



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 27.6.2001
COM(2001)354 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION
TO THE COUNCIL, EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT,
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE
OF THE REGIONS**

ON

**A NEW FRAMEWORK
FOR CO-OPERATION ON ACTIVITIES CONCERNING THE
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION POLICY
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

CONTENTS

Introduction

I. Co-operation between the Institutions and with the Member States

I.1. An open framework for co-operation between the European Commission and the European Parliament

I.1.1 The Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI)

I.1.2 The Operational Services of the European Commission and the European Parliament

I.1.3 Co-operation on the ground - Representations and External Offices

I.2. A new Framework for co-operation with the Council and the other Institutions, the Member States and the National Parliaments

II. Commission information and communication services

II.1 General information services

II.2 Handling of sectoral information

II.3 Ways, means and evaluation

III. Follow-up

Annex: Ways, Means and Evaluation of Information and Communication Activities

INTRODUCTION

The underlying aim of the Communication is to establish a **new inter-institutional relationship** based on a new type of co-operation where common subjects and interests are concerned. This will involve joint implementation of information policies, management arrangements that are **easy to handle, decentralised and involve as little bureaucracy as possible**. It goes without saying that all of the parties involved will remain accountable as regards the specific direction of their own communication and information policy strategy. In the same way, all the parties involved will retain their autonomy as regards political information relating to their own institutions and getting their own priorities across.

The purpose of the Commission communication is to set up a new framework for co-operation on information and communication. It is a first response to requests made by the European Parliament and the European Council. On several occasions the European Parliament has asked the Commission to set up a joint strategy in the area of information and communication.¹ Likewise, the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 called on the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission to pool their efforts to put out co-ordinated general information on the Union and to optimise the use of resources. The Commission was invited to “study the general question of the Union's information policy, including improving co-ordination with its information offices in the Member States and links with national information offices.”

This is a big job, requiring considerable input from all the institutions and the Member States in order to implement measures producing, as far as possible, quick and persuasive results that will need to be evaluated regularly. Making a success of this entails allocating additional human and financial resources.

In the context of a genuine overhaul of information policy, the Communication sets out to:

- Devise an instrumental framework (identifying, sharing and pooling the various tools);
- Enlist support for objectives which included developing a proper dialogue with the public; bridging the gap between the Union and the public; ensuring that people have access to the right information; keeping messages to the point; being proactive rather than reactive; creating a Europe that is close to people, familiar to them and means something to them.
- Lay down arrangements for partnership between the institutions, the Member States at national, regional and local level and civil society; partnership arrangements that help provide information at decentralised grassroots level.

¹ Resolution of 14/05/98 on Information and Communication Policy in the EU
Resolution of 14/03/01 on the Information and Communication Strategy of the EU

This corresponds to a new environment in a Union where there have been profound changes. Public expectations and demands, the need to provide information at grassroots level and the debate about European governance have the combined effect of requiring all the parties concerned, both the Community institutions and the Member States, to step up co-operation with each other and develop new ways of working together. There is also a need for an inter-institutional approach to ensure that the picture the public is given of the institutions and what they do is one that hangs together rather than one that is muddled and piecemeal.

Given what is at stake, the Communication naturally calls for a debate; an open debate, but one that is structured, with a clear timetable and properly targeted. The Communication is, in fact, set out in such a way as to invite such a debate, since its sole purpose is to lay down a framework that can be built on. The framework says nothing about the content. The purpose of a debate would be to concentrate principally on content, thus fleshing out and adapting the framework.

I. Co-operation between the Institutions and with the Member States

The increasing and legitimate expectations of citizens to have full and easy access to information on European affairs, European Governance and the development of the Union calls for a modern, efficient and reliable information policy. To the Institutions, in particular the Commission, the Parliament and the Council, who are committed to a policy of openness, transparency (access to documents) and accountability, this new challenge is a welcome occasion to reinforce and rethink co-operation between them and with the Member States.

The purpose of this communication is to suggest a new framework for the information and communication activities of the European Union. In so doing it recognises the responsibilities of the Institutions and the Member States. The framework is not exclusive; indeed all the Institutions are invited together with the Member States and national parliaments to contribute to the common effort of information and communication.

The chosen approach is simple, un-bureaucratic and decentralised and aims to create a basis of mutual trust and confidence between Institutions.

A Europe close to the Citizen

At the heart of Information and Communication policy is the obligation to bring Europe closer to its citizens. The structures and Institutions themselves must adapt to this imperative so that Europe is “round the corner” with information that is clear, appropriate and in touch with real concerns. This matter is closely related to current discussions on Governance of the EU and in particular how to equip the Institutions better to fulfil their duty to inform and communicate. It is also essential for the citizens to be informed on the European Union Charter on Fundamental Rights in order to fully benefit from the Charter. In this way Information and Communication will become a strategic tool of governance for the European Community and

responds to the concerns and wishes expressed by the European Parliament on the participation of the public.

The Institutions face many difficulties in reaching out toward the citizen and cannot reasonably be expected to be able to launch and uphold a debate on their own. Ways must be found to overcome barriers to communication whether of a linguistic, cultural, political or institutional kind and taking full account of the differences between Member States: a European Public does not exist today for most purposes.

We therefore have to adapt the message to convey according to the specificities of the public addressed.

This requires full use of partnerships at all levels, making the best use of new techniques and technologies of communication and providing mechanisms for feedback from the citizen.

Accountability

While there must be a considerable degree of decentralisation in the provision of information it is equally necessary to assure consistency and reliability in the flow of information. The Institutions are and remain accountable for their actions. The fullest synergy should where reasonable be achieved between the activities and resources of each Institution.

Equally the Institutions – and their members - remain fully responsible for their respective contacts with the press and media. Work with the press is a high priority in today's world and is the key to the immediate presentation of new information, policies and opinions. The information and communication strategy should, whenever possible, facilitate this work with the media by assuring that factual and up-dated information on current topics is readily available. However, press-related activities are not directly concerned by this strategy on information and communication. Each Institution remains responsible for its press activities and for presentation, promotion and defence of its own policies and actions.

Integrity of the Institutions

The autonomy and integrity of all of the institutions is fully respected in the new framework. In particular, the European Commission is solely responsible for the communication and information activities relating to its exclusive authority, e.g. the right of initiative, the guardianship of the Treaty or the execution of the Budget under the control of the budgetary authority. The European Parliament, when acting in its role as legislator, as budgetary authority or as the democratic control authority, must have full independence to voice its opinion and its members to speak freely on any subject of their choice.

Handling of information by the Institutions

As the ordinary citizen is unlikely to appreciate too many distinctions being drawn between the European Institutions, and still less the different services of the

Commission, this not only requires improved mechanisms for inter-institutional co-operation, especially between Commission and Parliament, but also continued improvements within the Commission itself.

Information can be categorised in three ways. General information is aimed at the public as a whole, though it includes information aimed at priority audiences such as women and youth. The Commission, apart from explaining its own role, policies and activities must also include the rights and opportunities which belong to members of the public as citizens of the EU and the effect that actions at EU level have on them. It naturally covers the EU decision making process itself, the accountability of the Institutions to the General Public and areas of general interest such as the expenditure of EU funds.

Specialist information is needed by specific groups with a need for in depth information on some very particular aspects of EU policy. For instance in the Commission exist Units within the DGs to help those needing this kind of information.

Press information, much of it 'up to the minute' news, but also including specialised background material is separate from both of these, and belongs in a category of its own because of the audience to which it is in the first instance addressed, notwithstanding its enormous importance as regards the public as a whole.

Information should be considered within a more general communication strategy, which is designed to stimulate an informed debate on European matters. This does not mean that the information services should take over the role of politicians who are responsible for putting forward a particular stance towards the European Union. However the fact that the Commission is responsible for bringing forward the measures necessary to make reality of the articles of the treaty carries with it an obligation to communicate the substance of what it seeks to achieve to EU citizens as a whole. This task should be performed in partnership with the other European, as well as national and regional institutions.

I.1. An open framework for co-operation between the European Commission and the European Parliament

The important political priority given to Information and Communication activities and strategies by both Institutions, a priority, which is also reflected in the allocation of budgetary resources to the relevant budget lines, is clear and unchallenged. The framework for co-operation between the Commission and the Parliament should reflect this high level of political commitment as well as providing the basis for operational decisions by the headquarters of each institution and practical co-operation on the ground.

It is useful to identify the three levels of actors of this effort as the framework will concern them all in different ways and lay out precise modalities for co-operation:

- The political level in the form of the Inter-institutional Group on Information (IGI), which will define the general guidelines and priorities for the overall

policy on information and communication in full respect of the sectoral competence of Parliamentary Committees;

- The operational level where the responsible services (DG PRESS and Communication for the Commission and DG Information and Public Relations – DG III – for the Parliament) will decide and oversee activities;
- The decentralised level at which execution takes place in the Member States (Representations and External Offices).

