



Activities of selected Europe Direct Information  
Centres from eight different European countries  
- A comparative study -

---

Friederike Löser, Robin Freund

Oktober  
2016



## **The individual activity focusses of selected Europe Direct Centres**

The project is dealing with the work of the Europe Direct Centres and focusses on the different approaches that each Centre takes. Dr. Friederike Löser and Robin Freund collected several information concerning the participating Centres. Each Centre filled out a questionnaire. Interesting questions for the authors are concerning the size of the respective Centres, the cooperation with other Centres, the educational background of the employees and the most important projects in the view of each Centre. After several attempts to get in contact with some Centres via e-mail, the authors decided to visit some Centres personally to get in touch with the employees and to introduce themselves and the project. The visits took place from July to September 2016. Thankfully the Europe Direct Centres of Amsterdam, Luxembourg, Utrecht, Antwerpen, Firenze, Pisa, Valencia, Valetta and Siena took part at the project. Additionally, from a Non-EU-country, the EU Info Centre in Skopje also participated.

---

### **Europe Direct Amsterdam**

The Centre in Amsterdam exists since the European Commission established the Europe Direct Centres in generally. Since the existence of the Centre, the employees in Amsterdam are employed temporarily and also work as librarians in the annexed library. All of the current and previous employees were and are librarians. The Centre is not supervised by other Centres or any authority in the Netherlands. Meetings between other Centres are on irregular basis with all EDICs, at least twice a year. For the Centre in Amsterdam the situation with the citizens is not easy to handle. There are a lot of other activity options for the citizens and the EU is not popular in the Netherlands. In average, 50 visitors visit the Centre per month. Most visitors do not make an appointment. Since the "Brexit" the Centre did not feel any changes.

The last project was "EURES". The advisors tell the audience about the possibility of applying for jobs in other European countries and the specifics of each country. The "EURES" program is offered once every year. Most of the other projects are not very popular.

---



## Europe Direct Luxembourg

The Centre in Luxembourg exists since 1998. Currently, there are two people employed at the Centre – both of them permanently. The Centre is supervised by the “structure hôte, La province de Luxembourg”. The Centre organizes several projects and meetings with other Centres continuously. For example, in cooperation with the Centre in Wrexham, the so called “Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange”. The Centre is situated in a library in a rural area, the target audience are mainly pupils. In average, 50 people visit the Centre per month with some visitors making an appointment. Since the “Brexit” the Centre did not feel any changes.

The last and most popular project was “The footsteps of Robert Schuman, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2016. The “Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange”, organized by an English Centre (Wrexham), was popular as well. Other interesting projects in the near past were a visit to Schengen and the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. The Centre repeatedly offers “the open doors of the European institutions in Brussels”, which is also very popular. Travelling exhibitions in and for schools with themes like “Democracy and Federalisms in Belgium”, “Anne Frank – A history for today” were popular in the past. The Centre participates in the Erasmus program of universities and in the “Price lux”, a distribution of films. The Centre also visits places of memory, takes part on the European Christmas market in different cities (2016: Liège). Next year, the Centre organizes a competition with primary schools with the theme “European Cuisine”.

---

## Europe Direct Utrecht

Europe Direct Utrecht exists since 2001 (information Point Europe). In 2005 it continued as a Europe Direct Centre. During the opening hours there is one employee of the host organisation, the public library in Utrecht, responsible for the visitors and their questions. There is one employee with a contract of eight hours per week and two others working for Europe Direct occasionally. All of them are employees of the public library and employed permanently. Most of them work in the library as a librarian, occasionally the website manager and marketing and public relation officers work for the Europe Direct Centre. The Representation of the European Commission in the Hague supports the Centre. They answer questions and organise courses on different kind of topics. The Dutch national network of Europe Direct Centres meet three times per year in order to exchange experiences with activities, consult each-other.



Additionally, they communicate via a facebook group. The Centre has about 300 visitors per month. Most of the visitors do not make an appointment. Since the "Brexit" the Centre did not feel any changes.

One of the last projects was "Kidslecture for children" (eight years and older). Children's book author Arend van Dam tells about his project "Europe in 50 stories". One of the projects offered repeatedly is the Information fair in the library for youngsters who like to go abroad for study, work or as a volunteer. Other projects offered repeatedly are the European Film Festival and the Emigration Expo with about 12.500 visitors and the "Europe Pub Quiz" in a popular pub. Very well visited are the activities addressed to the general public about topics like history, the EU and its role in the world, and about Russia, Ukraine.

