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DOCUMENT 1-1058/82

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Youth, Culture,
Education, Information and Sport

on the information policy of the European Communities
for the 1984 direct elections

Rapporteur: Mr B. BEUMER
Chairman of the committee

At its meeting of 20 April 1982, the enlarged Bureau authorized the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport to draw up an own-initiative report on the information policy of the European Communities for the 1984 direct elections.

At its meeting of 17 May 1982 the committee appointed its chairman, Mr Bouke BEUMER, rapporteur.

At its meeting of 18 November 1982 the committee decided to consider in its own-initiative report the motion for a resolution on support for joint action by radio stations in coverage of the 1984 elections which had been referred to it at the plenary sitting of 15 November 1982.

The committee considered the draft report at its meetings of 28 and 29 September, 18 and 19 October, 4 and 5 November and 30 November and 1 December 1982. At its meeting of 30 November 1982 the motion for a resolution in its entirety was adopted by 9 votes to 5 with 6 abstentions.

The following took part in the vote : Mr BEUMER (chairman and rapporteur), Mr FAJARDIE, Mr HAHN, Mr SCHWENCKE (vice-chairman), Mr BERKHOUWER, Mr BEYER DE RYKE, Mr BØGH, Mr BORD, Miss BROOKES, Mrs BUCHAN, Mr COTTRELL, Mr FANTI, Mr FERNANDEZ, Mr GEROKOSTOPOULOS, Mr HUTTON, Mr MARCK, Mr PAPAPIETRO, Mr PEDINI, Mr PERY and Mrs VIEHOFF.

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The Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the information policy of the European Communities for the 1984 direct elections

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the SCHALL report of 16 January 1982 on the information policy of the European Community, of the Commission of the European Communities and of the European Parliament (Doc. 1-596/80),
 - having regard to the report of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities for the financial year 1978 (Doc. 1-567/79),
 - having regard to the resolution of the European Parliament on relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments (OJ C 234, 14.9.1981),
 - having regard to the information programme of the Commission of the European Communities for 1982 (COM(82) 3 final),
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution on support for joint action by radio stations in coverage of the 1984 elections (Doc. 1-773/82),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport (Doc. 1-1058/82),
- A. having regard to the importance of the second direct elections to be held in 1984 and to the consequent need to inform public opinion in the Member States of the activities of the Community Institutions, and in particular of Parliament, in an adequate manner,
- B. whereas the second direct elections must confirm and consolidate the popular base of the European Parliament which is essential, in the very interest of democracy, to strengthen the role of the parliamentary body in the Community's institutional structure,

- C. whereas the election campaign for the second direct elections to the European Parliament will largely focus in the Member States on comparison of the programmes drawn up by the European political movements, thus providing an opportunity to review the progress made by the Community and assess the respective contribution of its Institutions, particularly of the European Parliament,
- D. concerned at the decline in the interest of the media in the European Community and at the disenchantment of the general public, in the present situation of economic crisis, as a result of the inadequate progress in the work of European construction, and considering that the citizen of Europe has a right to be fully informed,
- E. whereas the increased interdependence of the Member States requires greater mutual awareness and understanding based not least on information obtained from an impartial source,
- F. underlining the contribution which national bodies such as the parliaments, political parties, trade unions and professional bodies could make to improving understanding of the Community and its Institutions, and particularly of the European Parliament, if they placed greater emphasis on the European dimension of the problems of our societies and their solution,
- G. having regard to the advantage to the media of access, inter alia, to information independent of that provided by the political groups,
- H. whereas there is a need to make optimum use of the limited resources available to the European Parliament for the information campaign,
- I. whereas the European election campaign will also benefit from contributions granted at the national level in some Member States,
- J. whereas more intensive use of funds set aside for the Community's general information policy, taking account of enlargement and of inflation, could in itself have a positive effect,
- K. recalling the provisions adopted by the enlarged Bureau in 1977 concerning the use of appropriations made available to the political groups,
- L. confirming its decision to use the appropriations entered in its budget 'for information in connection with the second elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage . . . on the basis of the criteria and guidelines for control applied in 1977 for the first direct elections to the European Parliament,

once they have been improved and strengthened'¹,

M. sharing the view of the Committee on Budgetary Control with regard to the internal rules for the implementation of the budget :

' . . . Financial control of the use by the political groups of their annual allocation shall be governed by the special provisions for each group, which shall be adopted by the enlarged Bureau on a proposal from the political groups having had the opinion of the Committee on Budgetary Control'²,

