

[Electronic EU Information Service Provided by the European Documentation Centre at Tartu University Library](#)

**SESSION PROGRAMME**

**Information Resources & Services in the Light of EU Accession 29.05.03.**

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European Documentation Centre (EDC) has been operating at Tartu University Library since 1992. We started our work with printed documents and document indices, during the course of work we started to use electronic databases (CELEX, SCAD), which made our work with European Union documentation much easier. The WWW home page of our Centre was created both in Estonian (<http://www.utlib.ee/ee/EURO>) and English (<http://www.utlib.ee/en/euro>) already in 1996.

Together with the opening of the Electronic EU Information Service on 30 November 1999 at the university library, the home page of the EDC acquired its present shape and the new address <http://www.euroinfo.ee>

In my presentation I will examine the dissemination of EU information via the EDC home page and Electronic EU Information Service.

The main task of the EDC is to provide all interested persons with access to original documentation and legislation of the European Union, so that they can familiarise themselves with the texts of agreements, directives and decisions, with the preparatory documentation of legislation, and with other materials published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

But only the access to the documents does not meet the need for information.

What kind of knowledge about the European Union do people in Estonia need? Based on the experience of the EDC of Tartu University Library I can say that mainly, information is required on the different aspects of the European Union, on the accession negotiation between Estonia and the EU and on how Estonia will cope in the EU.

Based on this, we have gathered most comprehensive information on the home page of our Centre.



Fig 1. EDC home page.

Material has been divided under the following sections:

- \* **Estonia and the EU** offers an overview of relations between Estonia and the EU, displays the texts of official documents and treaties, and reports prepared by the European Commission on Estonian progress in accession negotiations, as well as the studies on Estonian economy and politics in the EU context. It also explains materials discussing the problems of Estonian legislation in the context of accession.
- \* **EU Centres in Estonia** helps to find institutions that deal with the EU information on the state level, as well as those that have been created for working on specific projects. It also gives links to information centres that hold original documentation.
- \* **Databases** directs the user to full text and bibliographic databases of EU information
- \* **ABC of the EU** directs the users to a full scope of materials introducing different aspects of the EU, the easiest level of which, an interactive game on the EU, is suitable for schoolchildren. The game has been created by Opintotoiminnan Keskusliitto OK ry, and it has been translated into Estonian from Finnish.



Fig 2. The opening page of the EU game made by Opintotoiminnan Keskusliitto OK ry.

- \* **Research on the EU** displays a comprehensive list of research done on European integration by universities and European Institutes, which are accessible on-line.
- \* **EU legislation** helps to find way among primary and secondary legislation, treaties, directives and regulations of the European Union.
- \* **EU on the Internet** gives links to institutions and agencies of the European Union and web pages of other organisations.
- \* **EU scientific activities** gives links to scientific conferences and seminars held in European countries, and to different research programs.
- \* **EU and education** directs the users to the web page of European Education Information Network EURYDICE and to programs related to education.

Thanks to the privileges accompanying the status of the European Documentation Centre, we have the passwords to access the full text monographs on the web page of the Statistical Office of the European Communities EUROSTAT <http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat>, as well as the CELEX database of the EU legislation. I have to mention that free access to the materials of EUROSTAT is a praiseworthy and very actively used research opportunity for the academic community of the University of Tartu, since otherwise, the voluminous analytical collections of materials, analysing various aspects of the EU, should be bought, and expense is an important factor.

Since 1998, the European Documentation Centre acts as the South - Estonian supporting centre for informing the public of Estonia of the issues of the European Union. To fulfil our tasks we have developed **Electronic EU Information Service**

(EEUIS) - a continuously supplemented data set of questions and answers, which is accessible via the Internet from all over the world.

The services of the Electronic EU Information Service are project-based. To guarantee the operation of the EEUIS, the State Chancellery of the Republic of Estonia and the University of Tartu have each year signed agreements titled "From the European Union Documentation Centre of Tartu University Library to the Estonian public in the year ..."

Electronic EU Information Service is operating under the guidance of the EDC at Tartu University Library since the autumn of 1999, it can be found on the web page [www.euroinfo.ee/discus](http://www.euroinfo.ee/discus).

Although the Internet supplies more and more information free of charge, and seemingly, everything can be found, the users still cannot always find necessary facts without the help of information specialists. Besides, the EU subject area is enormous and rather specific, thus, some concrete questions can be answered only by a few specialists.

