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NOTE

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To: Working Party on e-Law (e-Law)

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Subject: Public Access
- State of play

1. PublicAccess.eu¹ is a pilot project initiated by the European Parliament in 2014. It is being coordinated by the Publications Office, with input from associated Commission DGs (SG and DIGIT) and the other EU institutions. The main objective of the project is to enable easier online access to a wider range of unclassified documents held by EU institutions, thereby enhancing transparency and limiting the number of requests for access to documents.
2. The work on the project is proceeding, with three specific project strands being implemented:
 - Enriching EUR-Lex with new categories of documents
 - Project showcase
 - Study on ensuring integrated access to publicly available documents from EU institutions, agencies and bodies.

¹ <http://publications.europa.eu/en/web/public-access/home>

3. Enriching EUR-Lex with new categories of documents constitutes the main aspect of the project, as the outcomes will remain part of regular OP processes. The initial focus is on the Commission's documents and the implementation has been divided into three stages.
- Stage 1 concerns documents produced during the preparatory stage of the decision-making process within the Commission, leading to autonomous acts (delegated/implemented acts and PRAC acts²). Publication of those documents on EUR-Lex started on 11th of July, with 81 documents already available (the same as in Better Regulation Portal³). The link to the legal basis and the final act as published in OJ are already in place and at the beginning of 2017, EUR-Lex will be adapted in order to display the documents in the new internal procedure view.
 - Stage 2, planned for beginning of 2017, concerns further documents leading to the adoption of the Commission's proposal, as well as related documents produced during the internal decision making process (e.g. roadmaps, opinions of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board).
 - The scope of Stage 3, also planned for 2017, is still under discussion.
4. Additionally, initial contacts with the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Central Bank have been made in view of exploring the possibilities of including documents from these institutions in this part of the project.

² Acts adopted under the Regulatory procedure with scrutiny introduced by the Council Decision 2006/512/EC amending the Council Decision 1999/468/EC (Comitology decision)

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/share-your-views_en

5. The project showcase⁴ is a publicly available site, displayed via the OP Portal, containing the complete legislative cycle together with a range of related non-legislative documents for five EU legal acts. It is multilingual and it highlights new, innovative ways of presenting legal information and its links with other related documents. The showcase provides a safe environment for testing new, experimental ideas for displaying legal information, while exploring at the same time the potential of gathering all publicly available legal information concerning specific EU legal acts in one place for easy access. The site invites users to leave feedback on the various solutions proposed, which may be used in the future to inform other related projects concerning access to legal information.

6. The study on ensuring integrated access to publicly available EU documents is a project strand that is not restricted to documents related to legislative processes. Its main objective is to provide a wider insight into how to bring together different types of documents from different EU institutions, agencies and bodies, display them in a single place in view of ensuring easy and seamless access, and make them searchable, for the benefit of various stakeholders interested in EU documents and citizens at large. The work on the study is nearly finished, with the final deliverable expected in December 2016.

7. At the same time work has started on the proof of concept concerning one of the integrated access solutions proposed in the study – a federated search engine, able to search for documents in different institutional registers and websites, and to show the results in a centralised manner on one site. The first results of this exercise are expected at the beginning of 2017.

⁴ <http://showcase-publicaccess.publications.europa.eu/en/>