

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(82) 3 final

Brussels, 9th February 1982

## INFORMATION PROGRAMME FOR 1982

(Communication from the Commission to the Council)

COM(82) 3 final

INFORMATION PROGRAMME FOR 1982

I. GUIDELINES

1. The Community's information policy for the '80s must reflect a political and social context which differs radically from that of previous decades. As far as the Community is concerned, the current crisis manifests itself in two ways:

- on an economic level, in the (re)emergence of nationalism in policies and attitudes, in a proliferation of conflicts of interest between Member States (and between them and non-member countries), and last but not least, in the substitution of the new problem of what to do about the drop in growth and the attendant rise in unemployment for the old one of how to divide the spoils of affluence.
- on a psychological level, in a feeling of insecurity and evident disenchantment with the Community, which goes as far as outright rejection in some Member States (note the Eurobarometer surveys).

2. In addition, our efforts have to be set against the rapidly changing realities of mass communication. The public is constantly bombarded with information from all sides and is reaching saturation point. The mass media and political performers broadcast messages which are becoming more and more simplistic and more and more extreme. The borderline between politics, news and entertainment is blurred. A message like ours, often complex and subtle, is finding it harder and harder to get through, if it is not garbled on the way.

3. Our information activities cannot be confined to vaunting the positive achievements of the European venture. We must take account of the new misgivings being expressed by the people of Europe and show how the Community can respond. We must strive to beam a message which will be heard.

4. We must also bear in mind that the existence of an elected European Parliament is making increased demands on us. From now on election campaigns in the Member States will provide a better indicator of how the Community message has penetrated and raised a response. The lead-up to the next European elections, which has already begun, will provide us with a golden opportunity for mobilizing public opinion.

5. Seen from this angle, information is not merely an optional extra, but an essential component of every policy.

## II. MESSAGE

1. In a world which is threatening to fall apart at the seams, the Community is still a force for coherence and solidarity. It represents a political system, unique in the world today, based on right rather than might. It uses a democratic method based on a partnership of peers and the search for a consensus to govern relations between States. This inevitably entails horse-trading, compromises and delays. Far from trying to gloss over conflicts, which are part of the Community reality, we should:
  - highlight the virtues of the Community's way of dealing with clashes of interest, stressing that decisions can only be taken after an arduous passage through the institutions;
  - strive to understand and persuade others to understand the motives and legitimate concerns of our partners;
  - explain and gain acceptance for sacrifices essential to the common good;
  - dare to diagnose and apportion blame between the institutions and the Member States when things go wrong.
2. We must endeavour to convince the people of Europe that the Community is here to stay, that there is no alternative to the Community when it comes to problems which transcend the national dimension.
3. We must constantly project a consistent, comprehensive picture of the Community's work to which the man in the street can pin the bits and pieces of information that rain down upon him.
4. We must, of course, highlight achievements which are evident and quantifiable (such as the expansion of trade and the growth of Community funds) but we should not neglect those which are primarily qualitative (liberalisation of competition, consumer protection, the quality of life, an international presence and prestige, etc.).

5. In detailing the advantages that the Community brings, we must not confine ourselves to aids which are patently of Community origin, but also feature those whose roots in the Community have been forgotten. We must claim the credit for measures to protect and defend the man in the street which have lost their Community label.
6. Another point which should be brought out is the innovative role of the Community, and the Commission in particular, in devising and planning new policies which enable governments to face up to their responsibilities. In most cases this involves medium- and long- term options reaching beyond the short-term expediency which tends to dominate politics.
7. In 1982, two important events will dominate the Community scene, and hence influence the activities of the Directorate-general for Information: the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome and follow-up to the May Mandate. These will provide an opportunity of explaining what the Community is, what it has achieved and what it proposes to do about the challenges now facing the Ten.
8. The Commission - an independent institution with large resources for information work - has a duty, in the interests of all the institutions, to publicize the Community as such. However, it is only with the help of the other institutions that it can demonstrate that - despite difficulties and vicissitudes along the path to integration - there is no viable alternative to policies formulated and implemented at Community level. Interinstitutional cooperation will assume particular importance in 1982 when the Commission and Parliament will have to agree on a joint information campaign for the next European elections. With this in mind, present close links with Parliament's Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport will be maintained.

