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## **REPORT**

on the Commission communication on a new framework for co-operation on activities concerning the information and communication policy of the European Union  
(COM(2001) 354 – C5-0465/ 2001/2192(COS))

Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport

Rapporteur: Ole Andreasen



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## PROCEDURAL PAGE

By letter of 29 June 2001, the Commission forwarded to Parliament a communication on a new framework for co-operation on activities concerning the information and communication policy of the European Union (COM(2001) 354 – 2001/2192(COS)).

At the sitting of 22 October 2001 the President of Parliament announced that she had referred the communication to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport as the committee responsible and the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs for their opinions (C5-0465/2001).

At the sitting of 13 December 2001 the President announced that she had also referred the communication to the Committee on Constitutional Affairs for its opinion.

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport appointed Ole Andreasen rapporteur at its meeting of 18 September 2001.

It considered the Commission communication and the draft report at its meetings of 20 November 2001, 8 January and 19 February 2002.

At the last meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Michel Rocard chairman; Vasco Graça Moura and Theresa Zabell, vice-chairmen; Ole Andreasen, rapporteur (for Marieke Sanders-ten Holte); Alexandros Alavanos, Pedro Aparicio Sánchez, Christopher J.P. Beazley, Michael Cashman (for Renzo Imbeni pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Marielle de Sarnez, Janelly Fourtou (for Francis Decourrière), Geneviève Fraisse, Jas Gawronski (for Mario Mauro), Ruth Hieronymi, Ulpu Iivari, Maria Martens, Pietro-Paolo Mennea, Juan Ojeda Sanz, Gérard Onesta (for Luckas Vander Taelen), Barbara O'Toole, Doris Pack, Roy Perry, Christa Prets, Felekna Uca, Gianni Vattimo, Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca (for Domenico Mennitti pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Eurig Wyn, Stavros Xarchakos, Sabine Zissener and Olga Zrihen Zaari (for José María Mendiluce Pereiro pursuant to Rule 153(2)).

The opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs are attached; the Committee on Constitutional Affairs decided on 27 November 2001 not to deliver an opinion.

The report was tabled on 25 February 2002.

The deadline for tabling amendments will be indicated in the draft agenda for the relevant part-session.

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

### **European Parliament resolution on the Commission communication on a new framework for co-operation on activities concerning the information and communication policy of the European Union (COM(2001) 354 – C5-0465/2001 – 2001/2192(COS))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission communication (COM(2001) 354 – C5-0465/2001,
- having regard to Article 1 of the Treaty on European Union according to which decisions "are taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen" as well as the requirement of transparency laid down on Article 255 of the EC Treaty which imposes on the legislative institutions an obligation to give access to their documents,
- having regard to the declaration (point 17) on information made by the Member States in the annex to the Treaty on European Union,
- having regard to the declaration (point 23) on the future of the Union made by the Nice Conference in the annex to the Treaty of Nice,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 July 1993<sup>1</sup> on the information policy of the European Community,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 December 1996 <sup>2</sup>on participation of citizens and social players in the European Union's institutional system,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 November 1997<sup>3</sup> on the Amsterdam Treaty,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 May 1998 on information and communication policy in the European Union,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2001<sup>4</sup> (b5-0174-2001) on the information and communications strategy of the European Union,
- having regard to the new *Mission Statement for the Parliament's Information Offices*, the new *Role of Heads of Representation for the Commission* and the new *Code of Conduc* for cooperation between the Information Offices and the Representation, adopted following the recommendation of the Interinstitutional Group on Information on 23 October 2001,
- having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 268 of 4.10.1993

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 20 of 20.1.1997, p.31

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 371 of 8.12.1997, p.99

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 343 of 5.12.2001, p.571

Sport and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs (A5-0051/2002),

- A. whereas the information policy of the Union requires close cooperation within and between the institutions of the European Union in order to avoid an unintended lack of clarity in the outcome of the information activities,
- B. whereas openness, transparency, diversity of opinion and objectivity are essential guarantees of the credibility of any information and communication policy,
- C. whereas the average participation in the elections to the European Parliament fell from 65.9% in 1979 to 49.4% in 1999; whereas a change in this trend is absolutely essential in order to increase the democratic legitimacy of the European Parliament and the European Union,
- D. whereas the information and communication policy should be consistent, effective and proactive,
- E. whereas 58% of citizens<sup>5</sup> state that they feel very or fairly attached to Europe,
- F. whereas nonetheless, only 48% think that membership of the European Union is 'a good thing',
- G. whereas 58%<sup>6</sup> of citizens in the European Union state that the main institutions of the European Union play an important role in the life of the European Union,
- H. whereas the European Parliament is the most trusted institution with 53%<sup>7</sup> of citizens trusting the European Parliament,
- I. whereas TV is the most preferred method (62%)<sup>8</sup> for receiving information about the European Union; whereas, however, the use of TV by the European institutions as an information provider is rather limited,
- J. whereas 40% of citizens in the European Union in 2001 are connected to the Internet and 75% are expected to be so by 2010,
- K. whereas a disproportionate amount of the Commission's budget for information is spent on printed publications,
- L. whereas the institutions should channel greater resources into information and communication via the Internet, which have the advantage of reaching a broad section of the public at minimal cost,
- M. whereas 43% of the budget for the European Parliament's DG III is at present spent on visitors groups; whereas the budget for visitors groups will increase in the year 2002,
- N. whereas the information campaign on the introduction of the euro has been successful in terms of European Union information and communication, thanks to an effective partnership between the Member States and the Institutions, and should serve as an example to future information campaigns,

