

# Publishing Practices of Official Gazettes

Survey Report

Layan Khalaf, 2024

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Survey Structure & Data Collection .....	4
Table 1: Gazettes participating in the survey on publishing practices .....	5
Results.....	8
Table 2: ‘Beyond publishing the Official Gazette (legislation), is your publishing organisation providing services in any of the following areas?’ .....	8
Print edition.....	9
Graph 1: Percentage of Gazettes that print a paper edition of the Gazette .....	9
Graph 3: Legal value.....	9
Graph 2: Number of copies printed.....	9
Graph 4: Main purpose of the paper version.....	10
Electronic edition .....	10
Table 3: Basic information about the electronic edition .....	10
Access to law .....	10
Graph 5: How often consolidated versions are made.....	10
Graph 6: Type of format in which consolidated texts are provided .....	11
Services provided to users by Gazettes.....	11
Graph 7: List of services .....	11
Graph 8: User-authentication services on website .....	11
Web-analytics.....	12
Graph 9: Percentage of Gazettes that use web-analytics .....	12
Graph 10: Electronic Gazette site visits per year .....	12
Use of AI.....	12
Graph 11: Percentage of Gazettes that use AI in their production process .....	12
Conclusions.....	13
Services provided by Publishing Organisations.....	13
Print & electronic editions .....	13
Access to law .....	13
Services provided to users by Gazettes.....	13
Web-analytics.....	14
Use of AI.....	14
Limitations .....	14

## **Abstract**

This report presents the results of the ‘Survey on the Publishing Practices of Official Gazettes’ launched by the Secretariat of the European Forum of Official Gazettes in May 2024. The purpose of the survey was to take stock of current publishing trends amongst European Gazettes and beyond in terms of services provided by the publishing organisations, print and electronic editions of the Gazettes, accessibility and authentication, web-analytics, and artificial intelligence (hereafter AI). Despite some limitations, listed at the end of the report, the results serve to capture the current state of practice surrounding the official publishing of legislation and can be used as a source of comparison for future analyses. Notable findings include that although all except one Gazette respondent have an electronic version of their gazette, about half of Gazettes still print, although not for large-scale dissemination. Site visits on electronic versions are increasing steadily, however. Furthermore, only 27.3% of Gazettes logged training activities for citizens as a service provided by the publishing organisation. Additionally, only half of the Gazettes make use of web-analytics, while half do not. Finally, AI is not yet used in the production process by 94.3% of Gazettes. In light of the focus on AI as a theme in the upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> plenary Forum, observing how this finding changes over years to come should prove highly interesting.

## **Introduction**

The main aim of the Publications Office of the European Union is to provide the European public and beyond with transparent access to EU Legislation. Within the frame of the European Forum of Official Gazettes, the Office conducts analyses on current trends in legislation publishing around Europe with the purpose of delineating and promoting best practice surrounding official publishing of legal texts.

In view of the 20<sup>th</sup> European Forum of Official Gazettes plenary meeting hosted by the French representatives from the Direction of Legal and Administrative Information in Paris this year, the Publications Office, serving as the secretariat of the Forum, has launched a survey on the publishing practices of Official Gazettes. The survey seeks to capture the current state of practice of Official Gazettes of the EU Member States, EU candidate, potential candidate, and EFTA countries, the UK, as well as the Official Journal of the European Union itself, comprising a total of 43 distributors of Gazettes. Its results are going to be integrated into the 20<sup>th</sup> Forum meeting and used as a source of comparison for future assessments of publishing practices.

The survey serves as a follow-up to the 19<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting in 2023, highlighting main topics of this Forum event such as the digitalisation of official publishing and best practice in facilitating access to law. It encompasses questions ranging from services for users and web-analytics, to the print and electronic versions of the Official Gazettes, accessibility, and the use of AI.

This report first outlines the structure of the survey and details the data collection. It then presents the results of the survey by sections that correspond to those of the survey itself. The results are then reflected upon in a conclusion and put into perspective by taking into consideration the limitations of this present study.

## **Survey Structure & Data Collection**

The survey begins by asking the name of the Official Gazette for which the survey is presently being answered and the name of its publishing organisation. It commences with a question about the services provided by the publishing organisation aside from publishing legislation/the Official Gazette, with options such as publications of announcements, archiving, social media, data management and training activities for citizens listed and a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ selection provided. The rest of the survey is split into sections, with questions grouped under the headings ‘Print edition’, ‘Electronic edition’, ‘Access to law’, ‘Services for users’, ‘Web-analytics’, and ‘Use of AI’.

