

Address by Mr. Seán G. Ronan, Director-General for Information of the Commission of the European Communities, to the Public Relations Institute of Ireland, 7th November 1975, on "The information policy of the Commission"

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome this opportunity of addressing you this evening on the subject of the Commission's information policy. For you who are involved in public relations, this is a subject which should be of specific interest. For me it is a pleasure to speak about my own area of competence in the Commission to a professional body of communicators in which I have many friends, including the representatives of State-sponsored companies and other agencies with which I had contacts during my periods of service in Dublin with the Department of Foreign Affairs. I am, therefore, very grateful for your kind invitation.

I shall proceed by outlining in relation to our subject the basic elements in any important policy question, namely, why, what, to whom and how, and afterwards, if you wish, I am prepared to answer questions and enter into discussion on points you may wish to raise.

The need:

Impact of modern technology

In these days of mass communications, no organisation can survive without the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between itself and its public. Any organisation or firm which neglects this will do so at its peril. May I recall for a moment that historically the tremendous expansion of business and commerce brought about by the Industrial Revolution vastly increased the need for more efficient communications, particularly for the sale of products. This was the beginning of large scale advertising and publicity centred on printed material and later on radio as well.

World War II and the post-war period have witnessed a veritable revolution in the techniques of informing the public. Marshall McLuhan pointed out that this is the first generation of the electronic age. In television everything is happening at once, instantaneously and enveloping not just one thing at a time as was the case with the printed word for centuries. The growth in communications technology has put at our disposal a vast range of new techniques,

including short-wave radio, STD telephone and telex, colour television, videotapes, computers, transistors, tape recorders, instamatic cameras, photographic printing, photocopying, use of coaxial cables, satellites and so on.

But the fruits of materialism and advanced technology have not solved more basic problems. There is need for more recourse to the social sciences and communications psychology to find out what people think and why, what they really want from life, why they react in the way they do and what can make them change their opinions. The importance of attitudes rather than just products has indicated the need for more attention to and research on the processes of the human mind and spirit.

Legitimacy

When it comes to political systems, legitimacy is a vital factor. Unless it is perceived and accepted, it can hardly be said to exist - whatever the lawyers may say. To maintain favourable attitudes towards its legitimacy, a political system - once constitutionally established - has, among other things, to (i) be visible to its citizens and (ii) be capable of making its activities intelligible to them.

In both of these respects the European Community today is not in the strongest position. While, according to our "Eurobarometre" opinion polls, it continues to have a high level of support among the citizens in most of the Member States, it is also the case, to quote from the Marjolin Report of March 1975 (p.2) on "Economics and Monetary Union 1980", that "the idea of a United Europe, while enjoying the passive sympathy of the majority of the population in most Community countries, is not one which carries force. The goodwill with which it is generally received is usually accompanied by scepticism...."

While the legitimacy of the Community is not seriously questioned, it remains for the majority of its citizens remote, intangible and bureaucratic. One major reason for this is that there are few occasions when they come into direct contact with it, or feel themselves directly and personally affected by or involved in its activities. An exception is the common agricultural policy which affects a substantial number of the Community's citizens in a

direct and meaningful way - that is through their pockets. Those who work in industry or services have few occasions when they are made aware of the existence of the Community in terms of impact on their daily lives.

One reason for this is that most of the decisions of the Community are executed by agents of the Member States. Moreover, the direct demands the Community makes on individual citizens are very few: the same is true of the services it offers.

Another reason is that even in those cases where Community action has been taken - through the Social Fund, the European Investment Bank, the newly established Regional Fund and so on - it is often not apparent that the Community has been involved. In some cases bureaucratic practices forbid full information to be given about the destination and amount of financial assistance. And on the spot, a conspiracy of silence often surrounds the facts about Community intervention. We are actively endeavouring to remedy this state of affairs.

All this is in marked contrast to the way in which national and regional political and administrative systems make their impact felt in the daily experience of citizens in our Member States. These systems have a tangible existence in the terms of those who work for them (armed forces, policemen, civil servants, etc.); the demands they make on us (taxes, military service, etc.); and the services they offer (physical security, social and health services, etc.). We are, moreover, constantly reminded of their existence by a whole range of visible symbols: flags, national anthems, coins, postage stamps, identity cards, passports, football teams and so on. They accompany us from the cradle to the grave.