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<sup>5</sup> Eurobarometer 54, 2001, cp. 2.1

<sup>6</sup> Eurobarometer 55, 2001, cp. 4.5

<sup>7</sup> Eurobarometer 55, 2001, cp. 2.4

<sup>8</sup> Eurobarometer 55, 2001, cp. 4.3

- O. . whereas greater involvement by Members of the European Parliament in national political debate would help to increase public awareness of the European Parliament,
- P. whereas greater involvement of the members of national parliaments in European political debate would help to increase public awareness of the European Union and its impact on citizens' daily lives,
- Q. whereas the complex and opaque decision-making procedures in the European Union hamper the provision of information to and communication with the public,
- R. having regard to the broadening role of the European Union on the world stage and considering, in particular, that the European Union enlargement will create the need for a more systematic and effective information, communication and awareness-raising policy that will bring Europe closer to its peoples and more visible worldwide; considering the need of providing sufficient funding for such activities,
- S. Whereas the Information and Communication Policy implemented by the Commission should reflect the objectives and activities of all the Institutions since they are financed by the European Union budget;
1. Welcomes the institutional changes in the Commission's information and communication policy at the beginning of 2001;
  2. Welcomes the renewed and fruitful cooperation between the Commission and Parliament in the Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI), respecting each institution's autonomy; emphasises however that cooperation through the IGI needs further strengthening;
  3. Calls for appropriate decentralisation in all information and communication activities of the European Institutions, including decentralisation of responsibility and financial resources, as practised by Parliament;
  4. Calls for the coordination of guidelines in order to avoid contradictions in the messages sent out and dual infrastructure, and to enhance co-operation between the various bodies involved;
  5. welcomes the establishment of " Europe Direct", the interactive information service free of charge that enable citizens to submit questions on their rights or opportunities offered by the European Union policies and get quick answers in their own languages; and invites therefore the Commission to ensure that this service is interinstitutional, accessible on the internet, and linked to other help services provided by information relays on the territory of the European Union and the candidate countries,
  6. Express its concern at the planned decrease in the overall multiannual estimate of expenditure on information and communication in the Commission ( the B-3-3 budget lines); considers that, for the years 2003 and 2004, appropriations must be earmarked for conducting a joint awareness-raising campaign in the run-up to direct elections to the European Parliament in June 2004;
  7. Urges all the European Union's Institutions to use the following principles in order to provide the best possible public information and communication:
    - impartial information free of propaganda
    - factual information
    - diverse and balanced information;

8. Calls for strengthened support to be given to the existing civic information networks in the member countries (Europe Houses, European Parliament and European Union Commission, Info-Points Europe, International Federation of Europe Houses, European Movement, etc;)
9. Stresses the need in general to match the information made available more closely with the main target groups such as women, young people between 16 and 20, the elderly, rural communities, school children, teachers, SMEs, professional decision-makers and opinion formers;
10. Considers that all information and communication activities addressing specific target groups, specialists, multipliers and the general public concerning the operation of the institutions and the content of policies adopted, should be carried out, whenever possible, as a joint campaign by the European Union's institutions;
11. Considers that European Union information campaign strategies should operate on two levels:
  - (a) top priority information and communication should focus on issues close to the everyday lives of citizens. (Topics such as food safety, the euro, employment, security, the environment, traffic etc.),
  - (b) contemporary campaigns relating to the major issues facing the European Union (such as the future of Europe, enlargement, the next treaty, globalisation, justice and home affairs, good governance, promotion of the European charter of fundamental rights etc.) must be regarded as additional, but important campaigns;
12. Recommends that the European Union institutions, mainly the Commission and the Parliament, carry out information and communication work in schools, educational establishments, places of work and other public places; stresses the need for the information to be in a form appropriate to the age, maturity and knowledge of the recipients concerned, while respecting the plurality of views on and proposals for European integration;
13. Stresses the need to make information available more closely to journalists, sub-editors and editors in chief; calls on the European Institutions to develop specific training programs related to European mechanisms and issues for these groups and for future journalists, in partnership with their training schools and institutes;
14. Calls for a 'civic education' unit to be established within the European Parliament with sufficient resources to achieve the following objectives:
  1. To act as a centre for information on all matters relating to education for European citizenship (projects and programmes in the European Union and in applicant countries);
  2. To act as a centre for European-level exchanges between different project operators and promoters in the European Union and the applicant countries;
  3. To provide appropriate educational resources (information materials, public events, thematic activities, etc);
15. Considers that, in its own decision-making process, Parliament should have maximum transparency as its starting point and that it must repeatedly urge the other institutions, mainly the Council and the Commission, to take maximum transparency into account and



