



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 2.10.2002
COM(2002) 350 final/2

CORRIGENDUM

La foot note n° 9 doit se lire

SEC 737/3 du 10 mai 2000.

Concerne uniquement les versions :FR-DE-EN.

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

**ON
AN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE EUROPEAN
UNION**

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INTRODUCTION

In its communication on a new framework for cooperation on activities concerning the information and communication policy of the European Union,¹ the Commission called on the other institutions and bodies of the Union and on the Member States to join in its efforts to overhaul the Union's information and communication policy.

The purpose of the communication was to propose a new framework for interinstitutional cooperation on the formulation and implementation of an information and communication policy for the European Union.

The proposal was drawn up in response to a request by the European Council to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission to pool their efforts to provide coordinated general information about the Union and to optimise the use of resources.² The Commission was also invited to "study the general question of the Union's information policy, including improving coordination with its information offices in the Member States and links with national information offices". It was also formulated against the background of Parliament's reflections, with particular reference to the development of its partnership with the Commission on the information campaign: *The euro, a currency for Europe*.³

In the wake of its communication, the Commission called on the other institutions and bodies of the European Union and the Member States to debate its proposal. It welcomes its endorsement by the European Parliament⁴ and its approval by successive Presidencies of the Council (the Belgian Presidency in the second half of 2001 and the Spanish in the first half of 2002). For the first time, the Council is now recognising the important role of the Member States in the dissemination of information and the promotion of communication on European affairs. The Commission fully appreciates the significance of this development, which opens up new possibilities for complementary action by the institutions and the Member States, something the Commission sees as entirely appropriate in view of the challenges facing the Union today.

The time is now right for a coherent and comprehensive information and communication policy for the European Union which will improve public perceptions of the Union and of its role. However, it is self-evident that this strategy will have to be developed in a progressive and empirical manner and that it will not in itself be sufficient to resolve the issue of good governance or the "democratic challenge". But it can make a contribution by creating a public forum for the European debate. The Member States are invited to take part.

¹ COM(2001)354 final.

² Helsinki, December 1999.

³ Resolution of 14 March 2001 on the information and communication strategy of the European Union.

⁴ Resolution of 13 March 2002 on a new framework for co-operation on activities concerning the information and communication policy of the European Union.

This strategy does not claim to answer all the institutions' needs or to cover all their action in the information and communication sphere. What it does do is complement their role as interface with the public.

In particular, it does not set out all the information and communication activities carried out by the Commission's Directorates-General in the specific areas for which they are responsible. Its function is to complement such activities, to contribute to an overall dynamic and to ensure consistency.⁵

It takes account of the institutional and political constraints placed on the Union and attempts to provide a springboard for developing a joint communication policy for the institutions that is geared to their individual roles and specific requirements.

⁵ It does not cover the complementary information measures carried out by the Commission in non-EU countries.

I. The democratic challenge

1. A COMPLEX STATE OF PLAY

Just like the Member States, the European Union is facing the full force of public disaffection with politics. This crisis of representation is even greater at European level since there is no clear public perception of the legitimacy of the European institutions.

The current context of new challenges to the Union does not help, as is evidenced by recent referenda and elections.

With the approach of enlargement, occurring alongside the deliberations of the Convention on the future of the European Union and in a context of suspicion towards globalisation, there is an increasing need for the European projects to be made meaningful and visible.

In the Laeken Declaration the Heads of State and Government recognised that the European Union could not move any further forward without public support and commitment.

1.1. The European Union: a mixed picture

So the Heads of State and Government basically acknowledged that, if the institutions were to be brought closer to the public, there would have to be concerted action by the institutions and the Member States to win it over to the Union's main objectives. But this on its own will not be enough to fill the information deficit. A large section of the public quite simply does not understand what the European Union does: many feel that it should deal more with their day-to-day concerns; others are of the opinion that it meddles too much in the minutiae of matters that naturally fall within the competence of the national or regional authorities, and see Community action as a threat to their identity.

Nevertheless, the majority generally see the Union as the expression of the unity of this continent of freedom, solidarity and diversity, and many share the conviction that the time has come for Europe to assume its responsibilities on the world stage.

As the Laeken Declaration stresses, "the image of a democratic and globally engaged Europe admirably matches citizens' wishes".

1.2. Public expectations

The studies at the Union's disposal⁶ show that public perception of the challenges facing the European Union is relatively homogeneous:

⁶ OPTEM study, May 2002.

- closing the economic divide and increasing solidarity (within the Union and with the world's poorest countries);
- globalisation (even though this notion is still somewhat vague);
- the protection of the environment (within the Union but also globally) ;
- environmental protection (in Europe and world-wide).

But this widely held perception is only one side of the coin; the other is the ignorance, particularly among young people, not only of what the Union has achieved but also of how it operates and what its real powers are.

The public is aware that it is poorly informed on Europe. It is only too ready to blame not only the media and national authorities, but also the European institutions, for the perceived ignorance or prejudice.

Fighting ignorance and apathy is now a must for the European Union. Remember that turnout in the European elections fell from 63% in 1979 to 49% in 1999.

2. A NEW FORM OF GOVERNANCE ... A PRIORITY

The ignorance or lack of understanding typical of the public's relationship with the European Union is not inevitable. It is due largely to the complexity of the European process but also to the absence of an EU information and communication policy on the part of both the European institutions and the Member States.

2.1. The facts acknowledged

In its White Paper on European governance,⁷ the Commission acknowledged that a genuine information and communication policy was the main prerequisite for the development of better governance in Europe.

"The institutions should work in a more open manner. Together with the Member States, they should actively communicate about what the EU does and the decisions it takes. They should use language that is accessible and understandable for the general public. This is of particular importance in order to improve the confidence in complex institutions."

In the Member States, as at European level, democracy depends on the capacity of the individual to participate in the public debate. The institutions, with the backing of the Member States, must not waste any time in rising to this challenge, which will only increase with enlargement.

2.2. Shared responsibility

How then can the quality of the European public debate be improved?

⁷ COM(2001) 428 final.

In order to exist, the European public space needs temporal, spatial and ideological points of reference. It also needs active public involvement. This will mean developing all forms of representation (opinion leaders, interest groups, parliamentarians, etc.) at European level and building on all forms of cooperation, whether from journalists, the major media or national institutions.

This sharing of responsibility between the Union and the Member States must prompt each partner to develop a more coherent and more confident information and communication policy which will allow Europe and the individual Member States to rediscover a sense of oneness and of belonging to the same community.

The Union must organise its information policy in such a way as to encompass a more comprehensive range of subjects, with the Member States agreeing not to communicate on European affairs from a strictly national viewpoint, the filtering effect of which is often reductive.

3. THE NEED FOR A FRESH APPROACH

The awareness now shared by all European leaders has generated a new political will to involve the public more in the European decision-making process. The real changes which the European Union is undergoing now call for a fresh approach.

3.1. At institutional level

This political will has led to the development of a different method of preparing the ground for the revision of the Treaties required for enlargement: the Convention on the future of the European Union, which was set up following the Laeken Declaration and is now pursuing its deliberations in a totally transparent fashion.

It has also prompted the Heads of State and Government to seek the involvement of civil society and as broad a section of the general public as possible in the European debate.

3.2. As regards information and communication

However, this momentum can only be sustained on the basis of an informed and more enlightened debate on Europe.

The institutions and Member States have reiterated their political will to develop a concerted information strategy on the main issues affecting the European Union. This new joint approach should lead to synergy between the different methods applied by each partner, with Member State involvement allowing the European Union to speak with one voice and also to benefit from the hitherto lacking yet crucial multiplier effect.