Weak signals, poor reception

This situation is clearly reflected in the great bulk of the messages transmitted by the mass media. It is not generally through lack of goodwill toward the Community on the part of those who work for them. When they look around for suitable material, they often find it difficult to find. This is particularly true of television. Given the importance of the visual image in our society, the fact that the Community is so rarely visible is a very severe problem.

The communicators also have the problem of the receptive capacity of their audiences. They, too, have been so conditioned by their national environment that messages have to be put through a series of national filters if they are to be readily understood. Not the least important of these is the language filter. So it is wholly understandable that each journalist should seek the views of "his" national Minister on a Community event; assess its importance in terms of "his" national situation, and so on.

Efforts are being made to change this situation. The Commission itself has set about a major re-orientation of its information policy and is now placing much more emphasis on the need to reach the general public. A substantial number of new initiatives have recently been taken, particularly in the audio-visual field, by radio and television authorities and by those concerned with the production of audio-visual teaching materials, with the aim of bringing much more information about the Community to the mass of its citizens.

The political, economic and social context

Information policy must be related constantly to the political, economic and social framework, within which the Community operates, and changing conditions. The role and development of the Community institutions must also be reflected in our information work as well as basic Community objectives.

The Paris Summit Declaration in October 1972 followed by the enlargement of the Community by the admission of Denmark, Ireland and the UK was a watershed in the Community's history following the earlier period in which successes were achieved in a number of specific fields, including the establishment of the Customs Union, the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Commercial Policy.

But 1974 was a year of disappointment. The energy crisis and the rise in world prices of raw materials took the Community by surprise. The degree of solidarity and the will to achieve common policies, which are so necessary if the Community is to speak with one voice, were clearly lacking. The UK sought a "renegotiation" of its terms of entry. With the onset of inflationary and unemployment trends, the deadlines set by the Paris Summit for the achievement of major policies such as Economic and Monetary Union receded. There was

questioning of the lengthy and complicated decision-making process and the need for institutional reforms.

At the same time, steady progress was being achieved in a number of important areas, including the Community's relations with developing countries and in regional and social policies, which laid the foundation for undermining an image which had developed of the Community as an "inward-looking rich-man's club". The Community developed a responsibility for the social consequences of its economic decisions and the Social Fund was transformed into an instrument of social philosophy.

Early in 1975 President Ortolí defined Community objectives and priorities as follows:-

1. To make Europe less dependent in the face of the energy and raw materials situation;
2. To restore the economic and social balance by tackling the problems of inflation and unemployment;
3. To increase efforts to assist the developing countries notwithstanding the world recession;
4. To achieve progress towards economic and monetary union, although the 1980 deadline was no longer attainable; and
5. To achieve progress on political union on the basis of the reports of the Community institutions called for by the 1972 Paris Summit.

The emphasis he placed on the Commission's political role must also be reflected in information matters.

There have been signs of improvement in 1975. The British "renegotiations" were concluded successfully during the Irish chairmanship and the subsequent UK referendum resulted in a two-thirds majority in favour of membership. The Lomé Convention concluded with 46 African, Caribbean and Pacific States represents a singular achievement in Community aid and development policy and progress in international relations. A trade agreement was concluded with Israel, the Euro-Arab dialogue was launched, the People's Republic of China has accredited a Permanent Representative to the Community, Greece has applied for full membership, a delegation has been set up in Tokyo and another will follow soon in Ottawa, the Regional Fund, even though perhaps

more qualitative than quantitative, has been established, and discussions are under way for direct elections by universal suffrage to the European Parliament.

There are some examples just to show that the Community is pressing forward with its objectives and achieving progress even at a time when it is facing very severe difficulties both internally and externally. Many hurdles have yet to be cleared which are obstructing Community development. A number of obstacles have been overcome and a great deal is possible again. All those factors have to be analysed and taken into account in framing our information policy and programmes. These are kept under the closest scrutiny and the results regularly evaluated so that new measures can be taken to cope with any new needs that arise.

Public opinion will judge the Community by its ability to act and react on a stage that is increasingly assuming worldwide dimensions. Much depends on whether governments and our institutions can put into practice common policies which clearly show our public that we have a true European Community and not just a "Community of merchants".