After the survey was published on EUSurvey, it was sent via email to the 42 countries and their various Gazettes on May 7, 2024 with an initial deadline set for May 30, 2024. Participants were informed of the basic purpose and content of the survey and advised that the survey would take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. In a reminder to complete the survey also sent via email, the deadline was then extended to June 14, 2024. In the Publications Office, the survey was answered for the Official Journal of the EU internally with the help of colleagues from units B1 and C2.

A list of Gazettes that participated in the survey can be found in Table 1 below. This list has been compiled using the previously mentioned survey responses to “Name of the Official Gazette” and “Publishing Organisation of the Gazette”. 33 out of 43 gazettes that were contacted submitted a response to the survey. A total of 35 submissions were recorded as for two countries, Ireland and the Netherlands, two responses were received per country corresponding to two different gazettes. The 10 countries whose Gazette representatives were contacted but no survey response was registered are Belgium, Finland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Moldova, Ukraine, Switzerland, Iceland, and the UK.

**Table 1: Gazettes participating in the survey on publishing practices\***

<b>Name of the Official Gazette</b>	<b>Name of the Publishing Organisation</b>	<b>Country</b>
The Malta Government Gazette	Department of Information – Office of the Prime Minister	Malta
Official Gazette	Center of Official Publication, “Qendra e Botimeve Zyrtare”	Albania
Javno podjetje Uradni list Republike Slovenije d.o.o.	Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, “Javno podjetje Uradni list Republike Slovenije d.o.o.”	Slovenia
Narodne novine, Službeni list Republike Hrvatske	Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia, “Narodne novine d.d.”	Croatia
Sbírka zákonů a mezinárodních smluv	Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky	Czech Republic
Liechtensteinisches Landesgesetzblatt	Government Legal Service, “Rechtsdienst der Regierung”	Liechtenstein
Lovtidende	Ministry of Justice, Department of Civil Affairs	Denmark
Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia	Public Enterprise Official Gazette	Serbia
Riigi Teataja	Riigi Teataja Division, Ministry of Justice	Estonia
Diário da República	National Printing Office and Mint (INCM)	Portugal
Register of Legal Acts <a href="https://www.e-tar.lt">https://www.e-tar.lt</a>	Office of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania; Unit for Managing the Register of Legal Acts	Lithuania

Službeni glasnik Bosne i Hercegovina	Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Federal Law Gazette, “Bundesgesetzblatt”	Federal Chancellery of Austria, “Bundeskanzleramt”	Austria
Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo	Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo	Kosovo
Gazette Of The Government Of The Greek Republic, “Efimerida tis Kiverniseos tis Ellinikis Dimokratias”	National Printing Office, “Ethniko Typografio”	Greece
Cyprus Gazette	Cyprus Government Press	Cyprus
Dziennik Ustaw, Official Journal of the Republic of Poland, “Monitor Polski”	Government Legislative Center	Poland
Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana	Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato S.P.A.	Italy
Official Gazette of Montenegro	Public institution Official Gazette of Montenegro	Montenegro
Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia	PE Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia	North Macedonia
Federal Legal Gazette, “Bundesgesetzblatt”	Federal Ministry of Justice, “Bundesministerium der Justiz”	Germany
Republic of Türkiye Official Journal	General Directorate for Law and Legislation of the Turkish Presidency	Türkiye
Svensk författningssamling	Government Offices of Sweden, “Regeringskansliet” Secretariat for Legal and Linguistic Draft Revision, Prime Minister's Office, “Granskningskansliet, Statsrådsberedningen”	Sweden
Staatscourant	Knowledge Center for Official Government Publications, “Kenniscentrum en Exploitatiecentrum Officiële Overheidspublicaties (KOOP)”	Netherlands

Staatsblad, Staatscourant, Tractatenblad, Waterschapsblad, Provinciaal blad, Gemeentebblad, Blad gemeenschappelijke regeling	Knowledge Center for Official Government Publications, “Kennis- en Exploitatatiecentrum Officiële Overheidspublicaties (Logius KOOP)”	Netherlands
Journal officiel de la République française	Direction of Legal and Administrative Information, “Direction de l’information legale et administrative”	France
Oireachtas.ie	Houses of the Oireachtas Service	Ireland
Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE)	Official State Gazette National Agency, “Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado”	Spain
Iris Oifigiúil	Office of Public Works (OPW)	Ireland
The Legislative Herald of Georgia	Legislative Herald of Georgia (LEPL)	Georgia
Norsk Lovtidend	Lovdata Foundation, Stiftelsen Lovdata	Norway
Official Gazette of the Republic of Bulgaria, “Darzhaven vestnik”	National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, “Narodno sabranie na Republika Bulgaria”	Bulgaria
Latvijas Vēstnesis	VSIA Latvijas Vēstnesis	Latvia
Journal officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg	Ministry of State - Central Legislative Service, “Service central de législation / Ministère d'Etat”	Luxembourg
Official Journal of the European Union	Publications Office of the European Union	n/a