The scale of the challenge is immense, and the means available are limited. The Commission is therefore proposing a two-pronged approach that is both realistic and gradual:

- giving the European Union the capacity to formulate and disseminate messages geared to and focused on its priority issues;
- establishing a voluntary working partnership with the Member States fostering genuine synergy between their structures and know-how and the activities of the European Union.

II. A coherent and comprehensive response

To meet these challenges the European Union must devise a strategy based on a clear commitment to objectives enabling a set of messages on each topic to be developed as part of an overall process involving both the institutions and the Member States.

1. A CLEAR COMMITMENT TO OBJECTIVES

What objectives should the European Union set itself for the development of an information and communication strategy?

1.1. A genuine dialogue ...

Neutral factual information is needed of course, but it is not enough on its own. Experience has shown that a given item of information will not remain neutral because its presentation will constantly be reworked by the media, relays and other opinion multipliers.

Genuine communication by the European Union cannot be reduced to the mere provision of information: it must convey a meaning, facilitate comprehension, set both action and policy in a real context, and prompt dialogue within national public opinion so as to enhance the participation of the general public in the great European debate.

The objective of this new strategy must therefore be to generate awareness and combat ignorance and apathy so as to lay a firm foundation for the management of public life, a clearly understood form of governance between the European Union and its citizens. The main point is to improve popular perceptions of the Union or, in short, to boost the general awareness of the European dimension of citizenship.

1.2. ... based on a two-tier information strategy

But it goes without saying that this strategy must reflect the highly specific nature of the European Union, which cannot be compared to a traditional government.

What this means is that the European Union must develop a genuine teaching function in relation to its role and tasks. Looking beyond education *stricto sensu*, which would merit specific study by the Member States, the European Union must take a more didactic stance on its policies in order to meet the needs inherent in better governance.

This didactic stance should be manifested in two basic ways:

- first, in general information aiming to boost awareness of the Union's existence and legitimacy, polishing its image and highlighting its role; this would merit specific study by the Community institutions and the Member States;

- then, on the basis of the Union’s major projects and challenges, which the Community institutions will translate into priority information topics to be slotted into the Prince programme (Programme of Information for the Citizen of Europe), in accordance with the new interinstitutional framework that is now operational.

To improve its communication capacity on this basis, the European Union must begin by gradually developing the means of controlling its image.

The European debate must be made more dynamic so that the general public can more easily relate the information and explanations it receives to the European Union’s projects.

Objectives:

To improve perceptions of the European Union, its institutions and their legitimacy by enhancing familiarity with and comprehension of its tasks, structure and achievements and establishing dialogue with the general public.

2. GREATER COHERENCE

Information and communication cannot be regarded as a sort of secondary appendage to or supplementary constraint on the European Union’s activities.

The development of an information and communication strategy matching real needs is a precondition for the success of the European Union’s policies and initiatives.

But this will mean the European institutions undergoing a genuine cultural revolution at every level of responsibility.

The acquisition of a new communication culture will depend on a coherent and methodical reconstruction of the European Union’s image.

This first entails demonstrating a genuine capacity to elaborate our own funds of messages.

2.1. A common reference framework

This capacity requires the establishment of a common reference framework for all the institutions to serve as the basis for building up a fund of messages for each of the European Union’s major policies.

2.1.1. A central thread

To enable the European Union to acquire control of its own image and, by extension, of its messages, it must devise a sort of central pattern, a thread woven round homogeneous general concepts profiling clearly the Union’s *raison d’être* and providing the institutions and the Member States with a reference framework within which to transmit coherent messages.

What this really means is translating into simple and non-controversial communication terms the Union's main objectives as stemming from the Treaty on European Union (Articles 2 and 6).

This central thread – a sort of constant central reference for all information activities – must both take account of the range of different conceptions of the European venture and at the same time meet the needs of the institutions, the Member States and the general public.

It must be capable of being expressed in simple terms, acceptable to all the institutions, highlighting the specific nature and reality of authentic European value added.

Initial studies suggest that the central thread for European Union action should focus on the following concepts:

- the virtue of exchange (liberties, diversity, humanism);
- value added in terms of efficiency and solidarity;
- the concept of protection;
- the role of Europe in the world.

This central thread would mean a higher public profile could be given to certain fundamental features of the European Union's *raison d'être* and action.

The central thread could be woven from the following elements:

- the European Union is a pledge of greater liberty, prosperity and security for Europeans;
- the European Union promotes a model of society inspired by solidarity and dynamism and respecting diversity;
- the European Union enables us to play a world role matching our values and commensurate with our weight.

This central thread should make it possible to provide a firm foundation for the language and presentation of the individual messages for each of the areas in which the European Union has power to act.

2.1.2. *Essential values*

Translating this central thread into concrete audible messages for the citizen entails filtering it through the values underlying the European Union's primary objectives.

In the context of a well-controlled information strategy, these values must always be implicit in and closely connected to the practical objectives of Community action, and must correspond to the generally accepted public perceptions of the European Union. They will constitute the invisible communication substructure endowing the

presentation of the Union's policy objectives with a new coherence, also with a view to elaborating the funds of messages that the European Union needs for the purpose of self-expression.

Initial studies⁸ suggest that these values remain virtually unspoken. But they exist, and they translate a necessary positive perception of European integration. This perception combines both collective and individual benefits.

Implied basic values for communication:

- *rapprochement* and exchange: opportunity(ies);
- equality and solidarity: prosperity;
- protection: security.

Like the central thread, these values still need to be tested and then validated by the institutions as a common reference framework.

2.2. Topics and messages

Likewise in the interests of coherence, the main topics the Commission proposes to develop focus on the European Union's policy priorities for the years ahead.

In particular, they are in line with the four strategic objectives spelled out by the Commission at the beginning of its term of office and reformulated each year on an interinstitutional basis in the APS decision: promoting new forms of European governance; a stable Europe with a stronger voice in the world; a new economic and social agenda; and a better quality of life for all.

In agreement with its partners, the Commission had already identified three priority information topics:

- enlargement;
- the future of the European Union; and
- the area of freedom, security and justice.

It is now proposing a fourth: the role of the European Union in the world.

Taking these priority information topics as a starting point, the definition and development of the main messages must match the needs and concerns of the general public. And they must be expressed in its language: effective communication must always be seen in terms of the general public rather than of the institutions.

For the European public has specific demands: preserving peace and security, fighting unemployment, combating organised crime and trafficking, reducing poverty,

⁸ OPTEM study, May 2002.

ensuring equal opportunities and protecting the environment. These concerns must not be perceived as conflicting with the proposed topics. Quite the reverse. The objective of communication is to explain the direct correlation between a given policy priority and the context and quality of the life of each and every individual.

2.2.1. *Enlargement*

The approach proposed complements but does not modify the communication strategy on enlargement adopted by the Commission in May 2000.⁹

In the light of the results of Eurobarometer (83% of the public feel poorly or not at all informed), communication on the topic of enlargement should first make it easier to grasp the actual timing (which countries when). And as regards substance, in the Member States it could focus on the following angles:

- the legitimacy of accession by these countries which are potential members of the EU (opportunities);
- the considerable efforts made by these countries to adopt Community law and practice (security);
- the undeniable value added of enlargement, which will ultimately benefit the entire Union (prosperity).

The Union's objectives thus rest implicitly on the values of opportunity, security and prosperity. The messages to be developed must be such as to express these values (cf. tables at Annex 1).

2.2.2. *The future of the European Union*

Regarding the future of the European Union, this is a subject where we come up against total ignorance about how the European Union operates and how it needs reforming.

In this respect the development of this topic also matches the need to provide a modicum of general information and basic explanation about how Europe actually works.

But this topic also meets the need of the moment to explain the work of the Convention on the future of the European Union and, in due course, to ensure that the outcome is properly appreciated.