Objectives

In the light of this background, the European Community must now assume a new image in the eyes of public opinion, both in Europe and elsewhere, if it is to become a living Community of peoples in the full sense. This indicates that a large part of our information efforts must be directed to within the Community itself. The principal task, as President Ortoli stressed in the European Parliament, is "the association of the people of Europe with the building of the Community". It is, therefore, necessary to create a sense of European identity in all branches of public opinion, and to make citizens aware of being part of a social group involved in a historical experience and of participating in the shaping of a common destiny.

There are other objectives: a continuous rapid flow of information on the aims, activities, guidelines, proposals, decisions, etc. of Community institutions, more especially those of the Commission, more generalised and in depth information based on priority themes, because of their importance to the

Community and their impact on various audiences, the stress being laid on the overall development of the Community. It is necessary too to highlight the main stages and more important developments in Community and national life to illustrate the steps being taken towards European unification. Every effort is made to present a coherent picture of the whole, with the accent on the interrelationship of the various themes.

Outside the Community, the aim is to present a true picture of what the Community means to its citizens and its desire to contribute to world peace and prosperity. Special emphasis is given to Community policies which impinge on the industrialised or on the developing countries as the case may be. Wide contacts are necessary with key sectors of opinion and the public information media to bring about a better understanding of Community policies and problems.

All this is no easy task that can be carried out overnight. It involves trying to make some 260 million Europeans understand what European unification means and how the Community affects them in their daily lives. Externally, it involves impact on a worldwide scale. The Commission by itself cannot make a spectacular and rapid improvement in attitudes towards the Community. Much depends on the resolve on the part of the Governments of the Member States to achieve common policies and give effect to them.

Methodology

The Commission is well aware of the difficulties which have to be overcome and has taken a series of initiatives in reshaping its information policy to achieve these ends. One of the means is to provide objective, accessible and rapid information and to explain its purpose more directly to the public and associate them with its efforts. The manner in which this is done must be more simple, lively and concrete, stressing that the Community is concerned with the human effects of its decisions and with the improvement of the quality of life. The effort to reach the public at large must be complemented by having greater recourse within the limits of our resources to outside movements, associations and consultants to aid in these tasks.

Our information has been decentralised to correspond more with the needs and interests in the Member States and third countries. This means that the

Commission's press and information offices have to adapt the material they receive from the centre to the various national situations and intensify dissemination at the regional level.

There is the closest cooperation between the Spokesman's Group and the Directorate-General for Information, or DG X. The Spokesman is responsible for briefing the accredited journalists and the offices with the "hot news", the immediate decisions and activities of the Commission, and so on, while DG X is concerned with the rest - the medium and long term situations, background notes, publications, information visits, audio-visual means, fairs, expositions, research, and specialised information for priority audiences. Both the Spokesman's Group and DG X are complementary instruments for carrying out the Commission's information policy.

Of great importance is the internal information gathering system in the Commission. For this purpose, apart from briefings by the Spokesman, correspondents have been appointed in each Directorate-General, responsible for information for that sector. In this way, our information personnel dealing with specific themes can keep in close touch with developments. Also, as occasion demands, interservice groups are established to prepare information actions and campaigns according as themes become topical and require information action.

Also, for the second time in two years, we are reorganising the structure of DG X to achieve more flexibility, dynamism and efficiency so that it may be able to respond more readily to changing circumstances and priorities and undertake a greater number of specific information actions. It is vitally important that the information divisions should not become too compartmentalised and that there should be greater interaction between the information personnel both at headquarters and in the Information Offices in the capitals.

Greater efforts are also being made to intensify cooperation with the information services of the other Community institutions and of the Member States. The latter have, of course, a heavy responsibility to inform their own public opinion about Community developments and the need for closer European union. In addition, meetings are held in Brussels during the year with all the Heads of our Press and Information Offices to coordinate policy and follow the evolution of our programmes. Including everything, our total

operational budget is about £3 million, which is allocated between 17 Information Offices plus the Divisions at headquarters. Early next year, new Information Offices are being established in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Athens and Ottawa. As regards the budget programme, we work on a combination of a PPBS system plus means by objectives. In July each year we issue policy orientations for the following year's programme and, during the autumn, in a series of hearings with the Office and Division Heads, we decide on the programmes in relation to the budget which we have negotiated with the Council and the European Parliament, so that in December a complete information policy statement and programme budget is submitted to the Commission for the following year. We work on the basis of a reserve of about 10%, and during the year we have between 8 and 10 revisions of the budget programme, according as new projects arise or approved projects are either underspent or lapse. While, therefore, we have decentralised our information vis-à-vis the external offices, there is at the same time constant control from the centre and coordination with the external offices.

