

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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## INFORMATION PROGRAMME FOR 1980

(Communication from the Commission to the Council)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 1980 the Commission has to respond to a growing demand for information about the Community both within the member states and in non-member countries at a time when the resources available to it, in both staff and funds, are increasingly inadequate.

2. As far as the member states are concerned the Commission is acutely conscious that the first elections to the European Parliament revealed widespread ignorance about how the Community works and what it has achieved, as well as disturbingly low levels of popular support for it in one or two member countries. It intends, therefore, to intensify its efforts to explain to as wide an audience as possible the need for, and the work of, the Community.

3. Outside the Community, the forthcoming entry of Greece and the negotiations for the entry of Spain and Portugal require a development of information activities in all three countries. And while existing priorities will be maintained for work in the major industrialised countries, special efforts have to be made to explain the new Lome agreement in the ACP countries. At the same time, it is also desirable to maintain the existing level of effort in Turkey and the EFTA countries ; to give a new impetus to work in Latin America ; to provide the press and information office in the new Delegation in Bangkok with the means to cover the vast area of South and South-East Asia ; to build up information work in the Southern Mediterranean ; and to extend information work to Australasia.

4. In formulating its budgetary requests for information work, the Commission took into account all these needs, including pressure from a number of member states to increase the funds available for information work outside the Community. The Council, however, reduced the major credits requested (post 2720) from 9 million EUA to 7.5 millions. The European Parliament subsequently voted to restore this cut : the Commission warmly welcomes this initiative and hopes that it will be confirmed in the final stages of the budgetary procedure.

5. Whatever the final level of credits agreed, the Commission believes that a continuing major priority should be given to information work within the member countries. It is proposing, however, to make a modest increase in the proportion of its funds devoted to work in third countries primarily in order to extend its work in Greece and the other two applicant countries, and in ACP and other developing countries.

6. In all areas, resources will be stretched to their limits. It will be necessary to focus activities on carefully selected priorities, both in terms of audiences and themes ; to seek the most effective balance between the various types of instruments available for information work ; and to ensure an optimal use of both staff and credits.

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## II. INFORMATION IN MEMBER COUNTRIES

7. The Commission's General Directorate for Information has re-examined the activities both of its central services and press and information offices in the light of the lessons learned during the special information programme - organised jointly with the European Parliament - leading up to the first direct elections.
8. Although substantial additional resources would be needed to organise information campaigns on a similar scale, other lessons are more immediately relevant. They are in line with the new guidelines for information policy adopted by the Commission in 1977. They include the crucial importance of the mass media in communicating with the general public ; the desirability of concentrating effort on specific themes directly related to current concerns and policies ; and the need for a clear message and simple explanation even when the subject matter itself is complex.
9. A number of decisions have been taken to put these lessons into practice. The first is the creation of a new Media Directorate bringing together the Spokesman's Group and the TV/Radio and Audio-Visual Division. The bulk of the work of this Division is now related to the coverage of news events, and it is necessary that its day-to-day work should be more closely coordinated with that of the Spokesman's Group. The second decision is that part of the annual budget should be set aside for use in connection with information work on the priority themes decided on the occasion of each four-monthly review of the information programme. This will mean that more resources will be available for these priority information activities to give them more impact on the public. A third decision is the nomination by each policy-making General Directorate of an information correspondent. The task of these correspondents is to ensure close working relations with the General Directorate for Information ; to alert it to forthcoming policy proposals and decisions ; and to provide background material and other assistance in the organisation of information activities on priority themes. Other decisions have also been taken. These relate to a more precise identification of the target audiences for information work, and to a number of aspects of publications policy (see below, paras 13 - 15 and 21 - 22).

### Themes

10. The essential message which the Commission will seek to communicate will be that of the necessity of continuing and developing the work of the Community as an instrument to enable its members to find common solutions to their common problems. This is all the more important at a time of economic crisis, and when the problems facing the Community on the eve of its further enlargement are already acute.

11. Close attention will be paid to the central issues engaging the attention of the Community's institutions, including the common agricultural policy and the budget. With regard to the former, the central information unit dealing with agricultural information is now located in the General Directorate for Agriculture. Together with the information service, it is developing a

new range of publications and other activities, including selected visits to Brussels, the training of speakers, and the production of supporting material to provide not only those directly engaged in agriculture, but also the general public, with authoritative information about current developments.

