

European Sources Online

Abstract: European Sources Online (ESO) is an electronic information service that provides information focusing on Europe. This article, by Ian Thomson of Cardiff University and Executive Editor of ESO, describes the development and the background to ESO, the key features and objectives of the service and current challenges.

Keywords: European Union; online services

Introduction

European Sources Online (ESO) is a web-based subscription information service that focuses on providing substantive information from a wide variety of sources on the European Union, the countries and regions of Europe, and on issues of concern to people living, studying and working in Europe.

ESO is the culmination of a long series of bibliographical and full text European information services from the European Documentation Centre at Cardiff University, where I have been based since 1982. In this article I describe the history of these services, why I feel there is a need for ESO today, the key features of the service and current and future challenges. Bearing in mind the specific subject interests of the readers of this journal, I indicate how ESO can be of assistance to those looking at the European Union and the wider Europe from a legal perspective.



Ian Thomson

access to full text sources. A further evolution led to the launch of *KnowEurope*, in which we added a mass of full-text licensed material about the EU from other publishers. We also started creating unique editorial material in the form of Information Guides on the institutions and policies of the EU and on the countries of Europe. For a variety of reasons (including the fact that *KnowEurope* 'sounded' rather negative about Europe) we

re-launched the service as *European Sources Online* in 2004.

In 2006 it was decided that Information Services at Cardiff University would take over the publishing of ESO directly. In collaboration with JISC Collections we acquired the existing data from ProQuest and created a new operating system, which allows for daily updating and streamlined publishing. Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Information and Communication, formally re-launched the service in Cardiff in January 2008 and called ESO an 'excellent internet resource.'

Within the United Kingdom higher and further education sectors ESO is now available via JISC Collections (<http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/catalogue/eso>). The EDC at Cardiff directly markets ESO to other sectors of the market in the UK and to other European and international markets.

History

In 1980, whilst working as a researcher to a Member of the European Parliament, I became aware of the need to bring to the attention of students, researchers and professionals in the UK the range of information sources from both the EU itself, and from other sources that helped explain what was happening in the European Union. This led to the launch of *European Access*, a paper-based quarterly bibliographic service. The key feature was to bring together 'primary' or 'official' sources with 'secondary' sources, which summarised, analysed or commented upon EU developments.

When I moved to Cardiff University as the Official Publications Librarian in 1982, I brought the title with me. In 1988 Chadwyck-Healey agreed to 'professionalise' the service and it became a bi-monthly title. In the 1990s a web-based version was launched as *European Access Plus*, which allowed for hyperlinks and

Objectives – why ESO?

The situation as regarding models of publishing, the type of information services needed by people today, and the methods whereby we find information in 2009 are very different from when I first came up with the idea of *European Access* in 1980. Is there a need for ESO in 2009?

This is a question that I ask myself regularly – from both an intellectual and a commercial perspective. As a European information specialist who still daily helps a wide range of users find European information and trains

hundreds of people a year all over Europe, I use and recommend a wide selection of sources myself. These range from using general search engines such as Google, the EU's own EUROPA portal, specialist databases such as EUR-LEX, OEIL and PreLex, the EU's Registers of Documents, the ECLAS bibliographic database and current awareness services such as EurActiv and EUObserver – many of these are essentially free access at the point of use services. If I want I can also use commercial databases such as ABI/Inform, LexisNexis Butterworths and Westlaw UK.

Nevertheless, without ESO I feel the information service I provide to my users would be seriously compromised.

We use the by-line *Easy access – Expert selection – Extensive coverage* in our marketing literature for ESO. It may sound like marketing-speak but each claim can be backed up. Easy access means that the ESO search functionality is powerful and allows you to search in a very basic or a very refined way. Expert selection means that human European information specialists choose carefully what information is to be indexed. Extensive coverage means that one search in ESO will bring forth official EU information sources, sources from national governments, academic monographs and journal articles, news sources, stakeholder information etc. Daily updating means that an important judgment in the European Court of Justice can be accessible, alongside any news coverage and commentary the next day. A recent search for information on the Community Patent

found significantly more useful information in ESO than a search on Google or ECLAS.

Features

The dividing line between a bibliographic index and an information service is blurred nowadays. Essentially, ESO is a bibliographic index to information sources on Europe. A bibliographic record is created for each source, from which you can search by keywords, author, title, source type, source origin, geographic indicator and subject listing. For 80% of the sources there is a hyperlink to the full text of the source. For another 10% the full text is provided following the bibliographic record (this largely comprises Europe-focused articles from the newspapers *Financial Times* and *European Voice*, and ESO's own Information Guides). The remaining 10% of records comprise academic monographs and journal articles – open url linking increasingly offers full text access to some of these sources as well.

So, I would argue that ESO is an information service providing primarily immediate full text access to a unique range of expertly selected information sources on European topics. Whilst the vast majority of its sources are fully in English, ESO does not have an exclusive UK perspective. Where possible we include sources offering other national, European and international perspectives.

Following a search the hits are shown, by default, in reverse chronological order, preceded by any records

ESO European Sources Online

Home | About | **Advanced Search** | Information Guides | Email Alert | Librarians' Resources | Help | Wales & Europe | Cymraeg

Welcome to European Sources Online, the added value information service that focuses on the European Union, the countries of Europe and on issues of concern to citizens and stakeholders in the Europe of today.