It is also essential to foresee and manage information and not merely to respond to circumstances, if we are to ensure adequate planning and effective outlets. The quarterly work programme of the Commission is studied closely to plan information actions in advance, and significant events such as the forthcoming debate on Mr. Tindemans' report on European Union, the proposed direct elections to the European Parliament, meetings of the European Councils, the Euro-Arab dialogue, and so on, are studied with a view to planning information campaigns. An effort has also been made to establish a plan of the kind of information activities which should be undertaken in relation to each major decision taken by the Commission.

Themes

The themes to be dealt with depend mainly on the implementation of the Commission's policy, and it is desired to have a deeper dialogue with the public at large as well as with the Community's institutions. In the present difficult circumstances, our information policy must concentrate on a number of fundamental, simple and concrete facts - what membership of the Community means to the man in the street, why it is one of the factors for solving the economic crises, its proper place and role in the world, and how it can become more

efficient and democratic.

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This year the 25th anniversary of the Robert Schuman Declaration was an occasion for extensive information activity, together with a programme on Women's International Year to emphasise the role which the Community can play in improving conditions for women. Other topics corresponding with citizens' concrete preoccupations and interests include Commission action to combat inflation and unemployment, harmonious regional development and the implementation of a social policy aimed at full and better employment, improvement of living and working conditions and participation of the social partners in decision making. The Commission is also concerned with improvement of the quality of life, of which environment and consumer policies are an important part. Priority sectoral policies include agriculture, industry, energy, transport, education, science, research and so on.

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The Community's position in the world, and in particular its relations with its major trading partners and the developing countries, are stressed, and also the strengthening of Community institutions and progress towards economic and monetary cohesion, political union and direct elections by universal suffrage to the European Parliament.

Audiences

The Commission will increase its information action vis-à-vis the public, which up to now had not been concerned with European construction, and will aim at producers, consumers and citizens in general, particularly in the regions. It must, however, pay the closest attention to the interest and attitudes of the various population sectors, giving priority to trade unions, youth, teachers, political circles, consumers and the agricultural milieu. Special programmes have been drawn up for these circles.

The heads of state and government have already stressed the importance of stimulating the imaginations of young people, so contacts and cooperation with youth organisations both at Community and national level have been expanded and intensified to supply them with information suitable to their needs and thus stimulate their interest in Community problems. A special effort has been made to provide information for teachers, schools and universities.

Trade unions in the Community represent some 35 million workers and therefore need special attention aimed in particular at trade union schools and the training of leaders to use audio-visual material which we have made available for this purpose in all the languages of the Community.

Means

While the Commission will utilise all available information means, information for the public at large must be disseminated mainly through the mass media - the press, radio, television, including popular periodicals, the specialised and the regional press - and through the social groups, if it is to have the optimum effect on the widest audience at the least cost. A newly established feature service has prepared more lively and attractive information specially for this purpose. The Information Offices have organised themselves to carry out this policy, particularly as regards the regions.

Reliance is also placed on various multipliers and intermediaries such as agricultural, youth and other associations, lecture teams, symposia, exhibitions and information visits to Brussels.

Our publications continue to play a vital role, chiefly for reaching opinion leaders and disseminators. Certain basic brochures giving facts about the Community and how the institutions work, are produced in Brussels, together with a short attractive series called European Documentation which will treat priority themes such as energy, regional, social, aid and development and other policies. We produce, mainly in our Offices, eleven monthly magazines in nine different languages, as well as background notes, newsletters, information sheets, dossier stories and maps.

One of our priorities is to build up and make greater use of audio-visual means. Major importance is attached to television as a means of information, and our studios have been equipped with a magnetoscope which can record interviews in colour for rapid transmission through RTB-BRT transmitters. When this facility becomes fully operational, it could greatly help to increase Community broadcasts within the Member States. The basis of our policy at present is to provide facilities for the radio and television correspondents of the Member States and of other networks, rather than to undertake direct production ourselves.

Closer cooperation with the television networks, both through their Brussels correspondents and in the capitals, is being established and we hope to increase the number of coproductions with the stations and the supply of film material on Community subjects.

