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PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS
Communicating Europe in Partnership

Delegations will find attached Commission document COM(2007) 568 final, a Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled "Communicating Europe in Partnership".

The Communication is accompanied by an impact assessment (SEC(2007) 1265 - 13829/07 ADD 1) and by an impact assessment summary (SEC(2007) 1267 - 13829/07 ADD 2) which have been forwarded as Commission staff working documents, as well as by a Commission working document entitled "Proposal for an Inter-Institutional Agreement on Communicating Europe in Partnership" (COM(2007) 569 final - 13829/07 ADD 3).

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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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

Communicating Europe in Partnership

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

Communicating Europe in Partnership

INTRODUCTION

Fifty years on from the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the European Union continues to transform and reform itself to make the most of the opportunities of and respond to the challenges in areas such as globalisation, energy efficiency and independence, mobility, competitiveness, migration, security and climate change. Today's Union is larger, more diverse and deals with increasingly complex issues where the EU value added is significant but not easy to communicate.

In this new environment a more sophisticated way of working is required, one that heavily relies on a partnership between different actors across European society to deliver results that matter to European citizens and are adequately debated with them. Evidence suggests that there is an underlying conviction amongst European citizens that our societies can only tackle today's challenges by working on a European scale. This shift in the purpose and focus of the Union today thus fits well with the aspirations of citizens.

Today, more than ever, the debate on Europe must be taken beyond the institutions to its citizens. This was emphasised by the 2007 June European Council which underlined the crucial importance of reinforcing communication with the European citizens, providing full and comprehensive information on the European Union and involving them in a permanent dialogue¹. This will be particularly important during the Reform Treaty ratification process and as we approach the 2009 European elections.

The Commission shares this challenge with all EU institutions, bodies and Member States. A properly conceived and adequately resourced communication policy is an essential element in the range of EU policies. It must combine proximity to the citizens together with a reach extending across the Union and beyond its current borders to the countries aspiring to become members as well as to the rest of the world.

This Commission has already adopted three initiatives centred on listening, communicating and 'going local'. The Action Plan² kicked off a major internal reform of the Commission's use of communication resources. Plan D³ created a long-term framework for citizens' dialogue to go beyond the current "future of Europe" debate. Most recently, the White Paper on a European Communication Policy⁴ advocated two-way communication, involving active public participation of citizens with a shift in emphasis from a Brussels-based to a 'going local' approach.

¹ SI(2007) 500.

² SEC(2005) 985.

³ COM(2005) 494.

⁴ COM(2006) 35.

This Communication uses the results of the above initiatives⁵ to consolidate current activities and to formulate a set of concrete proposals which should serve as the basis of an enhanced communication policy for the European Union, which respects the autonomy of the different institutions. The overall objective is to strengthen coherence and synergies between the activities undertaken by the different EU institutions and by Member States, in order to offer citizens better access and a better understanding of the impact of EU policies at European, national and local level. Such a policy will address fundamental concerns of citizens, for whom the information on the EU seems disorganised, dispersed and difficult to understand. EU issues are mainly seen through national lenses and rarely presented in a trans-national context, despite the fact that many practical challenges faced by citizens can only be solved at European level. Moreover, citizens' knowledge of the EU, its institutions and policies is rather limited. This situation should first be addressed by the Member States through the educational systems, for which they are responsible. It should also be tackled by democratic platforms, including national and European level political parties which have the responsibility of transmitting conflicting views in order to animate and structure the public debate on EU issues.

For its part, the Commission will reinforce its communication activities by providing information and engaging in debate and discussion with citizens in national, regional and local contexts, thus promoting active European citizenship and contributing to the development of a European public sphere. The Commission also considers that communication on European issues is the responsibility of all those involved in the EU decision-making process. Therefore, while fully retaining its institutional prerogatives, the Commission intends to work in close partnership with the other EU institutions, inviting Member States and all interested stakeholders around selected annual communication priorities to reach this objective. To support this partnership, the Commission is proposing an inter-institutional agreement (IIA), to structure the EU communication process, and to invite all stakeholders to engage themselves to work within the proposed coherent and flexible institutional framework. This will allow the development of a common annual work plan around selected EU communication priorities.

1. COHERENT AND INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION

The Commission's communication activities aim at creating and nurturing exchanges, debates and understanding between European institutions, the general public, organised civil society and specialised audiences at European, national, regional and local levels. Moreover, engaging with the citizens and creating a new impetus for transparency should be seen as an integral part of any issue. Time and an appropriate share of the resources available should therefore be dedicated to such activities.

Communication activities are carried out by a large number of Commission departments using audiovisual media, internet, the written press, publications, events and information relays. To have the best possible impact we need to integrate these effectively and mobilise all the available resources in a coherent manner.

The Spokespersons' Service will remain a cornerstone of the Commission's communication policy, concentrating on the delivery of Commission news to written and audiovisual media in

⁵ SEC(2007) 1265.