I.1.1 The Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI)²

The IGI will be the central body for co-operation at political level between the Institutions. It will have two important functions: to oversee the proper functioning of the co-operation between the Institutions; and, on an annual basis, to review progress and lay down orientations on the general and specific information activities on which the European Parliament and Commission co-operate.

At an annual meeting, scheduled after the first reading by the European Parliament of the Preliminary Draft Budget for the following budgetary year, the IGI should adopt priorities for the future activities and review progress on the basis of a report drawn up by the Commission and such other contributions from other Institutions as may be appropriate. The IGI would have at its disposal a draft work programme on information activities from the Commission and Parliament services, including activities planned in each Member State. It will also draw up multiannual guidelines on information and communication activities.

The IGI will, as part of its responsibilities for the overall programming of common activities, adopt recommendations as necessary and make suggestions for the conduct and financing of the major information campaigns. It will be given regular reports on the execution of information activities undertaken by the Institutions in order to enable a fully informed political discussing of achieved results and future objectives.

The IGI strategy decision, based on the review of ongoing activities, includes:

- Selecting priority areas for information activities for the following year(s);
- Identifying, for each selected priority, the general objectives to be reached and the strategy to be followed;
- Defining the tools to be used (PRINCE, other major campaigns, etc.);
- Recommending arrangements for monitoring and impact assessment.

The IGI could meet on other occasions throughout the year when considered appropriate in order to examine the progress of major activities and making appropriate suggestions to amend and re-direct ongoing campaigns.

² The IGI is a joint working group with members from the Commission and the European Parliament and co-chaired by the two institutions. Its initial remit was restricted to priority information measures (PRINCE campaigns). It has now been extended to cover all information and communication activities.

The IGI Assessment of the co-operation between the Institutions should be a permanent activity and a fixed point on the agenda for the annual meeting. In this context it will be considered whether it is necessary to review the code of conduct in the area of information and communication.

Each Institution takes note of the decisions of the IGI and the recommendations made while preserving full autonomy and integrity. In particular each Institution should explicitly state how their Members will be involved in information campaigns and activities.

I.1.2 The Operational Services of the European Commission and the European Parliament

The Services of the two Institutions (DG Press and Communication – DG PRESS - for the Commission and DG Information and Public Relations – DG III – for the European Parliament) are charged with preparing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating information activities in accordance with the guidelines established and the instructions received within the agreed framework. The co-operation, exchange of information and mutual assistance between the services cover all of these steps.

The Commission's and the Parliament's Directors-General responsible for information and communication assist the IGI in its work. These DGs or their representatives will meet regularly and at least twice a year to examine reports on the execution of information activities, exchange information on current planning of activities and prepare the discussions of the IGI.

Either DG invites as a matter of course a representative from the other Institution to participate as an observer in its editorial committees of other similar groups in charge of general information activities. These DGs will also endeavour to associate the other Institutions and, where appropriate, other bodies, including representatives from the Member States involved in information activities with their work.

When a group or committee charged with editorial or other information-related responsibilities is created by the operational services (DG PRESS and DG III) at central level they invite the other to nominate an observer.

The Directorates-General of both Institutions should give further consideration to arrangements for the sharing of means of communication, as is already the case for example for the EUROPA web-site, Europe by Satellite broadcasts (EbS) and the Libraries of the Institutions.

The Directors-General of PRESS and DG III should also meet with their counterparts of the other Institutions, overview the work done by the existing co-ordinating committees (e.g. on Europa or on Europe by Satellite). They should ensure that the Institutions exploit consistently the potential of modern technologies and provide the public easy access to updated information.

The possibility to create an advisory body on Information and Communication comprising representatives of the Institutions, the Member States, and with the

possibility of co-opting external advisers and specialists for specific purposes will be examined (such as best practices in the use of communication instruments, how they can be used together most effectively, evaluation criteria and impact assessment).

I.1.3 Co-operation on the ground - Representations and External Offices

The Commission Representations and the European Parliament External Offices in the Member States are at present co-operating locally on an ad-hoc basis. Both Institutions have allocated considerable resources to their activities and expect a corresponding feedback in relation to the specific tasks defined for the local entities. In the new framework for co-operation a high degree of local co-ordination, exchange of information and co-operation is both necessary as it enhances the efficiency of the actions.

Scope and method of co-operation

The Representations and Offices are to be considered the centres for all decentralised co-operation in the Member States within the new framework. All areas concerned by the decisions and guidelines laid down by the IGI are included. Activities and actions relating to areas, which are and remain, the sole responsibilities of either Institution do not fall within the purview of local co-operation in the Member States.

The Heads of Representation and External Offices will be responsible for the implementation on the ground of the activities identified by the IGI and made operational by DGs PRESS and III respectively. As a rule the co-operation is to be based on systematic local contacts and regular exchange of forward plans and initiatives. Whenever possible the Offices and the Representations should seek common solutions to common problems.

The Heads of the Representation and External Office in each Member State are responsible for the co-operation on the ground between their two Institutions. They systematically invite each other to participate in steering groups, editorial committees etc. at local level when the subject matter is of common interest. In order to facilitate the regular co-operation the following provisions apply:

- a monthly meeting is held between the Heads of Representation and Information Office at the office of one of them, alternating;
- a copy of the written agenda and summary minutes of each meeting is forwarded by each Head to his Institution;
- the Heads of all Representations and External Offices meet twice a year; one of the meetings will give priority to preparing the annual meeting of the IGI.

The co-operation respects all local conditions and special circumstances of the host country. The Institutions remain committed to seeking a maximum of synergy in their operations, including joint premises, information outlets, electronic linking of internet sites etc. as well as in all other practical ways of collaborating.

Finally, the Heads of Representation and External Offices undertake to take into consideration in all information and communication actions where appropriate

precisely how Members of the two Institutions may be invited to participate. In all case appropriate steps must be taken in order to promote pluralism and open debate.

Joint actions – mission statements and code of conduct

Basic information about the EU and its policies should be a joint responsibility of the Commission, European Parliament, Council, the other Institutions and the Member States. Relays and networks that are adapted to the circumstances in individual Member States best carry out this work.

These information providers should be as close to the citizen as possible - the EU is around the corner, not a foreign policy issue. It is particularly important in some Member States to find locally trusted and credible carriers of the messages the Institutions want to pass on. It is also important to keep in mind that even working together, the Institutions can not reach all citizens by themselves. Therefore partnerships with Member States, civil society and NGOs are of crucial importance. The information must be modern and user friendly, addressed to people's real concerns. The Representations have a responsibility for co-ordinating, training and feeding the relays and networks with support from the relevant units at the centre.

Against this background there is good reason to review and if necessary amend the mission statements of Representations and Offices. The Commission proposes to re-examine its provisions to take account of the new framework for co-operation; this entails adding provisions concerning information to "general public" as a priority to be added to the two existing priorities relating to "media" and "political contacts". Other amendments would concern the campaigns and other actions adopted by the IGI to ensure that they are given proper priority on the ground.

A proposal has been made to the Parliament similarly to amend the mission statements of the Offices, in particular in relation to the activities directed at the press and media in the regions. It could be considered to include "work through the relays and networks" among the priorities.

Finally it could be envisaged to review the code of conduct between the European Commission Representations and the European Parliament Offices in the Member States (January 15th, 1998) in the light of the principles outlined in this communication, lay down the formalities of the proposed regular meetings and identify the areas of co-operation.

I.2 A new Framework for co-operation with the Council, the other Institutions, the Member States and the National Parliaments

The responsibility for information and communication falls on all Institutions and the Member States. The co-operation framework described here should be open and all Institutions and the Member States should be invited to participate wherever appropriate and feasible.

The Council

The Council has a different information and communication policy comparable to those of the European Parliament and the European Commission, as it has limited budgetary resources for this purpose. It does operate its own relations with the press and media and shares some means of communication with the other Institutions. However the Helsinki European Council asked that the Council be associated with the effort of providing general coherent information on the European Union. The European Council also called on the Commission to improve co-ordination between the Representations in the Member States and the National Information Authorities.

At present the Council participates in the EUROPA web-site and in Europe by Satellite alongside the other Institutions. The Council is represented on the editorial and managerial committees but does not otherwise take part in formulation of information and communication policies. The Council is not at present a member of the IGI.

Future developments could include information and communication from the Council on second and third pillar issues. This would involve inter-institutional co-ordination between Commission, Parliament and Council beyond simple sharing of means of communication. So far the Council has not put forward a comprehensive strategy but the establishment of the rapid reaction force and increased Union participation in international peace-keeping operations may be an occasion to change that. The Commission will invite the Council to consider how the Institutions should handle these issues and how the Council envisages its participation in the IGI.

It is likely that individual governments consider that they have ample means of information and communication at their disposal. The scope for joint actions at the level of the Union involving both the Council and the Member States is probably limited to sharing of means of communication. Apart from the electronic media of EUROPA and EbS, the establishment of a joint Visitors' or Information Centre in Brussels and closer co-operation on libraries are being actively considered, though at present without firm conclusions. Co-operation among the Institutions in the joint production of press cuttings and reviews could provide a better service and economies of scale in a field of common interest.