It should focus on the content of the Convention's proposal and take account of the fact that the need to adapt the *modus operandi* of the institutions to an enlarged Union is broadly well-perceived and accepted, even though there are some who fear that a strong central power will emerge, beyond the control of the Member States.

⁹ SEC 737/3, 10 May 2000.

2.2.3. The area of freedom, security and justice

Lastly, creating the area of freedom, security and justice, a particularly tangible topic, could be developed around the following issues:

- immigration: isolated action by a given Member State is not sufficient to ensure full control of borders or to combat international crime, whereas the European Union allows a joint response to migration issues;
- human rights: belonging to the Union implies freedom, democracy and respect for basic values; the European area of freedom and justice needs to be consolidated and reinforced;
- citizenship: the area of freedom, security and justice will finally give full meaning to the concept of European citizenship, something which enhances but does not replace national citizenship.

2.2.4. The role of Europe in the world

The topic of Europe's role in the world can be approached from a variety of angles (good-neighbour policy, sustainable development, humanitarian aid, etc.).

But the subject of globalisation constitutes a truly formidable challenge for the communicators. It often generates unease even though the concept is sometimes a little obscure.

To allay the fears felt by Europeans regarding how they will be affected by this process, attention must be focused on demonstrating that Europe is more effective and more competitive than they think in coming to terms with and regulating globalisation.

The following communication angles should be explored:

- the issues on the table in the multilateral trade negotiations;
- the Union's determination to be a force for equilibrium in the world (open to the third world, sensitive to sustainable development);
- the strength of a united Europe speaking with a single voice.

Other subjects could obviously be addressed here as well.

Likewise, in parallel with the first police and military actions in Bosnia, the question of Europe's defence also undoubtedly deserves attention.

The European Union's good-neighbour policy vis-à-vis the regions on its borders constitutes an important dimension of its external policy.

But the European Union must do more than just formulate clear, simple and instructive messages; it must back up its assertions. If the message to be developed is

not supported by positive practical examples that speak to everybody, it will never strike home.

2.3. Audiences

The European Union must practise targeted communication. Dialogue with opinion multipliers and dialogue with the general public in the Member States do not satisfy the same demands.

Information must therefore be provided at two distinct levels, using different messages and appropriate tools. Certain information must be addressed to those who are interested and already reasonably well-informed whereas other information must be aimed at those who are apathetic and unfamiliar with the European Union. The need to resist the temptation to be satisfied with maintaining dialogue with the natural circle of those ‘in the know’ is a real challenge, which the new strategy must help us to take up.

In addition, information and messages must be geared to local realities, languages and perceptions and to the specific interests and concerns of the various target groups. These groups should be selected in accordance with the communication plans negotiated with the Member States on each of the priority topics agreed on.

The target groups should include not only opinion makers such as political representatives, leading personalities in civil society, the media, the business world and so on, but also specific categories of the general public such as young people, women, families, working people, etc.

Particular attention should be given to young people and the education sector as a channel for helping people to learn about the European Union.

For each topic:

- formulate a strategy and messages geared to a public that is already informed;
- formulate a strategy and messages geared to the general public.

3. AN OVERALL PROCESS

If the European Union is to manage its communication activities more effectively, it will have to ensure that its information policy forms part of a coherent and comprehensive strategy which bears the hallmark of true political leadership.

The development of this new strategy and the need to take control of its own image and create its own messages mean that the European Union and its institutions will have to make far-reaching changes in their information and communication policy.

3.1. A more proactive approach

The Union can no longer afford to be purely reactive. If it is to promote a more informed debate on its objectives, it must take a policy decision to build into its *modus operandi* the need to seize the initiative on a number of priority issues, timed in such a way as to reflect a given agenda.

However, it goes without saying that, even acting collectively, the Union institutions do not have the capacity to engage directly with the man in the street.

So the success of this strategy will depend directly on the degree of support afforded it by the Member States. The multiplier effect of resources, relay channels, expertise, information services and the main ministries involved in the Member States is crucial if the objectives set out in this paper are to be achieved, particularly as regards improving the partnership with civil society.

This process of making each partner jointly responsible will require a real political commitment at the highest level from institutions and Member States alike. This commitment must be both to the procedures and to the common reference framework, which they should use as long as there has been no joint decision to change it.

Another problem is that the European Union sadly lacks a "face" which ordinary people can relate to. Over and above decentralisation and organised relays and networks the European Union must also give thought to working with actual opinion leaders in each Member State who will strive to make Europe a more tangible reality for ordinary people (both on television and at local level). Obviously, responsibility in this area lies primarily with the European institutions, but local, regional and national politicians also have a part to play. Business and/or academic circles should also be called on to contribute.

3.2. Confident leadership

- (a) Before funds of European messages can be developed on major issues, an in-depth analysis must be carried out of public opinion in the Member States. The European Commission has the necessary experience and capacity at European level to do this. Eurobarometer, and the opinion polls and qualitative studies which it draws on, enable it to develop this perception on a consistent and regular basis. It will need to boost its capacity for analysis significantly if it is to be able

to disseminate adequate information not just internally but also to the other institutions and, obviously, to all the political players in the Union as well.

However, this must not exclude analyses developed by the Member States themselves. The Commission would like to improve its knowledge of current public opinion and trends in the Member States by developing a more regular partnership with the departments in the national information services responsible for conducting opinion polls in the Member States. This cooperation should make it easier to meet the expectations and needs of ordinary Europeans more effectively.

The development of this information monitoring capacity — which could take the form of a web-based network linking all the partners involved — will thus provide a framework in which to formulate the messages needed for each topic or information campaign.

- (b) The other requirement if the comprehensive character of the process is to be preserved will be to tie all the information activities into the Union's agenda in order to maximise the visibility and topicality of the information and communication process. Here too, responsibility will lie with the European Commission, whose power of initiative places it at the very heart of the decision-making process.
- (c) True leadership will clearly be required to direct and guide the process as a whole if genuine decentralisation is to be achieved. The Commission must be able to assume responsibility for ensuring greater coordination both between the institutions and the Member States and, internally, between its various Directorates-General.

If it is to play its role properly, the Commission will need to be able to draw on regular evaluations of information activities carried out each year by the European Union itself as well as initiatives taken by and in the Member States. The machinery for monitoring these evaluations will have to be set up jointly by the institutions and could be based on collective result-based targets.

In addition, in the way the Commission has done for the euro campaign right from the outset, each major campaign will have to be evaluated over the whole of the period in question.

The Commission will also attempt to draw up a multiannual information and communication programme to ensure the necessary continuity for the main information campaigns carried out jointly by the institutions and the Member States. This programme will be submitted to the Interinstitutional Group on Information (IGI) for political approval.

3.3. The need for synergy

Another feature of this strategy is that, although the Commission's Press DG will be required to play a central role, this role will be more that of service provider and

coordinator in relation to the other Directorates-General, the other institutions and the Member States than that of all-knowing, all-powerful driving force.

The task of DG Press is to assist its partners under the political authority of the President or the relevant Member of the Commission, in conjunction with the Member chiefly responsible for the information topic in question.

Obviously, this function of serving the political authority also applies to the Commission representations in the Member States and indeed to all the instruments, tools and resources available to it whose use must be maximised to ensure that the new strategy succeeds.

- So Eurobarometer will have to adapt to the issues selected. The aim is in no way to undermine the ongoing analysis of public opinion which this instrument makes possible but to take on board, within the framework of an annual programme, the need to acquire an adequate knowledge of public opinion in the Member States on the selected issues in order to develop appropriate messages which meet the public's expectations.

We also need to assess how it can be extended to the candidate countries in ways which guarantee maximum reliability and continuity.