to adopt the fundamental reforms of the Convention urged by the European Parliament, in order to enhance the legitimacy of the European Union in the eyes of its citizens;

16. Calls on the Commission to promote and reactivate the European Documentation Centres in the various Member States and to improve their effectiveness as a means of disseminating information about the European Union;
17. Calls on the Commission to engage in policy awareness-raising activities befitting a government by, for instance, publishing the annual plans for public works with Community financing in the media of the Member States concerned or by ensuring regular participation by Commission Members in regional press conferences and in national or regional public events held to promote European actions, while maintaining relations on the best possible terms with the national and regional authorities concerned, with the aim of providing citizens with a European point of reference through their presence;
18. Calls on the Commission, as from 2003, to draw up detailed annual reports on the entire information and communication policy of the European Union, on the basis of the information provided by the institutions, including the financial aspects, and assessments of European information and communication policy;
19. Calls on the Parliament to draw up detailed annual reports on the entire information and communication policy of the Parliament, and an annual action plan of the forthcoming activities, including the financial aspects of the parliaments information and communication policy;
20. Calls on the Commission to provide a comprehensive overview of its current information and communication activities in non-member countries, as well as a multiannual comprehensive and coordinated programme and budget estimate;
21. Suggests that Parliament should conduct an annual debate on the information and communication policy of the European Union, to be based on a report by the Commission and a report by the competent Committee of the European Parliament;
22. Suggests that the Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI) should meet at least twice a year, assess the activities on a regular basis, propose appropriate guidelines for their development and report back to the European institutions;
23. Calls on the institutions of the European Union, and especially the Commission, Parliament and the Council to recognise the need for coordination of all communication and information activities;
24. Believes that the participation of the Council and the Member States in a common European Union information and communication policy is of fundamental importance;
25. Urges all the institutions of the Union to simplify decision-making procedures for information and communication policy and to use simple and clear language in all official documents in order to promote faster and better information and communication activities;
26. Calls on the institutions to use well-qualified media workers, such as journalists and professional communicators, in order to provide the best possible information in readable and comprehensible form;
27. Calls for the development of a cohesive public relations and communications strategy for all facets of the European Union's work;

28. Encourages cooperation with existing regional or trans-regional television channels and organisations, such as the EBU (European Broadcasting Union), CIRCUM (European Association of Regional Televisions) and the international press agencies, and support for new channels that might act as effective local relays for transmissions by a European channel; calls on the Commission to conduct a feasibility-study on a 'European C-SPAN' to provide the general public with relevant news and information on European Union affairs;
29. Considers it necessary for the European Union to step up and more intensively promote audiovisual-sector activities, notably by exploring further opportunities for co-production, and by involving new television channels and radio broadcasting stations, in particular in the applicant countries;
30. Recognises the need for further financial resources for the Europe by Satellite (EbS) to enable it to be one of the leading sources of information on European Union affairs in the world, and calls for better promotion of EbS towards journalists, broadcasting organisations and NGO's;
31. Calls for a reorganisation of the various websites of the major European institutions; considers there is a need for a joint portal for the Commission, the Council, the Court of Justice and the other main institutions in order to provide citizens with a more complete picture of European Union policies and legislation; considers that the official websites should offer links to relevant non-official sites, be they those of NGOs, associations or the media, or Members of the European Parliament; considers that European Union information sources should include a comprehensive online press library with a sophisticated search engine and a fast and effective help desk;
32. Calls on the national offices of the European Union institutions to undertake much more pro-active outreach work, and calls on the European institutions to establish 'rapid response units' at central and decentralised level in order to oppose false or contradictory information concerning the European Union in the media,
33. Calls on the budgetary authorities to give the DG for Public Relations the human resources needed to enhance Parliament's presence on the Internet;
34. Calls for intensive investment into Parliament's video-conferencing facilities in order to improve Members' access to their constituencies;
35. Recommends that CELEX, the European Union-document database with search engine, to be offered to the public free of charge;
36. Welcomes the plan of the Office of Official Publications of the European communities to introduce arrangements for "print on demand" through a portal dedicated to the publications of all the institutions, bodies and agencies;
37. Settles the principle that all printed publications should be published electronically as well; suggests in addition that the work and tasks of the Offices Of Official Publications of the European communities should be revised and instead of allocating the major part of the Office's production to printed material, the focus should be switched to audio-visual and electronic products, including the preparation of appropriate Power Point presentations;
38. Urges the Commission, together with Parliament, to establish common 'European Union Houses' (not to be mixed up with the existing organisations called "les Maisons d'Europe" which work very well) in all the Member States and the applicant countries at national

and, possibly, at regional level, and to permit organisations dealing with European integration to use the facilities of these 'Houses';