Other Institutions and bodies

All the Institutions should be invited to contribute to the information activities of the Union within their specific areas of responsibility. The Commission proposes to include information activities in all the normal contacts between Institutions. There should be mutual understanding and proper inclusion of information from the institution in information materials for public use. This is already the case for example in the relations between the Commission and the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee.

The joint declarations between the Commission and the two Committees, which are being finalised at present, will include these aspects and the role they may play vis-à-vis civil society and the regions. The Commission remains open to any proposals in this respect from the other Institutions.

Member States and National Parliaments

As the information strategy must involve a wide range of means and techniques for placing information at the disposal of the public it is also necessary for the Institutions to seek and obtain the full co-operation of the authorities of the Member States at national, regional and local levels. It is clear that an effective information and communication strategy must ensure that messages are received by the citizens at the most local level. The Commission should enhance co-operation with national, regional and local administrations whilst naturally respecting the constitutional balances of each Member State.

Where policies are agreed and established, Member States together with regional and local authorities share directly in this task, and are often best placed to provide a framework for the diffusion of information, particularly at the local level.

Efforts to decentralise the provisions of information to the public to a partnership arrangement with the Member States will be pursued. Such arrangements exist already in Paris and Lisbon and will soon be in place in Rome. In other Member States, different forms of partnership involving national, regional, local and civil society bodies might be appropriate. In all cases the thrust of policy is to provide information to the public through a partnership between the EU Institutions and the Member State's own facilities, not only in the Representations or the External Offices.

The options for joint actions with government agencies in the Member States include joint information activities co-financed and co-managed through a signed agreement (convention). The activities may concern permanent information centres like Sources d'Europe in Paris, the Jacques Delors Centre in Lisbon and the CIDE in Rome; or they may relate to specific policy priorities like the Euro or Enlargement information activities. Apart from the very positive signal of co-operation, there are many other advantages to such joining of forces, not least the involvement of the media, recourse to specialised personnel and the possibility of reaching groups of the population which no European institution may reach alone.

Member States have reacted differently to the advances of the Commission regarding conventions. Some have embraced the proposals with enthusiasm and are likely to want to further expand and exploit the idea. Others have agreed to participate within narrowly defined objectives (e.g. information campaign on the Euro) and limited in time; they may be willing to look at other issues like enlargement. Only two Member States have not yet agreed to any conventions.

Government information agencies – where they exist - have not been approached in a systematic way by the Commission. Directors-General for Information - or their equivalent - were invited to a meeting in Brussels in 1999 to discuss options for common actions, in particular regarding the Euro. Some Representations have maintained bilateral contacts with national agencies, but no general picture exists. The reason for this is no doubt that there are significant differences between the Member States; some have central Agencies responsible for public information on a grand scale, others operate a very decentralised system of public information with little or no central co-ordination.

Examples of co-operation concern mutual references and links to internet sites and similar cross-referencing. There are no examples of mutual membership of editorial boards or joint publications. It should be possible, however, to associate the national authorities – where they exist – with general European campaigns, and that should be the rule if there is a convention.

As regards national Parliaments, co-operation with the Representation is seen as a purely local affair. The European Parliament has similar experience. Some Member States have information offices at their Parliaments and the Representation is normally in contact with them; in other cases there is no formal contact with the Parliament, only with individual MPs and political parties. The Commission has not taken any general initiative to approach national parliaments. All such initiatives will be undertaken in close co-operation with the European Parliament.

II. Commission Information and Communication Services

II.1 General Information Services

DG Press and Communication

The Directorate General for Press and Communication is responsible for the Commission's relations with the media. The fact that the Commission's Spokespersons specialise in a particular area of Commission policy is designed to ensure the provision of information of high quality within an overall framework which involves the other Directorates General.

Within DG PRESS responsibility for the press is shared with Representations of the Commission based in the Member States. Unlike their colleagues in Brussels, the Representation staff who deal with the press will in general be speaking to journalists who may not be specialists in European matters, but, for example, political, economic or industrial correspondents within the national press who increasingly include European aspects in their coverage of national affairs. In addition, Representations have a vital role as regards information to the regional and local press which do not have journalists dedicated to reporting European matters on their staff.

A large number of specialist newspapers and magazines often seek help from the Representations. Furthermore, apart from journalists, the Representations also have contacts with editorial staff and leader writers.

Representations' role and priorities in the new framework

The Representations of the European Commission represent and are at the service of the Institution as a whole. Their tasks involve:

- A direct role with the media on behalf of the Commission, acting within the priorities laid down by DG Press and early warning on major issues;
- Political networking and the feeding back of intelligence to the Centre in Brussels;
- Assistance in provision of information to the general public on priority themes, where appropriate in partnership with Member State authorities and the European Parliament. This function is carried out, under the authority of the Representations, mainly through networks of information providers established in association with the Member States and other regional or local bodies.

Explaining the Commission's policies is an important feature in the first two of the three priorities which remain the core activities of the Representations when they act as representatives of the Institution. The new framework should imply that the third priority is given equal treatment in the future, to reflect the new co-operation with the Parliament. The Representations will continue to play a crucial role in helping to implement major information activities decided upon by the Commission within the framework of PRINCE³.

The Parliament's External Offices are only marginally associated with the networks at present. There is much scope for closer involvement of the EP in two ways: the Offices could be invited to use the networks for institutional information from the EP and should in time be invited to reflect on the location, the size and the structure of the networks. Secondly, MEPs should be invited to participate in local events organised by or through the networks.

In addition to the core activities, Representations also handle other tasks such as acting as an extension of the services in Brussels. Examples include helping to manage DGs programmes, handling recruitment inquiries, tenders, and complaints by citizens. The Representations assist with high level visits from the Commission in Brussels and provide support when the host country holds the Presidency.

The Representations should further develop the networks including at regional and local level and involve them as active partners in the general information activities, in organising events and providing training for network personnel.

The Representations and the Offices have a key role to play in inter-Institutional co-operation on a decentralised basis. Close working relationships between Representations and EP External Offices will be of growing importance in planning

³ The PRINCE programme, which was introduced in 1995 largely at the instigation of the European Parliament, involves priority campaigns in partnership with the institutions and the Member States.: It is now applied to enlargement, to the euro, to the debate on the future of the European Union and to the new campaign on the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice.

and carrying out their respective activities. Many activities now undertaken by the Representations will therefore fall within their remit of inter-institutional co-operation. The Annex of this Communication gives an overview of the possible evolution of these activities within the new context of close co-operation.

It is proposed that annual definition of information and communication priorities should take place with Representations each September for the budget year that follows. Proposals for action will be prepared by Representations on the basis of these priorities and a copy will be given to the External Offices for information. Final agreement would be given in the light of IGI conclusions and the internal Commission budget hearings and decisions. The Parliament Offices should be invited to follow a similar procedure. Each year, Representations and Offices should submit activity reports, as part of the evaluation exercise, which will include the exchange of information priorities.

II.2 Handling of Sectoral Information

The Directorates-General and Services within the Commission have information units responsible for sectoral information; eg environment, competition, trade, social policy, agriculture etc. These services have at their disposal specific budget lines for this purpose; these are not covered by the present communication. There is also a particular role to be played by the DGs responsible for external relations in providing information to citizens of third countries including information for the general public in applicant states. Demand from other third countries will often be of a more specialised kind. There are of course many journalists from third countries in the Brussels press corps who receive exactly the same service as their EU colleagues. These aspects are not covered either by the present Communication.

The Information Units perform a very important job of making Commission policy, decisions and activities known to the public at large or specific groups of population. The services use printed, electronic and other media for this purpose as well as meetings, conferences, visits and speeches. This activity is indispensable for the good functioning of policies; it is also an effective and useful way for the Commission as an Institution to reach a wider audience than it can through the general activities and campaigns.

While the work of DG PRESS and the Representations is co-ordinated within the same Directorate-General there is no such direct mechanism as regards information provision by other Directorates General. It is increasingly recognised that information is a key element of policy making and that in this area it is vital in order to avoid loss of impact or misunderstandings. The Spokespersons having a responsibility for a specific subject area can contribute to assure the coherence of the message in an unbureaucratic way⁴. It is also the case that while the Representations themselves keep close contact with key target audiences such as industry, trade unions and non-governmental organisations, those with very specialised interests will naturally keep contact with the unit which has information responsibilities bearing on their own field of activity.

⁴ Declaration of Presidents with a protocol on co-operation in annex

As information and communication are the key partners of policy formulation, the best way to start would be to identify the main policy events that have a high profile, making four or five key policy priorities the main foundation for information and communication activities that will provide a firm basis for a co-ordination between policy and information as a whole. The Commission now announces its key policy priorities and financial orientations through the Annual Policy Strategy in the Spring. The Commission's annual Work Programme remains an important event, linked as it is to the state of the Union debate at the end of the year. However, it will become much more political and focused on priorities than in the past, which should facilitate its use for information and communication purposes. Another new feature is the presentation by the Commission of an annual report on its activities, which should become another important information and communication event. The Director-General for PRESS should meet with other Directors-General to discuss the implications for information policy of these events and establish mechanisms for implementing appropriate information activities. Clearly this co-ordination will enhance the high quality information provided by the different services.