In addition, we are studying the increasingly important video-cassette market and the best way of including Community subjects.

Our radio studio is widely used by correspondents and we have an average of 25 short direct links per week to national and African stations. We have also started a monthly information bulletin called "Euradio", particularly geared for the needs of regional broadcasting stations.

Kits with slides and taped commentaries have been prepared for trade union circles and schools, an activity which we intend to intensify. Short films are also produced on Community activities from time to time, and short animated cartoons depicting topical themes.

This whole area of our activities could alone be the subject of a special lecture.

Information developments in 1975

There have been a few developments this year affecting our activities, which might be worth mentioning. These are (a) our complementary programme, (b) the British referendum and (c) a computerised information data system called ECDOC which the Commission has established.

Complementary programme

The European Parliament has now the final say within a certain percentage limit over non-obligatory items in the Community's budget which includes information. At the end of 1974 it voted an extra million units of account, which is the best part of £500,000, for a complementary information programme by the Commission in addition to the regular programme for 1975. The Commission approved the complementary programme last March before Easter and it was subsequently adopted by the Council and the Parliament so that the funds became available last June. In essence, the programme

consists of projects aimed at the dissemination of information among the general public, regional information, more use of audio-visual means and dissemination of information in non-member countries where political developments had created a new demand. The programme was based in the main on projects submitted by our Information Offices, aimed at people on the job through organisers at trade union level; at the domestic consumer following the adoption by the Council of the consumer protection programme; and at the younger generation by preparing and disseminating programmes on video cassettes amongst students and socio-educational associations equipped to use this type of material. As a first step, these programmes are being introduced in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the Netherlands. In Italy a competition has been arranged in some of the principal young people's weeklies, ultimately involving the presentation of prizes.

In most of the Member States, travelling exhibitions to visit cities and towns have been undertaken to open up dialogues with the local people. In Denmark this involves an "information railway coach" modelled along exhibition lines, complete with publicity material and manned by a team of promotional personnel, to tour the regions. In France, competitions devoted to various aspects of the Community will be aimed at readers of the major regional daily newspapers, concluding with a prize-giving ceremony and a series of functions in the main provincial cities and towns. These events will be closely followed by the regional radio and television stations.

In third countries, efforts are being made to publicise the Lomé Agreement and to intensify information in Turkey, Greece and Portugal, as well as in Arab and Latin American countries. Part of the funds are also being used to help towards the cost of the Commission's participation in the Okinawa International Exhibition being held during the last six months of this year on the theme "The sea and its future".

The British referendum

This was a crucial event for the Community in which our information services were heavily engaged. The result was extremely satisfactory because it was decisive and produced majorities in favour from all the regions in the UK, with the exception of the Shetland Islands which was hardly significant. The poll of 68% of the electorate produced a two-thirds majority in favour of the UK's continued membership of the Community.

The issue was a delicate one for our London Office and information services as it involved a sensitive political issue as between the British people, the Government and political parties. The Commission's role in these circumstances had to be one of a low profile, although the British Commissioners, which was their right and duty, undertook many speaking engagements in the UK on the issue. Otherwise, the role of our London Office was to be as helpful as possible and to supply individuals, groups, associations and, above all, the media with all the information they required on the issues in the campaign. In addition, the London Office prepared a series of brochures and background notes to explain in an objective way facts and Community policies. In the first six months of 1975, nearly 4,000 visitors in groups and individuals came to Brussels for briefing. As far as the Commission is concerned, the two main factors involved - the political sensitivity of the situation and the need for mass information - were adequately handled. Special measures were also taken to get appropriate material to the regional and local press and radio in the UK, not just to the national media, and the information potential was taken into account before the content and timing of Community decisions were settled, above all in replies to Parliamentary questions.

In Brussels we were fairly confident of the result and predicted it reasonably accurately because all opinion polls since 1971 have indicated an increase of support in British public opinion towards the Community.

The ECDOC and CELEX systems

Since 1st January 1974, the Commission has been introducing a computer system for all important general and legal documentation. This includes documents relating to Commission meetings, decisions, certain Council documents, Parliamentary questions, Council decisions, minutes of the Commission, Council and COREPER, and commissioned studies. Already some 15,000 documents have been covered. The data can be retrieved in photocopy or microfilm form. An information officer for this purpose has been appointed in each Directorate-General, and nearly all Directorates-General will have their own data room in due course. The information officers are responsible for the input and retrievals. Each of our Information Offices in capitals will have a complete set of the microfiches and of the equipment for their use. They will not,

however, have a direct link with the system otherwise but will work in close liaison with their information officer. DG X will be a big user of these systems, which should greatly facilitate a much more rapid provision of information about Community decisions and so on required by ^{business} circles, associations, journalists and all others concerned with Community activities.