39. Asks the national governments and national parliaments to participate in the activities of these 'Houses' in order to ensure the most effective realisation of the joint priorities: in that sense, calls on national, regional and local authorities to participate in the activities of 'Info-Points Europe' and the European Institutions to enlarge the co-operation with the national parliaments of the member states, for instance through implementation of internships for national parliamentarians;
40. Believes that the 'European Union Houses' would facilitate 'one-stop shopping' for European citizens seeking information on European Union activities and detailed information on the execution of the specific responsibilities of the European Union's institutions; considers that the 'European Union Houses' should be easily accessible and visible to the public;
41. Recommends that the decentralised and local presence of the European Union institutions close to the citizen should be strengthened by allocating increased and adequate human and financial resources [deletion] by reconsidering the amount of the budget dedicated to the national "European Union Houses" in the capitals of the Member States and boosting the activities of regional centres like 'Info-Points Europe';<sup>42</sup>. Considers that the visitors groups are important means of coming closer to the citizen; regards it as important to study where improvements can be made in the quality of the visits in order to improve the effectiveness and cost-benefit of expenditure on visitors groups;
43. Questions if the expenditure on visitors groups is proportionate to the overall budget of the Direction General III of the European Parliament and calls for an analysis of the impact and value of visitors' groups;
44. Supports the idea of a common interinstitutional visitors centre in Brussels with all modern technological audio-visual facilities;
45. Calls for re-allocation of budget appropriations in accordance with the priorities set out in this report (the press service, AV department, the Internet service and visitors groups);
46. Calls on the Commission to do a calculation on the costs of the realisations of this report within 6 months;
47. Recalls that in the 1996 Budget, a process of rationalisation based on interinstitutional co-operation and aiming to create synergies between administrative and human resources and better value for money for the European taxpayers, was initiated;
48. Intends to continue the restructuring process in 2003 in particular through further concentration of the means dedicated to these policies, with the setting up of a realistic programming of savings to be made in administrative and human resources expenditure;
49. Confirms that the Information and Communication policy clearly belongs to the Commission's prerogatives as foreseen by the IIA of 6 May 1999 and therefore no specific legal basis is necessary;
50. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission as well as the other institutions and organs of the European Union and the national governments and parliaments.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

### Introduction

The aim of this report is to contribute to the development of a new information and communication strategy of the European Union which will enhance the knowledge and the understanding of the nature of the European Union among its citizens.

The European Union is facing great challenges in the next few years; first and foremost, the enlargement that will accomplish the unification of the European continent. The final stages of building the institutional structure of the European Union, and the new world agenda after September 11th, 2001 are other main issues which require stronger public support and democratic legitimacy among the citizens of the European Union.

The ambition of the new information and communication policy is to look upon information and communication 'as the citizens want it', in order to bring the European Union closer to its citizens.

Getting the message across to the public is a major problem owing to the credibility gap between Brussels and the European citizens. Less than 50% of citizens believe they benefit from their country's membership of the European Union<sup>9</sup>, and only 26% have an interest in participating in debates concerning European affairs<sup>10</sup>.

The turnouts in European Parliament elections also indicate a regrettable trend. In the first election in 1979 the turnout was 63%; In the following EP elections the turnouts were 61% (1984), 58.5% (1989), 56.8% (1994) and 49.4% (1999). A change in the perception of the European Union is a prerequisite in order to increase the turnout in the coming EP elections and thereby increase the democratic legitimacy of the European Parliament and the European Union.

A second major challenge is to avoid any propaganda from the institutions of the European Union. An acknowledgement of earlier mistakes in this field must aim to avoid mistakes in the future. Instead information and communication has to be as reliable, unbiased, pluralist and accountable as possible.

One way of providing pluralist information could be to present other points of view than those of the institutions in the form of links on European institution websites.

As a starting point it is necessary to acknowledge that the European Union cannot inform all its citizens and target groups about everything at the same time. There is an urgent need to give priority to particular subjects. The European Union's information campaign strategies must operate on two levels. Top priority information and communication should focus on issues which are close to the everyday lives of citizens. (Topics such as food safety, the euro, employment, security, the environment, traffic, human genetics etc). Contemporary campaigns relating to major issues such as enlargement, the future of Europe and security

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<sup>9</sup> EUROBAROMETER no. 55, July 2001, p 11

<sup>10</sup> EUROBAROMETER no. 55, July 2001, p 76

issues must be regarded as important campaigns too.