---

## **Europe Direct Antwerpen**

The Centre in Antwerpen exists since 1998. One employee works full time, three employees in part time. All colleagues are employed permanently. The employees studied Political sciences, social sciences, EU studies, or Justice. The Centre is supervised by FOD Buitenlandse Zaken (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The Centre has about six meetings with other Centres during the year. The Centre focuses its work on the education while varying the target groups in schools. The Centre has about 30 visitors per month. Usually, the visitors make an appointment. Since the "Brexit" more and more people are aware of the EU as an important policy level. A public opinion about the EU is growing.

The "Europaweken" is a popular project. Children learn everything about how the EU works by playing EU Council and EU Parliament in role plays. In 16 weeks throughout the school year the employees meet up to 4000 pupils. The Centre repeatedly offers role plays with children, and focuses on teaching teachers as well as future teachers to raise awareness.

---



## Europe Direct Firenze

The Centre was opened in 1999 as European Info Point. Then, in 2005, when the European Commission established the Europe Direct Network, the Centre was transformed into Europe Direct Firenze. Currently, three people are employed in the Centre. Europe Direct Firenze is hosted by the Municipality of Florence but the service is managed by a private association which won a subcontract. The EDIC manager is a civil servant so he is employed permanently, the other two persons are employees of the Association and are employed temporary depending on the ending of the subcontract. The civil servant has worked as a project manager in the social service of the Municipality of Florence. One of the employees has the degree in Law, she has gained experience working in a legal office and in companies. She also taught law in High School. Another employee has the Degree in International Relations, she has benefited from different European mobility programmes (Erasmus, Leonardo) and did internships abroad, before she was working in an association of the social sector in project management. Every year the Centre participates in the Annual General Meeting which gathers all the Europe Direct from different countries in one city in order to share good practices, to have a direct contact with European officers, to know the priorities they have to communicate in their territories. Every year the DG COMM (Europe Direct are instruments of Directorate General Communication) provides a training in Brussels for all Europe Direct Centres. The Centre is supervised by the Italian Representation of European Commission in Rome. Until now, there was no visit to other Centres by the employees, but a visit is planned for one week in October 2016. Usually between 50 and 100 people visit the Centre per month without appointment. If there are special events, like the "Notte Blu", a culture festival with up to 1000 visitors. At the time questioning, the Centre did not feel any changes concerning the Brexit.

In their current project the Centre records podcasts on different topics related to European Union and the territory, interviewing people and experts. For example, a podcast on the topic of migration. The Centre interviewed a lawyer who is volunteering in a Florentine association which provides free services to migrants (for example free legal advice).

Link to the interview (only in Italian):

<http://www.edfirenze.eu/2016/07/eurocast-5puntata-associazione-progetto-arcobaleno/>

Every year, the Centre offers projects in schools (American University students in European Studies are trained to be professors in order to go to the Florentine High School to speak about European Union), for young people (different events on job opportunities where they can meet entrepreneurs, associations in different fields and



the Centre organises Info Days on the European mobility opportunities) and also organizes free film festivals focusing on European topics. The most popular project is the above mentioned "Notte Blu", born in 2010, which celebrates the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, the European Day. For two up to five days the Centre organises shows, exhibitions, projects, concerts, cinema and public meetings, cooking shows to speak about the EU to citizens also in a light way.

Link to the video of Notte Blu 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xCUaRDUaVc>

---

## **Europe Direct Pisa**

The Europe Direct Centre Pisa exists since 2007 and is located in the city Centre right next to the tourist information. There are two temporarily employed staff members working in the Centre but they are supported by the permanent staff (3-4 employees) of the European Policies Office of Provincia die Pisa (Local Public Body hosting the EDIC Centre). The backgrounds of the employees are studies of languages and political science and international relations. The employee who studied languages is still a teacher of French in middle and high schools. The Centre receives many inquiries via email and 20 visitors per month in average. The Centre is hosted by the Provincia di Pisa (Local Public body) and their director Giuseppe Pozzana is also manager of different offices in this institution, including European policies office, from which the Centre depends. The Europe Direct Centre Pisa has at least one meeting with other Italian EDIC and their Representation in Rome per year and the annual general meeting with the whole European network. They did some projects together with other Italian Europe Direct Centres in the past, especially in the pre-election period to raise the awareness of the first voters about the importance of the vote for the European parliament. Since the British vote on the withdrawal from the EU, the Europe Direct Centre in Pisa has not felt any changes but fears that in the long run there will be repercussions.