The aim of the Electronic EU Information Service is to make it possible to all interested persons to ask questions and receive information on the European Union.

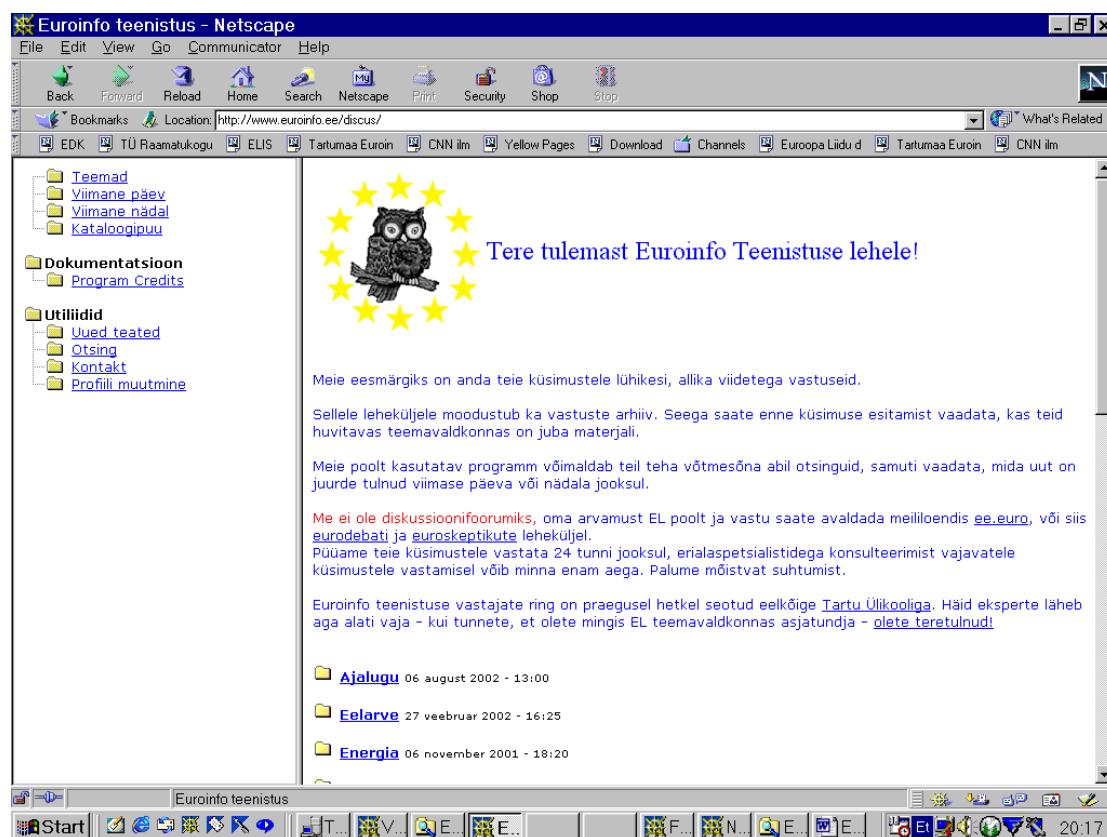


Fig 3. The title page of the Electronic EU Information Service.

The work of the EEUIS is based on *Discus* freeware for open discussion forums. This discussion forum is an implementation of the *Discus* discussion board program developed by DiscusWare, LLC of Holland, Michigan.

Using this program, it is possible to follow what questions have arrived during the previous day or week.

The catalogue tree contains the following divisions:

- History
- Budget
- Energy
- Enterprise
- Education
- Information
- Institutions
- Integration
- Commerce
- Environment
- Competition
- Culture
- Economy
- Agriculture
- Finance
- Regional politics
- Social politics
- Statistics
- Consumer
- Science
- Customs
- Transportation
- Labour politics
- Foreign affairs
- Law
- General information

Submitting inquiries for information to the EEUIS is very easy: one simply has to choose the section in the catalogue, and read the subdivisions and queries that have already been answered. In case there are no suitable answers, one has to open a new window and write the question (open the new subject). Let us say that we are interested in social politics in the European Union. We have to choose the section Social politics; if our question has not yet been discussed there, we press the key 'New subject / *Uus teema in Estonian*' and write our question.