### **Target groups**

There is also a need to give priority to target groups, which must be defined as precisely as possible. Examples of well-defined target groups could be women, young people between 16 and 20, rural communities, school children, journalists, teachers, SMEs and professional decision-makers.

Your rapporteur believes that the recipients of the information must not be underestimated by presenting information which is too glossy or simplified. The information has to be provided in a form appropriate to the age, maturity and knowledge of the recipients concerned, while respecting the diversity of views on and proposals for European integration.

### **Decentralisation and coordination**

The key messages in this report are decentralisation and coordination. Your rapporteur believes that the best tool for bringing the Union closer to its citizens is the highest possible degree of decentralisation in all information and communication activities of the European institutions. Clearly, providers of information at the regional or local level are best located to provide information in a certain region or area. It is also clear that the closer the provider of information is to the citizen, the greater its credibility. A higher degree of decentralisation also seems to be the most obvious way of fine-tuning the target groups. Decentralisation encompasses both decentralisation of responsibility as well as financial resources from the institutions.

Co-ordination of information to citizens and communication with citizens is another prerequisite in order to derive the best possible benefits from the activities undertaken. Currently, there is insufficient knowledge of information and communication activities between and inside the institutions. Within the European Commission there seems to be very limited, if any, coordination of the information activities between the various Directorates-General. Coordination between the representations of the European Commission in the capitals of the Member States seems to be more developed than between the DGs in Brussels.

The rapporteur considers it appropriate to ask the European Commission to draw up an annual report on the entire information and communication policy of the European Union, including its financial aspects. This annual report must also assess current policy. In order to give the right priority to the importance of relations with citizens, the rapporteur also suggests an annual report and debate in the European Parliament on the current status of European Union information and communication policy.

### **The tools**

The use of the most appropriate tools to get the message across must be re-evaluated in future information and communication strategy in the European Union. Printed material, (leaflets, brochures and books) have so far been the main tool. It is extremely important to acknowledge the modern technological mass communications media. This means higher priority for TV and Internet use in the future.

TV is undoubtedly the most preferred medium for receiving information about European Union. 67% of citizens use TV to receive information about the European Union<sup>11</sup> whereas only 11% use the books, brochures and leaflets. The Internet, the use of which varies widely between Member States, is used by 11% of citizens in 2001.

Europe by Satellite (EbS), EURONEWS and the Contact magazine have been the TV media/programmes used until 2001 by the European Commission. Owing to budgetary constraints and a change of priorities in the Commission, support of EURONEWS and the Contact Magazine will be phased out in coming years. This leaves the European Union with even less access to TV. The rapporteur disagrees with this development and proposes instead the creation of a European Union TV channel dealing with European Union politics. The C-SPAN model in the USA, BBC Parliament or the German Phoenix parliamentary TV-channel are various models which must be considered at European Union level.

The introduction of televised debates and media partnership with major TV channels are supplementary tools to increase the use of TV in information activities. Such activities could also be seen as tools for promoting more lively debates in the European Parliament. The idea must be to create politically constructive argument which presents real political choices to the audience and thereby to voters in European Parliament elections.

The increasing spread of the Internet should mean giving higher priority to its use. Your rapporteur commends the 'Europa' website as professional and enriching. However there is a vital need for constantly updated, well organised, and easily navigated websites for the institutions. In order to develop a more coherent European Union information and communication policy, we should consider setting up a common portal for all the legislative institutions, to provide the optimum overview of specific European Union legislation.

There are many reasons for the regrettable lack of democratic legitimacy. One important reason is the unsatisfactory lack of quality in public information and communication. Too much information has been provided in too general a form i.e. the same brochure translated into 11 languages. It has not been precise enough, i.e. lacking in references and data, somewhat boring, or in the nature of 'propaganda'. A conceivable solution would be to engage media workers with the right expertise to get the message across.

### **Budgetary aspects**

The decrease in the planned expenditure on information and communication in the Press and Communication DG is of deep concern to the rapporteur. Planned expenditure for the forthcoming years is shown in the following table<sup>12</sup>:

#### **Overall multiannual estimate of expenditure:**

(a) Schedule of commitment appropriations/payment appropriations (financial intervention).  
(€ Million to three decimal places)

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<sup>11</sup> EUROBAROMETER no. 55, July 2001, p 69

<sup>12</sup> COM (2001) 354, p 34

	2002*	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Commitments	94.310	90.894	83.438	72.096	69.155	409.893
Payments	86.910	83.762	76.891	66.439	63.728	377.730

Even though the final stages of the successful euro campaign - which has been rather costly - have to be taken into account, this development is regrettable. The democratic legitimacy of the European Union is at stake over the next few years, and a decrease in expenditure on information and communication is the wrong signal to send the public and the institutions of the European Union.