- So too the Europa site remains an essential instrument for bringing the institutions closer to ordinary people and facilitating contact between Europeans. It could also be geared more to meeting the information requirements of the general public and facilitating access to information sources directly linked to the selected priority issues.

Nor should the interactive dimension of the strategy be forgotten: genuine dialogue with the public takes place naturally through channels like the Internet, but also through direct contact with the institutions via services like Europe Direct. This service should be developed on an interinstitutional basis, focusing primarily on the priority topics identified, but also expanding its direct-reply facility on all issues of relevance to the daily life of Europe's citizens.

- Traditional publications also remain essential sources of facts and information for many Europeans. In the light of the new strategy proposed, appropriate guidelines should therefore be produced and adopted for the publications policy of the European institutions.
- Lastly, it is clear that the role of radio and television is set to increase. And here too Europe by Satellite in particular should make it possible for all events directly linked to the information campaigns to be covered in an interinstitutional perspective.

Similarly, the audiovisual communication policy of the Union in general and the Commission in particular will have to be reevaluated in the light of this strategy, given the very limited options currently available either centrally or in the Member States. It is in this field above all that partnership with the Member States should provide significant leverage for achieving better coverage of the European

dimension of public life in the local and national media; promoting co-productions with national or regional channels should therefore be encouraged. In particular, the training of journalists and editors should remain near the top of the agenda. At present, 66% of Europeans see radio and television as their main source of information on the European Union.

The Commission calls on each institution to adapt its internal structures to reflect the requirements of this new strategy. It also invites each Member State to reflect on ways of improving synergy between its national information policy and the Union's communication strategy.

III. Gradual implementation tailored to needs

The European Union's new information and communication strategy must be viewed in the context of the Union's current resources, which are limited, particularly as regards the capacity of the European institutions themselves.

Consequently, its success will depend to a very large extent on partnership with the Member States: without active support from the national and regional authorities, the European institutions will not be able to get their message across to or engage with the general public.

If the communication strategy is to be developed to the full, cooperation with the Member States must operate at three levels:

- interinstitutionally,
- in the various facets of decentralisation; and
- in the partnership with civil society (cf. table at Annex 2).

1. FORMS OF INTERINSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

As indicated in the Commission's first communication on the subject,¹⁰ the Interinstitutional Group on Information (IGI) is the cornerstone of interinstitutional cooperation.

1.1 The IGI

Membership

Politically speaking, the IGI is co-chaired by the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council. The other EU institutions and bodies can take part as observers.

The Group meets at least twice a year.

• Remit

The Group sets the thematic priorities for information and lays down joint guidelines for interinstitutional cooperation on EU information and communication. It evaluates the coordination of centralised and decentralised information activities aimed at the general public on the topics chosen. Each year it gives its views on the topics for the coming year, basing itself on a report drawn up by the Commission.

¹⁰ Communication on a new framework for cooperation on activities concerning the information and communication policy of the European Union (COM(2001)354).

- Prince working party

A technical working party whose members are drawn from the three institutions is being set up to monitor information activities covered by the Prince programme, which is essentially an action framework for interinstitutional cooperation on budgetary matters.

1.2 Developing messages

Cooperation between the EU institutions is also important when it comes to formulating and defining the information and communication strategies to be developed on the various topics selected by the IGI, particularly as regards coordination.

What action needs to be taken?

(a) The Commission's role

The European Union must establish a shared fund of messages on each topic chosen. The core messages on all subjects falling within Community jurisdiction will be prepared within the Commission under the authority of the Member of the Commission concerned. They will be tested by focus groups in each Member State before the Commission passes them on to the other institutions.

Both in the interests of its representatives and to boost its own capacity to take action, the Union must be in a position to disseminate its fund of messages on each topic selected. These messages will supplement the background information which is essential to the successful dissemination of information.

Building up a fund of messages on each topic and checking to ensure that they are accepted by as many people as possible is the key to success for a coherent EU information and communication strategy. The Union must therefore be equipped with the necessary monitoring machinery.

(b) Cooperation with the Member States

In addition to building up a fund of messages, the Commission must develop a communication strategy geared to each priority information topic (messages, targets, types of action, timetable, budget). On this basis, the Commission will propose to the European Parliament and the Member States that they cooperate to implement the decisions taken by the IGI.

It goes without saying that each Member State will be at liberty to endorse the strategy and messages proposed - or not, as the case may be. Adopting them, or even adapting them in line with specific national needs, would greatly enhance the Union's coordinated communication strategy.

In particular, these messages should make it possible for the information on Community legislation disseminated by the European institutions (notably the Commission and Parliament) and also by the Member States to be better structured, especially when it relates to one or more of the main priority topics.

The Commission has also duly noted the Council's wish to cooperate with it at as early a stage as possible in formulating an appropriate strategy and in preparing the necessary messages for the priority topics selected jointly by the IGI. It is ready to work on this with the European Parliament in a spirit of interinstitutional understanding. And it is prepared to present its proposals on the strategy to be developed and the fund of "European" messages which it has drawn up and tested to the Council's Information Group and the national experts, whom it would encourage to take part in this type of activity.

Fund of messages on each topic:

Commission primarily responsible: cooperation with other institutions. Member States may cooperate or not.

2. A NEW DECENTRALISED PARTNERSHIP

Implementation of this strategy is based on complementary action by the European institutions and the Member States.

2.1 Effective decentralisation

In the case of the European institutions, the Commission representations and the European Parliament information offices will work together to adapt the Union's message to local and national situations within a joint framework drawn up jointly with the Member State.

And as part of the decentralisation process - with regard to implementation and reworking of the message - the Commission representations, together with the European Parliament information offices, will shoulder the main responsibility for conducting the various information campaigns.

Basically, they will have to draw up the communication plan for each subject chosen by the IGI, where necessary with assistance from outside experts. The plan will incorporate the action programme drawn up jointly with the Member State (agreement) and the Union's independent action programme where the Member State does not go along with the priorities or messages selected.

Drawing on support from the relevant DGs, the representations will also rework the message to meet national, regional or local requirements adapting the content of the information campaigns to the various target groups, the media selected, and people's everyday concerns. In particular, presentation will need to be adapted to take account of the communications vector used. Radio and television clearly require a special format different from that required by the press.

This must be done as close to the target groups as possible and in direct liaison with the channels used.

2.2 Sharing responsibility better

Overall, it would be helpful to be able to draw on the expertise and resources of each of the Member States. Each national information service will have a key role to play in developing and implementing the various information campaigns.

They will need not only to participate in drawing up the communication plan to be prepared in partnership with the institutions but also to ensure that, overall, the European strategies and messages and the national subject focus and presentation are consistent.

The Union's information and communication strategy cannot stand alone. It must slot into the overall play of government communication policy providing value added and a tangible European dimension to the democratic debate in each Member State.

To this end, the Commission is giving thought to the best way to set about crystallising this cooperation in all its forms. Drawing on the example of the various cooperation mechanisms already established with the Member States, the Commission would like to check with the Council and Parliament whether it would be possible to draw up a memorandum of understanding with each Member State. The aim of the memorandum would be to put a political seal on the mutual contractual undertaking between the European Union and the Member States to work together to improve the dissemination of general information on European matters.

This type of memorandum could also have the merit of recognising at national level the role of the networks and relays in transmitting a regular flow of information, thereby ensuring ongoing public debate in Europe. It could provide for the systematic networking of information correspondents in each Member State (national information office and ministry concerned by a given priority information topic) and the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. It could also give Member States the freedom to form more specific partnerships in relation to the information measures proposed by a particular Commission Directorate-General in its area of responsibility.

This formula would offer the flexibility necessary for close cooperation between Member States and the European Union and could subsequently facilitate negotiation of the agreements needed to develop the priority information topics selected by the IGI.