Brussels and beyond and on responding to media enquiries. In addition, the Commission recently adopted an Internal Communication and Staff Engagement Strategy⁶, encouraging more staff to have contacts with the public and the media. This strategy includes the information and briefing of staff as well as training a pool of speakers from the Commission services. In particular, senior Commission officials should be empowered and trained to communicate on EU policies and to participate in public debates as well as to play an important role in engaging with the media, complementing the impact of the media work of Commissioners.

The Commission will continue to work with various multipliers in order to support them in providing information to the citizens on the ground. A range of ongoing activities already provides elements essential to an effective communications policy, promoting transparency and openness (“European Transparency Initiative”⁷), a Europe close to the citizen (“A Citizens’ Agenda — Delivering results for Europe”⁸), European active citizenship (the Europe for Citizens programme⁹), and European culture (“A European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World”¹⁰).

There is scope for further increasing the visibility of EU action at all levels and for demonstrating its utility to citizens. The Commission cooperates with the Member States on communicating EU action in various policy areas. In the fields of cohesion, environment and rural development policies, managing authorities must meet minimum communication requirements; Member States are legally obliged to provide information on the programme to the general public as well as to potential beneficiaries¹¹. Where there are no legal obligations, the Commission will nonetheless ensure that communication is an integral part of all initiatives and programmes.

The Commission’s communication activities in third countries aim to strengthen the image of the EU as a global actor and to build good relationships through pro-active public diplomacy, thereby helping the Commission achieve its external policy goals. It is based on a common strategy between the departments in charge of specific external policies, ensuring more coherent actions and greater synergy when communicating the various policies, and allowing greater visibility for them. Most of this is done with the active participation of Commission Delegations. The Commission will submit to the Inter-institutional Group on Information (IGI) a paper on the EU’s communication in third countries.

Based on the Commission’s strategic multi-annual objectives, key initiatives with a major communication impact were identified for the first time in this year’s Annual Policy Strategy (APS) and this will be a feature of the APS in the future. Subsequently, these selected communication priorities are incorporated in the Commission’s Legislative Work Programme

⁶ SEC(2007) 912.

⁷ COM(2006) 194.

⁸ COM(2006) 211.

⁹ Decision No 1904/2006/EC (OJ L 378, 27.12.2006).

¹⁰ COM(2007) 242.

¹¹ For example, for 2007-2013, Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006 implementing the Structural Funds, and Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on Rural Development FEADER fund lay down the following communication requirements for managing authorities: publication of lists of beneficiaries; putting up information banners on the sites of ongoing projects, and national and regional launch events or annual communication events in the Member States and regions. The Commission Representations may contribute by disseminating information to potential beneficiaries.

(CLWP)¹². The Commission intends to better coordinate communication activities of all relevant services on these cross-cutting, citizen-oriented issues by setting up dedicated project teams¹³ to develop a communication plan specifying tools, resources and evaluation methods¹⁴. The “Energy/Climate Change” package of January 2007 represented one of the first attempts at this kind of integrated communication approach. Building on the experience gained, this working method will be refined and applied wherever possible.

The proposals in this communication can be implemented within the existing multi-annual financial programme¹⁵. With limited resources, however, they will require significant efficiency gains and the development of greater synergies, mobilising those resources to communicating Europe, and by including communication activities within annual management plans.

2. EMPOWERING CITIZENS

More than eight out of every ten Europeans feel that it is important to be informed about European issues. Seven out of ten Europeans want to know more about their rights as citizens. Close to two thirds of Europeans think that available information on the EU is useful and interesting, but almost as many find it insufficient¹⁶. There is a desire for a more open debate, where citizens express their opinions in order to influence the decision-making at EU level.

In line with recent European Council conclusions, the Commission is developing appropriate structures, means and skills to fulfil its obligation to ensure adequate information and to involve citizens in dialogue and debate. The first six trans-national Plan D civil society projects were launched in 2006. In 2007, a second set of projects was supported, this time locally, targeting primarily youth and women. In the course of the coming months, the Commission will take stock of the results of Plan D and present proposals to widen the democratic debate throughout Europe. This stocktaking will be done in parallel with the ratification process of the Reform Treaty by Member States and the run-up to the European parliamentary elections. A third group of civil society projects will be launched by 2008-09, including supporting initiatives to increase the turnout in the next European elections.

The renewed Plan D framework will also aim to involve the many partners involved in the development of the European Union, including NGOs, professional associations and the increasing number of enterprises that want to learn more about Europe, its policies, programmes and processes. Their communication resources and know-how are often very significant and the Commission will seek to develop partnerships with them to communicate on subjects of general interest such as climate change and the fight against xenophobia.

¹² Some of these priorities will be discussed within the Inter-institutional Group on Information to explore the possibility of joint action (see point 4.2).

¹³ A good example of such an approach is the wine market reform campaign.

¹⁴ The Directorate-General for Communication will devote human and budgetary resources to communication priorities, and will ask Commission Representations to do the same in their Annual Management Plans.

¹⁵ As set out in SEC(2007) 500 and SEC(2007) 530.

¹⁶ All public opinion survey results in this Communication come from the *Flash Eurobarometer* on the White Paper, No 189a: EU Communication and the Citizens. Fieldwork was conducted in September 2006.