Furthermore, DG RELEX has already had to face a cut in its budget for the recent and forthcoming years. This will mean very limited TV production concerning the role of the European Union in the third world in 2002, despite the fact that TV is undoubtedly the best media to get the message across.

### **European Parliament, DG III**

Even though visits to the institutions of the European Union have a relatively limited scope in terms of the number of citizens who take part, they are regarded as a very important means of informing and, especially communicating with citizens. Openness and access to the European institutions is definitely of major importance if the European Union wishes to get closer to its citizens. Visits to the European Parliament also offer a great opportunity for direct communication between citizens and the Members of the European Parliament. The annual number of visitors to the European Parliament is 550 000. However, a re-evaluation of the budget resources is necessary. The total budget for DG III in 2000 was 24.7 mil. €. Of this 43% was allocated to visitors groups (10,8 million €)<sup>13</sup>; 28.5% was allocated to printed publications, seminars and exhibitions (7 million €); 10.5% to audio-visual programmes (2.6 million €) and 17.2% to infrastructure and other items (4.25 million €). The question is whether this is the right balance.

The European Parliament's AV department offers excellent TV and radio broadcasting facilities to journalists and others, but seems to be fairly unknown outside a limited group of permanent users. Further promotion of the AV-Centre on TV and radio stations across Europe should be considered. A common interinstitutional AV centre could be considered as a future opportunity too.

An evaluation of the Press Service within DG III must be considered in order to ensure optimum use of the rather limited budget of DG III. Do the products produced meet the demand for modern information? Is the balance right between staff based in Brussels/Strasbourg and the press staff based at the external European Parliament offices in the capitals?

### **European Union Houses in the Member States**

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\* PDB 2002.

<sup>13</sup> This covers mainly the costs related to official visitors groups, which annually amount to 50,000 visitors.

The external offices of the European Parliament and the Representations of the Commission in the capitals and a few other major European cities ought to play an important role in bringing the European Union closer to its citizens. The aim is to have European institutions represented locally on a level with citizens, and not only in Brussels. As interinstitutional affairs are not particularly interesting to the general public, the rapporteur believes that close co-operation between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the national government or national parliament is very important. 'Teamwork' between the European institutions encourages an image of a 'Europe-as-one' to citizens on the one hand. On the other hand, it also establishes cooperation between the institutions. The third benefit is the possibility of common facilities, which offers opportunities for cost reductions. In your rapporteur's view, it is absolutely essential to set up common 'European Houses', centrally located and easily accessible, in all the capitals of the Member States and the applicant countries.



23 January 2002

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS**

for the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport

on a new framework for co-operation on activities concerning the information and communication policy of the European Union.

(COM(2001) 354 – C5-0465/2001 – 2001/2192 (COS))

Draftsman: Markus Ferber

### **PROCEDURE**

The Committee on Budgets appointed Markus Ferber draftsman at its meeting of 1 October 2001.

It considered the draft opinion at its meeting of 21 and 22 January 2002.

At this meeting it adopted the following conclusions unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Reimer Böge, acting chairman; Anne Elisabet Jensen, vice-chairman; Markus Ferber, rapporteur; Ioannis Averoff, Kathalijne Maria Buitenweg, Joan Colom i Naval, Bárbara Dührkop Dührkop, Göran Färm, Salvador Garriga Polledo, Neena Gill, Catherine Guy-Quint, John Joseph McCartin, Jan Mulder, Juan Andrés Naranjo Escobar, Guido Podestà, Kyösti Tapio Virrankoski, Ralf Walter, Brigitte Wenzel-Perillo,

## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

Over the past years, the Parliament has made efforts to develop a common Information policy reflecting the legitimate demand of the European citizens for this public service of the Union.

The guidelines set up by the committee on budgets were based on the following principles:

- a common message in respect of the autonomy of each institution.
- visibility of the Union through the creation of European Houses in the Member States.
- development of partnerships with the national authorities.
- synergies between the Commission and the Parliament services.
- decentralisation of activities.
- creation of a specific programme for information campaigns dedicated to the Union priorities (Prince) with a specific budget line (B3-306).
- more value for money.

To monitor those objectives, the Parliament has set up an interinstitutional working party co-chaired by the Commission and the Parliament and attended by representatives of the different parliamentary committees concerned.

Since 1996, the working party has made useful recommendations for the breakdown of the Prince appropriations for the various information campaigns and for improving the joint general activities.