This system would clearly not exclude other forms of partnership at national level or with the constitutional regions or even bodies representing civil society.

Cooperation between the European Union and Member States:

A memorandum of understanding + agreements on information topics prioritised by the IGI.

But this collaboration between the European institutions and the Member States must clearly not be exclusively interinstitutional; it must develop at grassroots level, as close to the target group as possible.

3. COLLABORATION AS CLOSE TO THE PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE

Developed gradually over time on the basis of a vast number of varied initiatives, the Community information and documentation relays and networks now incorporate over 700 centres in the Member States. They are designed to bring information to the people and are coordinated and facilitated by the Commission.¹¹

In addition to these networks and relays, which provide a physical presence, there are also some 550 "Team Europe" lecturers.

However, the networks and relays are not actually part of the Commission; they are mostly the result of partnerships with Member States and, above all, local authorities.¹²

Their experience, flexibility and immediate proximity to the representatives of civil society and the general public make them invaluable and a favoured instrument for implementing the European Union's information and communication strategy. On the ground, they embody the synergy of resources available to the European Union, the Member States and civil society, translating into practice the principle of the decentralisation of information.

The potential is there; it simply needs to be exploited more effectively. The Commission therefore believes that all the relays and networks should be analysed and assessed with a view to drawing up a new and more coherent framework for action making better use of their role in the new strategy, and preparing to extend them to future Member States with the ultimate objective of ensuring that every region has one.

This new framework should be based on the following principles:

- a more homogeneous and coherent structure for the various "levels" of relay and existing network (national, regional/interregional, local), also in terms of image (name, logo, etc.);
- rationalisation and greater decentralisation of management to improve cost-effectiveness;

¹¹ These initiatives, for which DG PRESS is responsible, are the following (other applications for centres to be opened are under examination):

- 3 major national centres for information and documentation in Paris, Lisbon and Rome;
- 3 interregional centres for information and documentation in Thessaloniki, Naples and Berlin;
- 142 Info-Points Europe (IPE) ;
- 134 rural information and promotion carrefours;
- 328 European Documentation Centres (EDC), 24 depository libraries and 72 European reference centres (which together with the 360 EDCs set up in countries outside the EU make up a total network of 784 centres).

¹² The relays and networks are not part of the Commission; they are actually independent centres run by host structures which provide the location and are the main source of funding. The Commission is a minority partner which has signed an agreement with the host structure – a university, local authority, etc. - undertaking to provide it with the services and support needed to enable it to develop its activities and, in certain cases, an annual grant.

- greater sharing of responsibilities and a closer partnership with the Member States, taking due account of administrative and local characteristics;
- the development of interinstitutional cooperation, not just at national level with the major national centres (Paris, Lisbon and Rome) but also at interregional and local level.

Once defined, the new framework for action should be the subject of negotiations with the Member States so as to ensure that it stems from the common will of the Union and the Member States. It should also take account of the potential of the other information multipliers with which the Commission works, such as independent information networks.

Relays and networks:

Analysis and assessment of all relays and networks.

Development of a new framework for action (mission, *modus operandi*, future developments).

CONCLUSION

1. The proposed strategy is based on all the contributions received by the Commission during the debate following the initial communication it adopted in June 2001. It represents the consensus if not the common view of Parliament, the Council and the Commission: each of the three institutions will have to make a clear commitment to this new "contract", which will be implemented by the Interinstitutional Group on Information.

Implementing the strategy will require a joint effort by the institutions and the Member States:

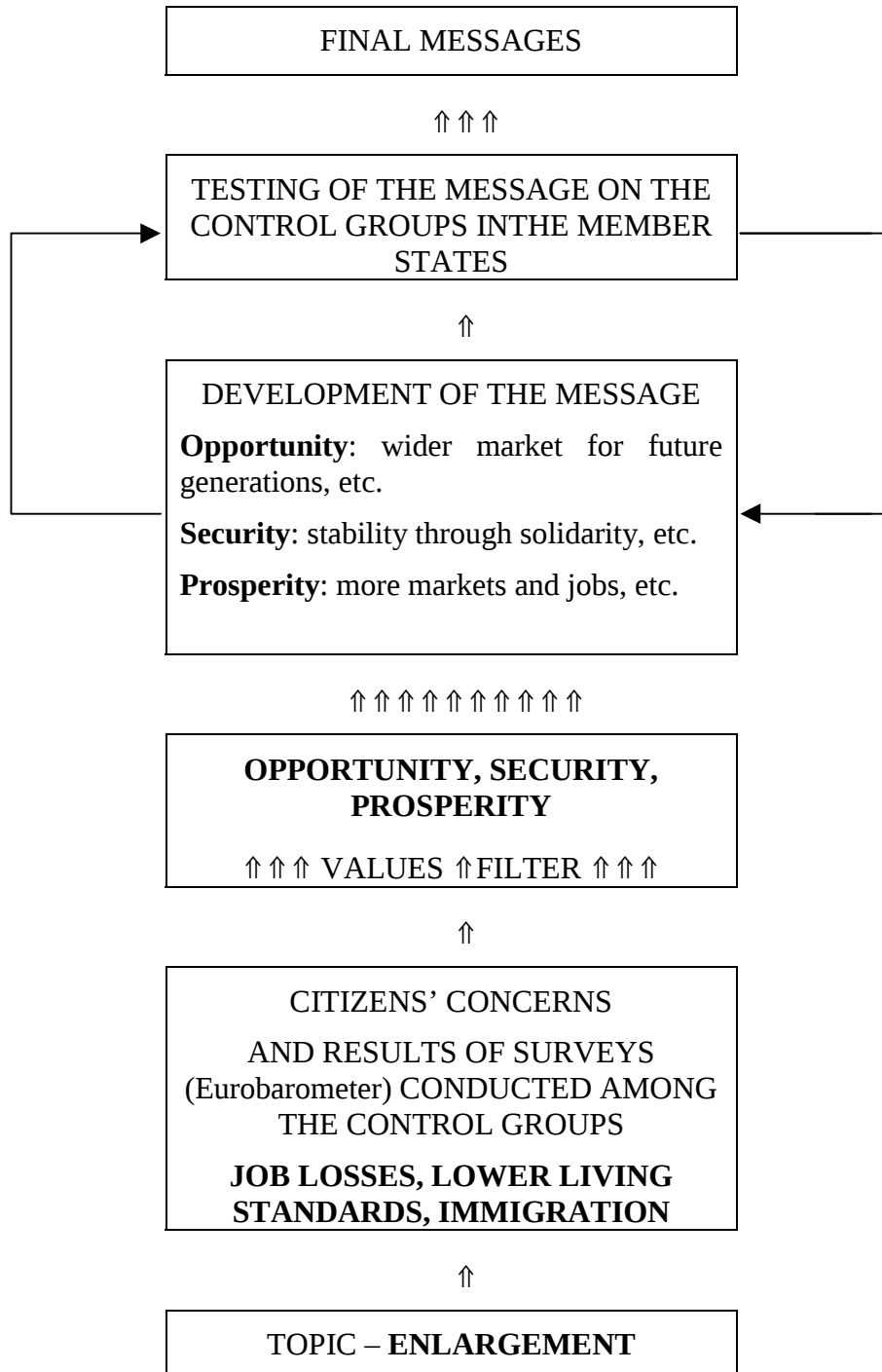
- drawing up a reference framework common to all the institutions, encompassing certain key values, for use in formulating messages geared to the main information topics, must be a priority for each partner;
- a change of culture within each institution but also on the part of the Member States must be a regular and ongoing requirement, achieved primarily through training programmes for all managers;
- the partnership with each Member State must be based on a new approach which goes beyond the basic legal and financial framework and is not impeded by the often cumbersome and rigid procedures, either when it comes to disseminating general information or in terms of more regular contacts with national information services.

