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REPORT ON THE COMMUNITY'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE 1992 OLYMPIC GAMES

Communication from the Commission
to the Council and the European Parliament

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INTRODUCTION

On 15 March 1989, in response to the calls made by the European Parliament and in the Adonnino report on a People's Europe, the Commission of the European Communities decided to become involved in the 1992 Winter and Summer Olympics Games, which, as large-scale media events, offered enormous opportunities for communication. The Commission also decided at a later date to become involved as well in their corollaries, the Paralympic Games for the physically handicapped in Tignes (winter) and Barcelona (summer) and for the mentally handicapped in Madrid:

Now that the Barcelona Olympics are over, it is time to produce a comprehensive assessment of the Community's Olympic programme, including an overall description of the activities carried out and an appraisal of the results.

The figures given in this assessment and in particular those relating to audience at the ceremonies at Barcelona are still provisional. They are, for the most part, taken from the official study carried out by the International Olympic Committee. A qualitative appraisal of the campaign relating to the Olympic Games using the final figures, as well as an in-depth analysis of the cost/efficiency return will be available at the beginning of next year.

I. Opening and closing ceremonies

Alongside the financial contributions made by the French and Spanish governments as well as by local and regional entities to the budget for the Olympic Games, the Commission made direct contributions to the committees responsible for organizing the games:

- ECU 4 million to COJO (Organizing Committee for the Winter Olympics in Albertville);
- ECU 6 million to COBO (Organizing Committee for the Summer Olympics in Barcelona).

In return for these subsidies, the Community image was to be projected in the televised mass-impact spectacles of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games.

The choreographed scenes devoted to the Community served to convey the double message decided on as part of the communication strategy:

1. The Community, as "host" to the Olympic Games in 1992 (Ballet of the Stars in Albertville; European scene in Barcelona, official flags and anthem in Albertville and Barcelona).

2. The Community as a participant in the Olympic Games through the athletes representing its Member States (identifiability of Community standard-bearers in Albertville, Community flag used to lead athletes at the Barcelona closing ceremony).

The scenes provided generous exposure for the Community, i.e. a total of 10 minutes (7 minutes television coverage) in Albertville and a total of 20 minutes (16 minutes television coverage) in the Barcelona opening ceremony plus 3 minutes television coverage in the closing ceremony.

Among the 200 000 or so spectators present at the ceremonies in the Albertville and Barcelona Olympic stadiums were many opinion leaders including a great many heads of state as well as the entire accredited press (some 25 000 people), which, helped by information (scripts of ceremonies, press releases, etc.) distributed by the Community's press service, produced articles and photographs serving to relay the Community's message further.

Thanks to the preparatory work (briefing sessions) carried out with the broadcasting associations entrusted with televising the ceremonies, the European scenes were on the whole transmitted very effectively to all viewers.

The viewing figures for the 1992 Winter and Summer Olympics were very good.

- As regards the opening ceremony in Albertville: a total of 72.6 million viewers in Europe with excellent scores in the ratings (25% in France, 17% in the Netherlands, 10% in Germany, 10% in the United Kingdom and over 40% in all the other European countries).
- As regards the opening and closing ceremonies in Barcelona: only incomplete figures are so far available but they do clearly confirm the impact achieved in the case of the Winter Olympics. In France alone, 10 million watched the opening ceremony (19.8% in the ratings), more than 6 million watched the closing ceremony (11.9%), i.e. the highest scores for all the Olympic events.

These figures, which relate to the Community population alone, are enough to justify the sponsorship expenditure but account should also be taken of the other 4 billion viewers elsewhere in the world to realize what an excellent communication vehicle the ceremonies were for the European Community.

II. Promotion of high-definition television

European HDTV was the focus of a special promotion campaign during the Olympic Games. As well as being introduced to the media and promoted in publications distributed to the public, it was also mainly used as a vehicle for information activities organized on the occasion of the Games both at the Olympic sites and in the Member States and for broadcasting a high-definition Community publicity film on the themes of the Olympic Games.

An HDTV projection room was set up for this reason in the public information centres in Albertville and Barcelona as well as in the travelling exhibition lorry which toured the Community in the period between Albertville and Barcelona.

At the 50 demonstration sites set up in Europe during the Albertville Games and the 600 sites set up during the Barcelona Games, some 3 million viewers also had an opportunity to watch the first programmes made in high definition by VISION 1250 (EEIG in charge of promoting European HDTV) on an experimental channel transmitting, live or prerecorded, the main events of the Games, reports, short films, etc.).

At the Universal Exhibition of Seville, the pavilions of the Twelve Member States were furnished with projection rooms and HDTV, and in addition the European pavilion which had three demonstration rooms. During the Olympic Games of Barcelona, the events were broadcasted directly or recorded in these pavilions.