12. While the regular information work of the Commission will cover these and other current themes, each four-monthly review of the information programme will identify those to which special priority should be given. Where necessary, additional resources will be allocated to them from the reserve which has been set aside for this purpose (see above, para 9). Priorities in the early part of the year will include a continuation of the work already undertaken to underline the importance of the measures being taken by the Community to meet the energy crisis, and the need for a Community response to the challenge presented by developments in electronics and telecommunications ('telematique'). A number of special activities will also be continued in areas particularly affected by the crisis in steel to explain the measures being taken by the Community to help the industry.

#### Audiences

13. In communicating with the public of the member countries, the Commission aims to reach the largest possible audience. It recognises, however, that the means available to it do not normally allow it to reach the mass of the general public directly. Most of the citizens of the Community learn about its activities through the media, where news and comment about it has to compete with many other claims on their attention. The degree of attention paid to the affairs of the Community by those who work in the media is therefore of crucial importance. For this reason the Commission attaches the highest importance to the development of its relations with them.

14. Another group of major importance in determining attitudes towards the Community, and providing information about it, is composed of those engaged in political activities either in the Community institutions themselves, or at national and regional level. In this context a particularly important role will be played by the directly-elected Members of the European Parliament: the Commission will make available its information material to complement that produced by the Parliament's own information service with which it is anxious to maintain the close working relations established in the course of the joint campaign for the elections.

15. It will also seek, within the limits of its resources, to continue to pay special attention to the needs of other leaders and formers of opinion, especially those in trade unions, farmers' organisations, consumers, environmental and womens' organisations, and in universities, schools and youth organisations. Responsibility for work with regard to these last three is now shared between the Directorate General for Research, Science and Education - where the central information unit is located - and the information service.

Instruments

i) Central units and information offices.

16. The structural changes made by the present Commission in the organisation of its information services, and in particular the formation of a single unit combining the Spokesman's Group and the General Directorate for Information, now ensure close and effective coordination of their complementary activities. Regular meetings will be held during the year with the Heads of information offices to supplement the daily liaison between them and the central services.

17. The Commission attaches much importance to measures to develop the work of its offices, in particular at the regional level, in order to reach a wider audience. At present regionalised information activities are only possible on a systematic and regular basis in the United Kingdom, where there are sub-offices in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast. For 1980 the Commission has requested additional staff to enable the opening of a sub-office in both the Federal Republic and Italy. This is the first stage of a two-year programme which aims to provide two sub-offices for each of these two countries, and a reinforcement of the staff of the Paris office to enable a corresponding increase in regional information activity in France. The Commission is also aware of the need to reinforce its offices providing information for the Benelux countries.

ii) Relations with the media

18. A key role will continue to be played by the Spokesman's Group, which provides a regular daily flow of information to the accredited press corps whose presence in Brussels ensures rapid and widespread coverage of current news. The Group also services the information offices, providing them with background material and answers to questions posed by journalists in the member countries.

19. Alongside it, the TV/Radio and Audio-Visual Division provides radio and television studios and other supporting technical services for the networks. In the first nine months of 1979 there were 820 transmissions from the radio studio, and 58 from the television studio. The Division also provided coverage of 124 Community events during the same period, either by direct filming or assistance to camera crews from networks. Its technical facilities are currently being extended by the acquisition of electronic news-gathering (ENG) equipment linked into the studio which will allow instantaneous transmission of interviews from the Berlaymont. The Division also has a unique archive of film material about the Community ; production facilities for video-recordings ; and for the supply of photographs and colour slides. For all these services there is a steady demand, especially on the part of the members of the European Broadcasting Union with which close relations have been built up in recent years - and which the Commission will continue to develop in the coming year.

20. The offices, for their part, will maintain and extend their relations with those in the media ; organise briefings on specific topics ; and provide background material for both national and regional journalists.

### iii) Publications

21. The results of reforms carried out over the past two years in the publications programme, designed to provide shorter and simpler material, have met with an encouraging response. The series of short pamphlets on individual topics, entitled 'European File' has been particularly well received : 130,000 copies of each issue are now being produced. There has also been an increasing demand for the fortnightly news magazine, Euroforum which is now sent to over 90,000 addresses. Its distribution will be consolidated during the year and its mailing list checked once it has been put on computer.

22. At the same time a number of changes have, or will be made, to certain publications produced by the offices. The aim is to reduce the number of individual titles and regroup them into series, while ensuring that periodical publications are adapted to current information policy objectives and the needs of each national audience. The first part of the review of these publications has been carried out and some changes are to be made at the beginning of 1980. The review will be completed during the first half of the year.