Other matters will arise during the course of the year in question, but making four or five key policy priorities the main foundation for information and communication activities will provide a firm basis for a co-ordination between policy and information as a whole. Implementing these priorities will involve the specialist DGs themselves, the Representations and, for overall co-ordination and presentation, the services of DG PRESS in Brussels. With the basis for co-ordination firmly established, the Commission will be better placed to deal with unexpected issues as they arise.

There are also mechanisms such as the Priority Publications Programme. It is set within the framework of the annual Work programme of the Commission and its publications are targeted to the general public. This is to provide a structured and coherent message and make it possible to get an overview of the range of Commission information materials as a whole.

Other mechanisms for co-ordination are already in place including joint participation in the running of the Europa web site and Europe by Satellite. Furthermore, within the framework of information campaigns under the PRINCE programme on specific topics, such as enlargement, there are full co-ordination mechanisms not only within the Commission, including the Representations, but also with the European Parliament and often the Member States.

II.3 Ways, means and evaluation

No information or communication policy can be properly developed without the requisite ways and means at its disposal. In the last few years the Commission has put in place a system whose coherence and visibility must be maintained. As well as the priority information activities (PRINCE), pride of place must go to networks and relays, as well as the value-added services: Europe Direct, Eurojus, Signpost Service. These rely on the various media placed at their disposal, such as Europe by

Satellite (EbS), the Library, Documentation Centres, publications and audio-visual co-productions etc.

These instruments and their means of evaluation are presented in the annex to this communication as well as their use within the framework of co-operation with the other Institutions and the Member States. This particular group has been identified jointly with the European Parliament. It is around all these instruments that co-operation with the other Institutions, the Member States and civil society should be made tangible. The Commission proposes to review each instrument with a view to defining the appropriate level of co-operation. To that effect, some suggestions are put forward by the Commission.

Externalisation possibilities

Today some current Commission information activities are handled by services external to the Institution. In this way information produced by the Commission may more easily reach the citizen, who will also be better served. By involving external services we can significantly increase the accessibility to information while the Commission remains fully in charge of the information of its electronic and printed products.

The establishment of an inter-institutional information agency merits consideration in this context. The Helsinki European Council has asked the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission to consider the creation of an agency of this nature. While each institution would continue to be responsible for the information it produces, the agency could be made responsible for a number of activities, e.g. Central Library, visits to the Institutions (headquarters); press cuttings and distribution, storage and restocking of all materials in all information outlets in the Member States. It could be considered if the agency should also be able to produce materials or publications of a general nature.

The Institutions will be invited, on the basis of an options paper from the Commission, to consider to what extent information activities are and could be further "externalised" through recourse to external service providers at central and local levels. A more thoroughgoing initiative, could consider whether or not the creation of an inter-institutional information agency, should be launched for this purpose. In the Commission's view the creation of such an agency should be based on needs resulting only from experience.

III. Follow-up

The Commission intends to exploit this new framework for Information and Communication in an active and constructive manner. To summarise: the framework provides us with an organisation for co-operation, a range of instruments and tools for information and communication activities and a number of methods for evaluating the information which is provided by the institutions.

The Commission will thus endeavour to create an information and communication policy which is:

- ***Sustained and permanent***: the public should know that factual information is available at all times; that information on European affairs is not an exclusive Commission privilege but a shared responsibility between all the institutions and the Member States. The purpose of the Communication policy is to produce and convey quality messages that are tailored to their audience and lasting.
- ***Decentralised and based on multiplier effects***; in recognition of the impossibility to communicate directly with the general public the delivery of information must rely on a multitude of outlets and operators; the Commission will continue to develop and strengthen its actions through journalists and the media, the networks, public and semi-public organisms, the private sector, the NGOs and the civil society;
- ***Suited and appropriate***; in today's mass of information it is necessary to ensure that the message and the means by which it is delivered suits the public to which it is addressed and is received and understood; therefore the actions are subject to constant scrutiny and adjustment.

The Commission invites the other institutions and the Member States to join in this effort.

Recent events, such as the low turnout in European elections and the results of various referendums, are ample proof of the public unease that needs to be addressed.

Since the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, this unease has manifested itself as a mismatch whereby the public are generally well-disposed towards the major European ideals the Union stands for, but have a nagging mistrust of the institutions and what they do despite the positive real-world effects that are there to be seen, such as economic recovery, the introduction of the Euro, the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice and a stronger voice for the Union on the world stage. The root cause of this dissatisfaction is the failure to convey what the policies are being pursued for, often coupled with a widespread feeling that not enough information is being provided. People also find it difficult to put a face to who is doing what in the Union and strongly feel that proper account is not taken of the realities on the ground. It is this vicious circle of disenchantment, the mismatch between expectations and immediate perceptions, that needs to be broken, by enlisting all the relevant parties as promptly as possible; this means the institutions, the Member States and civil society, within the framework of their own responsibilities. To this end, this Communication sets out to create a framework for better information and better discussions. In this context the information and communication strategy must naturally be considered within the wider discussions on governance and the need to stimulate informed debate and greater public engagement.

The result of the recent Irish referendum on the Nice Treaty makes it more necessary than ever to bring together all participants in the effort to provide information about the European Union. "Brussels" alone cannot explain the policies, activities and future of the Union. Information must come from those closest and most directly related to the citizen: elected representatives and Governments at all levels.

The European institutions, at central level and on the ground in the Member States, must play their part by working together to explain what they do and why. They must also assist in the co-ordination of efforts to provide information about the EU generally. This paper is intended to create a framework for a new co-ordinated strategy. The content of that strategy should be a matter of urgent debate between European and Member State institutions in the coming months.

This debate will take place on the basis of a concerted approach, in particular the consideration of a series of questions which should include :

- how to ensure mutual respect for the specific competences of each Institution;
- clarification, where appropriate, of the role of each Institution, especially in relation to the Council, Member States and the national Parliaments;
- a clear distinction between information and communication, each having a separate concept;-
- the search for a proper balance between the need for global coherence of the messages and necessary diversification which takes into account national differences;
- the use of external expertise whenever this is desirable and possible, but evaluation should remain within the Commission in liaison with the IIG;
- the elimination of all contradictions or duplications in relation to campaigns already under way (Euro, Enlargement, the Future of the Union).

The present Communication enables the Commission to embark on the next step in the process, which will be the analysis of the reactions from all institutions as well as the administrations and parliaments of the Member States. In addition, the outcome of the wider debate, which will be launched after the summer, must also be examined. At the end of this year the Commission will present its conclusions based on the discussions and proposals put forward with the view to preparing a Communication on the substance.

ANNEX

**WAYS, MEANS AND EVALUATION OF
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**

CONTENTS

1. Priority Information Activities (PRINCE)
2. Networks and Relays
3. EUROPA and Publications
4. Europe Direct, Eurojus, Signpost Service
5. TV and Radio Broadcasts and training for journalists
6. Central Library and network of documentation centres
7. Visits
8. Evaluation

1 Priority Information Activities (PRINCE)

PRINCE is synonymous with solid inter-institutional co-operation. The programmes lay down a global approach with clear and precise objectives and messages targeting specific audiences.

PRINCE operates on the following principles:

- Grassroots and decentralisation;
- Partnership;
- Flexibility and transparency.

Grassroots and decentralisation: with this in mind, several major projects financed by PRINCE have been devised, designed, implemented and monitored “on the spot” by the Commission’s Representations in the Member States with the involvement of the European Parliament’s external offices.

Partnership: this involves the Member States (on the basis of agreements concluded) and civil society (through calls for proposals).

Flexibility and transparency: this sets clear and visible priorities and allows the Commission and the Parliament to establish forward planning within a solid budgetary framework. Because of the fact that the IGI is associated with the programme PRINCE is also a focal point for the development of the information and communication priorities of the two institutions.

Through proper co-operation and agreement on political priorities it must be assured that budgetary resources for the actions are available.

Some campaigns are intended just to provide information, such as the campaign on the Euro. Others, such as the campaign on the future of the European Union, are intended to stimulate debate, while others still, such as the new campaign on enlargement, are meant to serve both purposes.

The purpose of all these campaigns is to get information across and stimulate discussion outside the narrow circle of specialists.

The PRINCE programme, which was introduced in 1995 largely at the instigation of the European Parliament, initially involved three priority campaigns: “Citizens First”, “Building Europe together” and “The Euro”. It is now applied to enlargement, to the euro, to the debate on the future of the European Union and to the new campaign on the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice. The euro information programme will be continued in 2002 and possibly beyond according to the needs of the pre-in and/or candidate countries.

The enlargement communication strategy, adopted on 10 May 2000 by the Commission, set out a multi-annual action programme and identified the budgetary

means to enable a decentralised approach, including the use of partnerships, notably with civil society.

