

21 January 1994

**THE ROLE OF STAFF INFORMATION IN THE  
COMMISSION'S NEW INFORMATION AND  
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

Draft Communication from  
Commissioner João de Deus Pinheiro

## Summary and Proposed Decision

---

The citizen's perception of the Commission is closely linked to his/her image of the European public service. The Commission is therefore asked to incorporate staff information in its new information and communication strategy and to endorse the steps outlined in this document to develop it into a dynamic management tool. These include in particular :

- the need for the Commission as a college to communicate regularly and directly to staff its broad goals and strategies;
- the holding of a meeting, at least once a year, between Commissioners and senior staff to define for personnel the Commission's position on major topical issues;
- the importance of providing simplified versions of official administrative and staff notices;
- the development in-house of new electronic means of communication — in individual offices via existing networks, and via the installation of television monitors in those parts of office buildings where staff congregate;
- the development, through appropriate training programmes, of communications skills at all senior staff levels;
- the intensifying of cooperation with other EC bodies in providing staff information.

In this way, the Commission will help ensure that staff remain motivated, and trained to become more information-minded and service-oriented.

# THE ROLE OF STAFF INFORMATION IN THE COMMISSION'S NEW INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Commission's decision of 30 June 1993 on a new approach to its information and communication policy made specific mention of the important role to be played by staff in ensuring its success.

There is a need for staff to be well-informed themselves about the Commission's *own priorities, policies and activities*. And it is also necessary for staff to be *information-minded and service-oriented* in order to communicate effectively in their dealings with the public. In addition to these considerations, it is clear that staff will be more effective and enthusiastic communicators if they feel a strong sense of commitment to the goals of the Community. It is therefore vital to mobilise and motivate staff in this direction.

This paper outlines the current situation in these two areas, and makes specific proposals for the future.

## 2. THE CULTURE OF THE COMMISSION

2.1. The Problem: It is generally acknowledged that the creation of a "*corporate culture*" is an important aspect of modern management, as much in public administrations as in large business undertakings. This is broadly taken to mean that staff have a *positive attitude* to their organisation, accept its overall *goals* and are *proud* to work for it.

As by far the largest employer of EC personnel, the Commission has a special responsibility to ensure that its staff are efficient, well-motivated and service-oriented. The image of the EC, and the Commission in particular, depends in large measure on the *image of the European public service*.

A strong esprit de corps was a marked feature of the Commission in its pioneer years. The Institution has grown and become more complex (for example, more nationalities and more languages); staff have been dispersed in many buildings; the whole concept of European integration has lost some of its novelty. There is, consequently, evidence that the corporate culture's function of motivating staff to work for the common cause has weakened.

2.2. Proposed Measures: It is against that background that the Commission should engage in a continuous programme to mobilise its personnel. This can take various forms.

At the political level, the Commission as a college must communicate directly and regularly the Commission's broad goals and strategies. Such messages define the corporate culture and can have a powerful effect in mobilising staff.

An annual meeting of senior staff and Commissioners to debate the aims of the Commission would also stimulate the development of a corporate culture. It is vital that staff with management responsibilities communicate regularly with their personnel on a two-way basis.

Communication is also important at the *administrative* level. Staff feel more positive towards an employer who keeps them informed. It is therefore proposed to develop further simplified versions of administrative texts that can be easily understood by all — along the lines of the recent document on education allowances.

2.3 Stimulating the Debate on Europe: In order to stimulate more effectively the present debate on European integration, each Directorate-General should nominate a number of its officials, who would be prepared to participate in the debate. The DG concerned should give priority to releasing them for such public events. DG X would have to ensure the necessary technical back-up i.e. user friendly material, training, etc.

### **3. INTERNAL INFORMATION**

3.1. Situation within the Commission: Easy access to internal information is an important element in efforts to mobilise and improve efficiency. In the context of this document, "staff information" refers mainly to the same range of information as that produced by DG X for the public — in other words, the policies and activities of the Commission as a political institution. In addition, it seeks to make Commission members better known to staff, and to tell personnel about the work of the DG's and Services.

Staff information is accordingly a *specific component* in the Commission's new information strategy decided by the Commission. It offers the Commission a first-class way to show that it can:

- explain clearly, truthfully, and in a fast and *user-friendly* way its activities and policies;
- practise *openness*;
- provide *professionally-crafted media products*.