### iv) Visits

23. Visits to Brussels remain an indispensable means of developing relations with key opinion leaders and formers. While every effort will be made to maintain the present flow of group and individual visitors, budgetary restrictions mean that measures will have to be taken to reduce costs as far as possible. Non-priority groups will be received for short visits based on a new audio-visual presentation which has been installed in the Berlaymont.

### v) Exhibitions

24. Within the Community the high costs of an effective presence in major fairs and exhibitions mean that the Commission can only very occasionally give a positive response to such invitations. It will, however, continue to organise small travelling exhibitions, and is studying the possibility of providing display material for use in libraries, schools, etc.

## III. INFORMATION IN NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

25. Outside the Community, the main aim of the Commission's information programme is to build up a sympathetic understanding of the Community's achievement, and its role in the world. But it has a special and additional task in Greece, Spain and Portugal to help prepare those countries for entry into the Community.

26. To undertake this work, the Commission currently has eleven press and information offices outside the Community - in Athens, Lisbon, Madrid (due to be opened early in 1980), Ankara, Geneva, Washington, New York, Ottawa, Caracas, Tokyo and Bangkok (The last seven of these form part of Commission Delegations). Some of the offices - like those in

Caracas and Bangkok -- have, with very small staffs, to try to meet the information needs of vast regions. In their case, the cooperation of the information councillors of the member states is of particular importance. (See below, para 34).

27. In making the difficult choice of priorities for its information work outside the Community, the Commission in 1980 will continue to give particular importance to its information programme in the United States. There, an increasing number of key people are being reached not only by personal contact, but also through the magazine Europe, as well as the media. It is planned to continue - and, if possible, extend - the experiment of sending radio tapes dealing with current European issues to selected networks. But a special effort will have to be made in a year when domestic affairs - and in particular the presidential election - will inevitably claim major attention.

28. More modest programmes will be continued in two of the other major industrialised countries - Canada and Japan. In the former country an effort will be made to extend the information effort to key groups in the prairie and western states, backed by a re-designed regular publication. An improved Bulletin is also planned for Japan, where greater attention will also be paid to those working in the media. Among other priority groups, relations will also be strengthened with universities, where there is a substantial degree of interest in the Community.

29. In Europe, a special effort will be made to develop information activities in Greece in preparation for that country's entry into the Community. Among the initiatives which are planned, is participation in the Fair of Thessaloniki, together with a number of the member states. For Spain and Portugal a primary task of the new press and information offices will be to develop a range of basic publications about the Community to respond to growing interest aroused by the current negotiations. Contacts will be established and developed with key leaders and formers of opinion; a number of them will be invited to Brussels for information visits.

30. Although it is difficult to forecast the pattern of developments in Turkey, and its relations with the Community, the Commission will seek to maintain the range of information activities built up over recent years, in which a special emphasis has been given to providing basic documentation on the Community.

31. At the same time information activities in developing countries have to be maintained as far as ACP and South Mediterranean countries are concerned and, eventually, developed in others (Asia, Latin America). In particular, close cooperation has to be maintained both with local and such European radio networks broadcasting to ACP, radio being the most important of all media in most of the developing countries. Information visits will be made within the limits of available resources.

32. In Latin America, the office in Caracas is now in a position to give a new impetus to work in that continent after some disruption caused by the

transfer of the Delegation from Santiago. At the same time, the new office in Bangkok will provide a means to build up contacts and provide basic material for the countries of South and South-East Asia.

33. One instrument which has been developed for these and other developing countries is the weekly film magazine, Europe Pictorial. This is now sent to 70 countries, in two versions, for both cinema distribution and use by television stations. The member states contribute material, as does the Commission, which exercises editorial control and is also responsible for its distribution. A full report on its impact, made by an independent expert, will be completed in 1980 and will serve - together with reports from the Delegates - as a basis for future policy decisions about it.

34. For other countries and parts of the world where the Commission has no representation - including the EFTA countries (other than Switzerland, which is served by the Geneva office which also provides information for the international organisations located there) - a number of activities will be undertaken at the initiative of its central services in Brussels. For such countries an important means of contact is provided by the information councillors of member states who regularly submit reports and suggestions to the Council's Working Group on Information, which works closely with senior officials of the Commission's General Directorate for Information. It is through these contacts that Commission information publications are made available, and in certain cases visits to Brussels arranged. Cooperation will also be maintained with the Council's Working Group on Fairs and Exhibitions, with a view to organising a joint presence of the member states and the Commission in non-member countries. Such cooperation has already produced good results, and in 1980 will include discussion of plans for a major exhibition on energy due to take place at Knoxville, USA in 1982.