III. Community information and communication campaign

With a view to making the Community message more explicit and more effective, the Commission decided to organize an information campaign on the Community and the 1992 Single Market to be conducted in conjunction with the Olympic Games, for a global amount of 4,5 MECUS.

It was decided that a diverse, "multilevered" action campaign would present two advantages:

1. it would avoid the drawbacks and dangers connected with publicity (danger that the exercise might be interpreted as "political propaganda" incompatible with the Olympic Charter or as a "waste of taxpayer's money", a single message might not be enough to cover all Community topics);
2. the opportunities for communication offered by the sponsoring of COJO and COOB could be exploited to optimum effect.

The five main activities in the campaign were carried out in order to obtain the best cost/benefit ratio balance:

1. Information activities at the Olympic sites: 26%
2. Information activities in the Member States: 14%
3. Publication of information and promotion material: 12%
4. Relations with the media: 6%
5. Publicity campaign: 42%

1. Information activities at the Olympic sites

The on-site activities proved very effective in projecting the presence of the Community not only at the ceremonies but throughout the two Olympic fortnights. 1600 Olympic buses, 300 banners at Albertville and 1800 banners in the streets of Barcelona served to display the Community logo. Thanks to the information distributed at the European Community exhibition centres (a tent at the Albertville Olympic Forum and a hall at the university of Barcelona as well as a travelling exhibition ("Euromobile") on the Place de la Mairie in Albertville and on the seafront in Barcelona) and the optimum use made of European HDTV (in the Eurocentres, the Euromobile and the experimental channels organized by Vision 1250), the Community was able to make a strong impact on visitors to the Games. The relatively large amount devoted to this activity (a quarter of the budget) is to be explained by the logistic context of the Olympic Games and is fully justified by the direct impact on the Olympic visitors (2.5 million visitors to Albertville and nearly 4 million to Barcelona) of whom more than 120 000 visited the Eurocentres in Albertville and Barcelona.

Other awareness activities were also organized at the sites: hot-air balloon at the Saisies ski station (Winter Games), kite and hot-air balloon festival marking the arrival of the Olympic flame in Empuries, activities at the Youth camp organized during the Summer Games in Barcelona (demonstration of kites, evening youth gathering).

All these activities at the Olympic sites were the subject of features or reports in the media and had an effective public impact.

2. Information activities in the Member States

The most effective of the information activities carried out in the Member States was the "Euromobile", which visited 70 European cities between February and July. The exhibition was designed to arouse public interest and provide information about the real achievements and future of the European Community. This operation attracted some 250 000 visitors in their daily environment whilst at the same time offering them the sight of the Olympics in HDTV.

The Euromobile was painted in such a way that its very presence in the towns or on the roads attracted the attention of some 8 million people. During its tour, it was able to distribute detailed information directly to the public, leaving visitors with a lasting impression of their visit.

This initiative prompted great public interest, revealing a genuine need and desire for information on Community matters of direct concern to the ordinary citizen (the ECU, training and exchanges for young people, etc.). The Euromobile met with its greatest success in the European cities.

This was not the first time that the Commission has used such a travelling exhibition. A similar experiment had been carried out, with equivalent success, in the United Kingdom and in the 5 new Länder.

3. Publication of information and promotion material

Most of the amount for this item was used for the production of leaflets explaining the involvement of the Community in the Olympics as well as on 1992, the Community and its direct advantages for the European citizen. 600 000 copies of these mini-brochures produced in the format of a credit card and using everyday language were distributed in all the official Community languages and also in Catalan.

More than 100 000 subject folders drawn up by the various departments of the Commission were also distributed. 4 000 copies of a handbook on the competitors in the Winter Olympics were also produced and distributed to the journalists covering the events in Albertville.

Lastly, promotional material in the Community colours or bearing the Community logo was distributed to the public (posters, balloons, stickers, small flags, etc.).

4. Relations with the media

Relations with the media played an essential part in ensuring optimum coverage of the Olympic programme. The work was carried out with dual objectives: defensive and pro-active:

- Defensive objective

There was a very great danger that the Community's venture into the area of the Olympic Games would provoke criticism. In the past - more especially in connection with the Seoul Olympics and attempts to promote the idea that Community athletes belonged to two entities - the press had been sharply critical of the Community, which was accused of political interference incompatible with the spirit of the Olympic Charter.

The announcement of a Community presence at the Albertville Winter Olympics moreover gave rise to strong reactions first on a certain section of the press in the United Kingdom and later on a certain section of the press in Denmark, in the context of the various referenda concerning ratification of the Maastricht Treaty.

The aim therefore was to counteract these accusations or at least attenuate their impact and prevent any chain reaction throughout the Community press. An information campaign was therefore carried out among all the journalists involved with the Olympic Games with the aid of press files, very long mailing lists, press releases and meetings with the Community's most vehement critics. The objective information provided in this way served to demonstrate the Community's compliance with the Olympic Charter and the approval of the Olympic authorities (IOC, COJO and COOB) and, in response to accusations of waste of public money, to convey the notion of an investment useful to the organizers.