*\*the Gazettes are listed in the order of survey submission*

## Results<sup>1</sup>

**Table 2: ‘Beyond publishing the Official Gazette (legislation), is your publishing organisation providing services in any of the following areas?’**

Area	Yes (%)	No (%)
Website management (other than the Official Gazette)	70.6	29.4
Publications of announcements/notices	82.4	17.6
Archiving & preservation	72.7	27.3
Website preservation	60.6	39.4
Legal deposit	55.9	44.1
Open data portal & re-use services	58.8	41.2
Public access to administrative documents	52.9	47.1
Communication & social media	48.5	51.5
Help-desk services	82.4	17.6
Data, information & knowledge management	63.6	36.4
Training activities for citizens	27.3	72.7
Other	41.9	58.1

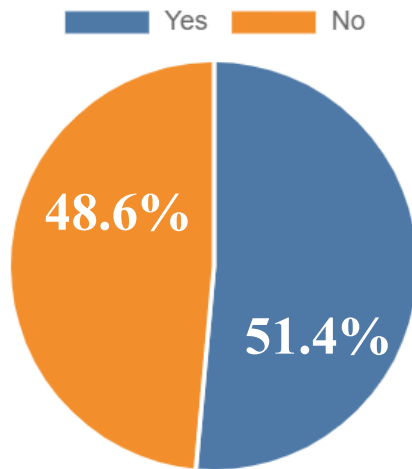
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<sup>1</sup> Please note that while questions were answered by the majority, there are a few questions where a response was not recorded for every Gazette. This will be addressed later in the limitations.



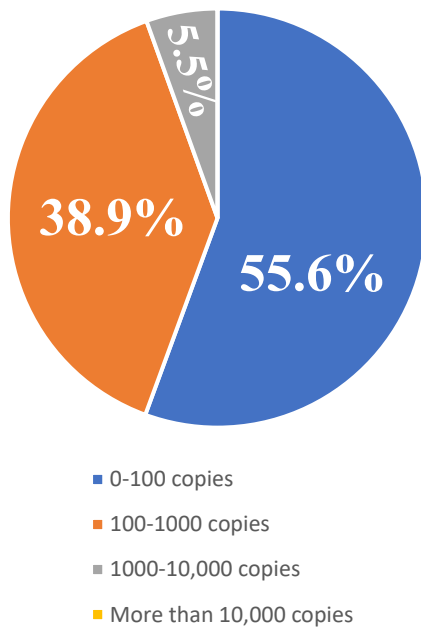
### ***Print edition***

*Graph 1: Percentage of Gazettes that print a paper edition of the Gazette*

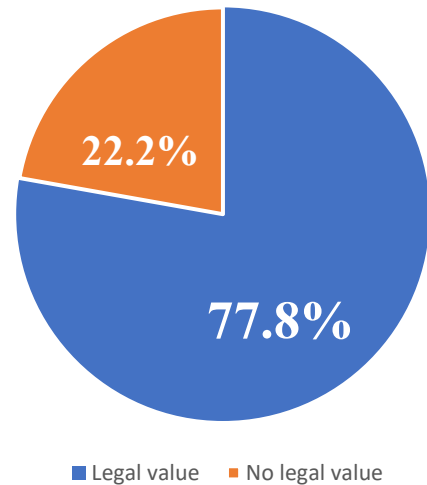


The remaining questions in this section concern those respondents that print a paper edition of the Gazette.