Search ESO

go!

All of these words Any of these words
 Exactly these words

Source Origin

All Origins

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial publisher and media	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National official organisation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional/local official organisation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International organisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professional, public or political organisation

Source Type

All Types

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Background	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy-making
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Book review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legislation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistics
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> News source	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Textbook, monograph or reference
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Periodical article	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Topic Guides/In Focus
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key Source	


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Figure 1: ESO home page

	Source: Financial Times Publication Date: 2009
Title: Offshore account holders offered tax deal Author: Houlder, Vanessa Simonian, Haig Series/Date: Financial Times 27.3.09 Source Origin: Commercial publisher and media Source Type: News source Notes: Thousands of United Kingdom investors with up to £3bn stashed in secret Liechtenstein bank accounts will be asked to come forward voluntarily under a bi-lateral deal to be negotiated April 2009 between the two countries that could be the first of many worldwide.	Article also refers to separate initiatives by Monaco pledging to meet international standards on transparency in tax matters. Homepage URL: http://www.ft.com Related URL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ESO: Background information: Liechtenstein eases bank secrecy rules ■ Liechtenstein: Portal: Economy: Financial services ■ OECD: Topics: Tax ■ Reuters, 26.3.09: Liechtenstein to enter tax talks with Britain ■ Liechtenstein: Portal: Press release, 26.3.09: Liechtenstein reports on progress in implementation of OECD standards ■ UK: HMRC: Press Release, 12.3.09: HMRC welcomes important first steps by Liechtenstein on path to tax transparency
Keywords: Tax havens / evasion / fraud; Liechtenstein; Bank / Banking secrecy; United Kingdom; Voluntary disclosure of untaxed assets; Offshore disclosure facility; Tax Information Exchange Agreements; HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Subjects: 6.5 Single Market: Tax issues Geographic Indicators: Liechtenstein: External Monaco: External United Kingdom: External	
Thousands of British investors with up to £3bn stashed in secret Liechtenstein bank accounts will be asked to come forward voluntarily under a deal to be negotiated next week that could be the first of	

which have been designated a 'Key Source' for a search on that subject. You can change the order to sort by relevance. We add value to individual records by such features as 'related urls' and 'ESO: Background information'. Related urls offer hyperlinks to directly related additional information sources on the subject of the record. ESO: Background information offers links to either the previous record in ESO most directly connected, or to a record which provides full background information to the subject of the record. Thus, whilst there are currently 170,000 distinct records in ESO, the addition of the related url hyperlinks allow you to find at least 300,000 sources of substantive Europe focused information in the service.

ESO also contains a series of unique Information Guides. These offer up-to-date structured guides to finding information on each of the institutions and policies of the EU, plus the countries of Europe.

An email alert system is in the process of being set up. This will allow for a weekly email alerting you to

records added recently to the service in your chosen subject(s).

Market

Subscribers are approximately divided into 50% UK based, 50% other. They include academic and public libraries, government departments and parliaments, and some companies, think tanks and professional associations. In that sense the market is extremely wide for ESO.

A number of ESO subscribers are from law libraries in academic institutions, legal officers in government departments and some of the major law firms. ESO is not primarily focused on providing legal information, although we do include records to key legislative and judicial developments in the EU and the wider Europe. For example, all major proposals for EU legislation are covered, along with related links to the relevant

pages in the PreLex database which allows you to monitor accurately all subsequent documentation. The major caselaw of the European Court of Justice is covered. ESO scores over other information services in offering very up-to-date access to a range of commentary and analysis on these key EU legislative and judicial developments. You can also find a large number of links to sources from UK government departments and parliament.



editorial resources for a service like ESO are also considerable.

ESO has found a niche market looking for an added value and authoritative information service focusing on Europe. Having the editorial base of ESO in a well-established European Documentation Centre, with vast experience of what type of information on Europe people are looking for, is clearly a big selling point. Developing a functionality that is both powerful and easy to use has been important. The range of sources and perspectives that can be found in a single search in ESO is also impressive.

LIM readers can have a free trial to ESO by emailing ESO@cardiff.ac.uk

European Sources Online: <http://www.european-sources.info> **Ian Thomson**

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The future

Undoubtedly, there are challenges ahead. The user's perception that they can find information for free, and the power of the biggest commercial publishers, means that a smaller-scale subscription product has to offer something special in its chosen field. It also has to market the product clearly and continuously. The human

Biography

A profile on the new website of the Information Office of the European Parliament calls Ian Thomson *Mr EU Information in the UK*. He is Director of the European Documentation Centre, Cardiff University, Consultant to the Enterprise Europe Network Wales and Executive Editor, European Sources Online (ESO). From 2006-09 he was also the Director, South Wales Europe Direct Information Centre (SWEDIC) and also finds time to be President of the European Information Association and Chair of the UK European Information Networks: Steering Group. He has regular teaching and training engagements at the College of Europe, Natolin, Poland, the European Institute of Public Administration, Maastricht, The Netherlands and Örebro University, Sweden. Currently, he is an 'Expert' advising on information matters at the European Economic and Social Committee.