N. whereas the absence of a decision on the choice of a single seat for the European Parliament is seen by the citizens of the Community as a sign of impotence, and the present dispersion of working places impedes optimum attendance by the media, consequently affecting the attention our Institution receives,

Nature of information

1. Considers that the issues at stake in the second direct elections to the European Parliament should be brought home to public opinion by means of a wide-scale information campaign;
2. Takes the view that this campaign will have to be mounted largely by the political movements called upon, for the first time, to account for the fulfilment of their electoral mandate, and that on this occasion the competition between the various political programmes will be the central focus;
3. Considers that, alongside the party-political campaigns, it is essential to mount a non-partisan information campaign with a view to enhancing public awareness of the essence of the European Community and especially of the role of Parliament;

Level of funds

4. Recalls that the sum total of financial resources for the first direct elections amounted to 34 million ECU; considers that the sum total of financial resources for the second elections, to be spread over several financial years, should be fixed taking into account both enlargement of the Community and inflation; and recommends that, while paying due attention to political considerations, efforts be made to keep the total amount within limits given the unfavourable economic situation in Member States;

¹ Paragraph 11, resolution of 7.6.1982 on the draft estimates of the revenue and expenditure of the European Parliament for the financial year 1983 (Doc.1-185/82)
² Art. 85, internal rules for the implementation of the budget of the European Parliament (PE 76.536/fin.) - 7 - PE 80.076/fin.

5. Recommends that the total funds available be distributed in such a way as to provide adequate means to enable the independent information campaign, especially by the mass media, to sensitise public opinion from an early stage; the involvement of the mass media should not, however, be limited to the period of the election but should represent the first step towards cooperation on a permanent basis;

Control

6. Undertakes to adopt the criteria and guidelines for improved and strengthened control on the use of appropriations entered in its budget for the information campaign, whilst drawing attention to the responsibility of the Court of Auditors for accounting control;

New political movements and non-attached Members

7. Calls for part of the appropriations available to be set aside for any new political movements which might be represented for the first time in the new Parliament;
8. Draws attention to the need to provide appropriations for the campaigns conducted by the non-attached Members;

Inter-institutional coordination

9. Calls for the creation of a Parliament-Commission working party to ensure effective coordination of both technical and substantive aspects of information activities; the Commission's campaign should stress the state of European construction as a whole, while the European Parliament's campaign will need to emphasize the particular role of that institution and its state of evolution;

Launching the information campaign

10. Considers that the flow of information needed to ensure the effectiveness of the information campaign should be provided immediately through more concentrated use of the appropriations entered in the 'general information' budget of the European Parliament and the Commission, and selection of those of the existing instruments which prove to be the most profitable for the campaign, paying especial attention to such opportunities as may be afforded by new communication technologies;

11. Encourages, therefore, the Commission of the European Communities immediately to bring its information policy to bear on the issues raised by the forthcoming direct elections to the European Parliament, pending completion of a detailed full-scale programme which should be implemented outside election periods;

Means of information

12. Calls for this programme to be prepared with the support of more specialist bodies, including the broadcasting and press organizations;
13. Emphasizes the contribution to the general information campaign which may be made by the organizations or movements which, by reason of the European character of their activities, have a multiplier effect on public opinion;
14. Hopes that information activities will be decentralized to ensure greater local and sectoral relevance; considers in this respect that the establishment of local coordinating teams, well-acquainted with the possibilities and requirements of audio-visual coverage might be envisaged;
15. Supports the endeavours of the relevant services to improve the presentation of information intended for use by the mass media;

Content of the campaign

16. Considers that the information campaign should centre on the following fundamental themes :
 - European integration is a factor for peace and stability in international relations as well as for economic and social progress;
 - European integration creates greater advantages for the public and the Member States than could be obtained from national policies alone; these advantages will need to be clearly formulated and documented;
 - the European Parliament, as the democratic voice of the Community, has a key supervisory and decision-making role to play which should be illustrated in the light of initiatives and decisions taken by Parliament, whether they have been effective or have failed through obstruction of various kinds as well as of the proposals for institutional reform drawn up by the elected Parliament during its term of office in order to remove the causes of the current stagnation of the Community

decision-making process;