In this context, multilingualism is crucial. In the last few years, the Commission has doubled the number of languages in which it communicates. The Commission has also set up a network of field offices for multilingualism in the Representations. In a situation of limited resources, trade-offs between increasing the amount of information published and broadening the audience appear inevitable, and will require a coherent approach.

2.1. Going local

Communicating at regional and local level is essential for involving citizens in a European debate, as has been confirmed by our experience in implementing the Action Plan and Plan D. The pilot project putting additional communication staff into eleven of the Commission's Representations in the Member States and four regional offices has enabled a step change in the number and quality of activities designed to promote a European debate within national political cultures¹⁷. The Commission attaches importance to building on this successful experience, and, subject to the result of the current evaluation of all ongoing communication activities, will consider consolidating and extending it.

The reinforced activities in pilot Representations have been complemented by the work carried out by over 400 Europe Direct information relays which provide EU information locally and regionally, including in rural areas. The Commission will open new Europe Direct information relays in Bulgaria and Romania as from 2008. Next year the Commission will also launch a call for proposals to renew the whole network across the EU-27. This will further improve geographical coverage and ensure that relays can provide information on communication priorities as well as on other issues which are essential for citizens.

The Commission also manages a significant number of information and assistance networks covering specific policy areas, such as EURES, ERA-MORE¹⁸, SOLVIT¹⁹ and the Euro Info Centres and Innovation Relay Centres²⁰. These centres represent unique links and multipliers with a large number of actors operating at local and regional level (social partners' organisations, universities, enterprises, employment services, chambers of commerce, language and training centres). The Commission will look at the feasibility of closer coordinated action between these centres that will enhance the Commission's capacity to communicate. Greater synergy between the networks is being explored in the External Communication Network, in particular around selected communication priorities. An inter-service group has been set up to look at how different Commission networks could cooperate in a Single Market Assistance Service.

In addition to communicating with the public and civil society, the Representations will step up their activities in organising Commissioners' visits to the regions²¹ and in supporting

¹⁷ In 2006, the pilot Representations organised over 830 seminars, 4 000 press statements and conferences and assisted in more than 370 visits by Commissioners.

¹⁸ EURES — European Employment Services; ERA-MORE — European Network of Mobility Centres.

¹⁹ SOLVIT is an on-line problem solving network in which EU Member States work together to solve without legal proceedings problems caused by the misapplication of Internal Market law by public authorities.

²⁰ The activities of current Euro Info Centres and Innovation Relay Centres will be taken over in 2008 by a new network to support business and innovation. It will connect some 600 centres covering most of the territory of the EU-27.

²¹ This will be done primarily, although not exclusively, by building on the success of Commissioners' visits to various regions in the country of the Presidency on the occasion of the traditional meetings between the Commission and the Presidency at the beginning of the Presidency term.

efforts to offer information to regional and local journalists via modern media technology as well as traditional means. The involvement of other EU bodies, such as the decentralised EU agencies, will provide concrete examples of EU initiatives at the service of citizens. The Representations and the European Parliament's Information Offices are working together to establish closer links. In most cases, they are under one roof in the Houses of the European Union. While retaining their distinct identities, this increases their visibility and allows more joint action.

A common pilot project with the European Parliament is being launched in 2007-2008 to create European Public Spaces to host a wide range of European activities, starting in the Houses of Europe in Tallinn, Dublin and Madrid. The pilot phase of these European Public Spaces will attract new audiences and create a new visual image — one that is also more targeted at the younger generation. As a “meeting place” for citizens, NGOs, political actors and the media, the European Public Spaces will be designed to host exhibitions, films, meetings, visits, discussions, forums of debate and lectures focusing mainly on civil society, politics, education, academia, think tanks and the cultural world. They will make a concrete contribution to implementing the “European agenda for culture in a globalising world”. Links to the network of National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) will be established to promote the various cultural programmes and other initiatives supported by the EU institutions, while cooperating with regional and local networks, civil society and the media to reach the widest possible audience in urban and rural areas. European Public Spaces will offer new facilities, such as a conference centre, an information office, an exhibition area and a reading area. Some of these may already exist but the openness of the spaces and efforts to attract new actors to engage with the Commission and Parliament will generate a new environment.

In the light of the good experience with communication on the reform of the wine sector, EU policy initiatives could be presented by policy specialists to interested parties and the general public on the day of their adoption, simultaneously in Brussels and in Member States, depending on the resources available to the Representations and policy departments.

2.2. Active European citizenship

The consultation process on the White Paper has confirmed strong demand from civil society actors for closer involvement in the European process. The Commission already supports active European citizenship through the “Europe for Citizens” and the “Fundamental Rights and Citizenship”²² programmes, which encourage greater participation in the EU's democratic life. The “Youth in Action” and “Culture” programmes also contribute to promoting active citizenship through cross-border mobility exchanges.

Education and training for active citizenship is the responsibility of the Member States. Peoples' rights and duties as European citizens are part of the school curriculum in less than half of the EU Member States; the history of European integration is included in 20 Member States²³. There is added value to be provided by European work on coordinating the exchange of best practice. All those involved should make full use of the European recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning, which provides Member States with a tool for promoting social and civic competences as part of the essential skills every citizen needs to

²² Council Decision 16505/06 of 27 March 2007.