This course of action proved effective in that the most critical sections of the press agreed to publish the Commission's point of view and what negative articles did appear remained very limited (only 23) compared with the positive articles (164). Moreover, following the experience of Albertville, they diminished considerably for the Barcelona Games.

- Pro-active objective

With more than 7000 journalists in Albertville and nearly 20 000 in Barcelona, the aim was to take advantage of this spontaneous press interest and direct it towards the theme of the Community initiatives.

As regards the official ceremonies in particular, there was an imperative need to draw the attention of the media, television stations covering the events live and press reporters to the messages contained in the choreographed symbols of the Community's presence. The work carried out in writing the official scripts, together with the background information files and the coordination work performed with the French and Spanish television producers responsible for worldwide transmission served to boost the main spin-offs from the agreements with the organizing committees.

Lastly, it should be noted that whereas the information activities carried out on the Olympic sites and in the Member States were actually intended to serve the general public through direct contact, their impact was amplified even further by media coverage. This was particularly true of the Euromobile, on which more than 43 items appeared, the Olympic programme as a whole (43), HDTV (27), etc.

Some 43 million people were reached through publications ranging from the international press (International Herald Tribune, Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, The European, Time Magazine) to national daily newspapers and magazines (Le Soir, Le Figaro, El Pais, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Paris-Match, Cambio 16, etc.) in all Member States except Portugal and to the local press (Olympia Proini, Münchener Merkur, Dauphiné Libéré). Furthermore, many reports went out on television and radio, particularly in connection with the Euromobile tour as well as on international networks (CNN, NHK, ABC, etc.).

5. Publicity campaign

As a complement to all the activities carried out under the Olympic programme, the publicity campaign played an important part in ensuring public understanding of the Community's message. More precisely, the campaign was conducted in such a way that the Community was able to retain full control over the content of its message, which it had not been entirely able to do in the case of the European scenes of the official ceremonies, for instance. Thanks to a well-orchestrated media plan in the daily press of the twelve Member States, some 50 million "contacts" were made in two waves (February and July) with a very straightforward message: twelve different Olympic athletes (ski jump for the winter and vaulting horse for the summer) joining together to perform a single movement thus going beyond their limits/frontiers to reach a shared goal (initial catch phrase: "A thousand faces, a single force"; concluding catch phrase: "The European Community: More is possible when you pursue the same idea").

The press advertisement appeared 65 times for the Winter Olympics and 58 times for the Summer Olympics in 41 different newspapers as well as in the official Olympic publications. Thanks to its creative nature and the degree of exposure, the advertisement can be considered to have been highly effective. In financial terms, a specially negotiated reduction of over 40% compared with standard rates produced a saving of some ECU 700 000.

The decision to produce a television clip on the subject of the Olympic Games was motivated by the desire to promote HDTV. The 30-second film in HDTV was broadcast 82 times on the EUROSPORT sports channel, being seen in 25 433 000 homes.

The drive to secure exposure of the film free of charge resulted in its being broadcast several hundred times on Italian (Télé Monte-Carlo) Dutch (Ster), Greek (ERD) and French (A2) television as well as on CNN's European channel and on British Airways long-haul flights. The film was also shown in high definition on the experimental channels in Albertville and Barcelona (1 500 000 viewers in the Twelve Member States) as well as at the Seville Universal Exposition (almost 2 millions visitors to the European Pavilion and the visitors to the Pavilions of the twelve Member States). Lastly, the film served as an introduction to high-definition projections at the Eurocentres and in the Euromobile. Apart from acquiring more than ECU 800 000 in free advertising space, this initiative proved advantageous from the image point of view in that it established a strong link between European advanced technology, the Olympic Games and European integration.

The advertising campaign can be considered to have been very effective in the "communication mix": it reached a large section of the European public, avoided any harmful ostentation, clearly strengthened the sense of the programme as a whole and at the same time was kept in an optimum budgetary framework.

IV. The Paralympic Games in Tignes, Barcelona and Madrid

1. Objectives

The Commission took advantage of the opportunity offered by the Paralympic Games, which this year were held successively in Tignes (winter) and Barcelona and then Madrid (for the mentally handicapped), in the summer, to set up a programme of activities to promote the European idea in general and to publicize specific Community activities to assist the disabled.

The principal objectives were to provide information on specific and general Community activities, to promote the participation of handicapped people (through discussions), to promote cooperation with international and national organizers of sport for handicapped people, and to make the general public aware of the problems of handicapped people in general.

As in the case of the Olympic programme, two types of activity were developed: sponsoring of organizing committees and organization of a communication and information campaign.