Underpinned by the Union's institutional architecture, the strategy is intended to be both ambitious and realistic. Its success will chiefly depend on whether the necessary political impetus is brought to bear.

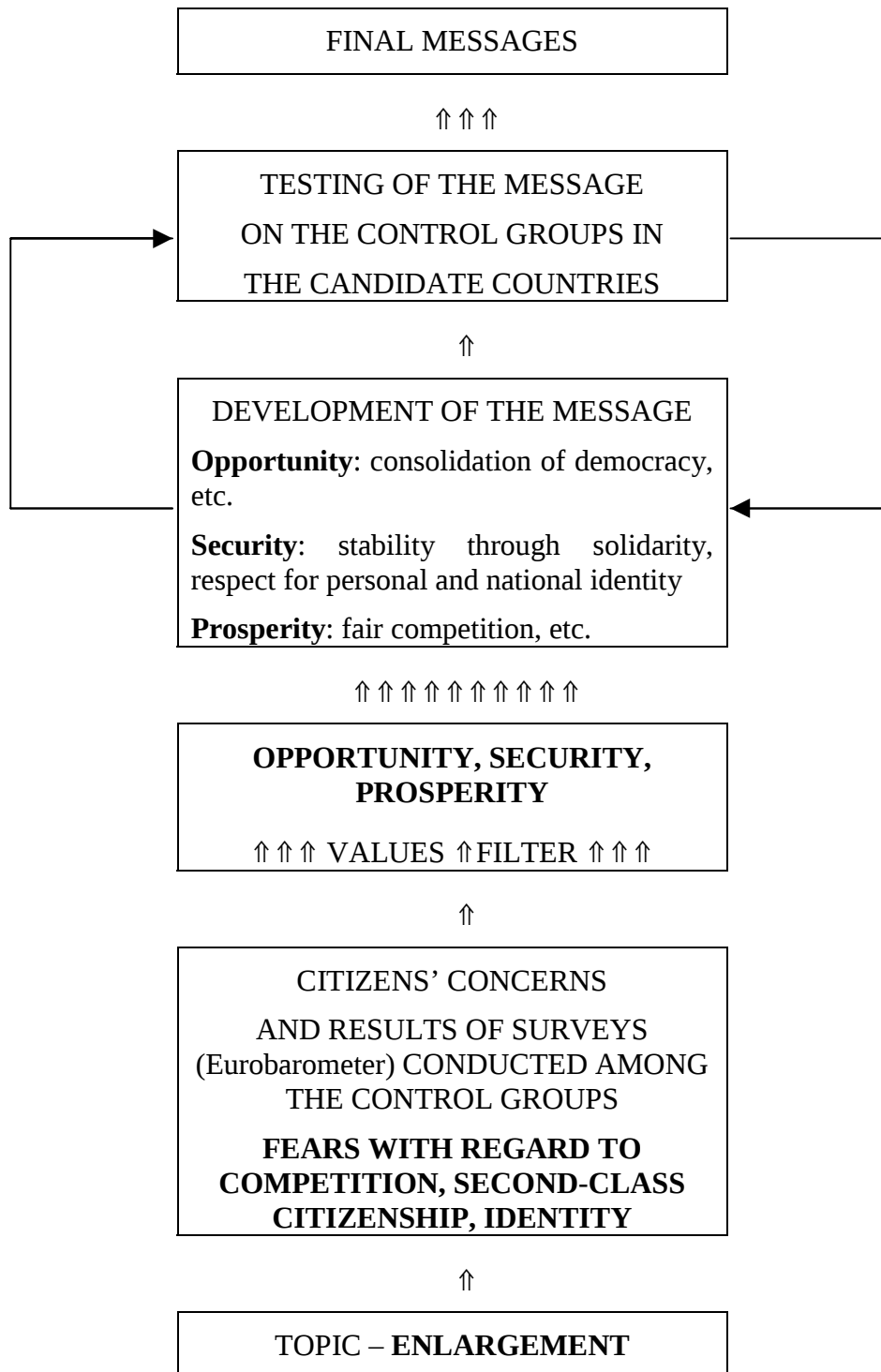
2. The Commission will very shortly begin taking the main measures to put the strategy in place in line with the attached action plan (Annex 3). The strategy should be operational, at least as far as its broad lines are concerned, from the beginning of 2003; however, it will only be able to develop its full potential in the medium term.
3. The Commission therefore proposes that a review be scheduled for 2005 with all the parties involved in order to carry out an exhaustive evaluation of progress achieved and to determine any new lines of action that are required for an enlarged Europe, once the new Commission and Parliament are in place and the next Intergovernmental Conference has been held.

ANNEX 1

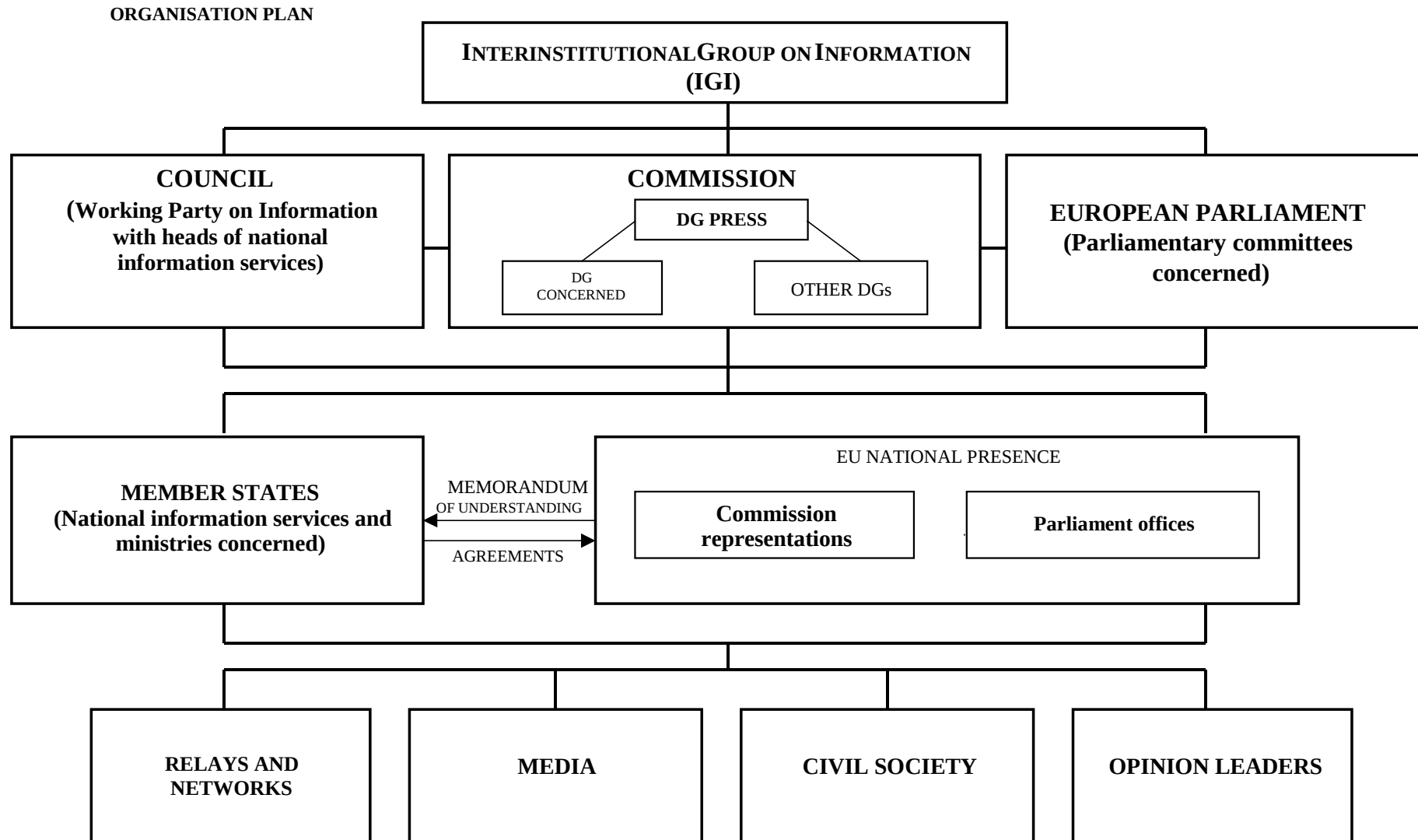
EXAMPLE OF THE PREPARATION OF A MESSAGE CONCERNING ENLARGEMENT FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