Their last projects were the management of SVE projects (Spain, Russia, Belgium, France) and Comenius Projects. These are mostly related to Life Learning Programme and Erasmus Plus Programme. Repeatedly, the Europe Direct Centre Pisa offers educational projects in schools and Universities. In secondary schools the Centre offers "UN GIORNO IN CONSIGLIO" (Simulation of a European Council session. Debates on the Europe 2020 strategy about environmental objectives); Another project is "PRIMI PASSI IN EUROPA" (Didactic path for low secondary schools to discover EU history, institutions, values,



Charter of fundamental rights, features etc); A third well-known project is “DIRITTI SI NASCE” (Didactic path in lower secondary schools about the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union). In High schools the Centre offers “A SCUOLA DI OPEN COESIONE: OpenCoesione School” (or ASOC, from Italian “A Scuola di OpenCoesione”) it is an educational challenge and a MOOC (Massive Online Open Course), designed for Italian high-school students. ASOC was launched in 2013 within the open government strategy on cohesion policy carried out by the National Government, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Representation Office of the European Commission in Italy. The project is also supported by the European Commission’s network of Europe Direct Information Centres. On the national OpenCoesione portal ([www.opencoesione.gov.it](http://www.opencoesione.gov.it)), everyone can find transparent information on investment projects funded by Cohesion Policies in Italy. Open data on more than 900,000 projects has been posted so far with details on the amount of funding, policy objectives, locations, involved subjects and completion times. Data are updated every two months and can be freely re-used and explored interactively on the portal using maps, filters and detailed data sheets on projects and recipients. A Scuola di OpenCoesione builds on the OpenCoesione portal to actively promote the use and reuse of data by participating schools for the development of civic awareness and engagement of local communities in monitoring the effectiveness of public investment. The program is composed of six main sessions. The first four sessions build on the use of innovative and interdisciplinary skills to focus, respectively, on public policies, ICT and digital capacity and open data analysis, citizen monitoring and citizen participation, data journalism and storytelling. During the fifth session the students carry out on-site visits to public works and/or services financed by the EU and national funds being developed in their territory and interview with key players involved in the projects’ implementation, beneficiaries or others on the sites where they are being developed, while the sixth step is a final event where students meet local communities and policy-makers to discuss the findings of their investigations and evaluations. In Universities the Centre offers “TOSCANA PER L’EUROPA”. This includes meetings about EU opportunities addressed to University students. The most popular projects are “Primi passi in Europa” (First steps in Europe) and “A scuola di Open Coesione” described above.

---

## Europe Direct Siena

The Centre in Siena exists since 2009. Currently six people are employed at the Centre. All employed colleagues are permanent university staff. One of the employees has a PhD



in Political Science, one employee has a graduate in foreign languages and Political science, one is graduated in Communication science, another one has a graduate in Computer science, two are holding schoolleaving certification. The Centre is not supervised by another Centre or authority. The Centre cooperates in the organization of events and mutual assistance in providing information to the citizens. In average the Centre receives about 50 visitors per month with some of them making an appointment. The Centre staff visits other Europe Direct Centres quite often and all experiences have been very positive. After the British "Brexit", the Italian visitors had a feeling of disease towards the British vote.

Two of the last project were "Juncker's priorities" and "SMEs" (Subject of approvals). One of the most popular project is "Nice to meet, you ..." it's a project aiming to contribute to integrate international students of the University of Siena in the city and to widespread different cultures. A repeatedly offered project is "Lessons of Europe". This project contains cycles of lectures focusing on history of European integration and on topics of interest for both the EU and citizens. At the end of each edition, modules on European project management are administered.