*Graph 2: Number of copies printed*



*Graph 3: Legal value*



*Graph 4: Main purpose of the paper version*



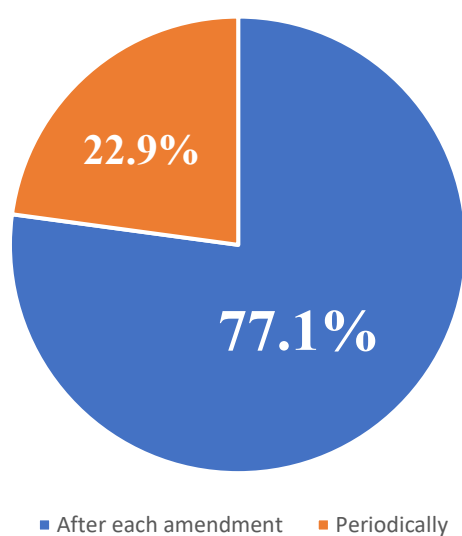
### ***Electronic edition***

*Table 3: Basic information about the electronic edition*

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)
Does your organisation publish an electronic edition of the Official Gazette?	97.1	2.9
Does the electronic edition have legal value?	81.8	18.2
Do you use any technology to authenticate the digital edition of your Official Gazette?	75.8	24.2

### ***Access to law***

*Graph 5: How often consolidated versions are made*

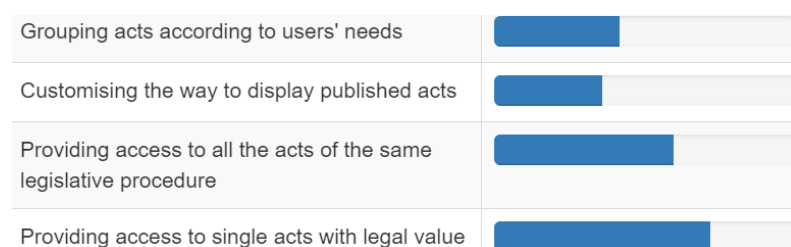


*Graph 6: Type of format in which consolidated texts are provided*

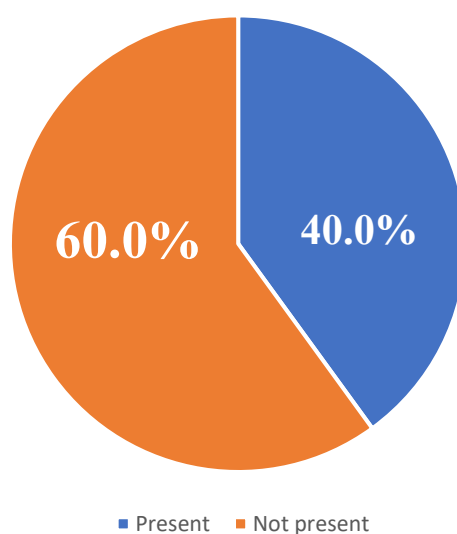


### ***Services provided to users by Gazettes***

*Graph 7: List of services*

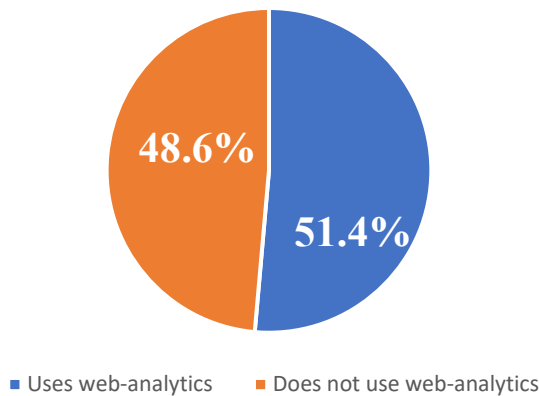


*Graph 8: User-authentication services on website*

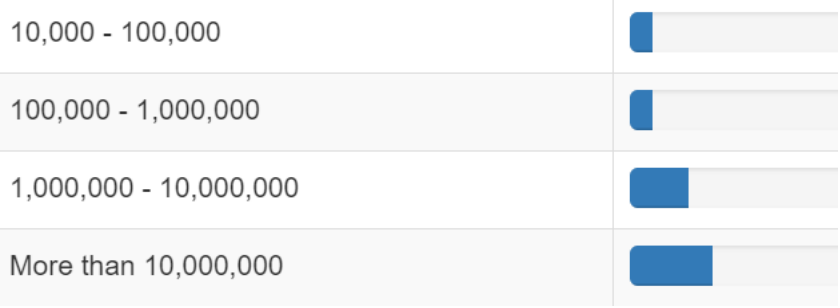


**Web-analytics**

*Graph 9: Percentage of Gazettes that use web-analytics*

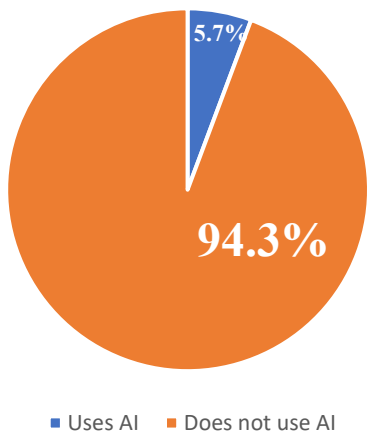


*Graph 10: Electronic Gazette site visits per year*



**Use of AI**

*Graph 11: Percentage of Gazettes that use AI in their production process*



## **Conclusions**

The conclusions are organized by section, corresponding to the different sections in the Results and by extension the sections of the survey itself.