**EXAMPLE OF THE PREPARATION OF A MESSAGE CONCERNING
ENLARGEMENT
FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE CANDIDATE COUNTRIES**



ANNEX 2
ORGANISATION PLAN



ANNEX 3

ACTION PLAN

September 2002

- IGI: Agreement between the three institutions on the main priority information topics for 2003 and 2004

This agreement must be reached before first reading of the budget by Parliament

- Launch of the analysis and evaluation of the networks and relays
- Introduction of a training programme tailored to the Commission's needs following adoption of the new strategy
- Launch of the development and testing, via the focus groups in each Member State, of the central thread and values underpinning the communication process

October 2002

- Budgetary validation of the resources allocated to each priority topic
- Analysis of the status of national public opinions with regard to the priority information topics selected
- Start of the preparation by the representations of communication plans for each topic
- Evaluation of the resources available to the representations in relation to the greater decentralisation resulting from the new strategy

November 2002

- Drawing up of a memorandum of understanding embodying the political agreement between the European Union and the Member State
- Political validation of the central thread and values
- Planning and coordination of action to be taken by the Directorates-General chiefly concerned by the priority information topics selected
- Development of the main funds of messages for the topics selected
- Validation of the Member States' participation in the proposed partnership

December 2002

- Meeting with the heads of the information services of all the Member States to validate the communication plans for 2003 and maximise synergy
- Proposing of corresponding agreements to the Member States wherever possible (or other possible frameworks for action)

January 2003

- Evaluation of action taken in 2002
- On the basis of the completed analysis, preparation and negotiation of the new framework for action for the relays and networks

March 2003

- IGI: validation of the evaluation of action taken in 2002 and determination of the priority topics for 2004 and 2005

July 2003

- Annual debate in Parliament, with Council participation, on the EU's information and communication policy

2003

- Gradual rationalisation of the relays and networks
- Development over the whole year of coordination and planning under the new strategy, also with regard to achieving synergy from the different Commission instruments
- Development of interinstitutional cooperation

2003-04

- Training activities tailored to the needs of Commission staff – Opening-up to the other institutions
- Closer coordination of the work of the representations and consolidation of the Commission's rebuttal function

2004

- Extension of the relays and networks in the candidate countries
- Appropriate increase in the resources of the representations
- Development of the representations in the new Member States

ANNEX 4
LEGISLATIVE FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Policy area(s): PRESS AND COMMUNICATION

Activit(y/ies): 16.01-16.02-16.03-16.04-16.05

Title of action: AN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

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

A7: Decentralised expenditure on support staff and administration

B3-300: General information work

B3-300A: General information work - technical and administrative assistance and support expenditure

B3-301: Information outlets

B3-301A: Information outlets - technical and administrative assistance and support expenditure

B3-303: Communication work

B3-303A: Communication work - technical and administrative assistance and support expenditure

B3-306: Priority information measures¹³

B3-306A: Priority information measures - technical and administrative assistance and support expenditure

2. OVERALL FIGURES (EU 15)

2.1 Total allocation for action (Part B): €285.065 million for commitment¹⁴

2.2 Period of application:

2003 and subsequent budget years

2.3 Overall multiannual estimate of expenditure:

¹³ Budget headings for which other DGs have authorising power (in liaison with DG PRESS).

¹⁴ Excluding the new priority information topic proposed: Europe in the world.

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

(€ million to three decimal places)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Commitments	71.100	72.575	63.330	60.285	267.290
Payments	66.750	65.209	54.666	52.182	238.807

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

Commitments	3.565	4.625	4.670	4.915	17.775
Payments	3.180	4.625	4.670	4.915	17.390

Subtotal a+b	2003	2004	2005	2006	TOTAL a+b
Commitments	74.665	77.200	68.000	65.200	285.065
Payments	69.930	69.834	59.336	57.097	256.197

(c) Overall financial impact of human resources and other administrative expenditure (see points 7.2 and 7.3)

Commitments/ payments	1.480	1.480	1.480	1.480	5.920
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TOTAL a+b+c	2003	2004	2005	2006	TOTAL a+b+c
Commitments	76.145	78.680	69.480	66.680	290.985
Payments	71.410	71.314	60.816	58.577	262.117

2.4 Compatibility with financial programming and financial perspective

Proposal is compatible with existing financial programming (with the exception of the new priority information topic proposed: Europe in the world)

2.5 Financial impact on revenue

No financial implications for revenue

3. BUDGET CHARACTERISTICS

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

4. LEGAL BASIS

Measures taken by the Commission by virtue of its institutional prerogatives

5. DESCRIPTION AND GROUNDS

5.1 Need for Community intervention

5.1.1 Objectives pursued

The communication from the Commission on an information and communication strategy for the European Union takes account of the fact that the Council is now participating in the interinstitutional cooperation exercise. The approach is two-pronged:

- giving the European Union the capacity to formulate and disseminate messages geared to and focused on the various priority information topics;
- establishing a voluntary working partnership with the Member States fostering synergy between their structures and know-how and the activities of the European Union.

The new information and communication strategy stems from a political determination shared by the three institutions, which will be given shape by the decisions of the Interinstitutional Group on Information (IGI).

It implies a change of culture for each of the institutions, entailing major adjustments, especially in terms of coordination, so as to improve the provision of information and ensure that it reaches the European public.

5.1.2 Measures taken in connection with ex ante evaluation

Besides the political awareness shared by the three institutions and the Member States, the proposed strategy is based on internal evaluations (consolidated result of the round table meetings organised by the representations and replies to a questionnaire from the various

networks) and on preliminary external studies of the strategy itself and the state of public opinion in Europe (focus groups).

5.1.3 Measures taken following ex post evaluation

In its communication the Commission proposes an annual evaluation of the main information and communication activities. As far as the Commission is concerned, this will be based on DG PRESS's new evaluation methodology, which should be operational from 2003. The other institutions and the Member States should also be able to draw on their own resources to contribute to the evaluation of the partnership.

5.2 Actions envisaged and budget intervention arrangements

The budget impact of this communication is concentrated on Title B3-3 of the budget, both for operational and technical and administrative expenditure. The actions envisaged are essentially general information work, information outlets, communication work and priority information measures (Prince).

5.3 Methods of implementation

The overall objectives will be achieved through:

- better coordination of general information work between all DGs and DG PRESS (including the representations);
- greater decentralisation of information work, with the involvement of the Member States and the institutions;
- efficient use of all existing information outlets and networks.

The strategy will be implemented primarily by way of the following measures:

GENERAL INFORMATION WORK

- More use of feed-back tools for information policy
- Closer coordination of decentralised information measures for the general public via the representations on priority topics, with best possible use made of existing outlets and networks
- Evaluation report on the impact of the combined action of the various information tools deployed under the new information strategy

OUTLETS

The importance attached to grassroots information is reflected in the close attention afforded to coordinating the work of networks and outlets, via the representations in particular.