Opinion Polls

Another aspect of the communication process which deserves attention is the question of feedback - the perception of the response from our audiences or receivers. This is an essential requirement of efficient communications. We receive, of course, periodic reports from our Information Offices in the capitals on attitudes towards the Community in the Member States and third countries. This is supplemented since 1974 by fairly in depth surveys carried out by reputable public research institutes in the Member States and published under the title "Euro-Barometre". The fourth such survey should be published by the end of the year. The questions to be asked in these polls are determined on each occasion at a conference in Brussels at which representatives of the opinion research institutes are present. Some 9,000 people, aged 15 years and over, are interviewed in their home in accordance with national representative samples drawn up by quota. Approximately 1,000 people are interviewed in each country, except in Luxembourg where 300 are interviewed. With modern techniques, opinion poll samples of 1,000 persons nowadays are usually accurate to the extent of 96-97%.

The last Euro-Barometre showed that, in spite of the social and economic problems facing the majority of Member States, the general attitude towards the Community remains very favourable, particularly in the six original member countries where 63% of those interviewed consider the Community to be "a good thing". In the UK, 47% considered the Community to be "a good thing", as against 36% a year ago and 33% in May 1974. Reaction remains fairly static in Ireland with 50% of those interviewed being in favour. In Denmark there was a marginal increase in support, with 36% voting in favour as against 33% a year ago.

In the Community as a whole, 78% were in favour of the European Parliament being elected by universal suffrage and 22% against, the Irish figures being 71% and 29% respectively. On an attempt being made to achieve European political union

74% in the Nine were in favour and 26% against - the Irish figures being 49% and 51% respectively. These figures exclude abstentions, i.e. "don't know" or "no replies". On the other hand, one of these polls shows that only a small part of the general public shows a great interest in questions concerning the European Economic Community - 1 in 10 in Belgium; 2 in 10 in Britain, France, Italy and the Netherlands; 3 in 10 in Denmark, Germany, Ireland and Luxembourg. Also, a majority in most Member States felt that they were inadequately informed on these matters. Those who complain of lack of information may be those who are in favour and would like to know more, and those who still may not have made up their minds on a controversial subject.

A majority in the Community countries feel that newspapers, radio and television give only a simple summary of European problems, so that it is difficult for people to see how they are involved. It is probable that criticism of the press, which is regarded as either reticent or superficial, is nothing more than an alibi for people whose lack of interest can be attributed to the complexity of Community problems and public lack of involvement. In Ireland, while 5 in 10 regard membership of the Community as "a good thing", also nearly 5 in 10 would greatly regret it if the Community were abandoned. This shows that an intensified and coherent effort is necessary to provide the public with more direct, interesting and topical information on Community developments, which confirms the reorientation in the information policy which we are pursuing.

This year also we are conducting an opinion poll among women as part of our programme for Women's International Year, on the place of women in society compared with that of men. The results should be published before the end of the year and may be a basis for further information action.

Also this year we are conducting polls on consumer attitudes and the state of public opinion in Denmark vis-à-vis the Community. We also have plans for polls in Canada and Japan, following the establishment of our new delegations in these countries. In 1973 we conducted an opinion poll in the United States and may repeat this exercise again next year.

Conclusion

The Community is facing certain difficulties at the present time. This simply means that we have to intensify our information efforts. Basically, we are

aiming at flexibility in the organisational aspects and more direct impact with the general public, and particularly in the regions. No matter what the policies are, people always need to be informed of our aims and of what is going on.

Effective information requires a frank and sincere dialogue with the public and its representatives, which consists not only in explaining what the Community is doing but also of answering questions and criticisms, of recognising any mistakes that have been made and thoroughly investigating the grounds for fears and complaints by the public. In its proposals and decisions the Commission will endeavour to foresee their probable effects on public opinion, and if it has good reasons for adopting unpopular positions, it will make additional efforts to explain its aims and satisfy criticism.