The campaign had been launched by the "Euromobile" touring 70 European towns. This mobile exhibition is housed in a lorry which is completely accessible to disabled people.

2. Action

In return for the subsidies granted to the committees organizing the games (ECU 325 000 for the Tignes games, ECU 400 000 for Barcelona and ECU 175 000 for Madrid), the image of the Community was promoted through the inclusion of European scenes in the opening and closing ceremonies: European ballet in Barcelona, European flag hoisted among the official flags in Tignes, Barcelona and Madrid, anthem played in Tignes, Barcelona and Madrid, hang-gliders in the colours of the European Member States at Tignes; a European ballet at Barcelona where European symbolism was much in evidence for about three minutes at the end of the opening ceremony when a choir of 400 Catalan children sang the Ode to Joy, and 12 ballet dancers in gold costumes formed a circle on blue ground representing the 12 stars of the European flag. This was followed by fireworks and the hoisting of the European flag in the stadium.

A "European Day" was held at Tignes, at Barcelona and Madrid. During the "European Day" at Barcelona a European Community medal was awarded, by a jury composed of experts from the Member States, to a blind Spanish athlete for her remarkable performance. The high point of each day was a reception by the Commission for the organizers and the winning athletes.

Lastly, the Paralympic sites in the three cities were also decorated with flags and banners bearing the Community colours.

3. Information

The information and communication campaign hinged mainly on information stands set up at the Olympic sites, consisting of posters and documentation on the various Community programmes to assist the disabled (Helios, Tide, Handynet). On the occasion of the Games, a special brochure on "The Commission of the European Communities and sports for the disabled" has been published in the nine Community languages. It should be noted that a demonstration of house automation took place at the same time as the Winter Paralympics in Chamberry with great success. The demonstration involved both a conference and the presentation of "show apartments" as well as an exhibition of this particular type of home equipment.

Activities with the press were also organized: a press release was sent to accredited journalists accompanied in each case with a press file emphasizing the involvement of the Community in the Paralympic Games; press conferences were also organized. Numerous TV reports were made. During the Barcelona Games, the regional television channel made live broadcasts for four hours a day and programmes of varying lengths were broadcast in all the Member States.

The organisers tried moreover to arouse the maximum public interest. At Barcelona the number of people attending the various sporting events was estimated at 1,250,000, which demonstrates the growing interest in the problems of handicapped people in general and in sport for handicapped people in particular.

CONCLUSION

All these activities served effectively to project the image of the Community at the 1992 Olympics. Thanks to television and the press, the Community's presence at Albertville and Barcelona was conveyed to the public throughout the Community and beyond.

Judging by the reaction to it, the programme served to bring about greater public understanding of the Community, which proved itself to be far more accessible than the strictly economic role all too often assigned to it otherwise suggests.

Thanks to the practical operations based on "closeness" to the public (for example the Euromobile), the European Community has been given a more human image.

The impact of the message conveyed through these activities was boosted even further by the fact that the activities organized, especially the HDTV demonstrations, and some of the themes - notably the environment, young people, social action - were tangible examples of practical Community achievements.

Financing of Community activities
Linked to the Olympic Games 1992

(in ECU)

Article/ Post	Financial Year	Budget provision	Expenditure			Total
			Albertville	Barcelona	Information and press campaigns	
A-3051 : Community presence at the 1992 Olympic Games, at Albertville and Barcelona	1990	500,000	200,000	300,000		500,000
	1991	5,000,000	1,330,000	2,000,000	1,670,000	5,000,000
	1992	7,000,000	2,470,000	3,700,000	830,000	7,000,000
			4,000,000	6,000,000	2,500,000	12,500,000
73-303 : General information campaign	1992	2,095,000	10,000	85,000	2,000,000	2,095,000
A-3054 : Community participation at the 1992 Paralympic Games	1992	1,000,000	325,000 (Tignes)	600,000 (Barcelona) 175,000 (Madrid)	99,952	999,952
86-5211 : ESPRIT (Information technologies) ("Charbéry exhibitions") (1)	1990	80,000	80,000			80,000
	1991	60,000	60,000			60,000
86-8105 : High definition TV (1)(2)	1991	2,790,000	2,790,000			2,790,000
	1992	10,963,079		10,963,079		10,963,079
TOTAL :	1990	580,000	280,000	300,000	0	580,000
	1991	7,850,000	4,180,000	2,000,000	1,570,000	7,850,000
	1992	21,058,079	2,805,000	15,323,079	2,929,952	21,058,031
GRAND TOTAL :		29,488,079	7,265,000	17,623,079	4,599,952	29,488,031

(1) Part relating to the "Olympic Games 1992" project.

(2) These amounts cover not only the organization of demonstrations during the Olympic Games but also the purchase of equipment used for other projects in connection with "High definition TV" activities (Sevilla...)

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DOCUMENTS

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