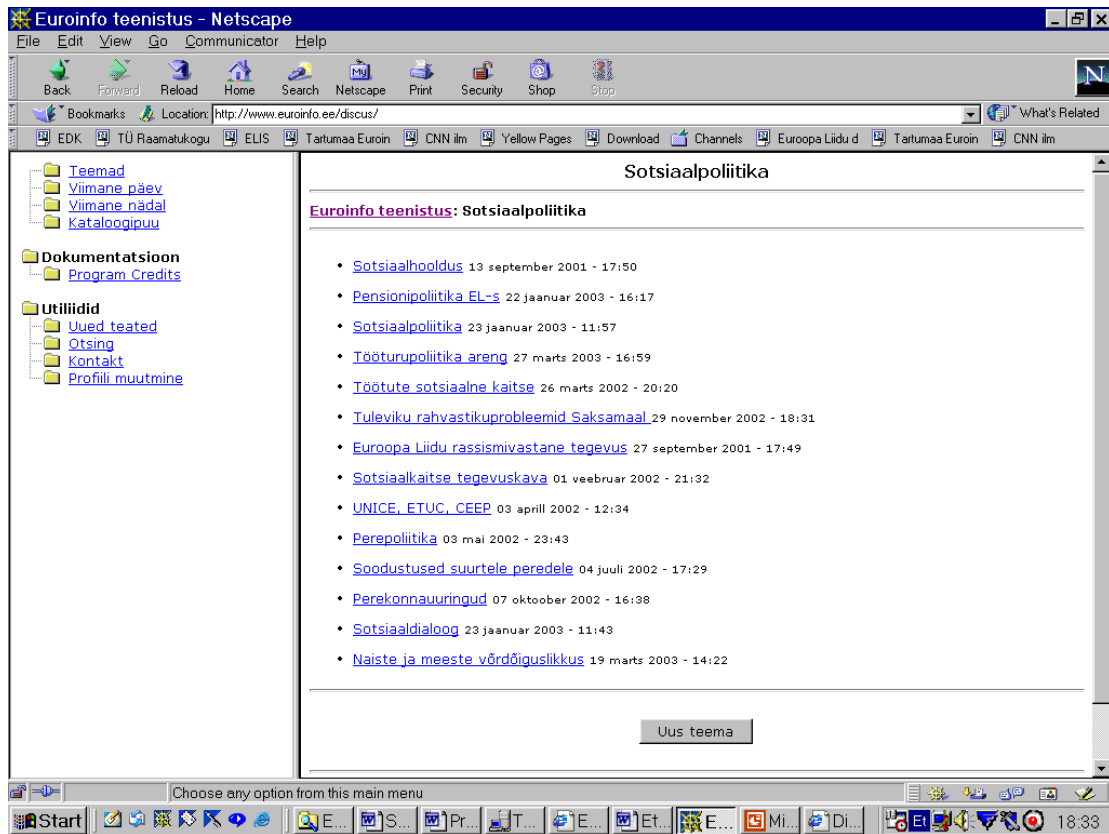


Fig 4. Questions in the section of Social politics.