²³ Citizenship Education at School in Europe, The information network on education in Europe (Eurydice) 2005.

prosper in the knowledge society. This includes foreign language learning, which is valuable for acquiring intercultural competencies, which are in turn an important component of active European citizenship. The Commission will use the results of a 2007 public consultation which will identify the aspects of school education where joint action at EU level could support Member States. For example, it will examine how schools could best provide students with the key competences, and how school communities can help prepare young people to be responsible citizens, in line with fundamental European values.

The Lifelong Learning programme supports projects which are relevant to education and training for active citizenship and promoting civic competences. The Commission will also promote the sharing of best practice between teachers in this area. The Commission will provide support for compiling information dossiers around European themes, including links to the relevant publications that can be downloaded from the EUROPA website, to be used by interested schools and teachers.

The Commission wishes to introduce more targeted visits for students and schoolchildren, and will explore how this could be achieved. Commission Representations and Europe Direct Relays will also invite groups from different social sectors (including students) to seminars and debates on their premises, using existing information materials. The visits made by around 400 German European Union officials to their former schools during the German Presidency in 2007 were highly successful, generating debate inside the schools as well as local media coverage. The Commission intends to continue this experience with future Presidencies. Similarly, the Commission will continue the “9 May Initiative in Schools” implemented in close cooperation with local and regional authorities, members of the European Parliament and civil society²⁴.

The Commission promotes relations with civil society organisations and their trans-national networks through its programmes and policies, with the support of an internal network of civil society contacts to share good practice, to reflect on common problems and to develop a coherent approach between Commission units responsible for relations with civil society. The Commission will increase civil society organisations’ access to the Commission by naming a specific civil society contact point in each of its departments.

3. DEVELOPING A EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE

Many political decisions that have a significant impact on Europeans’ day-to-day lives are taken at European level. Policies which are seen to match the expectations of citizens — whether on the internal market, climate change, sustainable mobility, trade, energy policy, or migration — and which are based on widespread consultation exercises are the best way of demonstrating the relevance of the EU to its citizens. Communication about those policies needs to go beyond national boundaries, with cross-border communication channels promoting debate and dialogue on issues of common concern while reflecting the European agenda.

²⁴ In 2007, EuropeAid organised the visit of 75 “ambassadors” to schools in 44 regions in 18 Member States to engage in debate on external cooperation, directly reaching 97 000 pupils. In a similar way, but not only limited to schools, DG AGRI has in place a Green Team of around 80 ambassadors in order to address public concerns and explain CAP and rural development policy.

Only if the EU is delivering on its policies will there be a consequent increase in the depth and extent of debate about the EU. The need to ensure safe chemicals are used in European products; opening up the market for services; lowering barriers to cross-border payments; improving consumer rights; reinforcing air transport safety, promoting food safety and quality, protecting the countryside and the environment, agreeing on an integrated climate and energy policy; cross-border police cooperation; reducing the cost of mobile calls made abroad: all these issues have been subject to European decision-making accompanied by often heated debate. This debate needs to be encouraged, and can only take place if the policy-making process is seen to be relevant and to add value to the legislative process in individual Member States.

3.1. The political dimension

The levels of participation and the extent to which European Parliament elections are fought on European policies are, together, a measure of the extent of the challenge of creating a European public sphere. National and European political parties, and the elected representatives belonging to different political families, are in a privileged position to raise European issues in national debates and to contribute to creating Europe-wide public debates. It is precisely the contested and often polarised nature of the exchanges between political parties which generates interest and a demand for greater levels of information on the issues concerned. In recent years, there have been a number of high-profile examples of public interest in European policy issues generated by party political and electoral divisions over such issues²⁵.

The Commission is committed to supporting efforts to increase the participation rate in the next European Parliamentary elections. The next Plan D civil society projects will, in part, be aimed at contributing to this. In addition, in June 2007 the Commission has adopted a proposal to revise the existing Regulation on European Political Parties²⁶, to allow the establishment of European political foundations. This will also contribute to strengthening an informed and genuine debate on European issues and to the development of a European public sphere.

Furthermore, the Commission will aim to maximise communication potential in its relations with national parliaments. Delivering on a proposal by the European Parliament, the Commission is working on the creation of Pilot Information Networks (PINs), a network of internet discussion forums between members of the European Parliament, members of national parliaments, journalists and opinion-makers, supplemented by meetings across the EU. PINs will make a substantial contribution to introducing European debates into national parliaments. They will also promote debate between national parliamentarians on European themes, and will contribute to supporting the national parliaments' own electronic information exchange systems.

²⁵ Examples include the Constitution, enlargement and economic proposals such as the Services Directive.
²⁶ COM(2007) 364.