3.2. At present information is channelled to staff in various ways :

a) the Commission has developed an elaborate system to *circulate working documents*, and various *data bases* exist with up-to-date information on Community policies and documents;

b) the *Courrier du Personnel* (Staff Courier) edited by DG X, a *Press Review* prepared by the Spokesman's Service, and the Administrative Notices issued by DG IX circulate throughout the Commission;

c) services themselves hold regular *meetings* to pass on and exchange information.

As far as information directed specifically towards the staff is concerned, the Commission at present relies primarily on the printed medium — in particular, the *Courrier du Personnel*. This publication now incorporates the *Petit Courier*, *Petites Annonces*, *Hebdo-Quick* and *Infor-Rapide*. Its format has been transformed to a weekly tabloid (A3). Its print order has gone up to more than 42 000, from 36 000 copies, of which about a quarter circulate in the other EC bodies.

The *Courrier du Personnel* seeks a *balanced mix* of information containing the following elements: Commission policies and activities; administration news; readers letters; the "Loisirs" section and news about the Commission's host country and host city.

In addition, the Informaphone (reached by dialing \*762) gives staff a *daily summary of EC news*, the weekly account by the *Secretary-General* of the Commission's activities, and a press review. Cultural, sporting and related activities of interest to staff are announced on a second line - \*761.

**3.3. Proposed Measures:** The general question of the availability and accessibility of information, particularly that which is stored electronically, is beyond the scope of this paper. The on-going work of the Committee for Information Strategy and Dissemination (CODIFIN) is however of vital importance in this respect. The possibility of transmitting, via computers, information announced on the Informaphone will in particular be examined.

As regards the means of communication for which DG X is specifically responsible, the following measures will be looked into, in co-operation with all interested services, especially those concerned with dissemination techniques:

- a) an *in-house campaign* to encourage other DGs to take full advantage of the opportunity of using the *Courrier du Personnel*;
- b) a campaign to stimulate the use of the *Informaphone*;
- c) the distribution of staff information electronically, via the *inter-linked work stations* (PCs; terminals) of Commission staff;
- d) the installation of electronic equipment to provide *in-house news*, via screens located in the entrances, hallways, restaurants etc of office buildings;
- e) ways of *intensifying cooperation with the other EC bodies* in undertaking staff-information activities.

**3.4.** A subcommittee of the Steering Committee for Information and Communication, consisting of DG X, the Secretariat-General, DG IX and the Spokesman's Service, will be established to examine periodically staff information issues and their implementation.

In addition, the Spokesman's Service is building a data base that will provide an index to newspaper articles. Staff (and the public) will be able to order copies of articles they require.

## 4. STAFF TRAINING

4.1. Present Situation: A vital element in strengthening the Commission's information activities is an increased effort to ensure that its staff is adequately trained in this area. In this respect, DG IX offers courses in various areas linked to information and communication, as part of the Commission's annual training programme. Such courses are extremely valuable, but are not necessarily aimed specifically at officials who work in the field of information and communication. DGs should therefore ensure that priority is given to applications for such courses, which are submitted by staff whose tasks have an information or communication content.

DG X has provided a limited number of more specific training courses on information techniques for its *own* staff and has also arranged with DG IX a course for *officials who regularly speak to groups* visiting the Commission.

Recently, DGs IX and X organised a highly successful course for a small number of officials newly appointed as *Heads of office*. And it has, from time to time, provided a course in media techniques for *Commissioners*. These initiatives will be pursued and extended with a view to meeting the needs not only of members of DG X, but also of anyone whose responsibilities include information and communication tasks.

4.2. Proposed Action: The following four areas for specific action have been identified :

- an extension of the courses on how to handle interviews already provided for Commissioners, to other senior officials who need to appear before the media;
- basic courses in information and communication skills, for those working in this area, particularly those designated as *information correspondents* in the DGs and services, following the Commission decision of 30 June 1993<sup>(1)</sup>. More specialised courses would follow to fit individual needs;
- a permanent course to train *speakers*;
- a course on information and communication policy, as an integral part of training for *new entrants*;
- lectures by personalities, from within the Commission and beyond, on current events to stimulate the debate on Europe amongst personnel;

These actions must be taken into account in the Commission's annual training programme.

---

(1) Document SEC(93) 916/9 point 5.E.2.