COMMUNICATION WORK

The representations will seek to establish partnerships with each Member State in order to formulate with them messages geared specifically to public opinion in the individual countries and to test these messages on the focus groups.

These voluntary working partnerships with the Member States will foster synergy between Member States' structures and know-how and the activities of the European Union.

PRIORITY INFORMATION MEASURES

The Prince information activities covered by the communication include:

- enlargement
- the debate on the future of the Union
- the area of freedom, security and justice
- Europe in the world.

The expenditure inherent in implementing the Prince programme will depend on decisions/guidelines adopted or to be adopted by the Commission.

The resources required for this information work will be assessed in the light of the specific measures that will be taken to implement the new strategy.

Giving the representations a greater role in planning programmes for each information topic is a key aspect of the new strategy and will require assistance from communication specialists.

6. FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

Specific requirements flowing from the measures recommended in the communication will be covered from existing resources under Title B3-3 (Information and Communication). The allocation of the amounts deemed necessary could be reviewed in the context of the Commission's APS/PDB procedure.

6.1.1 Financial intervention

Commitments (in € million to three decimal places)

Breakdown	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
B3-300 General information work	21.000	20.215	20.610	21.105	82.930
B3-301 Outlets	14.400	14.970	15.260	15.650	60.280
B3-303 Communication work	14.700	14.890	15.160	15.530	60.280
B3-306 Priority information measures	21.000	22.500	12.300	8.000	63.800
TOTAL	71.100	72.575	63.330	60.285	267.290

6.1.2. Technical and administrative assistance and support expenditure

Commitments (in € million to three decimal places)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
1. Technical and administrative assistance					
(a) Technical assistance offices (TAOs)					
(b) Other technical and administrative assistance					
- intra muros: ¹⁵ <u>B3-300A</u>	0.030	0.030	0.030	0.030	0.120
<u>B3-303A</u>	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.400
- extra muros:					
<u>B3-301A</u>	0.300	0.305	0.315	0.325	1.245
<u>B3-303A</u>					
Communications specialists	1.580	1.610	1.640	1.670	6.500
<u>B3-306A</u>					
Existing contracts (Prince correspondents)	1.380	2.400	2.400	2.600	8.780
- currently €1 380 000					
- additional expenditure from 2004 ¹⁶					
23 reps. x 52 000 = €1 200 000					
Subtotal 1	3.390	4.445	4.485	4.725	17.045
2. Support expenditure					
(a) Studies					
<u>B3-300A</u>	0.150	0.155	0.160	0.165	0.630
<u>B3-301A</u>	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.100
(b) Meetings of experts					
(c) Information and publications					
Subtotal 2	0.175	0.180	0.185	0.190	0.730
TOTAL	3.565	4.625	4.670	4.915	17.775

¹⁵ Occasional assistance from information officers (e.g. freelances).

¹⁶ 1 correspondent per representation (to be financed under the multiannual financial programming for all headings concerned by this financial statement).

6.2. Calculation of costs by measure envisaged in Part B

Commitments (in € million to three decimal places)

Breakdown	Type of outputs (projects, files)	Number of outputs	Average unit cost	Total cost 2003
	1	2	3	4=(2X3)
<u>B3-300 and B3-300A</u>				
<u>General information work</u>				21.180
<u>B3-301 and B3-301A</u>				14.725
<u>Information outlets</u>				
> evaluations (already included in PDB 2003)				0.100
<u>B3-303 and B3-303A</u>				
<u>Communication work</u>				16.380
<u>B3-306*</u>				
<u>Priority information measures</u>				21.000
- Euro				
- enlargement				
- the debate on the future of the Union				
- the area of freedom, security and justice				
- Europe in the world ¹⁷				p.m.
> evaluations (under appropriations for 2003)				0.100
<u>B3-306A (**)</u> ¹⁸				1.380
TOTAL COST				74.665

¹⁷ New topic, not included in PDB 2003, which will be proposed in future as one of the priority measures (amount not known at this stage).

¹⁸ Additional requirement from 2004: 1 Prince correspondent per representation (23 reps x €52 000 = €1.2 million; to be financed under the multiannual financial programming for all headings concerned by this financial statement).

* *Budget headings for which other DGs have authorising power (in liaison with DG PRESS); other priority topics likely to be identified by the Commission in future have not been included in this table.*

** *Impact from 2004: since the communication will be implemented gradually, expenditure for a full year is planned from 2004; any additional requirements in 2003 will be funded by transfer of appropriations.*

7. IMPACT ON STAFF AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENDITURE

(EU 15)

The requirements in terms of human and administrative resources will be encompassed by the amount allocated to DG PRESS under the annual allocation procedure.

7.1. Impact on human resources

Types of post		Staff to be assigned to management of the action using existing and/or additional resources		Total	Description of tasks deriving from the action
		Number of temporary posts permanent posts	Number of temporary posts temporary posts		
Officials or Temporary staff	A	3	-	3	
	B	4	-	4	
	C	3	-	3	
Other human resources		-	-	-	
A07000 – Auxiliary staff		1C		1	
A07002 – Technical assistance		2		2	
Total				13	

7.2 Overall financial impact of human resources

Type of human resources	Amount (€)	Method of calculation
Officials	1 080 000	10 x 108 000
Other human resources		
A07000 – Auxiliary staff	43 697	1 x 43 697
A07002 – Technical assistance	226 000	2 x 113 000
Total	1 349 697	

The amounts are total expenditure for twelve months.

7.3 Other administrative expenditure deriving from the action

Budget heading	Amount (€)	Method of calculation
Overall allocation (Title A7)		
A07010 – Missions	80 000	(*)
A07060 – Training	50 000	
Total	130 000	

The amounts are total expenditure for twelve months.

(*) Missions (A0-7010): €80 000

These appropriations are to meet the requirements generated by the new measures provided for by the communication for travel by officials from the representations to headquarters or within Member States or from headquarters to the representations.

The following activities are concerned:

- planning and coordination of measures, including establishing synergy between the various communication tools - central and decentralised deployment (€20 000);
- negotiation, preparation and follow-up of the memorandum of understanding with the Member States and the resulting agreements (€20 000);
- introduction of a programme of continuous training, based on the strategic approach set out in the communication, for all staff including those assigned to the representations (€40 000).

(*) Training (A0-7060): €50 000

Specific training programmes on communication will have to be organised in accordance with staff needs, on the basis of the proposed new approach.

I.	Annual total (7.2 + 7.3)	€1 479 697
II.	Duration of action	4 years (from 2003)
III.	Total cost of action (I x II)	€5 918 788

8. FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION

8.1 Follow-up arrangements

Internal reporting systems already in operation will be reinforced in order to take account of the new information policy components: coordination, planning and decentralisation.

8.2 Arrangements and schedule for evaluation

Appropriate tools will be deployed on the basis of a methodology (expected to be introduced in the second half of 2002) designed to provide for systematic and regular evaluation of all information and communication measures carried out by DG PRESS.

9. ANTI-FRAUD MEASURES

All contracts, agreements and legal undertakings concluded between the Commission and beneficiaries of payments allow for on-the-spot checks by the Commission or the Court of Auditors at the premises of the direct beneficiary of the Community grant (or the second-degree beneficiary in the case of an activity managed in a decentralised manner) and

the eventuality of requiring documentary evidence for any expenditure made under such contracts, agreements and legal undertakings within five years of the end of the contractual period.

Beneficiaries are subject to reporting and financial accounting obligations, analysed from the point of view of content and eligibility of expenditure, bearing in mind the purpose of the Community funding and taking account of the contractual obligations and the principles of economy and sound financial management.