3.2. The media and information services

The Commission will put forward concrete proposals to better respond to challenges related to new media technologies by the end of this year²⁷. Audiovisual media continue to be the preferred source of information on European affairs. TV and radio present European issues in the context of news and debates when important European policies are being decided. TV and radio spots are also broadcast in the context of information campaigns promoting specific EU policies. Still, studies show²⁸ — and two thirds of Europeans continue to believe — that the EU-related information provided by national media is insufficient.

The Commission will contribute to greater and more sustainable coverage of EU affairs on existing audiovisual channels, and encourage European networking by broadcasters. The consultation on the White Paper indeed showed strong support for the Commission to provide audiovisual information, education and entertainment on European affairs as part of public service missions across the EU Member States. Such missions must be executed in a way which guarantees broadcasters' complete editorial independence.

The existing policy of co-financing radio and TV programmes has encouraged dozens of audiovisual channels to develop EU programmes. To enhance its effectiveness, the Commission will offer multi-annual contracts for networks of broadcasters across Europe. These networks will independently produce and broadcast EU affairs programmes according to their own editorial standards using common programme formats. The contracts will contain a binding editorial charter guaranteeing the editorial freedom of the operators.

Europe by Satellite (EbS), the Commission's service for audiovisual coverage of EU affairs, will also contribute and facilitate the public service missions outlined above. Demand for time on EbS has reached saturation point, with live coverage of events such as the European Parliament's plenary and committee meetings conflicting with the transmission of raw footage news packages for professional journalists and press conferences. The Commission will therefore propose to the other European institutions the option of doubling EbS' capacity, to cover a wider range of EU activities.

The internet is the main medium for combining text, sound and vision and for enabling feedback from and discussion among users. It is already the principal medium of cross-border debate. The redevelopment of the EUROPA website, one of the biggest in the world, will continue by increasing interactivity and improving navigation and search functions²⁹. Web content will be organised in a more accessible and user-friendly way, while more images, video and audio material should be provided. In this way, EUROPA will remain an important European reference point for information on EU matters, complementing the sites provided by national administrations. Proposals to develop EUROPA will be based upon a user survey carried out in 2007.

In addition, the EU needs to strengthen its presence on the web beyond EUROPA. The Commission wishes to encourage the development of a network of civil society and private or

²⁷ The various proposals presented in this section follow the recommendations of the stakeholder conference "Europe in Vision", held on 4 and 5 December 2006 in Helsinki.

²⁸ *L'information relative à l'Europe et la télévision, Étude qualitative auprès de téléspectateurs dans les 27 États membres de l'Union européenne*, European Commission, April 2007.

²⁹ The Directorate-General for Informatics has conducted a study with a view to making recommendations for an Enterprise Wide Search and Retrieval Strategy in the Commission.

public sector websites which promote contact with or between European citizens by supporting websites that devote particular attention to European affairs and stimulate debate on EU policy issues. The Commission itself should also be more involved in interviews and participation in discussions in other sites. All these developments will be spelled out in detail in the Internet and in the Audiovisual Strategy papers that the Commission will present respectively before the end of 2007 and in early 2008.

Paper publications will continue to have a role to play in EU communication. Despite the growing domination of the internet, the demand for paper publications has increased. It is therefore essential to develop a cross-media publishing policy, combining publications on paper, on the web and in audiovisual formats, using the latest developments in communication technologies³⁰.

3.3. Understanding European public opinion

Measuring public opinion is central to listening to what Europeans think about — and what they expect from — the EU. Eurobarometer surveys help to analyse public expectations in various policy fields, to assess the impact of policies and to identify public concerns and perceptions in order to improve both policy-making and communication.

The Commission will introduce innovations in the methods used by the Eurobarometer in response to the White Paper consultation³¹ to increase its ability to listen and respond to public opinion. The goal is to use surveys more strategically in relevant phases of the policy process such as policy formulation and impact assessment, as well as in the design and evaluation of communication activities.

Concrete improvements will include more widespread use of qualitative research tools, including the innovative methods of some of the Plan D projects, and the combination of analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to give a fuller picture of public expectations. Targeted public opinion research methods will be used more widely to measure the impact of communication. Analysis of research results will be improved by reacting faster, focusing more sharply on the actual use of results, and looking also at regional and local results. On-demand secondary analysis of available data to answer targeted questions will be more widespread. Results will be disseminated faster and wider. A network of national experts on public opinion will be set up, with a consultative function, to exchange best practice, promote synergies, and advise on methodological issues.

The Europe Direct Contact Centre³² is an information service for citizens, answering questions free of charge in all EU official languages. It will be promoted as the main entry point for citizens seeking information on the EU and will develop the capacity to provide feedback on concerns raised to the relevant Commission departments and other EU institutions.

³⁰ The Publications Office has primary responsibility for publications off- and on-line. It is governed by an inter-institutional Management Committee. The Publications Office manages the EU Bookshop which is the single entrance point for citizens to all EU publications.

³¹ As suggested at the stakeholder conference 'Understanding European public opinion', Madrid, 27 October 2006.

³² Based in Brussels.

