

European Circuit of the Bar of England & Wales

Leader's Blog: News from the European Circuit - March 2010

Lisbon Treaty



Thursday 25th February 2010 saw the first of our occasional series of evening seminars under my tenure as Leader. Dr. Gunnar Beck, eminent jurist, philosopher and member of our Executive Committee, gave an enthralling and detailed talk on the Lisbon Treaty. Gunnar covered all key aspects of the new treaty including the key change to the standing rules for non-privileged applicants to the General Court (*ex* Court of First Instance) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. He also told us that according to demographic surveys, the UK (or at least its citizens) was/were more fecund than their counterparts in Germany and thus the UK would overtake Germany as the most populous nation in some years, which would obviously have some important consequences in terms of QMV (qualified majority voting) in relation to the weighting of national votes in the Council. Questions were plentiful and searching, and one line in particular gave your Leader the idea for a future seminar – the selection process of judges at the General Court and European Court of Justice together with the issue of specialist tribunals in the General Court. If you have any thoughts on this (or indeed anything else), please feel free to email me at fergus.randolph@brickcourt.co.uk.

3rd bilateral seminar: Bar Council and the DeutscherAnwaltverein

On Friday 30th April 2010, the third bilateral seminar held by the Bar Council of England & Wales and the DeutscherAnwalterverein will be held in Old Hall, Lincoln's Inn. As with many things European, the half day will start with the important business of lunch in Great Hall, Lincoln's Inn, followed by the afternoon seminar which will cover the topics of advocacy in the appellate courts and collective actions in competition cases. Your Leader is speaking on the second topic. The immediate past Leader – Gerard McDermott QC – will be speaking on the first topic. The seminar will be rounded off with drinks in Old Hall, which your Circuit is sponsoring – so please be abstemious!

The Circuit's inaugural annual lecture

The Executive Committee decided on your behalf that an annual lecture given by a distinguished speaker would be a useful addition to the Circuit's activities. For the inaugural lecture, we have been incredibly fortunate to procure the services of the Master of the Rolls, who will give the lecture on 24th June 2010 on the following topic: "*The incoming tide: the Civil Law, the Common Law, Referees and Advocates.*" This will be a prestigious event and I do hope that as many of you as possible will attend. More details closer to the day will be emailed.

North Eastern Circuit Grand Court

As promised in my last blog, I intend to visit each of the Circuits in England & Wales, as well as the Bar Library in Northern Ireland. My first step on this tour will be York Grand Court which I am sure will be very enjoyable and informative. I will be visiting together with Adrian Strong, member of the Executive Committee. Again, any suggestions of particular points you would like raised will be gratefully received.

Annual conference – Paris

As mentioned in the last blog, our annual conference in October will be held on Paris. Hugh Mercer QC and Margaret Gray have kindly agreed to help organise it, with input from our colleagues from the American Counsel Association. I for one will be looking forward to progress reports at our next Executive Committee meeting which will be held shortly.

Visit to Strasbourg

We had planned to visit Strasbourg and in particular the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe this year. I fear that this event will have to move into 2011 as the timetable for this year is already looking somewhat crowded. We have received offers of help already to organise what will probably follow the same format at The Hague visit a few years ago – informal meeting on the Thursday, with a full day of events on the Friday. If anyone else is keen to get involved, please let our administrator Catherine know – catherine@europeancircuit.com – and she will put in touch with the other organisers.

Last words

The Circuit is thriving, the topics we cover are increasingly diverse and interest in and knowledge of our activities is growing – all to the good. But a circuit is only as good as its membership. So please do send us any thoughts on the Circuit and in particular what we can do to make it better.

Once again, many thanks to the members of the Executive Committee and Catherine our Administrator, without whom my task would be sisyphian.

Thank you and an early happy Easter.

Fergus Randolph QC, Circuit Leader