### III - TARGET AUDIENCES

1. In the Member States the Community's message must be beamed at the general public.

The traditional, indirect approach through multipliers to trade unionists, farmers, women and so on will be pursued. But we must systematically widen the scope for getting our message to the general public direct. Since resources are limited, large-scale campaigns (the Silver Jubilee, for example) must continue to be the exception rather than the rule.

2. The Spokesman's Group is in a special position to provide journalists accredited to Brussels with information on current developments. The Directorate-General for Information, through its local offices, should provide follow-up to the Press, regional and local papers included, with a view to developing channels of communication.

3. The general public would feel more involved if the Community were to tailor its information activities to regional requirements. The Commission is determined to promote this type of information in a number of ways:

- by organizing travelling exhibitions which should make it possible to make direct contact with the regional public, politicians, businessmen and regional and local media;
- by supplying radio cassettes to local stations;
- by organizing visits to Brussels which would allow politicians, businessmen and representatives of local press, radio and television to make contacts at headquarters and see at first hand how the Community works;
- by encouraging exchanges between regional TV networks.

The Commission will examine the possibility of opening further regional offices to back up its policy of bringing information to the regions.

4. In the case of young people, the Community must not only tackle their specific unemployment problems through economic and social action but also respond to their protest, which highlights the fact that the present crisis has its roots in the nature of our society.

There is a serious danger that the Community will lose the support of its young people for good unless it can come up with a response which they find acceptable.

5. Our efforts to reach young people, centred on current affairs and Community achievements, should be amplified by a training programming using all educational channels (schools, universities, schools television, training organizations, associations of various links). At present these disseminate a predominantly national message which we should endeavour to enrich by adding a European dimension, stressing the cultural aspects of European identity.
6. Eurobarometer (and other public opinion polls) will show how the wind of change is blowing and allow the Commission to act accordingly.
7. In non-member countries the Community's information effort will be aimed in the main at political and socio-economic groups. The Commission confirms that one of its priorities is to attach information offices to existing and new delegations and to place more emphasis on the information aspect of the activities of its delegations in ACP countries and the Mediterranean area.

#### IV - PRACTICABILITIES

1. The situation with regard to the pending of information activities is rather precarious. The appropriation made available (approximately 12 million ECU) is modest if the information activities of headquarters and 25 local offices - not to mention the new offices approved in principle - are to be financed.
2. The Commission confirms that it is prepared to conduct a systematic review of its information tools and to make savings by pursuing efforts begun in 1981.

In this context the Directorate-General for Information is instructed to review all the information tools at its disposal:

- A review body has begun to vet serial publications issued by the Directorate-General for Information with the two-fold aim of adapting them to the requirements of Commission policy and cutting costs. A proposal will be put to the Commission within the next three months.

- Proposals for rationalizing the flood of publications emanating from other Commission departments will also be put to the Commission.
  - A similar exercise will be undertaken with regard to information visits with a view to defining the priority groups to be invited, improving preparation and follow-up, and developing training facilities for Commission lecturers.
  - With regard to radio and television, the key to reaching the general public, a more determined effort must be made to evaluate possibilities at the Commission's disposal. Coverage of Community news and the implications of the technological and cultural development of the communications media for the Commission's information policy must also be considered. A study, which will take Parliament's recommendations into account, will be put in hand shortly.
  - Finally, the Directorate-General for Information, while maintaining effective coordination with the Secretariat-General, will be forced to adopt a restrictive policy on subsidies for events of Community interest. In practice, it will have to confine itself to backing information activities specifically linked to the Commission's political priorities which it can help to organize and follow through.
3. The reorganization of the Directorate-General for Information took effect on 1 January 1982. The main objective was to improve monitoring of policies implemented by the Commission and ensure closer working relations between headquarters and the 25 local offices. A secondary objective was to increase other departments' involvement in the work of the Directorate-General. A first step in this direction was taken in June 1981 in connection with presentation of the Commission's Mandate Report and the discussions which followed. The Commission would like to make this approach standard practice across the whole range of its information activities. In this context information priorities for 1982 will reflect the political priorities which the Commission will be putting to Parliament when the President makes his "State of the Community" speech at its February part-session.