

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN EUROPE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

ALL ASSOCIATIONS IN EUROPE, OR WITH MEMBERS IN EUROPE, HAVE EVERY INTEREST IN UNDERSTANDING THE WORKINGS OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS. THERE'S A BASIC NEED FOR ASSOCIATION PROFESSIONALS TO BE AWARE OF ANY LAWS AND POLICIES RELATING TO ASSOCIATIONS AND NON-PROFITS, BUT MANAGERS ALSO SHOULD FOLLOW ONGOING CHANGES IN LEGISLATION, TRENDS AND IMPORTANT ISSUES. AS WELL AS UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF EUROPEAN RULES ON THEIR OWN OPERATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS ALSO NEED TO UNDERSTAND AND TRANSMIT THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THEIR MEMBERSHIP.

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Associations are faced with a complex political process that often differs from national-level policy-making, and yet has a profound influence on what happens in the member states. Some 60% of national law-making now originates in European rules.

Treaties and the decision-making process are the official framework, but associations must also master non-written conventions and political realities about lobbying, including the impact

of the political calendar. They need to know who the key actors are within the various institutions. It is also important to understand the difference between explicit and implicit agendas. Furthermore, associations operating in Europe need to take into account the competition of ideas among a multiplicity of actors, which means learning how to form effective alliances.

In order to support the development of its members' knowledge and skills in these areas, ESAE has made professional development a top priority. ESAE conducts seminars and conferences on a regular basis, allowing members to share insights and experience. We plan to build on this as part of our educational programme, particularly in the context of our forthcoming annual congress in Brussels on 17-19 March 2008, to be organised in conjunction with the European meetings fair EMIF.

There's never been a more crucial time for associations with members in Europe to keep on top of European-wide legislation, policy trends, and issues. We welcome your feedback on how ESAE can provide additional assistance.

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