The debate on the Future of the Union comprises two separate but interactive dimensions that were defined in the Commission communication (COM/2001/178 final):

- each Member State should organise and stimulate debates taking into account its specific national constraints;
- as the debate on Europe develops it should take into account the national debates and the discussions between Member States.

The communication specifies the practical means (types of actions and resources) and the Commission's contribution. The present communication does alter this in any way.

The area of freedom, security and justice was clearly designated by the Amsterdam Treaty as the Union's next political frontier. It introduces free movement for people residing legally on the territory of the Union. This area of freedom cannot be taken full advantage of unless security and justice are safeguarded for everyone within it.

The Charter on Fundamental Rights is laid out in a clear and readily understandable text directly addressed to the citizen. As the debate on the future of the Union, including the preparations on the IGC 2004, come underway it would be logical to make a main topic of a general campaign on the dynamics and method of the Charter.

Finally, the role of the European Union in the world. Whether in respect of its political and economic role or in the area of development, humanitarian aid and conflict prevention, the European Union has become a major player on the international stage. Likewise the role of the Union in peace-keeping is asserted through the Common Security Policy. This external action of the European Union, which is more and more established in the eyes of our partners, remains un-recognised by our own citizens. Any proposal for a campaign in this area would be in line with the general orientations of the activities under the PRINCE programme.

2. Networks and relays⁵

Information relays mean a decentralised structure with locally situated physical premises open to the public, set up by a body and run by it. As powerful tools for decentralising information provision, relays ensure that information activities have a human face and are tailored to highly varied specific needs.

Development of the relay system:

- Is based on the principle of subsidiarity and a commitment to engaging in active partnerships with bodies that are well-established in the socio-economic set-up in their region and, as such, in direct contact with the public;

⁵ The specialized relays and networks, created to support the development of small and medium sized enterprises, innovation and research etc are outside the scope of this communication

- Is part of a framework set up in close co-operation with the Representations;
- Aims for a balanced geographical spread of the centres across the Union.

There are relays at three levels: national, inter-regional and local/regional.

National-level centres:

There are currently two national-level centres in operation, one in Paris (Sources d'Europe) and one in Lisbon (Jacques Delors Information Centre); a third centre has just been set up in Rome (Information and Documentation Centre– CIDE). The Commission and the Member States are bound by a partnership agreement under which they share the financial costs equally between them. The Representations monitor the activities of the centres and Commission representatives sit on their management bodies alongside representatives of the Member State concerned.

The purpose of the centres is to develop an integrated system of information on the Union using local relays. Their main functions are to act as:

- head of the national network for all the other relays: Info-Points and, at local level, the “guides” (information kiosks); information centres;
- a document resource centre as well as producing various materials (leaflets, brochures, etc.) for the network.

On specific terms the centres' management bodies allow for any organisations or institutions, whether public or private, and any national or regional authorities to get involved with the centres and work together alongside the founding members. Here the European Parliament will need to clarify its intentions regarding its involvement with the national-level centres.

Centres at inter-regional level ⁶

Relays of this type have been set up to cater for regions considered a priority from a socio-economic point of view (regions whose development is lagging behind) and from the point of view of their geographical or geopolitical position: for example, the South of Italy, the northern dimension, proximity to sensitive areas, such as the Balkans or the southern coast of the Mediterranean basin, or proximity to the borders with the countries applying for accession.

The Commission has no management responsibilities in these centres, but ensures that the objectives set are properly adhered to by means of regular contact with its representations and its central administration in Brussels

Local/regional level

⁶ “Jean-Monnet-House” in Berlin, the “Thessaloniki Centre”, and the “Naples Centre”

Local-level relays are the cornerstone of decentralised information policy. Their job is to convey the information in line with everyday reality and the local economic context. These relays are grassroots information centres par excellence.

They are managed directly by their host bodies (regional or local authorities, public or semi-public bodies etc.). The Commission does not have any responsibility for their day-to-day management, but provides a grant and contributes to technical and documentary assistance on the basis of an agreement signed with the host body. While respecting the relays' autonomy, initiatives and diversity, the Commission nonetheless ensures that a certain uniformity is retained and their shared identity safeguarded (shared logo). A Help Desk facility has been introduced, integrating the aid, assistance, co-ordination and management functions. The Commission has also just set up a Permanent Monitoring System, which uses modern technology to make it possible to monitor and become better acquainted with what the different bodies are doing.

There are two types: Info-Points Europe (IPE) and Rural Information Carrefours.

- The **INFO-POINTS EUROPE** are usually located in the capital of the province or region and deal with information for people living in towns and cities. There are 139 such info-points and the vast majority of them (80%) are housed by the regional or local authorities and sometimes by specialised associations;
- The **RURAL INFORMATION CARREFOURS** are targeted more at people living in the countryside; there is a network of 130 of them.

The Info-Points Europe and the Carrefours now cover a large area of Europe, but it is still not sufficient. This is why the Commission is proposing a five-year plan to achieve more comprehensive coverage of the EU regions. Eventually each region should have at least one focal point for information. This will obviously require additional resources, but it should be borne in mind that the funds provided by the Commission are principally intended to have a lever effect and mobilise investments of much larger sums. This aim to extend the networks must be an aim shared by the institutions and primarily the European Parliament. For example, MEPs from the region where the Info-Point is situated could be routinely invited to participate in the various events. The European Parliament's External Offices could make use of the network and their suggestions regarding the location, size and structure of Info-Points will be welcome. These possibilities are also offered to other Institutions and organs of importance including the Committee of the Regions.

It goes without saying that this expansion will now need to take account of the countries applying for accession.

A final element in the relays providing general information for the public is the experimental network of 19 centres known as **Urban Forums**, whose role is to disseminate information on sustainable urban development.

In some Member States the Representations have organised networks not financed by the Commission (public libraries, local authorities, chambers of commerce etc.). The Representations give them as much support as possible for them to provide reliable information on Europe.

The Commission also gives financial, documentary and organisational support for information activities by large independent networks, such as **FIME (Fédération internationale des Maisons de l'Europe)** and the **European Movement**.

Mention should finally be given to the considerable logistical support provided by the network of **European Documentation Centres (EDC)**.

Team Europe and Groupeuro (speakers' network)

In parallel with measures to establish information networks on a permanent footing, the Commission has also set up networks of speakers who are taking an active part in the debate on the Community (in 2000 there were 10 000 interventions and more than 700 appearances in radio and television programmes). These speakers operate at local level and act as information multipliers.

The Groupeuro group of speakers was set up in response to numerous requests for input on EMU and the introduction of the Euro.

In some Member States a "Team Europe Junior" also provides information for young persons.

3. EUROPA and Publications

EUROPA was initially launched on the Commission's initiative and dates from 1995. Following a suggestion from the European Parliament, the Secretaries-General of all institutions set up a Task Force in 1997 which subsequently developed into the Interinstitutional Internet Editorial Committee, with the Commission providing the chair.

One of the outcomes of this co-operation has been a common vision of the content and presentation of the headings in the general homepage and the underlying pages. A common graphic chart has been established with general presentations and common or related navigational aids have been recommended so as to give overall uniformity. In future this collaboration will be gradually adapted to focus on the content on the various sites.

At the present time EUROPA is undoubtedly the most significant site available to the public and the most visited in Europe. It can compare with some US sites, such as those of the Congress and the Presidency. Each day there are 1.5 million visits to the constituent documents. Consultations are currently doubling each year; it should be noted that the site consists of 1.5 million documents and 60 databases, which each can contain several hundred thousand documents.

This means that EUROPA is now experiencing very strong growth and handling information that is bulky, complex, varied, changing and multilingual. It must meet growing multilingual requirements, increasing and regular updating for increasing numbers of varied users, with the number of non-professionals rising significantly, and indeed their behaviour is becoming the reference standard.

That is why the Commission is currently preparing new changes that will usher in a major improvement in quality. They will bring about a second-generation EUROPA, EUROPA II, which will soon be placed before the full Commission. The conclusions warrant a discussion at inter-institutional level on terms to be specified.

The Commission's objective is that EUROPA should represent the most up-to-date practices of the new governance in Europe, symbolised by the terms "e-Commission", "e-Europe" and "e-governance". The main features are interactivity, rapid and authentic consultations, research into support by public opinion, and a simplified administrative practice for everyone.

In this connection the entry into force of the regulation on access to documents, which implements Article 255 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, represents a major challenge for the Commission and requires a rapid and effective response in order to make citizens aware of their rights.

Interinstitutional co-ordination will be reinforced by the involvement of the Directors-General of the departments concerned (DG PRESS for the Commission and DG III for the European Parliament, the relevant services of the Council and of the other Institutions).

Publications

Publications offering basic information on the Union form a major activity. In future there must be an effort to produce all publications in a co-ordinated presentation and thereby to develop a common Interinstitutional presentation. Pragmatic co-operation between the institutions could thus begin.