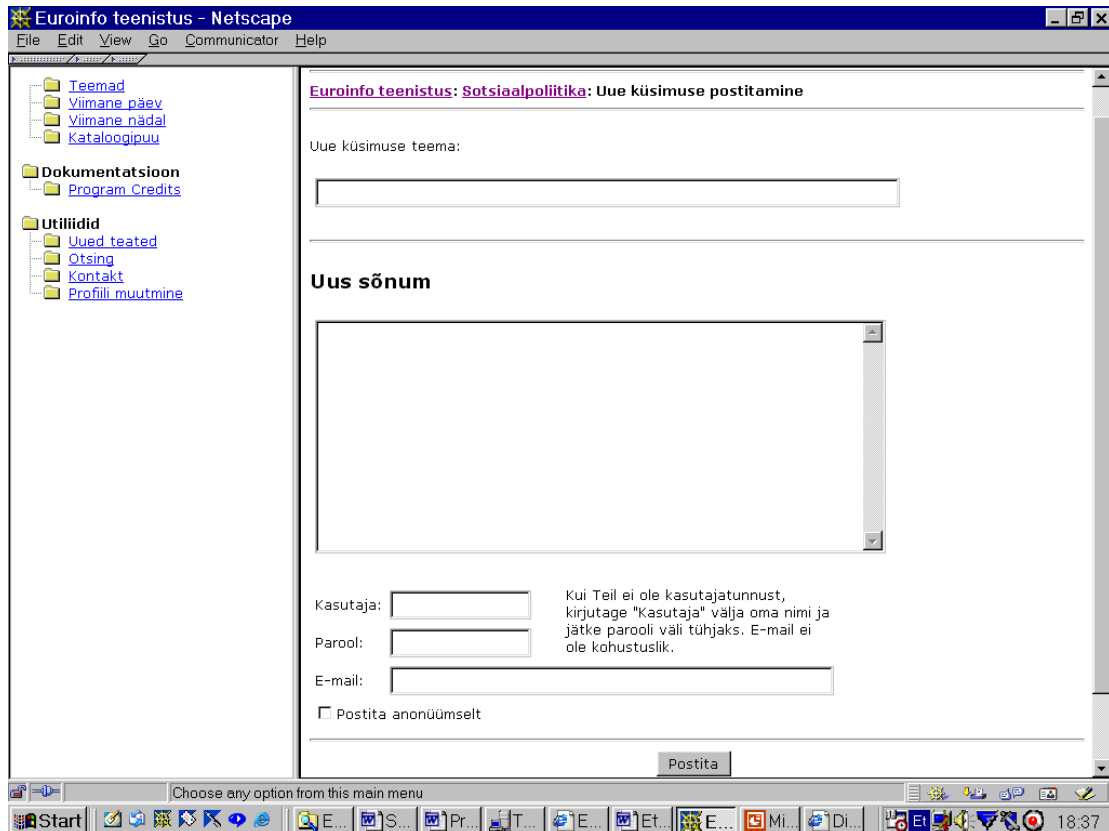


Fig 5. The window for submitting a new question.

We can see that a question can also be asked anonymously. This option seems to be rather necessary for a number of inquirers, since it is much more popular than the option of a signed question. Probably, the EEUIS comes handy in doing homework at schools and universities, for instance, we have been asked to help in solving a court case. In answering the questions we do not aim to give final truths, but direct the inquirer to information sources and original materials.

The number of questions sent to the EEUIS has been constantly increasing, during the two previous years it has doubled. In 2000, 108 new questions were submitted to the EEUIS, in 2001 the number was 178, and in 2002 it was already 261, resulting in a new question in every two days.

In this presentation I have divided the questions received by the EEUIS into three different classes: 1) according to the subjects; 2) Estonia and the EU; 3) complexity of the questions.

According to the subjects - 547 different questions had been asked by 31.12.2002, mostly concerning the problems of education, the enlargement of the EU and integration, the EU institutions, economy, social politics, agriculture and legislation.

