

One of the biggest websites managed by COMM.A5

History

1995 - Launch

Launched in 1995 and was one of the first multilingual government websites on-line.

2010 - Revamping

Revamped in 2009 with 87% of users satisfied with the site. (the recommendations from the 2007-2008 Ernst and Young study have been closely followed and the site has radically improved in its structure, navigation, design and language).

The site attracts a large number of visitors whose only interaction or contact with the EU is through the website. Impression of the site and user experience is considered as vital for the image of the EU.

Purpose

The entry point or the 'reception desk' for EU information on-line. Operates in 23 languages and provides:

- information on how the EU works
- latest EU news and events
- links to content on EU institutions, agencies and other bodies.

Governance and Management

overseen by the [Inter-Institutional Editorial Committee](#) which brings together internet editors and managers from all institutions. The committee meets around 4 times per year. Day-to-day management is ensured by a team of 3.5 staff members in COMM.A5 who also work on a range of other tasks and sites.

Overhaul

An evaluation was carried out for DG COMM by Ernst and Young in 2007-2008. The evaluation concluded that the site was too complex for the general public and not organised enough for a professional audience. One in four visitors had major difficulties with the navigation on the site. A series of recommendations were made concerning content, layout and structure. Building on these recommendations, A5 embarked on a major reorganisation of the site. The key aim was to focus more on users and their needs rather than on the structure and language of our organisation. The new site was designed involving users from the outset. A series of usability tests (the first ever for an EU site) were carried out at the University of Leuven on various prototypes of the site. We worked with DGT web-editors on the language and content, information architects on the navigation and search engine specialists to ensure our pages would be found easily. After 12 months of groundwork, testing and development, the new site was launched in all 23 languages in September 2009.

Who Comes to the Site

Traffic with around 2 million unique visitors per month.

According to the feedback questionnaire on the site, around

- 37% of visitors are teachers, researchers or students, while
- 23% are from business (private companies or lobbyists).
- Public sector officials make up around 22% of the audience.
- Media and non-governmental organisations are less represented, each at around 4% of visitors.

Why they come

1. to find out basic information on how the EU works (21%) and
2. to find documents, legislation, publications etc (23%).
3. Other key tasks include finding out about working for the EU institutions (12%) and
4. also about rights linked to EU citizenship, such as working abroad, travel, healthcare etc. (12%).
5. News accounts for another 12% and
6. funding and contracts just 3%.

1. Around 60% of visitors come to the site for work reasons so the majority of the audience are professional.
2. However, 40% per cent come for personal reasons (eg finding a job, finding about rights).

This high percentage of personal usage distinguishes europa.eu from policy/DGs sites, which attract a more specialist audience.

Feedback

One of the recommendations of the 2007 evaluation, was to develop "tools to improve knowledge of users and their needs." When redesigning the site, a feedback and suggestion box was placed on every page of the site.

The survey asks three questions:

1. Did you find what you wanted? Yes. No.
2. What were you looking for?
3. Any suggestions?

This survey is available in 23 languages and with about 700 comments per week.

Also there was placed a permanent feedback survey on the site. Each twenty visitors is asked whether they want to complete a short questionnaire (5 questions) on leaving the site. This allows us to keep track of our users and their key needs and to measure satisfaction (or not) with the site over time.

What we do with feedback

The feedback from the site survey, suggestion box and emails together with the data from [Europa Analytics](#) (visitors, page views etc..) allows to make constant improvements to the site. There are

daily adjustments and also work on short, medium and longer-term improvements.

The comments (via suggestion box) are translated (machine translation) and analysed on a weekly basis. Monthly evaluation meetings with our team and the contractors analysing data are held and feedback and making decisions on site improvements. The multilingual nature of the site makes every change to the site complex as even a small change to a link description has to be replicated across all 23 language versions.

User Satisfaction

The 87% of visitors are satisfied with the site.

This is an increase over the results of the 2007 survey which had satisfaction at 79%. This is a clear improvement and it shows that the new structure and layout of the site is more adapted to user needs.

Changes in the Pipeline

Revamp of about the EU section

europa homepage also provides extensive content on how the EU operates. Responsibility for this content lies partly with COMM.A5 but mainly with unit COMM.C1.

Revamp of policies section

Work has begun to revamp the content of the policy pages, which again is run in close cooperation with unit COMM.C1. The 32 policy areas will be grouped into 12 themes (as used on the Commission and EU news sites).

Your Life in the EU

We are currently revising this section to use to a greater extent the content under the Your Europe Citizens site. We are currently separating the work and business content and adding information on pensions. We also plan to add specific content for 3rd country nationals.

Longer-term we are thinking of eliminating this box entirely and having a much more graphic, eye-catching and direct link Your Europe content. This is still under consideration as it has major implications for the homepage as a whole. We are waiting for confirmation from MARKT on what the language policy of Your Europe Citizens will be. The original plan was to operate in all languages, but this seems to be now under discussion in MARKT given pressure on resources.

Take part

This entire section has been rewritten over the last few months adding new pages on EU and social media, visits programmes and 'have your say' on policies.

Publications and documents

The users have considerable problems finding documents, legislation etc.. A guide will help users navigate their way around various sites and databases.

Splash page

tested new language splash page - the splash page itself was a barrier to access as people had problem identifying their languages from such a long a list. Users expect to see flags to identify a language (which would not be an option on our sites as we focus on language rather than country) but we are working to make the layout easier and more accessible.

Site accessibility

The entire site was designed to meet high standards of accessibility but we are working to strengthen this even further. There are currently around 30 changes underway to various parts of the site to make it more open for all users.

Banner

A new banner (masthead) for the inter-institutional sites was approved by all institutions in the [CEiii](#) on 14 October. This followed months of discussion and submission of design proposals from a number of institutions. The new version does away with the Europa logo and replaces it with a more modern design, stronger EU identity (larger flag), search integrated into banner and language selector higher up. It also allows for a reasonable degree of customisation where appropriate.

The new banner is to be placed autumn 2010. The Publications Office has also agreed, despite initial resistance, to use this banner on their websites.

Sources

Note for the file COMM/C2/DH D(2010), from 18.10.2010