In 2002, the Budget allocated to these policies represents approximately 98 million € which is a significant amount within heading 3 of the Financial Perspective where most of the programmes result from co-decisions.

Concerning the legal aspects, the committee on budgets has always defended the idea that the Information policy should remain a prerogative of the Commission as foreseen by the current provisions of the IIA of 6 May 1999 (article 37b). So far, it strongly opposed every attempt from the Council for setting up a legal basis considers that the current Communication should not be the first step of a legislative process; the legislative financial statement it contains should remain purely indicative since the decision on the necessary appropriations is decided by the budgetary authority in the context of annual procedure.

After a period of restructuring leading to operational deficit, the Commission has indicated its will to co-operate in the sense indicated by the European Parliament and reflected in the current Communication, which the rapporteur warmly welcomes.

He also wishes to recall that progress has been made by using budgetary means such as the reserve year after year including for 2002. The positive approach demonstrated by the Commission should provide rapid and concrete results in the direction of the principles stated by the Parliament and allow it to release the appropriations still in reserve.

However, time has come to develop performance targets in terms of concentration of means, providing savings on the basis of the synergies now set in place.

The rapporteur suggests that the Commission and the Parliament introduce some proposals,

under the form of an action plan which could be discussed by the working party and agreed in the context of the next budgetary procedure.

Finally, he recalls that the committee on budgets has raised doubts about the opportunity to externalise the information policy, mainly because this would imply an abandon of an important part of public service and therefore be in contradiction with the principles set out by the European Parliament in Budget 2000 concerning the dismantling of TAOs and the full responsibility of the Commission over all tasks of public authority.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Committee on Budgets calls on the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following points in its motion for a resolution :

### Budgetary Aspects

Whereas the Information and Communication Policy implemented by the Commission should reflect the objectives and activities of all the Institutions since they are financed by the European Union budget;

Recalls that in the 1996 Budget, a process of rationalisation based on interinstitutional co-operation and aiming to create synergies between administrative and human resources and better value for money for the European taxpayers, was initiated.

Underlines that the use of instruments such the reserve decided by the Budgetary Authority every year since 1996 and the creation of an interinstitutional working party co-chaired by the Parliament and the Commission have ensured a political guidance to the Information and Communication Policy of the Union;

Welcomes the recent efforts made by the Commission following years of reluctance and inefficiency, to achieve Parliament's requests for setting up a joint strategy in the area of information and communication; expects concrete results to come out rapidly in order to release the appropriations still in reserve in the 2002 Budget;

Intends to continue the restructuring process in 2003 in particular through further concentration of the means dedicated to these policies, with the setting up of a realistic programming of savings to be made in administrative and human resources expenditure.

Confirms that the Information and Communication policy clearly belongs to the Commission's prerogatives as foreseen by the IIA of 6 May 1999 and therefore no specific legal basis is necessary.

5 February 2002

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON CITIZENS' FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**

for the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport

on the Commission communication on a new framework for co-operation on activities concerning the information and communication policy of the European Union (COM(2001) 354 – C5-0465/2001 – 2001/2192 (COS))

Draftsman: Michael Cashman

### **PROCEDURE**

The Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs appointed Michael Cashman draftsman at its meeting of 21 November 2001.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 22 January 2002 and 4 February 2002.

At the latter meeting it adopted the following conclusions unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Ana Palacio Vallelersundi, chairman; Robert J.E. Evans and Giacomo Santini, vice-chairmen; Michael Cashman, rapporteur; Christian Ulrik von Boetticher, Alima Boumediene-Thiery, Charlotte Cederschiöld, Carmen Cerdeira Morterero, Ozan Ceyhun, Gérard M.J. Deprez, Francesco Fiori (for Carlos Coelho, pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Jorge Salvador Hernández Mollar, Margot Keßler, Timothy Kirkhope, Eva Klant, Jean Lambert (for Pierre Jonckheer), Baroness Sarah Ludford, William Francis Newton Dunn, Hubert Pirker, Bernd Posselt, Martine Roure, Heide Rühle, Olle Schmidt (for Lousewies van der Laan), Ilka Schröder, Patsy Sørensen, The Earl of Stockton (for Mary Elizabeth Banotti), Anna Terrón i Cusí, Astrid Thors (for Francesco Rutelli, pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Gianni Vattimo (for Adeline Hazan).

## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The Commission's communication on cooperation on activities concerning the information and communication policy of the European Union is to be welcomed. The implementation of existing policies and future development of the European Union needs to be based on the active and informed participation of its citizens. The draftsman particularly welcomes moves to coordinate the information activities of the institutions and as far as possible provide information in a "one-stop shop" so that it is not necessary for citizens to understand the institutional structure of the European Union to obtain the information they require.