Consultation is a necessary and useful reality check for proposals. But it will only be effective if sufficiently broad and inclusive. Since the adoption of minimum standards for consultation³³, the Commission has consulted interested parties and EU citizens on a range of policy initiatives. The standard website for internet consultations ‘Your Voice in Europe’ (europa.eu/yourvoice) helps to clarify the consultation process and encourages Commission departments to apply the standards consistently. In order to encourage better feedback, greater pluralism and inclusiveness in the views and interest expressed by national, regional and local stakeholders at this early stage of policy development, the recent practice of involving the Representations in promoting consultations in the Member States will be strengthened. The Representations will, for example, organise early contacts and meetings with stakeholders to encourage their contributions to the main consultations linked to communication priorities.

4. REINFORCING THE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

EU institutions, bodies and Member States, and regional and local authorities across Europe all communicate on European policy issues in various ways and to different degrees. All those involved more directly in European decision making have an obligation to communicate and explain. They must all maintain their autonomy and prerogatives to communicate in their own way, but there is considerable scope for them to work together as partners in promoting debate and discussion on Europe. Up to now, attempts to promote common communication actions have been ad hoc and limited and it has proved necessary to agree on common themes and to work together more effectively. It was clear from the White Paper consultation that there was demand for greater cooperation and collaboration on communicating Europe between the EU institutions and bodies and the Member States. The Commission will therefore seek to strengthen partnerships at all levels around commonly selected EU communication priorities by proposing an inter-institutional agreement (IIA).

4.1. Working together with the Member States

National governments are responsible for setting the course of European policy in the Council and for communicating their mandates and policies to their citizens. Polling results show that citizens expect their national government to inform them about what the EU is doing for them and how this affects their daily lives. More than two thirds of European citizens prefer to contact national services on matters decided by the EU.

The Commission can, however, provide valuable support for all interested Member States. The Commission proposes strengthening the relationship with them by holding regular meetings with the respective “national communication directors” of each Member State in order to identify major communication priorities, to ensure monitoring of the communication process and to exchange information on communication activities³⁴. The Commission also seeks to develop management partnerships with interested Member States. This kind of partnership, framing the cooperation between Commission, Parliament and Member State in an individually tailored way, has already proved successful in Germany, and partnerships have been agreed in Hungary and Slovenia. Negotiations are under way with several other Member States which have formally requested them³⁵. These partnerships could serve as an

³³ COM(2002) 704.

³⁴ The existing network between Member States and EU institutions (EU-Infonet) will be developed to meet this objective.

³⁵ Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Latvia, Portugal and Poland.

instrument for carrying out joint activities on selected communication priorities at central, regional and local levels.

Management partnerships will enhance the coordination of communication activities on selected communication priorities based on joint communication plans³⁶. These plans are negotiated at political level between the Commission, the European Parliament and the respective Member States' authorities mandated to deal with communication issues. Thus communication activities under the joint communication plan are politically inclusive and ensure the representation of diverse views when debating European issues. Consequently, this cooperation will help to adapt communication to local circumstances and to link it to national political agendas (such as elections, major national events, and specific interests). Responsibility for implementing management partnerships is shared by the Commission and the respective Member State's authorities. While the Commission provides funding, human resources and infrastructure are provided by the Member State³⁷.

A good example is the ongoing management partnership with the German federal government. It is considered to be a valuable tool for implementing ideas shared by the Member State and the European institutions. Since 2005, a dozen major initiatives have been taken and have demonstrated how close cooperation of this kind can work successfully³⁸.

Regional and local authorities, individually or organised in associations, can play a crucial role in promoting communication on Europe. Communication has to be attuned to ways of showing the local relevance of EU decisions and policies³⁹. In cooperation with the Committee of the Regions, the Commission will ensure that relevant information is available to these authorities and that appropriate mechanisms are set up to retrieve their ideas and suggestions to improve communication on Europe at local and regional level. Regional and local action could also be included in management partnerships, in parallel with the activities undertaken already on the basis of strategic partnerships (separate, complementary financing of projects). In addition to the work of Representations, the Europe Direct relays and the EU agencies in this area⁴⁰, the Commission will develop closer links with those of the 250 offices representing regional and local authorities in Brussels willing to participate.

³⁶ Alternative types of partnership with the Commission may also be offered to Member States - COM(2004) 196.

³⁷ Management partnerships do not prevent the Commission from continuing or setting up other forms of communication partnership, such as strategic partnerships or ad hoc agreements. These are highly flexible instruments and have proven their value in specific areas such as the introduction of the euro.

³⁸ The nationwide information tour "Europe turns 50 — 50 cities are having a party" in Germany and the "Training seminars for editors of high school magazines" aimed at reporting on EU affairs in high school magazines are but two examples of successful projects implemented through a management partnership.

³⁹ The Scottish experience with the North Sea Regional Advisory Council, through which sections of the population directly affected by fisheries policy are directly consulted, as they are in other Regional Advisory Councils set up under the Common Fisheries Policy, demonstrates that citizens are interested in subjects which have an immediate impact on their lives.

⁴⁰ For example, the EU-wide business support network to be launched early 2008.