---

## **Europe Direct Valencia**

The Centre exists since 2005. This Centre employs two people full time, two half time. Three of the employees are employed permanently. One employee is a trainee. They have a Degrees in Law, Political Science or similar. The Centre is supervised by de European Commission and the regional government, Generalitat Valenciana. The Centre has to make a monthly and a yearly report about the activities for the EC. Generalitat Valenciana makes a diary supervision about the office. The Centre is in touch with Europe Direct Alicante. The Centres cooperate helping each other when help is needed and to spread information in the different regions.

In average, the Centre has 10 visitors per month. An appointment is usually not necessary. Just some of the visitors make a phone call before. Concerning the British "Brexit" the Centre did not get feedback from the visitors.

The Centre does not work at any European project. Europe Direct Valencia just gives information about European projects like Erasmus and its content.

---





## Europe Direct Valetta

The Centre exists since 2013. Two part-timers are employed at the Centre. The two employees are employed permanently with the host organisation (GRTU Malta Chamber of SMEs). One of the employees has a degree in European Studies and the other has obtained a higher national diploma in Business Enterprise and is currently reading a MSc in Management. The Centre is not supervised by another Centre or other Authorities. The Centre has regular meetings with the other Maltese EDICs. The employees have a good relationship with the other representatives of other Maltese EDICS. They meet once a month and send around an average of five emails each month. Usually the visitors do not make appointments. In average just five visitors come to the office. Maltese citizens are concerned about the BREXIT vote especially in relation with business. However, at the moment they have not experienced any immediate change.

The last project was an information project about the “EU Funding”. This project is offered once a year and the event always has a good attendance.

---

The authors also visited an EU Info Centre in Macedonia, a candidate country for EU accession:

## EU Info Centre Skopje

The EU InfoCentre Skopje at their current location was opened in 2008.

In contrast to the Europe Direct Centres (which only exist within the EU member states), the Centre in Skopje is an Info Centre of the Delegation of the European Union to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – candidate country for EU accession. Five people are employed there. The employment is limited to the duration of the Project. The management of the EU Centre is by a winning consortium on an EU tender for a fixed period (1 year with the possibility for one year extension). Employees are with mixed educational and professional backgrounds: Economics, International Relations and Diplomacy, Law, Journalism and have worked in the private sector, state administration, media and projects similar to this one.

In regard to their projects, the European Mobility Week is an EU initiative they promote in Macedonia, emphasising the Environment protection. Repeatedly, the Centre offers activities related to Environmental protection, EU educational activities for young audiences and cultural events. The centre’s most popular projects are the Babylon



Award for best young translator, the Jean Monet Award for best EU related article/photo, the European Mobility Week, the Cultural Stories - programme for promotion of European culture and Europe Day events across the country. As an EU funded project they have regular supervision of their activities – by the Delegation of the European Union. As the project for management of the EU Info Centre started on 4 July 2016, the Centre in Skopje did not have any contact with other Centres yet. In busy months, the centre in Skopje receives more than 800 visitors and up to 400 visitors per month during the quite summer months. Visitors usually do not make an appointment but mostly walk in. Since the vote on the Brexit, the centre in Skopje has not yet felt any difference.

---

Unfortunately, the Europe Direct Centres in Mailand, Palermo, Marseille and Konstanz have been visited, but did not send a response to the authors. Concerning Konstanz the authors have been informed, that the responsible person is out of office for several months. Further Centres (Den Haag, Groningen, Maastricht and Limburg Belgium) have been contacted via e-mail, but also did not send a response to the authors.

Concerning the following Centers the authors are only able to publish a few information which were discussed orally with employees in person during the visit.

## **Europe Direct Milano**

Europe Direct Milano is the central of “Europe Direct Lombardia”. Milano administers the finances for the other Centres in Lombardia. This concept is unique in Italy. In Milano four employees are working permanently.

---

## **Europe Direct Palermo**

The Europe Direct Centre in Palermo employed four people. Usually at least one trainee is working at the Centre, too. The authors had a very warm welcome at the Centre and were introduced into the several projects of the Centre. The most important projects are



information projects at schools. Unfortunately, there was a language barrier because only the trainee from Hungary could speak English and thus translated for us.

---

## **Europe Direct Marseille**

The Europe Direct Centre Marseille is part of the "Centre de jeunes". Unfortunately, the only employed person was not in office during the visit. One of the colleagues of the "Centre de jeunes" was very pleasant and was able to give the authors the needed contact.