

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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INFORMATION PROGRAMME FOR 1978

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The main task of the Commission's information service in 1978 will be to implement the new guidelines for information policy agreed on by the Commission in July 1977. These guidelines represent a substantial re-focussing of the information activities of the Commission, with a new set of priorities adapted to current needs .

### REACHING A WIDER PUBLIC

The central aim of the Commission's 1978 information programme will be to reach a wider public. The Commission is aware that for many of the citizens of the Member States the Community remains remote. In general, levels of information about it remain low, and in some countries there is widespread misunderstanding - and even distrust - of its objectives and policies.

This is particularly the case in two of the newer member countries - Denmark and the United Kingdom. In both these countries there has been over the last few years a fall in support for membership of the Community. In April/May 1977, for instance, only 30 % of the Danish population considered the Community 'a good thing' compared with 41 % in October/November 1975; while in the United Kingdom there has been a parallel, but sharper decline from 50 % in favour to only 35 % in April/May this year. Even in Ireland, where the level of support remains relatively high at 57 %, this has to be compared with the 67 % recorded in the autumn of 1975.

As far as the original Member States are concerned the situation is somewhat more satisfactory : in the Benelux countries support is now more widespread than two years ago. In France, Italy and the Federal Republic, however, there has been some falling-off in support over the same period, most notably in the latter case, where the level recorded in Spring 1977 - 54 % - was lower than at any point since the Community was enlarged.

#### The mass media

It is against this background that the Commission decided that the highest priority for its information effort in the Member States should be given to reaching a far wider audience than in the past. In this context it recognises that the media have a primary role to play. It is only through them that information about the Community can be provided on a regular basis to the many millions of its citizens.

The Commission can but encourage and support the total independence of the media. But there are many ways in which it can help the media to give better coverage of Community events and issues. Most organs of the written press already give significant coverage to Community events and policies. Nevertheless, in the main they reach opinion leaders and specialised sectors of the public. To reach a larger audience the Commission proposes to pay particular attention to its relations with the television and radio networks in the member countries. Now that the Commission has a fully-equipped, if still modest, colour television studio and a direct link between it and the Eurovision centre in Brussels it can now respond to requests for 'live' interviews from the networks, and also - thanks to the cooperation of RTB/BRT - participate in the daily Eurovision news exchange programmes. These new facilities, which became available for the first time in Autumn 1977, are now used regularly and

on an increasing scale. Apart from the crucial role they can play in bringing home the immediacy of Community events, their existence has attracted much increased interest on the part of television networks for the Community and a much higher level of requests for assistance than in the past. The Commission will respond to such requests by, for instance, the provision of filming facilities; archive material; slides and research facilities. It will also continue to encourage cooperation between the networks in making programmes on Community themes, of which there has been an encouraging increase in recent months.

At the same time the Commission will continue to develop the good and close relations which have been established with the European Broadcasting Union, on two of whose working groups dealing with preparations for coverage of direct elections it is now represented.

The radio studio of the Commission is already working close to capacity : the major task with regard to radio broadcasters in 1978 will be to increase links with programme producers and editors through the offices in the capitals, particularly at the level of regional and local stations. For them the Commission will seek to develop flows of information particularly suited to their needs, including information on the help being given from Community funds for local projects.

As far as the written press is concerned - which will of course continue to be served on a daily basis by the Spokesman and his staff in Brussels - the Commission also intends to make an /<sup>additional</sup> effort to provide material suitable for a wide audience. It has recently started a new service of feature material for distribution through its offices : this will be continued and expanded. At the same time the Commission will aim to encourage the publication of articles on the Community by mass - circulation periodicals, following the success of an initiative taken in 1977 with a group of women's journals, which together reached an estimated readership of over 20 millions. For such journals, as for

others, the weekly Euroforum published by the Commission itself with a circulation of over 12,000 has proved to be an invaluable source of material on popular subjects such as consumer protection and the environment, as well as other major current policy issues such as unemployment, energy policy and industrial topics.

### Relay Organisations

The Commission will also continue to work closely with those organisations having large-scale membership with the aim of reaching a wider public such as women's organisations, consumer groups and trade unionists.

It will develop its work with women's organisations in the member countries. This new programme, in which the offices are taking a full part, has already given very positive results. It is proposed to organise a second Community-wide symposium in cooperation with these organisations on the theme of 'Women and direct elections', and also to publish a periodic bulletin to establish a link between women's organisations throughout the Community.

Consumer organisations are another important group with which the Commission has recently begun to develop an information activity. It will continue to help them by providing material for their own publications and audio-visual programmes, and organising briefing sessions and visits. In parallel with this, the Commission will also continue to bring together press, radio and television journalists specialised in consumer affairs, and provide them with special dossiers of basic material on which they can write articles or build feature programmes.

