

ENTRE NOUS

An invitation arrives for the "Savoury Snack Summit 08", being staged in Brussels on 3 July, "with networking dinner on 2 July". One cannot help suspecting that the European Snacks Association is getting a bit above itself. Who are they to have a dinner? If they want to "network", surely they should do so over a cheese straw and a packet of crisps. Or is the dinner an admission that snacks, for all their merits, are just not substantial enough - certainly where Brussels lobbying is concerned.



SPIDERMAN Richard Medic is arrested by Brussels police (main picture), but manages to get the message across (insert)

Subsidiarity man fails to do spider tricks

A campaign by the Association of European Regions (AER) to draw attention to the importance of subsidiarity failed to get off the ground on Monday (19 May). The AER wants to get greater official recognition of the word "subsidiarity". AER complains, among other things, that subsidiarity is not to be found in some dictionaries and wrongly defined in several others.

As part of the campaign, AER spokesman Richard Medic was planning to climb up the Résidence Palace build-

ing on Monday and unfurl a banner proclaiming "Subsidiarity is a word". The building, opposite the Commission's Berlaymont headquarters and next to Justus Lipsius, home of Council of Ministers, is temporarily derelict while excavations for a new railway station are going on.

In the event, Medic was arrested by the Belgian police who put him under administrative arrest for eight hours. He had sought permission for his climb from the building contractor

and was told that he needed approval from the Belgian government agency, Régie des Bâtiments. When he was arrested, the Brussels police told Medic he also needed the permission of the mayor of Brussels (the subsidiarity of Belgian regional government knows no bounds). The police have confiscated the banner, which cost €1,000. That may yet thwart AER's plan to hang the banner from the front of the office of the Spanish region of Valencia in rue de la Loi.

Balkan language lessons

Bosnia is being made to wait until mid-June before signing a pre-membership Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU. An agreement between the EU and Serbia was rushed through on 29 April, even though Bosnia had met the EU's conditions and Serbia has not.

What explains the difference? A diplomat from a country which should be familiar with the intricacies of the linguistic situation in what was once Yugoslavia at first attributed the difference to translation problems, pointing out that Serbia had one official language - Serbian - while Bosnia had three: Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian.

But doesn't boiling three eggs take the same time as boiling one? Dimitrij Rupel (pictured), Slovenia's foreign minister, then blamed it on "technical checking" of the text - the process of ensuring that translations of the English text of the SAA into the

three official languages of Bosnia and Serbia and the other 22 languages of the EU are accurate and make legal sense. But given that Bosnia's text has been available since early December, when it was initialled, why was this not done before? Pressed on the issue and assured of anonymity, a diplomat finally confessed that Bosnia was "not a priority".

None of this bodes well for those who would like to curb the proliferation of official languages in the EU. Serbs tend to use the Cyrillic alphabet, but otherwise the differences between Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian are hard to spot. But the EU seems set on institutionalising what differences there are.

