

### EBLIDA Conferences

As announced earlier in EBLIDA News EBLIDA will be co-hosting two conferences in the autumn of 2007.

The first of these "Librarian@2010: Educating for the future" will take place in Lisbon from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of September at the Auditorium of the Direcção-Geral de Arquivos – Alameda da Universidade. The conference will be held in association with EUCLID (The European Association for Library and Information Education and Research) and the BAD (Portuguese Association of Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists).

The aim of the conference is to bridge the gap between academia and practice within the Library and Information Sector and to illustrate new ways of cooperation. The conference is divided into three themes exploring cooperation between academia and practice, mobility and flexibility and the role of academia and the LIS associations in the continuous training of library professionals. The conference will end with a panel discussion entitled "Towards a common curriculum".

More information about the conference will be sent to all EBLIDA members and also available at the conference website: <http://www.apbad.pt>.

The second conference on digitization of library material in Europe, co-hosted with LIBER (The European Research Library Association) will take place at the Royal Library in Copenhagen on the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2007. The conference will bring together a large number of experts in the field of digitization with representatives from the European Commission, several national and university libraries and colleagues from the private sector, including Google, Microsoft and JSTOR. The aim of the conference is to discuss various national and organizational strategies for digitization within the European LIS sector and to formulate a set of recommendations and proposals for further action within this field.

The full conference programme and details on hotels and registration can be found on the EBLIDA website at <http://www.eblida.org/index.php?page=index> and invitations have been sent to all the members of LIBER and EBLIDA.

On the conference website is a list of recommended reading which might also be of interest to members who choose not to attend the conference, including links to two reports carried out for the Commission by the Institute for Information Law in Amsterdam (IViR) and an article by Kjell Nilsson, Deputy National Librarian at the Royal Li-

brary in Sweden and a member of EBLIDA's Copyright Expert Group.

We hope that many EBLIDA members will find these conferences of interest and have the opportunity to attend.

### Twelve European Information associations reinforce their cooperation to enhance professional competencies (Press release, ADBS, France)

A meeting to study the enhancement of the competencies of European information professionals was convened in Paris, the 15 June 2007, by the ADBS. In attendance of the meeting were representatives of professional associations from twelve countries: Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, and United Kingdom.

The morning session allowed taking stock of the development of Euro **certification**, the European device of certification of competencies in conformity with the international standard ISO 17024. Associations in seven countries are already involved in the award of **European certificates of qualification level in information services**, applying the rules established by the CERTIDoc Consortium.

Joint communication activities have been planned to come into operation within the next few months, with a view to broaden the audience of the Euro certification and to heighten the awareness of some prospective partners.

The afternoon session was dedicated to the follow-up of the **Euro guide LIS**. The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, issued in 2004, is now available in eleven languages and had a real success in all Europe and even outside. Hundreds and hundreds of printed copies were bought; thousands of users downloaded it when visiting one from the web sites where it is freely available. Several among the participants outlined the diversity of the uses made of this tool. In some countries it was the basis for redesigning the LIS curricula in universities and professional schools, in full accordance with the provisions for an Higher Education Area required by the Bologna process.

In view of the elaboration of a 3<sup>rd</sup> edition to be issued in 2009 the decision was made to set up a "Consortium Euro guide". In each country (or linguistic area), a national association will be a member of the Consortium and will serve, when the need arises, as a switching point for other associations or organizations in the country using the **Euro guide**. A wiki will be set up to further the collaborative work of the various associations.

The information profession has from now at its disposal the *Euro guide* and the Euro certification which are, at the European level, two major tools for analysing and fostering the competencies of the professionals. The European meeting of the 15 June 2007 has shown the relevance of the "project approach" for a work jointly done by various associations at the European level. It brought to light the driving role of the ADBS, which for fifteen years had invested in the conception, maintenance and promotion of these tools for a collective management of professional competencies.