Trade unions are also of vital importance in this context. Working in close cooperation with the European Confederation of Trade Unions, the Commission plans to increase the flow of material specially adapted to the trade union

press - which has a readership of some 50 million members - and, in cooperation with the unions' own educational centres, to help to train speakers in the use of specially-prepared audio-visual programmes which can be shown at district and branch meetings. These activities will be in addition to the many seminars and meetings held for national, regional and local officials and members sponsored by the unions themselves with the active help and participation of the Commission's information service.

#### Publications and audio-visual material

The Commission has also taken steps to reshape its publications programme, which up to now has been focussed almost exclusively on relatively limited audiences of opinion-formers.

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The Commission has/instructed its offices to concentrate in 1978 on the production of more popular and topical material

in order to reach far more readers. This material will take the form of short pamphlets and leaflets giving a simple explanation of the basic facts about the Community, and will be adapted to the needs of each national audience.

As far as the monthly magazines produced by its offices are concerned, the Commission is undertaking a careful study of their role, effectiveness, and cost. It is aware that in some countries they are highly regarded, not least because they provide a forum for discussion and debate about Community affairs. The Commission also has to consider this matter in terms of the overall deployment of its staff and financial resources. Once it has completed its study, the Commission will consider carefully what changes may be desirable in the light of its new information objectives.

In the meantime much more emphasis has already been put on the production of various types of audio-visual material, particularly slides which are in increasing demand. Both its central services and its offices are undertaking the production of new audio-visual programmes, over which a new

overall system of supervision is being instituted to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure maximum economy. Two new films will also be distributed in 1978.

THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF INFORMATION POLICY : MORE SPECIFIC, MORE RESPONSIVE

In order to match the basic change in approach, the Commission also decided in July on a series of measures to give a sharper edge to the flow of information about its own activities and policies, and at the same time to make this information more responsive to the needs of particular audiences in the member countries.

To achieve this, a number of changes have been made in the internal structure and organisation of the information services. In the first place, the new <sup>relationship between,</sup> the Spokesman's Group and Directorate-General for Information under one authority, that of the President, has already brought about a greater cohesion between day-to-day information activities and more specialised and longer term activities. Information notes distributed daily to the press are supplemented by background notes giving a wider context to the event or policy proposed. Additional back-up is provided by the audio-visual service by, for example, provision of slides and film material put at the disposal of television stations. At the same time, the Spokesman's Group and Directorate-General for Information is now working in permanent consultation with cabinets and other Directorates-General to ensure that all who need to be involved in a particular activity are consulted.

Forward planning on the <sup>basis of the</sup> calendar of activities of the Commission and other Community Institutions also now gives time to assess when specific information activity or action is called for and to make the necessary preparations.

The creation of task forces on particularly important matters, with the active participation of members of cabinets and Directors-General concerned, has, in addition, greatly improved the quality and immediacy of more general information. A specific programme of action is established for each theme selected for special attention, which includes :

- the establishment of a basic document which summarises the subject matter of the information campaign, place it in its historical/legal context and highlights those elements likely to interest the public;
- the establishment of guidelines including points to defend, points to be underlined, kinds of public to be reached, etc...;
- action to be taken by information services in Brussels;
- actions to be taken by external information offices.

This new system will be employed - and further improved - in 1978 not only to provide a flow of <sup>more</sup> sharply-focussed information about Community events, but also to respond to the concerns and preoccupations of the citizens of the Community countries. The Commission is well aware that in individual countries, and among particular sectors of the population, certain policy areas are of especial concern : it aims to be far more responsive to these concerns than in the past, and believes that the extension and improvement of the task force arrangement will meet this need.

In the same context, the Commission also reaffirmed in its July decisions about information policy, the necessity of pursuing further the measures of decentralisation already taken in recent years. It is examining anew the possibilities of creating additional sub-offices in a number of the larger member countries, having already decided to set up a new sub-office in Belfast to meet the special needs in Northern Ireland. It is also examin<sup>ing</sup> ways of further reinforcing its existing offices, and also of giving them greater administrative freedom of action, within the overall policy guidelines.



OTHER            ACTIVITIES :            PRIORITIES AND GREATER SELECTIVITY

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because of inevitable constraints on resources, In other areas of its information programme, the Commission proposes to apply more rigorous priorities and greater selectivity. There are four such areas of traditional activity.

