

Europe Direct Information Centre Outer Hebrides



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Eurozone



€1= £0.84

€1= \$1.04

Source:

The European Central Bank, as of 21 December 2016

Our Contact Details

Europe Direct Information Centre – Outer Hebrides, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Sandwick Road, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS1 2BW

Phone: 01851 822830
Internal: 211010

Email and website:
europedirect@cne-siar.gov.uk
<http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/>



Europe Direct Information Centre – Outer Hebrides opening hours are from 0900 to 1300 each weekday

EDIC EVENT AT LEWS CASTLE COLLEGE (UHI)



The EDIC Manager was invited by Lews Castle College (UHI), Stornoway, Isle of Lewis to provide information to the students and staff at a specific event held in December 2016. The event focussed on providing information regarding EU programmes such as [ERASMUS+](#) 2014-2020 including the European Voluntary Service, the newly launched [European Solidarity Corps](#), the [EURES](#) (job mobility portal), the [European Personnel Selection Office](#) (EPSO), as well as information on general opportunities for young people in the EU, staff opportunities under ERASMUS+ and wider EU information including [EU citizen's rights](#).

Much interest was shown in the European Solidarity Corps and ERASMUS+ where bespoke resources were taken up by the students, and queries answered by the EDIC Manager. The college kindly allowed the EDIC Manager to leave the information stand in situ over the ensuing days to allow a wider cohort of students (different students attend each day), and more staff access to the resources.



CHRISTMAS IN EUROPE

The evergreen Christmas tree like holly and ivy symbolises eternal life. This tradition was first discovered in the sixteenth century in Alsace but as early as the eleventh century houses seem to have been decorated with 'greenery taken from trees'.

Very early on the Christmas tree was covered with various decorations and candles to light it up to celebrate Christmas.

In Hungary the tree is decorated with biscuits, sweets, and chocolates which can only be eaten from the tree from 24 December, and so as not to leave the tree bare the coloured wrappers have to be left on the tree.

In the eighteenth century the Christmas tree reached all of Germany and spread to other countries. However Italy and Spain didn't adopt the tree for quite some time. In Greece the Christmas tree doesn't exist but instead people cultivate a Christmas rose called a Hellebore. Find out more about Saint Nicholas, the advent calendar, gift giving and some European Christmas recipes [here](#).

Wherever you are spending your festive season we would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

In Scottish Gaelic we say: Nollaig Chridheil agus Bliadhna Mhath Ùr dhuibh uile!



Christmas Tree with illuminated creels beneath in Stornoway, Isle of Lewis

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PRESS BRIEFING BY MICHEL BARNIER

Michel Barnier, who has been appointed as the European Commission's Chief Negotiator in the Brexit negotiations, has indicated that should the UK trigger Article 50 in March 2017, then an exit agreement could be reached by October the following year. His statement gives a clear signal that the EU would like to conclude Brexit as quickly as possible, and that the UK will have to move quickly if it wants to secure favourable exit terms: <http://bit.ly/2qahdrs>

Michel Barnier stated "Time will be short. The period for actual negotiations will be shorter than 2 years ... The EU is ready to receive the notification"

"The 4 principles that will guide the negotiation with the UK are: unity of the EU27, EU membership of the EU comes with rights and benefits, no negotiations before notification, and the 4 freedom principles of the Single Market are indivisible, cherry picking is not allowed". Watch the press briefing here: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=1130486>



Michel Barnier, Image © LSE

LAUNCH OF THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

If you are between 17-30 years old you can now register to be part of the EU Solidarity Corps (ESC) which will engage in solidarity activities across Europe. The ESC will allow volunteers to sign up for volunteering, a traineeship, apprenticeship or job lasting 2 to 12 months.

These opportunities will provide valuable skills and experience at the start of young people's careers. For more information on the activities see [here](http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=1130486).

You can also watch a video to learn about registration: <http://europa.eu/!xy39RU>



Image © European Union

COMMISSION OPENS INFRINGEMENT PROCEDURES AGAINST 7 MEMBER STATES



Image © Sergiy Serdyuk

The European Commission is taking action against 7 Member States on the grounds that they have failed to fulfil their obligations under EU vehicle type approval legislation. They failed to set up penalties systems to deter car manufacturers from violating car emissions legislation, or not applying such sanctions where a breach of law has occurred.

The Commission is to act against the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Spain and the United Kingdom on the grounds that they have disregarded EU vehicle type approval rules.

For more information and details on the EU infringements procedure see [here](http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=1130486).

COMMISSION LAUNCHES CALL WORTH €1.5M TO PROMOTE COASTAL AND MARITIME TOURISM

Coastal tourism is the most popular type of tourism in Europe. Two out of three European tourists prefer to spend their holidays on the coast, and nearly half of all nights spent in EU tourist accommodation are spent in coastal areas.

Together with cruise tourism, yachting and marinas, coastal tourism in the EU provides almost 3 million jobs and generates revenue of 400 billion euros. The Commission is supporting maritime and coastal tourism by funding new ideas, fostering dialogue, and promoting Europe as a maritime destination, in line with its 2014 'European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism'. <https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/content/commission-launches-call-worth-%E2%82%AC1.5m-to-promote-coastal-and-maritime-tourism>

EVENTS SCHEDULE

The EDIC has now completed its scheduled programme of broad and specific events under our 2016 Action Plan agreed with the European Commission.

We will keep you informed of our upcoming events throughout 2017.

Our first planned events will take place early in the new year and will be in the form of specific events alongside primary schools who are preparing to enter [the Euroquiz](http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=1130486) 2017 competition.