

29 November 1993

**THE COMMISSION'S INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION POLICY:
THE CONSTITUTION AND OPERATIONAL
RULES FOR
THE USERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Draft Communication from
Commissioner João de Deus Pinheiro**

Summary and Proposed Decision

The Commission adopted on 30 June 1993 the principles of a new approach to information and communication (SEC (93) 916/9). This new approach included the creation of a Users' Advisory Council (UAC) to enable the views of the main categories of information users to be made known to the Commission. It was noted that a further proposal would be presented on "The constitution and operational rules for the Users' Advisory Council". This communication presents that constitution and operational rules for endorsement by the Commission.

The Commission is invited to confirm that the Commissioner for Information and Communication, with a secretariat provided by DG X, may proceed in the terms indicated with the appointment of members of the UAC and the convening of a first meeting at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Communication from
Commissioner João de Deus Pinheiro**

The Commission is asked to approve the attached text "The Commission's Information and Communication Policy : the constitution and operational rules for the Users' Advisory Council" so that all steps necessary for the creation of the Users' Advisory Council may proceed immediately as agreed by the Commission on 30 June 1993 in the framework of its new approach to information and communication policy (SEC(93) 916/9).

**The Commission's Information
and Communication Policy :
The constitution and operational rules
for the Users' Advisory Council**

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**THE COMMISSION'S INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION POLICY:
THE CONSTITUTION AND
OPERATIONAL RULES FOR
THE USERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Commission's decision to create a Users' Advisory Council (UAC) is important both in terms of a new approach to information and communication policy and also in the context of bringing a greater degree of openness to Commission policy-making and decision-taking. Given the Commission's wish that in all these areas much greater consideration should be given to a demand oriented approach, the creation of the UAC should be both a clear signal of new thinking and an important contribution to the achievement of a more effective information and communication effort. It is encouraging that there has already been a positive response to the announcement of this initiative. The distinctive experience and personality of each member of the UAC should be invaluable in helping to ensure the success of the new strategy.

2. POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

The establishment of a Users' Advisory Council will create a new form of dialogue between the Commission and the main users of its information output. The UAC will provide an opportunity for direct reaction and critical appraisal from vital outside audiences. This will enable the Commission to adjust its information and communication policy to genuine user demand. Given that these audiences include groups and professions which are well equipped to make a qualitative appreciation of the Commission's information and communication effort, the concept of the UAC must contain elements of feedback and of audit.

It is also vital that the Commission's information and communication work is sensitive to the plurality of cultural interests making up the Community. An effective UAC would help to enhance the Commission's awareness of the full range of such sensitivities.

In practical terms, the Commission must also ensure that the UAC is fully independent and provides a consultative forum in which all opinions are welcome. Recognition of the consultative opportunities offered by the forum might in time help to encourage a deeper involvement by many interest groups in the challenge of presenting the Community in terms appropriate to its role within Europe and in the wider world.

3. CREATING THE UAC

Following the Commission's decision to create a UAC it is essential to set up as quickly as possible a mechanism which will enable it to begin its mission. The outline constitution presented in Annex I meets the objectives set out in this communication and respects the orientation already agreed by the Commission on 30 June 1993 (SEC(93) 916/9). A representative UAC of 36 members is proposed. Both the outline constitution and draft operational rules have been kept as simple and flexible as possible in order to facilitate an open and informal dialogue.

4. THE WORKING OF THE UAC

The draft operational rules set out in Annex II seek to define with more precision the meeting pattern already envisaged for the UAC, the responsibilities of its chairman and secretariat, the role of members, and the manner in which the UAC is to advise the Commission's Strategy Group. Again the framework proposed is very light and open. A rotating membership is proposed to ensure both continuity and the widest possible range of representation.

5. PROPOSAL

The Commission is asked to approve this communication. The Commission will thereby establish the UAC and by adopting Annexes I and II will approve its outline constitution and draft operational rules. (The Commission will subsequently be invited, on the proposal of the Commissioner for Information and Communication, to approve the membership of the UAC. The UAC's internal rules will also be presented in due course for Commission approval.) The Commission invites the Commissioner for Information and Communication to report to it no later than 30 September 1994 on the working of the UAC, assessing in particular the effectiveness of its constitution and operational rules.

ANNEX I

Outline Constitution of the Users' Advisory Council (UAC)

1. The UAC consists of 36 members appointed by the Commissioner for Information and Communication. They provide a user's view of the Commission's information and communication strategy and advise on the effectiveness of operational activities and initiatives proposed under that strategy.
2. 18 members will represent groups and associations which exist at a European level of the written and audiovisual press or other media and of the following user categories: communication professionals, consumer, special interest and cultural or socio-professional groups.
3. 18 individual members will be chosen within Member States from the national or regional written or audiovisual press and from those sectors of the academic community with a special interest in the European integration process.
4. A list of 72 names will be proposed to the Commissioner for Information and Communication as a basis for selecting the 36 members. A balanced representation of user categories and appropriate geographical spread will be maintained.
5. The names will be proposed to the Commissioner for Information and Communication by the Director-General of DG X. To this end, the latter will consult other Directors-General and establish contacts with the principal bodies active in one or other of the user category fields set out in 2 above. In the course of these contacts, these bodies will be called upon to suggest appropriate candidates.

6. Each member of the UAC will participate in its work on a personal basis in accordance with the constitution and operational rules set out in Annex II below.
7. The Commissioner for Information and Communication will be the convenor and Chairman of the UAC and will be assisted in this role by a DG X secretariat. He will convene one-day meetings twice yearly. The place, time and agenda for the meetings will be decided by the Commissioner for Information and Communication. Sub-groups may meet within the context of the twice-yearly meetings. A sub-group will be created for the written and audiovisual press.
8. No member of the UAC will receive payment from the Commission for participating in the work of the UAC other than travel and subsistence expenses paid under normal Commission regulations.

ANNEX II

Draft Operational Rules of the Users' Advisory Council (UAC)

1. Any member accepting an invitation from the Commissioner for Information and Communication to serve as a member of the UAC agrees to be bound by the terms of the UAC's constitution and operational rules. The constitution and operational rules will be open to review by the Commission no later than 30 September 1994.
2. Each member accepts his or her invitation on a nominative basis and for a maximum period of four years. The term of office of half the membership will terminate after two years. The rotation pattern will be decided by lot at the first meeting of the UAC, providing this membership rotation is done equally between the two groups of members.
3. The Council will meet twice yearly preferably at dates within thirty days of a meeting of the Community's European Council. Attendance at each meeting will consist only of the Chairman, members and secretariat. The Chairman may invite other members of the Commission or high level officials of the Commission if and when appropriate.
4. The internal rules will be established by the UAC and approved by the Commission.
5. Each member of the UAC will receive from the DG X secretariat in advance of each meeting a list of all members, including contact addresses and telephone and fax numbers, a draft agenda, and appropriate documentation. DG X will seek, as may be necessary to the preparation of this documentation, the assistance of other DGs and Services.

6. Each member of the UAC will receive from the DG X secretariat copies of all Information and Communication Policy documents adopted by the Commission as and from 30 June 1993 and all Eurobarometer publications as and from 1 September 1993.
7. The UAC's opinions will be presented to the Commission's Strategy Group in the form of reports prepared by the UAC secretariat. They will be circulated to all UAC and Strategy Group members and, as appropriate, to DGs and Services of the Commission.