Current progress has removed the distinction between traditional and electronic publications; the production processes are now the same for both. The Publications Office will introduce arrangements for "print on request" through a portal dedicated to the publications of all institutions, organs and agencies. This means that NGOs, national civil services, info-points, relays, representations and the general public can download the publications of their choice and print them out or order any quantity for delivery to the address of their choice.

In future, co-operation between Member States may take on a new dimension with the services to citizens that are being developed (e-Europe, the IDA programme, etc.).

4 Europe Direct, Eurojus, Signpost Service

There are now three services providing replies to questions raised by citizens.

Europe Direct

Europe Direct helps citizens to find out about and exercise their rights and to identify all of the opportunities offered by the European Union. For example Community programmes that can help to implement projects. It was launched in response to the wish of the national authorities that the European Commission should be closer and

more accessible to citizens and businesses, a wish which was confirmed by the Cardiff European Council in 1998.

Europe Direct started off as a simple e-mail service and then had to respond to new requirements as its power increased, leading to the setting-up of a Europe Direct call centre, which has been operational since April 2000. The call centre can provide replies by telephone in 11 languages and is available through a free number, e-mail, letter or fax. It is run under a service contract and in the first year of operations it fielded 100 000 questions.

Eurojus

Eurojus supplements Europe Direct and provides free advice and assistance on legal problems arising from the interpretation or application of Community law. Legal advisers are accessible through the representations.

Eurojus has a number of advantages: it provides quick replies to specific legal questions and it is decentralised, making it close to citizens and giving visibility in Europe. It is relatively cheap, easy to run and is in line with the practice of most Member States of providing free legal assistance on points of national law. It meets a need by offering free assistance with Community law.

Signpost Service

Signpost Service was launched in 1996. It provides a service similar to that of Eurojus but focuses exclusively on the rights of citizens or businesses in connection with the internal market. The operation of the service, which was carried out by an external agency, has just been terminated. In the meantime Europe Direct is standing in for it.

It is important that all tools described in this chapter should be designed and set up to ensure that they are visible and mesh with each other, so that the general public, their target audience, can use them easily and effectively.

1. Concerning Europe Direct, the Commission will assess how this new service has performed during the initial period and make the necessary changes. The Commission reserves its global assessment of Europe Direct until a thorough analysis of all the information available has been made and the value-added of the service has been confirmed.
2. Concerning Eurojus the Commission is currently re-examining the system. It must be considered whether this type of legal advice is properly speaking a task for the Institutions or it would be better handled by national entities in the Member States.
3. Concerning the Signpost Service, a new call for tenders is being prepared.

5. TV and Radio Broadcasts and Training for journalists

For obvious reasons, one of the priorities of the European institutions is to develop the delivery of information for citizens through audio-visual media.

A major budgetary allocation has been made for this objective. The definition of a new policy is an important priority but, by reason of its complexity, the wide range of tools to be employed, and its various implications and side-effects, the planning and implementation of such a policy is a long-term project with a lengthy period for bringing it to fruition. The various factors indicated are therefore of a transitional nature.

They concern both central and decentralised levels.

Decentralised actions

Pilot tests in decentralised coproduction for TV and radio (operated jointly by the external offices and representations) are to be carried out during 2001. An assessment of those tests will enable their future framework to be refined. This action will receive extra money, enabling it to participate more effectively in collaborative projects with national and regional media.

Central actions

- In parallel with the decentralised operations, central actions are being carried out within the framework of priority information actions (PRINCE), which are indicative of the Commission and the European Parliament's wish to collaborate. The actions will be carried out with multinational audio-visual media (radio and TV).
- **EuroNews**

Co-operation with EuroNews to produce various information programmes has just reached a crucial phase now that the production contract has been running for three years. Following an evaluation of the content and impact of the programmes co-produced by Parliament and the Commission, it is proposed to update and specify areas of future co-operation over a new three-year period.

Co-operation will no longer be based on a grant, but on a proper co-production contract. Funds allotted to broadcasting will gradually diminish and those allocated to production will increase (more extensive broadcasting obligation, more news and fewer magazines), as will the quality of all programmes (better image quality, more varied editorial content). The Commission's overall financial contribution will be increasingly degressive. Themes will be identified on a tripartite basis (European Parliament Commission, EuroNews), while retaining the channel's editorial freedom.

Europe by Satellite (EBS)

EBS is the television news instrument of the EU institutions.

EBS offers a particularly important service: basically, live coverage of the Institutions' work (40% of all broadcasts). It also shows news summaries four times a

day at fixed times (20% of broadcasts). The remaining time is taken up by thematic picture libraries illustrating current affairs topics (15% of broadcasts) and by programmes made by partner channels.

The Commission is determined to maintain close, ongoing inter-institutional editorial co-operation. This is all the more important because the policy of aligning the editorial line as closely as possible with new developments entails a high frequency of broadcasts, reflecting the rapid pace of events. Inter-institutional co-operation will be strengthened by the addition of a higher co-ordination body at the level of the Directors-General of the relevant departments in each institution, as in the case of EUROPA.

Efforts will be made in future to follow up files comprising topical issues or focusing on successive presidencies. Specific technical assistance will be provided on a priority basis to journalists from the applicant countries. Interactive press conferences will be organised, involving the Commissioners in particular, with journalists based outside the headquarters of the Institutions. Since June 1999, Europa has provided a link to the EUROPARL site, and EBS pages have already been set up. EBS's presence on EUROPA is to be reinforced and there are plans to develop its contribution to the Virtual Press Office, a Commission site for journalists.

Training aid for journalists

For many years the Commission has contributed to journalists' training as a matter of policy. Its involvement focuses not on their general training, but on a specialism which has not always been given the importance it deserves in journalism courses. Recipients, which have been awarded varying amounts for a range of projects, include the European Journalism Centre (Maastricht), l'Association pour la formation au journalisme européen (Bordeaux), la Fondation journalisme en Europe (Paris) and the European Journalists' Association.

For the future, the Commission is keeping an open mind and is willing to discuss further changes to current arrangements with the institutions and the Member States. The Commission does not want a subject which should be an integral part of general training to be enclosed within a specialism on a long-term basis. At the same time, however, it is aware that the sheer complexity and range of EU affairs means that they cannot be covered without a solid framework of advance preparation.

The ongoing co-operation between Commission and European Parliament offices in training journalists in European issues (for example in Portugal) is also worth mentioning.

6. **Central Library⁷ and Network of Documentation Centres**

Because of their natural visibility and the public interest they attract, libraries can be regarded as the embodiment of their parent institution.

Accordingly, members of the Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI) have recommended that the Commission and Parliament develop co-operation within the framework of a virtual Interinstitutional library.

A feasibility study is to be carried out into the real options associated with the setting-up of such a project.

It should be noted that the Commission's central library has traditionally worked closely with the libraries of the other European institutions, and it would like to build on this collaboration by further strengthening co-operation.

It is also worth mentioning at this point that a network of **European Documentation Centres (EDC)** has been established over the last thirty years. The network comprises more than 500 centres, including a number of "specialist" units both within and outside the Union, which have concluded an agreement with the Commission on the provision of documentation and training.

The EDC are key information points, mainly in universities and institutes of higher education. Their task is twofold: to help academics and the general public to access information sources and to provide information in conjunction with other centres and networks.

7. **Visits**

In their continuous efforts to establish proximity between citizens and the Institutions, the European Parliament and the Commission have always pursued a policy of openness in respect of the general public. This is a particular priority for the Parliament, whose infrastructure allows for the reception of 300.000 such visitors in 2000 at its installations in Strasbourg and Brussels. The Commission's Visits Service on the other hand devotes most of its human and financial resources to the organisation of priority visits of senior groups of information multipliers and opinion formers from Member States, whose information visit may last up to two days. Such priority information visits are organised for targeted audiences, notably parliamentarians, journalists, representatives of organised civil society, and academia, are organised in close co-operation with Representations in Member States. Visits are also organised for targeted audiences from the candidate countries.

Further to the Presidency Conclusions of the Helsinki European Council, the competent services of the European Parliament and the Commission have drawn up a preliminary report (June 2000) outlining the basis for co-operation in the field of

⁷ The Central Library acquires, catalogues, financially manages and puts at the disposal of the civil servants of all of the European Institutions and the interested public, numerous collections of works and periodicals on the integration of the European Union and its policies since 1958. It also manages all of the collections of Directorates General and Services of the Commission as well as daily newspapers delivered to the Commission and specifically to the Press Service. It is possible to consult its complete catalogue on line, in EUROPA.

visits, seminars and public events. Although it also concluded that separate services for the organisation and reception of information visits should be retained, closer co-operation is foreseen in the context of the future events centre. This centre, located in the heart of the European Quarter of Brussels, should, involving the widest possible range of interest groups, become a focal point for a wider debate on Europe

8. Evaluation

The new framework for communication and information and the different instruments described in this communication will only achieve their full potential if the effectiveness and relevance of the work carried out is subject to permanent evaluation. The information obtained will also enable a solid framework to be created for decisions on the direction that work should take in future.