For more information CERTIDOC at <http://www.certidoc.net> or contact: [certification@adbs.fr](mailto:certification@adbs.fr).

## Problems with the EU institutions? - The European Ombudsman is there to help

By P Nikiforos Diamandouros, European Ombudsman

The European Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in EU institutions and bodies. Maladministration encompasses all kinds of poor or failed administration, from late payment for EU projects or problems with tender procedures to the refusal to give access to a document or information. In 2006, the Ombudsman received almost 4 000 complaints from EU citizens, companies, associations, NGOs and interest groups. The number of complaints thus stabilised at the record high levels reached during the previous two years. Two-thirds of his inquiries were directed against the European Commission, followed by the European Personnel Selection Office, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

### Lack of transparency

One quarter of all the inquiries that the European Ombudsman carried out in 2006 concerned lack of transparency in the EU administration. To give an example: The Ombudsman issued a critical remark against the Commission for its refusal to grant access to documents it had submitted to the World Trade Organisation on scientific concerns about the safety of genetically modified (GM) foods. This followed a complaint by the environmental NGO, *Friends of the Earth*, which had asked the Commission for the documents. The Commission eventually granted access to the documents.

### A citizen-centred administration

The EU institutions have done a lot to improve their services to the public in recent years, but they still have some way to go before they become truly citizen-centred. Last year, the Ombudsman noted a rise in the number of critical remarks he had to make to the EU institutions - from 29 in 2005 to 41 in 2006. This development should be a cause for concern for everyone who wants better relations between the European Union and its citizens. The way in which the public administration reacts to complaints is a key measure of how citizen-centred it is and how well it contributes to the promotion of a service culture.

### Origin of complaints

Most complaints received in 2006 were lodged by individual citizens (95%). Only 5% of the complaints came from

companies, associations and other organisations. However, half of the complaints from companies and associations were within the Ombudsman's mandate. This implies that these entities have a better understanding of the service the Ombudsman provides. Thousands of companies and associations from all the Member States are involved in EU projects, contracts and calls for tender. And some of them do encounter problems with the EU institutions. It is of particular importance that they know how the Ombudsman can help them. Information is available on a new info sheet specifically geared at companies, associations and other organisations: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/infosheet/en/default.htm>

The Ombudsman can only investigate alleged maladministration by EU institutions. This means that complaints against national or regional authorities in the Member States, even if these complaints raise issues of EU law, are outside his remit. However, the Ombudsman manages to help around 70% of complainants, by opening an inquiry into the case, transferring the complaint to a competent body, or advising the complainant where to turn.

Regarding the geographical origin of complaints, Spain produced the greatest number of complaints in 2006, followed by Germany, France and Belgium. But if the size of the population is taken into consideration, the countries with the highest rate of complaints are Luxembourg, Malta and Cyprus.

### The Ombudsman - complementary to the courts

The European Ombudsman offers a free, fast and flexible service. All citizens, companies, associations, NGOs, interest groups and organisations with a registered office in the EU may turn to the Ombudsman with their problems. Complaints can be written in any of the 23 EU Treaty languages and can be sent by mail, fax or e-mail.

In some cases, turning to the Ombudsman can provide a more effective solution than going to court. To begin with, there is no cost to the complainant and the Ombudsman is usually quicker than the courts.

Furthermore, whenever the Ombudsman finds maladministration in the EU institutions, he tries to achieve a friendly solution, instead of ruling "guilty" or "not guilty". This gives the opportunity to ensure a win-win outcome, satisfying both the complainant and the institution involved.

A complaint form and lots of other relevant information can be found on the Ombudsman's website: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu>.

### News from the Secretariat

At the Executive Committee Meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland the Executive Committee established two working groups to investigate the feasibility for expert groups on libraries and culture, to be chaired by Barbara Lison and on professional education, to be chaired by Jill Martin.

The working group will report back to the Executive Committee at its next meeting in Tallinn in October 2007.