## Subject areas of the questions submitted to the EEUIS

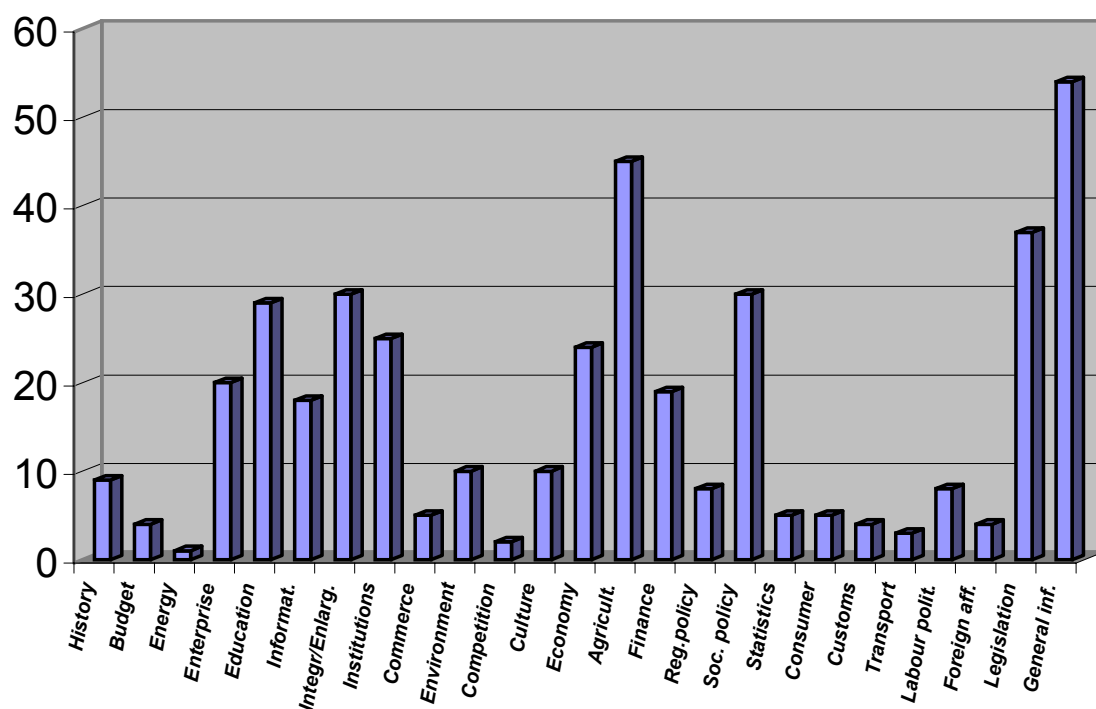


Table 1. Subject areas of the questions submitted to the EEUIS.

Here are some examples:

### I Questions according to the subjects.

Questions about the section 'Enterprise' fall into the following subdivisions:

Standards 2000

Local governments and enterprises 2000

Building standards 13.02.2002

Small enterprises 15.02.2003

Standards for lifting and fastening devices 14.10.2002

Taxing of small enterprises 22.10.2002

Standards for the devices for peeling potatoes and vegetables 25.01.2003

Subcontractors 15.02.2003

Questions about the section 'Integration/Enlargement' fall into the following subdivisions:

PHARE 29.08.2001

EU programmes 05.09.2001

Implementing EU accession agenda 2000

How large would be the member fee of Estonia? 2000

Informing the public 22.08.2001



Accession of Turkey 17.10.2000  
European Council 2000  
Accession of Finland and Sweden 12.10.2001  
Poland 15.02.2003  
Harmonization of legislation 08.11.2000  
Accession of Hungary 02.02.2001  
Accession of Estonia 13.05.2002  
Enlargement of the EU 28.03.2002  
Nice treaty 01.02.2002  
Association treaty 27.08.2002  
Norway 25.09.2002  
Progress report – Cyprus 03.10.2002  
Switzerland 17.10.2002  
Czech Republic 26.02.2003

Questions about the section 'Consumer' fall into the following subdivisions:

Estonian traditional smoke sauna 27.02.2002  
Standards for the quality of drinking water 27.11.2001  
Catering 18.01.2002  
Standards for hairdresser's salons 24.01.2002  
Standards for the shops of consumer goods 19.02.2002  
Standards for (small) grocers' 19.02.2002  
Standards for opticians' 28.02.2002  
Standards for restaurants 05.03.2002  
Health protection and consumer protection in the EU 18.03.2003  
Standards for commercial and business rooms 01.04.2002  
European standards for bakeries 02.04.2003  
Lost property offices 25.11.2002  
Travel and living in the EU member countries 21.02.2003

Dates are marking a last referring to the subject.

## II Estonia and the European Union

33% of all questions related to Estonia were concerned with the processes and changes that would be evoked in different spheres of life, such as social politics and social work, agriculture, education, regional development, etc. by Estonia's joining of the EU.

About 60% of questions related to different aspects of the EU, including member countries, or for the EU requirements.

7% of questions not related to the EU were submitted.