### ***Services provided by Publishing Organisations***

Overall, for all except three of the specified areas in which publishing organisations could potentially provide services, there were more ‘yes’ responses registered than ‘no’, meaning the majority of publishing organisations of the Gazettes carry out more services alongside publishing the Gazette itself. Amongst the services provided, those with the highest percentage of Gazettes responding ‘yes’, and thus the most provided services, are the following: Publications of announcements/notices, Archiving and preservation, and Help-desk services. In contrast, only 27.3% of Gazettes offer training activities for citizens as an extra service.

### ***Print & electronic editions***

This survey found that notably over half of Gazettes still print a paper edition, the main reason being ‘dissemination’. However, this dissemination is not large-scale, as only 5.5% of Gazettes print more than 1000 copies. For a vast majority of Gazettes that print (77.8%), the print edition also still holds legal value. This finding is especially interesting considering the printed version of the Official Journal of the European Union no longer holds legal value.

Although around half of Gazettes still print, the survey reaffirms the general trend towards the digital. Almost all Gazettes, 34 out of 35, publish an electronic edition of the Gazette, and for 81.8% of them, the electronic edition also holds legal value. Those with legal value are most commonly in the PDF format. Moreover, of the 75.8% of Gazettes that use technology to authenticate the digital edition, most use digital signature for this purpose. Finally, 22 Gazettes, or 68.8%, specified that their electronic edition follows an act-by-act process, for nine Gazettes it does not, and for one it does so partially.

### ***Access to law***

For most Gazettes, the organisation that compiles the consolidated version is the same as the one that publishes the Gazette. Consolidated versions are made by 77.1% of Gazettes after each amendment rather than periodically. They are offered mostly in HTML format to end-users. Out of 35, 14 gazettes were not sure whether the consolidated version is viewed by users more frequently than the original acts, 20 recorded that it is, and for the Official Journal of the European Union it is nearly the same.

### ***Services provided to users by Gazettes***

The service offered by Gazettes to their users most is the provision of access to single acts with legal value. For 40% of Gazettes that have user-authentication on their website, most Gazettes named ‘Subscription services’ as the purpose of this feature. Only two out of 35 Gazettes use Multifactor-authentication (MFA) for signing in, but for the majority of Gazettes, 31 out of 35, there is no possibility to sign in on the website without the use of a password.

### ***Web-analytics***

Approximately half of Gazettes noted that they use web-analytics, while half do not. For those that do use them, the main purposes are to analyse user behaviour and preferences, content consultation, and web-optimisation. According to those Gazettes employing web-analytics, the site visits are mainly above 10,000,000 a year and are mostly increasing. The most visited pages are the home-page and legislation.

### ***Use of AI***

According to the results, the vast majority of Gazettes, including the Official Journal of the European Union, are not using AI in their production process yet. Only two out of 35 Gazettes recorded that they do use AI in the production of their Gazette. The 20<sup>th</sup> plenary of the European Forum of Official Gazettes, which will draw AI into focus, might inspire Gazettes to investigate how they might use AI to their advantage.

### **Limitations**

The results of this survey should not be interpreted without taking into consideration its limitations. Firstly, it should be noted that the Gazettes of 10 out of 42 countries did not submit a response to the survey. Naturally, the survey is thus not representative of the current publishing practices of their Gazettes. The survey results also do not reflect the results of *every* Gazette from each country. Secondly, not all Gazettes responded to every single question, even out of the pool of questions that would have been applicable to them. Although the calculations made accounted for the missing Gazette responses, by taking percentages of the number of Gazettes that did respond to the question, it thus means that not every question accounts for all participant Gazettes. Finally, some participants themselves noted a limitation of the question asking in which format consolidated texts are offered to end-users. They expressed that their texts are offered in multiple formats, so the question should have offered the option of selecting multiple responses. Since it did not, participants were only able to select one of potentially several formats.