4.2. Working together with the European institutions

The Inter-institutional Group on Information (IGI) is the existing policy structure for agreeing EU communication strategy and selecting common communication priorities for the EU institutions and Member States. It is chaired jointly by the European Parliament, the Commission and the Presidency. Its political status and legitimacy, however, needs to be strengthened and expanded, so that it can more effectively provide guidance for EU communication priorities early enough to find synergies between the communication agendas of the EU institutions and Member States. The IGI's decisions need comprehensive and consistent follow-up, both political and administrative. With the support of the Presidency, the Council's Working Party on Information will monitor the communication process.

The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions participate as observers in the IGI. Cooperation with them is also being strengthened through addendums on information policy to the existing protocols on cooperation arrangements. The addendums highlight the political will of the Commission and the two Committees to establish a long-term partnership and work jointly on developing decentralised information and communication with European citizens. Cooperation will be based on clearly defined communication priorities for decentralised implementation at regional and local level.

4.3. Inter-institutional agreement on communication

To provide an appropriate framework for better cooperation on the EU communication process, while respecting the autonomy of the EU institutions and Member States, the Commission is proposing an inter-institutional agreement (IIA) with the European Parliament and the Council. All other EU institutions and bodies are invited to support the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council in this task. The aim of such an inter-institutional agreement is to achieve a convergence of views on the main communication priorities of the European Union as a whole; to identify the added value of an EU approach to communication on specific priority issues; to develop synergies concerning the resources used by each institution; to carry out activities related to these priorities; and to encourage Member States to cooperate. This does not prevent each EU institution from having separate, institution-specific communication activities geared to its specific role and to its stakeholders.

The Commission recognises the role of each Member State in communicating Europe on a national, regional and local level, in the official language(s). The IIA will anchor the EU institutions' and Member States' political commitment to taking responsibility for informing and communicating with citizens on EU matters. Furthermore, this political agreement will highlight the main principles and rights to be upheld in communicating Europe and will set out arrangements for cooperation between partners, ensuring proper monitoring and political accountability. The principles of inclusiveness, pluralism and participation should form the basis of any action to communicate Europe. The IIA will secure a common annual work plan setting EU communication priorities, to be drafted by the Commission — based on discussions on the communication priorities presented in the APS — for submission to the other EU institutions and consultative bodies.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Commission will marshal all its resources to achieve effective and integrated communication.

In particular, the Commission is proposing:

- an inter-institutional agreement to provide a framework for better cooperation on the EU communication process, while respecting the autonomy of EU institutions and Member States,
- voluntary management partnerships with Member States as the main instrument of joint communication initiatives,
- development of the network of European Public Spaces in the Representations,
- identification of aspects of school education where joint action at EU level could support Member States,
- strengthening the Eurobarometer,
- implementation of the Pilot Information Networks (PINs) to improve communication between European and national politicians, and with other opinion formers.

The Commission will, in the coming months, also:

- adopt a new internet strategy to support civil society networks and private or public sector websites with an EU focus which promote contact with or between European citizens,
- adopt a new audiovisual strategy to support networks of broadcasters across Europe in producing and broadcasting EU affairs programmes,
- launch a follow-up communication to Plan D, as well as a new set of Plan D civil society projects, with the overall objective of supporting the ratification process for the Reform Treaty and increasing participation in the 2009 European Parliament elections,
- examine the possible consolidation and extension of recent successful experiences in reinforcing the work of the Representations.

Budgetary Impact statement

POLICY AREA : TITLE 16 - COMMUNICATION

ACTIVITIES: ALL THE ACTIVITIES OF THE POLICY AREA

COMMUNICATION ON COMMUNICATING EUROPE IN PARTNERSHIP

1. BUDGET LINES (ACCORDING TO PDB 2008 NOMENCLATURE)

1.1. Operational lines

16 02 02	Multimedia actions
16 02 03	Information for the media
16 02 04	Operation of radio and television studios and audiovisual equipment
16 03 01	Information outlets
16 03 02	Local actions
16 03 04	Specific actions on priority themes, of which PRINCE
16 03 06	Pilot project on pilot information networks (PINs)
16 04 01	Public opinion analysis
16 04 02	Online information and communication tools
16 04 03	Targeted written publications

1.2. Related technical and administrative assistance line

16 01 04 01	Communication actions — Expenditure on administrative management
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2. LEGAL BASIS

Tasks resulting from the Commission's prerogatives at institutional level, as provided for in Article 49(6) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p. 1), as amended by Regulation (EC) No 1995/2006 (OJ L 390, 30.12.2006, p. 1).

3. BUDGETARY CHARACTERISTICS

Budget line	Type of expenditure		New	EFTA contribution	Contributions from applicant countries	Heading in financial framework
16 01 04 01 Communication actions — Expenditure on administrative management	Non comp	Non-diff	NO	NO	NO	No [3b]
16 02 04 Operation of radio and television studios and audiovisual equipment	Non comp	Diff	NO	NO	NO	No [5]
16 02 02 to 16 04 03 (except 16 02 04) Operational budget lines of DG COMM	Non-comp	Diff	NO	NO	NO	No [3b]

4. ESTIMATES OF THE FINANCIAL IMPACT BY MAIN OBJECTIVE AND OUTPUT

As far as the resources are concerned, the consequences of this communication remain within the framework of the multi-annual financial programming, as established in the documents SEC(2007) 500 and SEC(2007) 530.