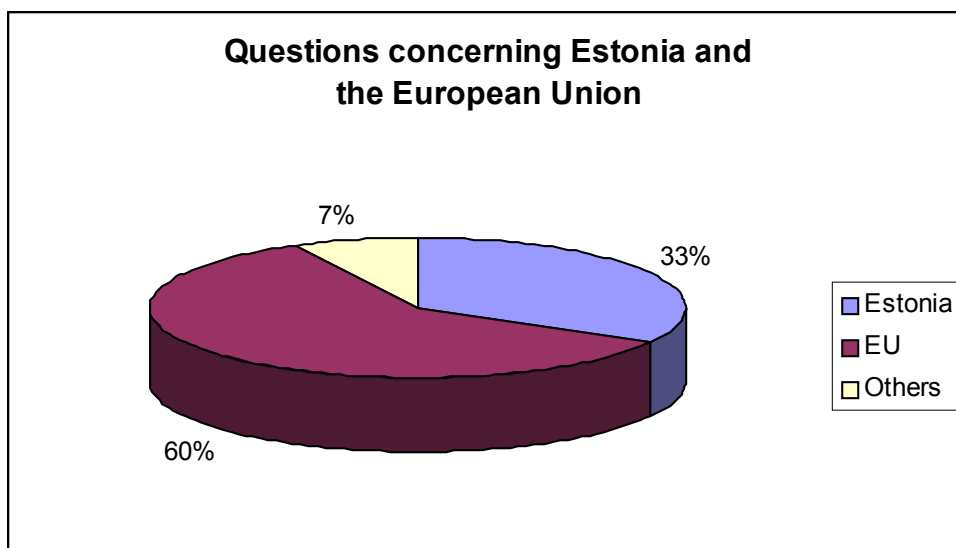


Table 2. *Questions concerning Estonia and the EU.*

### III Complexity of questions and information sources used in answers.

1. Easier questions, the answers to which could have easily been found over the Internet or from other sources by the inquirers, who still needed some help in finding them (15%), such as:

- \* What countries belong to the EU?
- \* What images can be found on Euro notes?

2. Questions requesting opinions or evaluations and the so-called political questions, such as:

- \* What is currently the most topical problem related to Estonia's integration into the EU?
- \* What are the main factors that influence Estonia's integration into the EU?
- \* Is the rapid accession beneficial to Estonia?
- \* Which is more beneficial to Estonia, reformed or unreformed CAP?
- \* Would Estonia benefit more from rapid accession and support from the structural funds of the EU, or from accession at some later time and the opportunity of using pre-accession help programs and funds?
- \* What positive/negative aspects would be there for Estonia at implementing the environment politics of the EU?

3. Questions requiring answers by specialists (77%).

Questions requiring answers from information specialists, such as:

- \* Which EU Directive specifies requirements for the percentage of sulphur in the fuel for sea transport?
- \* I would like to get information concerning the spider species mentioned in the 1. Appendix to the EU Directive on the conservation of natural habitats?

Questions requiring answers from professionals, mainly in the fields of economy and law, such as:

\* What is the essence of Luxembourg compromise?

Questions requiring answers by the specialists working at Estonian government agencies, such as: \* How would the expected financial support for grain farmers be calculated in case Estonia joins the EU?

\* From where could I get information about the influence of Phare 2000+ on Estonian economic policy?

\* Which are the benefits for families with four and more children in the EU and in Estonia after the accession of Estonia?

\* What is the main problem in Estonian animal husbandry as viewed from the EU? Which areas would need additional research? E.g. requirements to the transportation of animals in Europe, or some other problems related with animals?

Here I want to express my thanks to specialists from the Ministries and other institutions of the Republic of Estonia, who have kindly helped to answer these questions.

The EU Information Service has become the mediator between Estonian government agencies and other authorities and the members of the public, who need information.

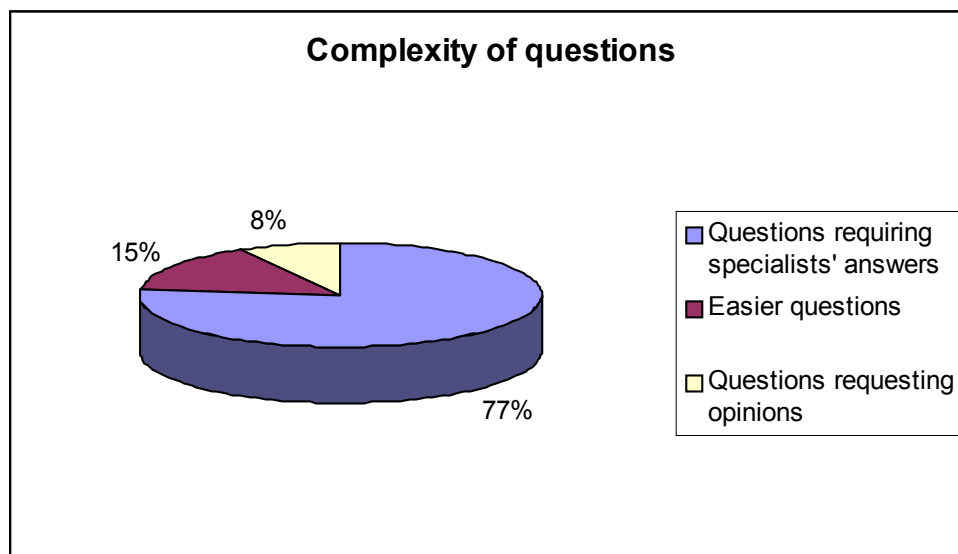


Table 3. Complexity of the questions.

