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Europe Talk

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Sweden's EU Presidency

Sweden is taking up the EU Presidency this month. Their priorities for the term from 1 July to 31 December 2009 are:

- to deal with the financial crisis
- tackle the rising unemployment across Europe
- the development and strengthening of EU cooperation on justice and home affairs in the Stockholm Programme
- adopt an EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region
- to strengthen the EU's role as a global actor with a clear agenda for peace, development, democracy and human rights.

Visit <http://www.sweden2009.eu/> for more information. Here you can also access the Work Programme for the Swedish Presidency of the EU.



Source: <http://www.se2009.eu>, photographer: Gunnar Seijbold

Latest News

Social Networking

Europe Direct is on twitter now! To follow us please visit <http://twitter.com/europedirect>. We are looking forward to tweeting with you.

Travel with Europe Direct Leeds

We have started a new series of posts on our website <http://europedirectleeds.org.uk>. For the next 30 weeks we will be introducing the 27 member states of the European Union, as well as the 3 candidate states hoping to join the EU in the future. The series is called "Armchair Travel with Europe Direct" and is published as part of our blog every Wednesday.

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Hot Topics & WebNews

Q&A



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Don't Miss Out Hot Topics in Europe this month

Roaming charges

European Partnership for Action
against Cancer

European Action on Drugs

WebNews Monthly Picks



We like these links...

Swedish Presidency news:
www.twitter.com/se2009eu

Kristina Lindhal, Political Adviser
to the Minister of Migration and
Asylum Policy:

www.twitter.com/K_Lindhal

Gunnar Caperius, Adviser on
International Issues:
www.twitter.com/G_Caperius

New Europe, the European
Weekly www.neurope.eu

Europe shows twenty/twenty/twenty vision on the Road to Copenhagen

In the final week of June I was lucky enough to attend a Europe Direct training seminar in Brussels.

Together with colleagues from 23 other member states, I spent two days being tutored in the European Union's strategy on combating the colossally important issue of climate change. This will be a crucial year as December will see approximately 190 member states converge on Copenhagen for the United Nation's Climate Change Conference where there will be an urgent need for a new agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol which ends in 2012.

The EU has already put on the table its own climate and energy package. It comprises the following targets

- to cut its greenhouse gas emissions to 20% below 1990 levels (30% if the rest of the developed countries come on board)
- to double the share of energy obtained from renewables so that it reaches 20%
- to increase energy efficiency so the EU reduces its energy consumption by 20%

...and all of this to be achieved by the year 2020.

At times, on the training course, as we were taken by a member of the EU Copenhagen team on a whistle-stop tour of the pre-negotiation negotiations, it felt a bit like death by acronym, with AWG-LCAs, NAMAs and LULUCFs. At other times it seemed so simple. If we change our electric bulbs, our boilers and our refrigerators; if we insulate our houses, buy less polluting cars or use public transport: then we will be able to protect the environment and guarantee a stable supply of energy for our children. On the training course, too, we saw how the EU has led the way with its Emission Trading System which has brought climate change into the board room by putting a price on companies' carbon emissions. We learned, too, of inroads made and future progress planned with the legislation the EU has introduced on the energy performance of new building and renovations and the energy efficiency labelling of household appliances.

Perhaps it's an admission that I don't always fully read the publications we disseminate to the schools and libraries in our area but I have to confess that before this course I had not heard of the 'Covenant of Mayors'. This is an EU initiative that brings together the leaders of Europe's most pioneering towns/cities in a network to exchange and apply good practice across these cities and beyond in order to improve energy efficiency in urban areas. In the face of the enormous challenge that climate change presents, the temptation sometimes is to despair. But if there is one lesson that I'll retain from this training course it is that what we do locally will make a difference. The leaders of the 568 towns and cities who have signed up to the 'Covenant of Mayors' certainly seem to think so.

John Armstrong Europe Direct Leeds

This Month's Q&A

Q What is the Schengen Agreement and how does it affect me?

A: By the Schengen Agreement Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands agreed that they would gradually remove controls at their common borders and introduce freedom of movement for all nationals of the signatory Member States, other Member States or third countries.

The Schengen Convention supplements the Agreement and lays down the arrangements and safeguards for implementing freedom of movement.

The Schengen agreements have been extended over time to all 15 old Member States.



Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Austria, Finland, and Sweden. Ireland and the United Kingdom are only partial participants in the Schengen *acquis*, since their border controls have been maintained.

The 10 new Member States have adopted the Schengen *acquis*, but a decision of the Council of the European Union will be required before controls at their borders are lifted.