17. Underlines the need for basic information intended for the general public, recalling the central ideas and the main aspects of European construction;
18. Emphasizes further the need to cultivate in the younger generation an understanding of the motives which inspired the creation of the Community and which retain their full significance today; the continuing validity of these motives and their relevance for the future should be shown and formulated anew;
19. Emphasizes the benefits to information policy which would stem from a term of office of the same duration for both the European Parliament and the Commission, in view of the latter's executive role;
20. Emphasizes the inefficiency in information policy arising from the multiplicity of the European Parliament's places of work, and draws attention to the advantages which would ensue if Parliament were to pronounce in favour of a single work-place by 1984;
21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission of the European Communities, and to the parliaments and governments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTIntroduction

The Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport is responsible, as its name implies, for advising Parliament and the Bureau on information policy. Parliament's approach to this subject is set out clearly in the SCHALL report. Obviously, such a task is not unimportant when it comes to the information campaign for the elections to Parliament itself. The Committee has accordingly been authorized by the Bureau to draw up a report on the subject.

Nature of information

The issues raised by the 1984 elections will not coincide in all respects with those in 1979. For the first direct elections to the European Parliament there was in fact no question of being accountable under a direct mandate. This time it will be different. As a result, the information campaign is bound to have a much stronger party political accent. This means that the political parties and groups will be taking a fuller share.

Such a change will have to be reflected in the allocation of funds for the election information campaign - on which Parliament took a decision in principle in 1976. Moreover, 'objective' or neutral information will obviously be essential. Here it is important that not only the full range of party political views and differences but also the attitude of Parliament as such to the Commission and Council should be properly represented. It is all too often apparent that many voters know little of the nature and relevance of European activity.

In fact, more interest seems to be aroused by the serious stagnation of the European decision-making process. In any event there is a need, for more information on the interdependence of relations between Member States which has continued to grow despite everything.

It should also be noted that the broadcasting services, for instance, appear to be at least as interested in the use of facilities arranged through the non-political offices of Parliament and Commission than in the use of the typically party political channels.

This point emerged clearly from talks which the rapporteur and members of the Subcommittee on Information held with representatives of the audio-visual media. Again, this aspect needs to be considered.

Funds to be made available

To determine the level of funds reference might best be made to the amounts disbursed by the various political parties for national parliamentary elections and calculated per inhabitant. However, it has proved impossible to arrive at workable comparisons and, hence, solutions.

There is a general feeling nevertheless that the total amount made available for the first European elections of 34 m ECU should be regarded as a fairly generous sum. Admittedly it should be remembered that the Community has been enlarged to include Greece and that there has been considerable inflation. In any event, in deciding on the new figure account should be taken of the need for Parliament to use relatively limited funds in a highly efficient manner.

The Community has acquired a reputation for using its funds in a rather extravagant way, and this particularly applies to the European Parliament. Excessive expenditure during the information and election campaign would only aggravate this impression and would thus if anything increase public antipathy. For this reason the level of funds to be allocated also has its political aspect.

Hence it would be a sensible move to base the campaign on a modest budget, backed up by an increase in the use of funds earmarked for normal information. This applies to the Commission as well. It naturally does not also mean that suitable 'objective' information can be provided without making additional funds available. Nevertheless, a measure of voluntary restraint - not least on the part of the political groupings - would set a good example of the restraint which needs to be shown by all in view of the economic recession.

It would be useful for the Commission to clarify its function in relation to the European Parliament and also to the Council over the past years during the election campaign. This would enable the Commission to stress the achievements and advantages of the Community. There will be a particular need for such emphasis during the campaign.

Accountability

In its decision in principle on the provision of funds for the first direct elections Parliament stated : '... the (information) funds shall be managed by the enlarged Bureau in accordance with provisions and safeguards laid down pursuant to the Rules of Procedure...'. In the event, however, the arrangement reached was for rules arising from an agreement between the political group chairmen.

It must be noted that in its report published in early 1980 the Court of Auditors drew attention to the fact that not a single document had been produced by the political parties despite the agreement concluded by the group chairmen. It also pointed out that practical comparison was made more difficult by the absence of a uniform accounting procedure for the various political groups.

The resolution on revenue and expenditure for the 1983 financial year (Doc. 1-185/82) adopted by Parliament states that contributions for direct elections must be disbursed on the basis of the criteria and guidelines for control applied in 1977 (see Annex I) and that these must be improved and strengthened.

Particularly at the present time of economic austerity it is especially important that Parliament should be able to justify and account for the payment of appropriations with particular care. This makes it essential for the Bureau to draw up uniform rules binding on the political parties.