Finding the answers and specialists, who could answer more complex questions, is an extremely interesting work. Unless somebody had asked it, I would never have thought about the problem whether the European Union regulates the concentration of tomato pulp in ketchup or whether the procedures of lost property offices are regulated in some way.

The question about the directive about fuel for sea transport can well characterise the people's rather unexpected ideas about normatives and requirements of the EU. Actually, there are no requirements for "sea fuel", there is the Directive on the sulphur

content of liquid fuels 93/12/EEC, and the Directive 98/70/EC relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels and the amending Council Directive 93/12/EEC.

A new notion of 'Eurostandard' has emerged in Estonia. People's knowledge about real requirements of the EU is rather scanty. Very often they do not differentiate between the requirements prescribed by Estonian laws, which are sometimes even stricter than the requirements given in the directives and regulations of the EU. I remember a question asked a few years ago about the EU requirements concerning rural shops. I took pains to search the databases, but could not find anything more than the recommendations of the European Commission concerning the measures to support local rural shops as the important factors in the development of rural areas. Indeed, the directive issued by the European Union only outlines general requirements to all enterprises dealing with food shops and grocers', canteens, cafés and restaurants either in town or in the country. Similarly, there are no specific health protection norms for public libraries, which also have been requested from the EDC, but there are general requirements to the microclimate and lighting of workrooms.

Tartu University Library gathers statistical data about hits to the EDC web page. User statistics of the web page can be seen at <http://www.utlib.ee/stat/euroinfo>

All visits and visits by different IP number computers to the web page are recorded; the number of used pages and files is registered also.

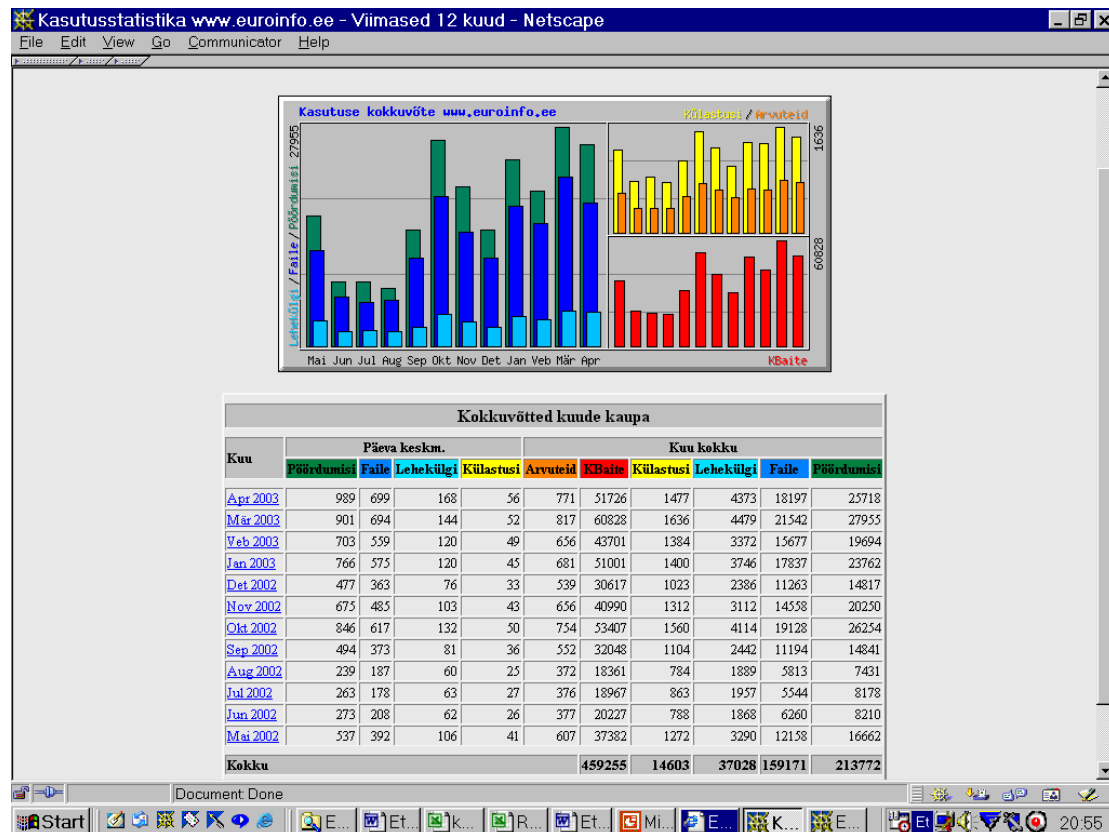


Fig 6. User statistics of the EDC web page <http://www.utlib.ee/stat/euroinfo>

The number of visits to the web page is comparatively large.