Visits

Both principles will be applied in particular to the many demands made on it for visits to Brussels. While recognising the value of such visits, the Commission has also to face the problem of the cost involved, and the heavy demands on staff resources and time. It therefore proposes in 1978 to

put the emphasis on a limited number of key groups of opinion formers such as members of political parties and party organisations; those working in the media; senior staff and members of elected regional councils; and senior staff members of national administrations and socio-professional groups.

Schools and universities

The Commission recognises the continuing importance of the work which it has been undertaken over the years with the aim of encouraging teaching in schools - particularly secondary schools - about the Community.

Up to now, however, this effort has been dispersed in a multiplicity of ad-hoc assistance to individual schools and teachers. The time has now come for a more concerted attack on the problem. It is for this reason that the Commission has supported the development of the work of the Centre for European Education.

The Commission aims - it hopes with the assistance of the Ministers of Education of the Member States - to develop with the Centre, and also through its offices, a new concerted strategy in this field, by concentrating on a number of clear priorities for immediate action. These include teacher training, curriculum development, and the provision of suitable written and audio-visual material.

As far as universities are concerned the situation, on the whole, is more satisfactory with teaching and research about the Community being a well-established feature of many universities in the Member States, supported by associations of active teachers. The Commission's activities in this field will be re-examined to see whether they are still justified in the light of current needs.

#### Youth organisations

Having asked the youth organisation themselves their views on the proposed Youth Forum, the Commission is awaiting their response before deciding on its future course of action with regard to this project.

In the meantime, it has informed those youth organisations to which it has traditionally offered support of its own priorities for 1978 - which are information activities designed to reach a wide audience among young people, and those focussed on youth employment problems and direct elections. It will take its decisions with regard to the applications for support it receives in the light of these priorities.

#### Agricultural organisations

The Commission recognises the importance of these organisations as channels of communication with those working in agriculture and rural areas. It proposes to continue to support those of their activities which correspond to the priorities of its information programme, with a particular emphasis on those designed to reach as wide an audience as possible.

INFORMATION FOR NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

The Commission recognises that it does not have the means, in most non-member countries, to pursue the same type of policy as in member countries. Even where it has an information office it has to concentrate its effort on decision-makers and opinion formers. There are some exceptions to this. <sup>First, in</sup> the United States and Canada, where a major effort has recently been undertaken - and will be continued - through the media to reach a wider audience. <sup>Second,</sup> given the interest and strong support of the Member States, the Commission also launched in 1977 a weekly film magazine - 'Europe Pictorial - Images d'Europe' for distribution to television stations and cinema circuits in 47 developing countries. In the light of the positive response to this initiative, the Commission proposes to continue it, given the continued cooperation of the Member States, in 1978 and to seek progressively to extend its distribution, especially to Francophone ACP countries in Africa.

The cooperation of the Member States with this and other aspects of information work outside the Community is greatly appreciated, and will be pursued by the Commission in concert with the Working Group of Information of the Council. It will also pursue its increasingly close cooperation, through the Council's Working Group, in the field of fairs and exhibitions. As part of a new programme of joint activities both the Member States and the Commission were for the first time represented in a Community pavilion at the Malta Fair in 1977. It is planned to follow this successful initiative by similar joint pavilions in 1978 at Khartoum and Lisbon.

As far as its own network of information offices is concerned, two new ones will be opened in Madrid and Lisbon to meet the needs of these two candidate countries : the Athens office will continue to develop its activities of explaining Community policies in Greece.

The office in Ankara will continue to follow closely issues arising from the Association as well as continuing its current range of activities. That in Geneva will further develop its newsletter, intended primarily for the information of the international organisations based there, which deals with commercial questions and the GATT negotiations. As far as other EFTA countries are concerned, information activities will be mainly focussed on the free trade agreements.

Information activity in the United States, Canada and Japan will also be largely focussed on commercial issues; it is hoped to be able to develop some further activities in the same context with regard to Australia and New Zealand.

There will be growing pressure to increase our activities in relation to the countries of the Southern Mediterranean, now that co-operation agreements have been signed with eight countries in the region, the imminent appointment of Commission representatives, and the on going Euro-Arab dialogue.

Selected journalists from the region will be invited to Brussels, and European based journalists may be aided to visit particular Mediterranean countries. Plans are being made for written material in Arabic on various aspects of Community policy.

Information activities with regard to the ACP countries will be continued via Commission representatives sur place and Member States Information Counsellors. The experiment in 1977 of bringing 50 journalists from ACP countries on individual information visits to the Community during a visit to Europe will be repeated. Possibilities of greater involvement should be examined, notably in the light of the future renegotiations of the Lomé Convention".

No new activities are planned for South America and Asia where the resources at our disposal are severely limited. The move of the Commission's delegation and information office to Caracas will be effected and a residual presence maintained in Santiago.