3.1. Summary of financial resources

See Table 1 in annex.

3.2 Detailed estimates of the financial impact of the main actions

See Table 2 in annex.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENDITURE - SPECIFIC NEED

The needs for human and administrative resources shall be covered within the allocation granted to the managing DG in the framework of the annual allocation procedure.

The pilot project putting additional communication staff into eleven of the Commission's Representations in the Member States and four regional offices has enabled a step change in the number and quality of activities designed to promote a European debate within national

political cultures. The Commission attaches importance to building on this successful experience, and, subject to the result of the current evaluation of all ongoing communication activities, will consider consolidating and extending it.

ANNEX

Table 1

Line	Heading	BUDG 2007	PDB 2008	Financial programming				
				2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
16 01	Administrative expenditure of 'Communication, policy area	3,865	3,600	3,987	4,065	4,145	4,225	4,306
16 01 04 01	Communication actions — Expenditure on administrative management	3,865	3,600	3,987	4,065	4,145	4,225	4,306
16 02	Communication and the media	27,720	30,882	32,380	32,881	33,390	33,902	34,420
16 02 02	Multimedia actions	18,750	20,700	21,380	21,800	22,227	22,657	23,091
16 02 03	Information for the media	3,370	3,970	4,100	4,181	4,263	4,345	4,429
16 02 04	Operation of radio and television studios and audiovisual equipment (heading 5)	5,600	6,212	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,900
16 03	Going Local, communication	39,514	38,530	39,555	40,314	41,085	41,859	42,642
16 03 01	Information outlets	16,753	15,300	15,802	16,113	16,429	16,746	17,067
16 03 02	Local actions	8,393	10,400	10,502	10,689	10,879	11,070	11,263
16 03 04	Specific actions on priority themes, of which PRINCE	7,868	12,830	13,251	13,512	13,777	14,043	14,312
16 03 05	EuroGlobe	1,500						
16 03 06	Pilot project on pilot information networks (PINs)	5,000						
16 04	Analysis and communication tools	21,830	21,830	21,546	21,990	22,441	22,894	23,352
16 04 01	Public opinion analysis	5,600	5,800	5,990	6,108	6,228	6,348	6,470
16 04 02	On-line information and communication tools	10,180	10,880	11,237	11,458	11,683	11,909	12,137
16 04 03	Targeted written publications	6,050	5,150	4,319	4,424	4,530	4,637	4,745
16	Communication (heading 3b)	87,328	88,630	90,568	92,350	94,161	95,980	97,820

Table 2 (page 2 / 2)

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE No. 2		DEVELOPING A EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE																		
Action category 1: THE POLITICAL DIMENSION																				
Output 1 : Pilot Information Networks	from 2007	16 03 06	Web site for PINs	4,000	1	4,000														
			Meetings	0,100	10	1,000														
Action category 2: THE MEDIA AND INFORMATION SERVICES																				
Output 1 : programmes on EU affairs produced and broadcasted by network of broadcasters	ongoing	16 02 02	radio and/or TV networks	between 5,5 and 8	1	5,500	1	8,000	1	8,000	1	8,000	1	8,000	1	8,000	1	8,000	1	8,000
Output 2 : increased capacity of EbS - more diverse material available	new	16 02 03	Production vidéo					0,600		0,600		0,600		0,600		0,600		0,600		6,000
		16 02 04	technical developments + new EbS from 2009					0,612		1,300		1,300		1,300		1,300		1,300		1,300
Output 3 : improved Europa web site	ongoing	16 04 02	new search engine put in place	0,300	1	0,300		pm												
	ongoing	16 04 02	new "flexible platform"	0,300	1	0,300		pm												
	ongoing	16 04 02	Evaluation Europa	0,300	1	0,300		pm												
Output 4 : network of private and public web sites with European content	new	16 04 02	Grants forwebsites with EU content	0,010			20	0,200	20	0,200	20	0,200	20	0,200	20	0,200	20	0,200	20	0,200
Action category 3: LISTENING AND RESPONDING																				
Output 1 : A network of independant experts on public opinion	new	16 01 04	Meetings of 15 experts	0,015	1	0,015	2	0,030	2	0,030	2	0,030	2	0,030	2	0,030	2	0,030	2	0,030
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE No. N 3		REINFORCING A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH																		
Action category 1: WORKING TOGETHER WITH MEMBER STATES																				
Output 2 : Partnerships with member states	ongoing	16 03 04	management partnerships (with redeployed means)	between 0,1 and 0,7	4	1,400	10	3,950	15	5,250	20	7,000	24	8,400	27	9,450	27	9,450		
TOTAL COST						13,686	(*)	14,423	(*)	19,011	21,311	22,891	24,001	29,401						

(*) The totals for 2007 become 15,786 mio € in 2007 and 17,423 mio € in 2008 when considering the amounts for Plan D (see indication under operational objective No.1)