The reason why evaluation and monitoring are so important is that the inter-institutional information working group is required to make an overall assessment each year when preparing the programme for the year ahead. It is precisely the quality of this evaluation and monitoring which enables the working group to draw the right conclusions and to amend, retain, withdraw, reorientate or reinforce the meaning and nature of the messages and information which it conveys.

The Commission has several tools at its disposal for assessing the debate on European issues in the Member States. Whether these tools can also be used to measure the impact of Union information and communication activities is an open question which must be addressed within the new framework.

The level of activity can be measured in simple terms: amounts and types of expenditure, statistics on events, contacts, individuals encountered, material disseminated, audience counts, etc. While these provide a vital starting point, they are not in themselves enough. Impact must also be assessed in qualitative terms: whether targets have been met, what the public's perception is and whether it is satisfied.

In methodological terms, the Commission does not have a great deal of experience in evaluating the impact of its information campaigns, but it remains open to suggestions or advice from professionals in the field.

Tools can largely be divided into two categories: general and specific. If properly interpreted, general tools can be said to provide an image of the public debate/attitudes, whereas specific tools relate to a particular theme of information activity. The first group includes general opinion polls and various press/media reviews, including public hearings and discussions in dedicated forums.

The second group is based on feed-back received from users or target groups; such feed-back may reveal important clues as to whether the information activity corresponds to the objective, what its effects beyond the original target group are and whether the approach needs to be adjusted or changed.

General tools – Eurobarometer, Press reviews, public hearings

Of the general tools, the **Eurobarometer (EB)** has existed for thirty years. It provides regular snapshots of public opinion: attitudes towards the EU and its main policies, awareness of and trust in the Institutions, political priorities and time frames, preferred sources of information. These data are used to prepare and evaluate information actions with a view to calibrating campaigns and as general information for the public. Numerous reports are published each year which are widely quoted and commented on in the media and stimulate public debate in Europe. In the near future the Commission intends to develop similar studies in the candidate countries. Qualitative surveys and "flash" studies, both of which may be highly detailed, are carried out on the general public or on specific target groups (SMEs, farmers, consumers, etc.). Around 50 studies are undertaken each year which produce a very rich body of information which must be properly exploited and its use evaluated.

Press and media reviews come under the same category of tools and the reasoning outlined above may also apply to them. The Commission attaches a great deal of importance to observing the impact of the various Institutions' actions and of intervention in all its forms by governments and politicians, especially Members of Parliament, and the impact of current developments on society in general.

The Commission therefore devotes considerable resources to this area: two press reviews a day, management of the database, four reviews of agency reports a day. There is scope for rationalisation (merging the different institutions existing press cuttings and reviews activities). Improvements, on the other hand, would be more difficult (for example, extending coverage to regional and specialised press; wider dissemination of the review and the cuttings themselves), since any strategy needs to reconcile several competing considerations, such as: copyright, quality (in the case of outsourcing), cost and available budget. One avenue that could be explored would be distributing the press reviews to the networks and relays in exchange for a contribution on their part to cover the regional and specialised press.

Specific tools – user feed-back

Information from users or groups of the population who have been the target of specific information or communication actions offers a more precise picture of how the efforts of the institutions are received, albeit mostly on a very limited scale. The different activities mentioned in chapter 2 of this communication reach hundreds of thousands of users a day (1.5 million documents a day consulted on Europa; 100 000 questions to Europe Direct last year). Each day these systems handle a mass of information that will need to be analysed more systematically in the future and exploited in the evaluation exercise.

The **Europe Direct** service handles enquiries and questions directly from individuals. Statistics on themes and issues covered can indicate shortcomings in our general information priorities and relate directly to the concerns of the citizen. Likewise the EuroJus system of free legal advice to individuals has highlighted areas, particularly in the area of free movement of persons and the right of establishment, where more information was needed.

In a new development the Internet is also a source of information on how the institutions match the public demand for information. EUROPA and the national home-pages run by Representations receive reactions and requests from the public in basically two different ways: through the direct mail-box services where users can ask questions, comment or order publications and other materials; and through the statistics of the most visited pages on the sites. It is possible – and necessary – to adjust the offer of information to these indications from the public.

Concerning in particular the networks a new **Permanent Monitoring System (PMS)** has just completed its experimental phase and has gone into operation. It represents a mixture of the general and specific approaches: it permits a monitoring of all the individual points and of the network as such from the point of view of utilisation, public contact and activity levels. At the same time it allows identification of element of user feed-back, such as frequently asked questions, user interest by thematic groups, by gender, age etc. Its future operation will be monitored more closely, with particular attention to the prospect of extending it to cover other activities.

Public hearings, in particular if they are well organised and prepared, may offer additional insight into public perception of and reaction to information from the institutions. They also allow for a dialogue proper between the information providers (institutions, Member States) and the information recipients and may thus give rise to fruitful exchanges on communication strategies and priorities. Through hearings and public debates it is furthermore possible to monitor the development over time in public knowledge of and opinion on major questions, e.g. enlargement. It is difficult to equate this directly with a measure of impact of the information policies of the Union since a large number of other factors are present, but the long-term trend on knowledge (the feeling of being informed) could indicate whether more (or indeed less) information is needed on a particular issue. Public hearings could in this manner be a useful supplement to Eurobarometer and press reviews; all sources could be exploited further if resources were available for analysis of the vast data.

LEGISLATIVE FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Policy area(s): MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Activit(y/ies): 01-02-20-21-22

TITLE OF ACTION: COMMUNICATION ON A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. BUDGET LINE(S) + HEADING(S)

B3-300; B3-300A; B3-301; B3301A; B3-303; B3-303A; B3-306; B3-306A;
A0-1112; A0-4200; A0-421; Title 7

2. OVERALL FIGURES

2.1. Total allocation for action (Part B): €432.717 million for commitment over the entire period of application

2.2. Period of application:

2002 and subsequent years

2.3. Overall multiannual estimate of expenditure:

(a) Schedule of commitment appropriations/payment appropriations (financial intervention) (*see point 6.1.1*)

(€ million to three decimal places)

	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

(b) Technical and administrative assistance and support expenditure (*see point 6.1.2*)

Commitments/ Payments	3.030	4.871	4.928	4.974	5.021	22.824
--------------------------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	--------

Sub-total a+b						
Commitments	97.340	95.765	88.366	77.070	74.176	432.717
Payments	89.940	88.633	81.819	71.413	68.749	400.554

(c) Overall financial impact of human resources and other administrative expenditure (excluding salary costs)

* PDB 2002.

Commitments/ Payments	33.940	35.486	36.196	36.919	37.658	180.199
--------------------------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	---------

TOTAL a+b+c						
Commitments	131.280	131.251	124.562	113.989	111.834	612.916
Payments	123.880	124.119	118.015	108.332	106.407	580.753

2.4 Compatibility with financial programming and financial perspective

- Proposal is compatible with existing financial programming.
- Proposal will entail reprogramming of the relevant heading in the financial perspective.
- Proposal may require application of the provisions of the Interinstitutional Agreement.

2.5 Financial impact on revenue

- Proposal has no financial implications (involves technical aspects regarding implementation of a measure)

3. BUDGET CHARACTERISTICS

Type of expenditure		New	EFTA contribution	Contributions from applicant countries	Heading in financial perspective
Non-comp	Diff	NO	NO	NO	No 3

4. LEGAL BASIS

Tasks deriving from the Commission's institutional prerogatives

5. DESCRIPTION AND GROUNDS

5.1 Need for Community intervention

5.1.1 Objectives pursued

This communication is concerned with developing grassroots information for the European citizen and improving institutional cooperation in order to give the general public a common perception of the institutions.

These overall objectives will be pursued principally by greater decentralisation of general information operations and by increased deployment of the Commission's relays and networks.

5.1.2 Measures taken in connection with *ex ante* evaluation

The communication provides guidelines for which the implementing arrangements have, for the most part, still to be spelled out. The measures relating to *ex ante* evaluation will depend on the nature and implications of these arrangements.

5.1.3 Measures taken following *ex post* evaluation

What is described in the communication is a new strategic approach to information.

5.2 Actions envisaged and budget intervention arrangements

The budget impact of this communication mainly concerns Chapter B3-3, both for operational lines and for technical and administrative expenditure lines.

The actions envisaged are essentially general information measures, information relays, communication measures and priority information programmes (Prince).

5.3 Methods of implementation

Implementation mainly involves the following activities:

GENERAL INFORMATION MEASURES

- Qualitative improvement in the editorial line of written and electronic publications
- Reinforcement of feed-back tools for information policy
- Decentralised information measures for the general public via representation offices on priority subjects
- Evaluation report on the impact of the combined action of the various information resources deployed under the new information policy (support expenditure).

RELAYS

- The importance attached to information close to the citizen is reflected in the essential development of networks and relays.

The measures envisaged are:

Creation of an additional national centre every two years (2003-2005)

Establishment of an additional regional centre every year

Creation of additional new Carrefours and InfoPoint Europe (IPE) each year.

