 %) cooperated with other networks in their countries.

After their fellow EDCs, the main networking facilitators are the Representations which in most of the Member States, organise network meetings either for all the national

information networks together or a separate meeting for each network. The EDCs regard these meetings as very important and participate actively.

*Thanks to very competent employees responsible for the EDC network we do not have any problems in our contact with the Representation in Poland. The Representation keeps helping to organize the EDC meetings in Poland, to support financially the participation of EDC employees in national and international training sessions, and in 2008 participated in the elaboration and publication of the Polish Vademecum (otherwise this publication would not have been possible). The EDCs are constantly informed about EU news, events, conferences, seminars, panels etc., in any situation we can ask for help or advice, and the response is immediate. (Poland)*

*Contacts are working very well. The Representation organizes training and an annual meeting and sends information by email. Our contact person helps us always as needed. (Finland)*

*Since the ED Network has been established, contacts between EDCs and the Commission Representation are now much better. (Slovakia)*

*EDCs do not receive any funding from the European Commission and our staff include two people. We realized that only by working together (with the national EDC network) and sharing experiences are we able to realize important projects and offer better services to a greater number of citizens (Italy)*

*In our opinion it would be necessary to organize meetings and workshops for the different relays at regional and national level so as to get information about the different services of each other and establish networks. (Hungary)*

There were also some negative comments on the support priorities of the Representations. An example:

*...too much stress on relays, too little interest in EDCs. (Sweden)*