In 2002, the number of visitors was 12 936, who opened 32 094 pages and 126 916 files. In average, each visitor used 2,5 pages and 9,9 files. The average of 2,03 visits was recorded from each computer.

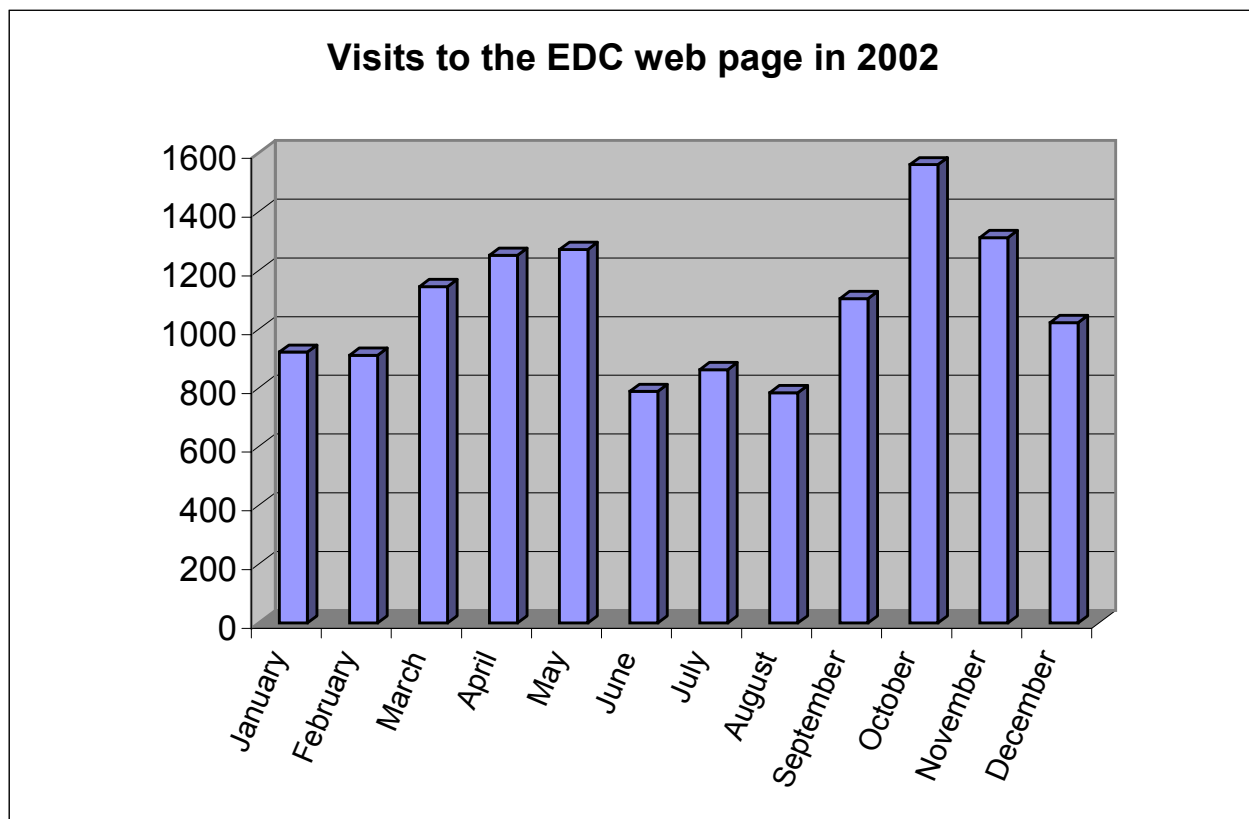


Table 4. Visits to the EDC web page in 2002.

In conclusion, I could say that the work of the Electronic EU Information Service is much appreciated and the information concerning the European Union, accessible on the web page of the EDC has found its users. The growing number of visitors to the web page shows that we are on the right path and the services we offer are of high quality. We hope to continue our work in informing Estonian public on the matters of the EU also in the future.