Given the geographical area to be covered and the population density,

Commission departments put the minimum number of relays required at 476.

Since Community financing of IPE and carrefours involves an all-in amount of €20 000 per relay, this will mean an eventual total of €9 520 000 a year.

Reinforcement of decentralised and general coordination meetings

Intensification of work of relays

GENERAL COMMUNICATION MEASURES

The role of offices in decentralised information and communication is enhanced.

Additional resources are required to develop electronic publications, direct communication measures, seminars, conferences, etc.

The changes in the missions of the representations will mean calling on the services of communication specialists. The resources available must be adjusted accordingly. (ATA estimated cost: 23 x €45 000)

The Eurojus consultants service would cost more.

PRIORITY INFORMATION OPERATIONS

The PRINCE information activities covered by this communication relate to

- enlargement
- the future of the Union
- the area of freedom security and justice and the Charter of Fundamental Rights
- the euro
- European Union action in the world

The actual expenditure inherent in implementing the PRINCE proposal will depend on the decisions/guidelines already adopted by the Commission or to be adopted in future.

The resources required for the deployment of these information operations will be evaluated in the light of the specific measures that are adopted in due course.

6. FINANCIAL IMPACT

6.1 Total financial impact on Part B (over the entire programming period)

The additional requirements flowing from this communication will, for the most part, be covered by redeployment of resources within Title B3-3 (Information and communication).

The figures below are the best estimates currently available of the additional appropriations required. They may be reviewed in the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy procedure.

6.1.1 Financial intervention commitments (in € million to three decimal places)

Breakdown	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
B3-300 General information operations	20.440	22.752	23.178	23.607	24.036	114.013

B3-301 Relays	14.340	16.317	16.640	17.163	17.486	81.946
B3-303 General communication operations	14.830	16.625	16.920	17.226	17.533	83.134
<u>B3-306 Priority measures</u>	44.700	35.200	26.700	14.100	10.100	130.800
TOTAL	94.310	90.894	83.438	72.096	69.155	409.893

6.1.2 Technical and administrative assistance (ATA), support expenditure (DDA) and IT expenditure (commitment appropriations)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
1) Technical and administrative assistance (ATA):						
a) Technical assistance offices (BAT)						
b) Other technical and administrative assistance:						
- intra-muros						
<u>B3-300A</u>	0.200	0.210	0.220	0.230	0.240	
<u>B3-303A</u>	1.170	1.205	1.241	1.266	1.291	
- extra-muros:						
<u>B3-301A</u>	0.220	0.231	0.242	0.253	0.265	
<u>B3-303A</u> Communication specialists 23 x 45.000 € Eurojus 600.000€		1.035	1.035	1.035	1.035	
<u>B3-306A</u> Information specialists Priority subjects	1.300	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	
Sub-total 1	2.890	4.481	4.538	4.584	4.631	21.124
2) Support expenditure (DDA):						
a) Studies (evaluation)						
B3-300A		0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	
B3-301A	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	
b) Meetings of experts						
c) Information and publications						
Sub-total 2	0.140	0.390	0.390	0.390	0.390	1.700
TOTAL	3.030	4.871	4.928	4.974	5.021	22.824

BA lines concerned (point 1 + 2)

B3-300A	0.200	0.460	0.470	<i>0.480</i>	<i>0.490</i>	2.100
B3-301A	0.360	0.371	0.382	<i>0.393</i>	<i>0.405</i>	1.911
B3-303A	1.170	2.840	2.876	<i>2.901</i>	<i>2.926</i>	12.713
B3-306A	1.300	1.200	1.200	<i>1.200</i>	<i>1.200</i>	6.100
TOTAL	3.030	4.871	4.928	<i>4.974</i>	<i>5.021</i>	22.824

6.2. Calculation of costs by measure envisaged in Part B (over the entire programming period)

commitments (in € million to three decimal places)

Breakdown	Type of outputs (projects, files)	Number of outputs	Average unit costs	Total cost 2003
	1	2	3	4=(2X3)
<u>B3-300</u>				
<u>General information operations</u>				
- Written and electronic publications				15.500
- Eurobarometer opinion polls		3	0.900	2.700
Other polls		3	0.350	1.050
- Decentralised measures for the general public				3.502
<u>B3-300A</u>				
- ATA and support expenditure				0.460
<u>B3-301</u>				
<u>Relays</u>				
- Regional centres		2	0.255	0.510
- National centres		8	0.546	4.365
- Rural carrefours		164	0.020	3.280
- Info Point (IPE)		192	0.020	3.840
- Decentralised meetings		49	0.010	0.490
- General meetings		3	0.105	0.315
- Development of work of relays				3.517
<u>B3-301A</u>				
- ATA and support expenditure				0.371
<u>B3-303</u>				
<u>Communication</u>				
-Decentralised measures in offices				16.625
-Measures at headquarters				
<u>B3-303A</u>				
-ATA and support expenditure				
<u>B3306</u>				2.840
<u>Priority information measures</u>				
-IGC 2004				
-European Union action in the world				35.200
- JHA				
- Enlargement				
- Euro				
<u>B3-306 A</u>				
ATA and support expenditure				1.200
TOTAL COST				95.765

7. IMPACT ON STAFF AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENDITURE (1)

7.1. Impact on human resources

For 2002 DG PRESS is not requesting any additional staff in connection with this communication.

In the course of 2002 DG PRESS intends to begin devolved operations in compliance with the new guidelines set out in the communication with the staff which it will be allocated in 2002 as part of the Commission's annual allocation of staff.

For subsequent years, however, the human resources requirements will be assessed in late 2001-early 2002 in the light of resources available and requirements identified so that any requests for additional staff required can be included in the APS 2003.

The rotation system in the Representations needs to be reactivated. To this end, and to make it effective and compatible with the constraints of managing the establishment plan, DG PRESS, in agreement with DG BUDG and DG ADMIN, will work out procedures for the reinsertion of Representation staff at the end of the posting to the Representation.

7.2 Overall financial impact of human resources

Type of human resources	Amount €	Method of calculation
Officials	p.m.	
Other human resources A0-1112 - Local staff	p.m.	
Total		

7.3 Other administrative expenditure deriving from the action

Budget line (number and heading)	Amount €	Method of calculation
Overall allocation (Title A7)		
A0701 – Missions	300.000	(*)
A07030 – Meetings	50.000	
A07031 – Compulsory committees		
A07032 – Non-compulsory committees		
A07040 – Conferences		
A0705 – Studies and consultations	50.000	
A706 - Training	20.000	
Other expenditure - Part A	230.000	
A0-4200 - Buildings, equipment, operating costs and information technology		
A0-421 - Operation of radio and television studios and audiovisual equipment	200.000	
Total	850.000	

The amounts are total expenditure for 12 months.

*** Missions (A0-7010) 300.000**

Missions, to meet new needs generated by decentralised communication and information activities, of Representation officials to headquarters, Representation officials within Member States and headquarters officials to Representations for internal controls.

*** Meetings (A0-7030) 50.000**

Amount corresponding to foreseeable estimate of number of meetings in connection with new activities (5 additional meetings).

*** Studies (A0-7050) 50.000**

Studies and evaluations relating to all DG PRESS activities in connection with this communication.

*** Training (A0-706) 20.000**

Specific training programmes will have to be organised on information, management and control.

***Offices in the Community: buildings, equipment, operating costs (A-4200) 230.000**

This amount is an overall estimate of requirements that could arise to support the increase in the activities of the Representations. This figure will be validated in the course of the normal budgetary procedure.

***Operation of radio and television studios and audiovisual equipment 200.000**

In order to broadcast Community information more widely across the Union, it is planned to increase the number of sites, in particular by providing the information relays with the equipment necessary for the reception and recording of the Commission's satellite broadcasts via the EbS (Europe by Satellite) information agency.

It is also planned to develop the EbS site on both the Intranet and the Internet.

The estimated cost of these two operations is €200 000. This figure will have to be validated when the draft budget is being prepared.

I.	Annual total (7.2 + 7.3)	850.000	€
II.	Duration of action	4	years (starting in 2003)
III.	Total cost of action (I x II)	3.400.000	€

8. FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION

8.1 Follow-up arrangements

The internal reporting systems will be strengthened to accommodate the new dimensions of information policy: decentralisation and interinstitutional cooperation.

8.2 Arrangements and schedule for evaluation

Suitable tools will have to be deployed so that information operations are systematically evaluated at least once a year.

9. ANTI-FRAUD MEASURES

All contracts, agreements and legal commitments between the Commission and beneficiaries provide for the Commission or the Court of Auditors to conduct

on-the-spot controls of the direct recipient of the Community grant (or of the second-degree recipient where an activity is managed on a decentralised basis by the Commission), and for the production of all supporting documents for expenditure under contracts, agreements and legal commitments to be demanded during the five years after the end of the contract period. Grant recipients are required to provide financial reports and statements, which are analysed in terms of content and eligibility of expenditure by reference to the purpose of the Community funding and with due respect to contractual obligations and the principles of economy and sound management.