In this connection reference may also be made to a report drawn up by the Committee on Budgets and adopted by the enlarged Bureau early in 1979 (see Annex). Important points contained in the report are:

- .- each political group must ultimately be able to justify all payments made;
- .- payments should be made on the basis of preliminary estimates; and
- .- any residue should be repaid to Parliament.

It is a political necessity - affecting the public's response to the information campaign - that funds should be seen by the electorate to have been used accountably (and responsibly).

Status of political groupings

Unlike Parliament, the political groupings may be regarded legally speaking as outside organizations and hence third parties. In the provision of funds Articles 80 and 82 of the Financial Regulation will thus apply. These include the stipulation that any grants made to organizations which do not come under the auspices of the Institutions are paid on condition that the beneficiary agrees to an audit carried out by the Court of Auditors on the amount of grant paid.

Both the legality (compliance with the relevant provisions) and the regularity (proper bookkeeping) of such payments will thus be subject to external control. The political groups are bound by this requirement.

As regards internal control, there is room for improvement, as Parliament has already observed. What is needed is the same accounting procedure, applied in accordance with the Financial Regulation. Otherwise, as the Working Party on implementation of the Parliament budget, a sub-committee of the Committee on Budgetary Control, comments in Article 79 of its proposed internal rules for implementation of the budget: 'Financial control of the use by the political groups of their annual allocation shall be governed by the special provisions for each group, which shall adopt them by analogy with the provisions of the Financial Regulation.' It would be useful for this recommendation to be endorsed by Parliament as a whole.

Non-attached Members

In defining Article 3706 Parliament explicitly stipulated that this appropriation was intended to cover the political activities of the non-attached Members. A similar inference should therefore obviously be drawn for payments based on Article 3708.

Since this involves individual Members, separate rules are needed.

The new Parliament in 1984

It would be sensible to ensure that part (e.g. 25%) of the funds provided should be reserved for groupings represented in the new Parliament other than those represented there today. Reference could be made to an arrangement in the Federal Republic of Germany under which any political grouping attracting a minimum of 0.5% of the vote is entitled to financial assistance.

Criteria for the campaign

1. As a start, all existing facilities should be reviewed with an eye to making a specific campaign contribution. If possible a cost/benefit analysis should facilitate the choice of issues. An intensive and selective approach of this kind should largely obviate the need for extra funds. Such funds should in any case be based on programmes submitted well in advance.

2. Audio-visual information, and particularly television, should be regarded as an important campaign tool. There need to be consultations with both the national broadcasting organizations and those operating at international level to determine how they could be involved in the campaign activity.

The Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport has already been shown to have a specific interest in the matter. Taking this into account could influence the eventual allocation of funds, particularly with regard to the impact of the campaign.

3. Since these elections involve accountability under a directly obtained mandate for the first time, the emphasis should be placed predominantly on party political campaigning.

4. Prior to that it would be sensible to conduct a campaign to increase public awareness so as to improve the election turnout. In view of the forthcoming elections and campaigns by the political groupings, a general information campaign would seem a good idea in which emphasis is placed on the monitoring role of Parliament as an important democratic institution within the Community's institutional system.

Funding must be made available for this purpose on the basis of carefully considered programmes.

Furthermore a separate advertising operation will be needed to explain what it is that Parliament is aiming for. This should concentrate primarily on the results of five years' work. What has this achieved? Why is the role of the European Parliament indispensable? Apathy and indifference must be overcome. Since news is bound up with decision-making and influence, it must be shown where and how parliamentary decisions have been influential and also how Parliament plans ensure that its influence is increased.

5. Optimum use must be made of organizations whose activities have a European (international) dimension and as such are also involved in Community activities; these would include employer and employee organizations, Copra, consumer and environmental organizations, organizations connected with development and cooperation, universities, youth organizations, etc. (the opinion formers).

6. In connection with the above close cooperation between the Parliament and Commission services as well as the political groupings will be desirable to ensure that funds are used in an efficient and coordinated way. A campaign working party should perhaps be set up to this end on which - for coordination purposes - the political groupings are also represented.

7. There will be a need for geographical and operational decentralization of campaign activities. A bland and undifferentiated campaign is bound to lack appeal and will consequently be a waste of money. Coordinating teams for each country should therefore be commended. Here it should be remembered that the European idea is no longer a sufficient source of inspiration on its own. For many young people, who are unaware of the climate in which the European idea took hold and flourished, the purpose of close and responsible European cooperation must once again be made clear. This will also mean closer relations with the national parliaments. The more the European dimension is placed on their agendas, the more it will be written about and debated. There is still a widespread tendency to ignore the European implications. Yet much that happens in Europe is relevant on a national scale and the reverse is surely true of the major national problems. A list of directives (classified by the area of work concerned) would help to point this out.