Another key aspect of the information policy of the EU institutions is "access to documents". As the draftsman repeatedly noted in connection with the adoption of Regulation 1049/2001 on public access to documents of the institutions, 'documents' can not be separated from the information contained in them. It therefore follows that the information and communication policy of the institutions should be coordinated with the activities for the implementation of Regulation 1049/2001. For example, the Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI), which is responsible for the cooperation on information activities in particular between the Parliament and Commission should also be responsible for the activities in Article 15 of Regulation 1049/2001, i.e. developing good practice and examining possible conflicts and future developments on access to documents.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following points in its motion for a resolution:

Citation 1 a (new)

- ***having regard to Article 1 of the Treaty on European Union according to which decisions "are taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen" as well as the requirement of transparency laid down on Article 255 of the EC Treaty which imposes on the legislative institutions an obligation to give access to their documents,***

Citation 3 a (new)

- ***having regard to the White Paper of the Commission on European Governance (COM(2001) 0428) which aims to develop a constructive dialogue and an active participation in the European construction on the part of citizens and representatives of civil society and the economic sector and recalls the close interaction between the actions of the Union and the measures to be undertaken at national level and the obligation which flows from Article 10 of the EC Treaty for the administrations of the Member States to take all general or particular measures resulting from action taken by the institutions of the Community and to facilitate the achievement of the Community's tasks,***

Recital -A (new)

- A. *convinced that any information and communication policy only makes sense if it aims to achieve a constant interaction with the recipient of the information and that this interaction is from now on facilitated by modern technologies such as the internet or other interactive services from which more and more citizens benefit,*
- Ha. *whereas Parliament has always advocated transparent decision-making, access to documents, and meetings in public, since these are prerequisites for informing and communicating with citizens; whereas the above goals are laid down in the Treaties, in Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, and in the EP Rules of Procedure; whereas in particular, when it elected its President, Parliament set up a link to enable citizens to follow the event via a live audio and video webcast,*
- Hb. *whereas Parliament should achieve the aim of broadcasting its plenary sittings and committee meetings live on the Internet and making recordings thereof accessible via archives and a search engine; whereas this aim is entirely consistent with the EP Rules of Procedure, which provide for meetings to be held in public, with Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, which includes audio and video recordings as well in the definition of documents, with the Treaties, as regards transparency, and with the goal of informing citizens more fully and communicating with them more effectively,*
- Ka. *whereas the institutions should channel greater resources into information and communication via the Internet, which have the advantage of reaching a broad section of the public at minimal cost,*

Paragraph -1 (new)

- 1. *Confirms that a coherent information and communication policy of the European Union's institutions and notably of its legislative institutions must respond to the right of the citizens to participate in the European construction as well as the necessity for the institutions to base their policies on democratic consensus,*

Paragraph 4 a (new)

- 4a. *Welcomes the establishment of "Europe Direct", the interactive information service for citizens interested in knowing their rights or the opportunities offered by the Union policies, and invites the Commission to ensure that this service is interinstitutional, accessible on the internet, and linked to other help services provided by information relays on the territory of the Union and the candidate countries,*

Paragraph 6, second indent

- *factual information notably on the decision-making process within the European Union and on the preparatory texts for future decisions (Regulation 1049/2001),*

**11a. Believes that live broadcasting of Parliament's plenary sittings and committee meetings on the Internet – as was done when the EP elected its President – and archives and a search engine to make recordings thereof accessible to citizens would guarantee full compliance with the provisions of the EP Rules of Procedure on meetings in public, with Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, which includes audio and video recordings in the definition of documents, with the Treaties, as regards transparency, and with the general aim of informing citizens more fully and communicating with them more effectively, thereby bringing them closer to the European institutions;**

Paragraph 15

15. Suggests that the Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI) **should be responsible for the tasks foreseen in Article 15 of Regulation 1049/2001 establishing an interinstitutional committee to ensure access to documents** and should meet at least once every three months, assess the activities on a regular basis, propose appropriate guidelines for their development and report back to the European institutions;

Paragraph 15 a (new)

**15a. Suggests that the Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI) should be chaired by the European Parliament Vice-President responsible for transparency and access to documents as appointed pursuant to Rule 172 (6) of the EP Rules of Procedure,**<sup>14</sup>

Paragraph 33

33. Asks the national governments and national parliaments **as well as the regional and municipal authorities to host and** to participate in the activities of these '**European Union Houses**',<sup>15</sup>

Paragraph 39

39. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission **as well as the other institutions and organs of the European Union and the national governments and parliaments.**

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<sup>14</sup> As adopted at the plenary session of 13 November 2001 (Amendment 10 to the Rules of Procedure).

<sup>15</sup> The rapporteur of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport proposes that the Commission, together with the Parliament, should establish common 'European Union Houses' in all the Member States and the applicant countries (paragraph 32, CULT - PR/449527).