8. In order to plan a relevant campaign there is a need for preliminary surveys, conducted well in advance, to find out what the electorate is concerned about, annoyed or attracted by in the European Community and not least in Parliament itself.

What is its image, and how familiar is it, particularly as regards achievements? A balanced strategy will not be possible without fore-knowledge and research.

9. For this reason it would be desirable to run a test campaign (including a test of different themes). It can be noted with satisfaction that the Bureau has already agreed to suggestions by the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport for more searching opinion polls. An intensive and long-term approach may be assumed to be necessary in order to acquaint the European electorate more fully with Parliament's work. This will need to show the voter what measures Parliament has taken to put an end to the inappropriate use of funds.

The electorate will naturally also need to know what Parliament has been doing on its behalf. This should include information on what specific initiatives Parliament has taken, what has been successfully implemented and what has not (yet) been achieved or has even been rejected, particularly by the Council. The kind of presentation which the media receive, e.g. from the permanent representatives, tends to be fairly partisan. The same applies to members of the Council of Ministers. This is reflected in the style of reporting. Is nationalism at its strongest in the governments of the Member States?

Parliament should receive support from the electorate for its stubborn efforts, still too often unsuccessful, to break the stalemate at the European level. Inadequate cooperation, and even reciprocal obstruction (in protectionism) account for the failure to escape from the economic crisis and the associated problem of unemployment and these are bound to form a central issue in the campaign.

Unless Parliament succeeds in getting across the overwhelming case for the European answer, it will fail on one essential point. Parliament must put that case in comprehensible terms.

10. The European Parliament would do well to realize just how much information policy is adversely affected by the existence of its various seats. Not only is this seen by the electorate as a vivid and discouraging sign of Parliament's impotence but it also means much lower coverage by the media, and hence much less constant attention than would otherwise be possible. It would be extremely valuable for Parliament to cut the Gordian knot.

11. In order to consolidate relations between Parliament and the Commission, the question might be raised as to whether they could not adopt identical terms of office. The investiture debate would thereby gain in significance, and the Commission's executive role would be enhanced. This would be an important step, not least in the direction of a more relevant information policy.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (DOCUMENT 1-773/82)

tabled by Mr BEUMER, Mr BROK, Mr HAHN, Mr PAPAPIETRO,
Mrs PRUVOT, Mr ROGALLA, Mr SCHWENCKE, Mr SIMMONDS

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on support for joint action by radio stations in
coverage of the 1984 elections

The European Parliament

- A. having regard to the fact that the "Euroservice" project for cooperation between radio stations in 1978/79 with a view to creating a joint programme during the run-up to the first European elections in 1979 could not be carried through on the scale envisaged, thus leaving unspent a large part of the grants made for this purpose by Parliament and Commission,
- B. whereas public knowledge of the development of European unification remains inadequate,
- C. conscious of the need to ensure a high at the next European elections in 1984,
- D. noting that a new initiative for joint action in the run-up to the 1984 elections has been taken up by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which has recently incorporated Euroservice into its news and current affairs working party,
 1. Welcomes this new initiative by the EBU to set up a framework for joint action in order to provide a European dimension to radio coverage of the 1984 elections in all member states;
 2. Calls on the European Broadcasting Union and its members to implement the Euroservice project and to submit to Parliament detailed programme proposals and cost estimates, together with a financial report on the 1979 grants;
 3. Resolves to support the project as far as it is able, so as to prevent this plan from failing because of financial difficulties;
 4. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

In the run-up to the first European elections the European Parliament and the Commission each contributed a grant of 300,000 ECU to a project for joint programmes (Euroservice) envisaged by an ad-hoc group of radio stations. The project was not realised on the scale proposed, with the result that approximately two thirds of the grants remain unspent.

A new initiative by various radio stations for joint programming in the run-up to the 1984 elections has recently been taken over by the European Broadcasting Union, which has given the task of realising the project to its news and current affairs working party.

The joint action group are seeking the institutions' approval to use the unspent balance of grants made for the 1979 elections; they further request additional aid not exceeding the total grants made in 1979.

Since the group propose to begin transmitting joint radio programmes by mid-1983, an immediate decision is necessary to make due funds available in the 1983 budget.