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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth

on the ~~information~~ programme 1974-1975 of the Commission of the European
Communities

Rapporteur : Mr J.B. BROEKSZ
Chairman of the Committee



By letter of 1 March 1974, the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth requested authorization to prepare a report on the Information Programme 1974-1975 of the Commission of the European Communities.

By letter of 11 March 1974, the President of the European Parliament authorized the committee to report on this matter.

On 12 March 1974, the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth appointed Mr Broeksz rapporteur.

It considered the draft report at its meetings of 8 April 1974 and 8 May 1974 and unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement at the latter meeting.

The following were present: Mr Broeksz, chairman and rapporteur; Mr John Hill, Mr Hougardy, Mr Knud Nielsen, Mr Noé (deputizing for Mr Giraud), Mr Seefeld, Mr Thornley, Mr Van der Sanden, Mr Verhaegen, Mr Walkhoff and Mrs Walz.

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The Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement:

A

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the Information Programme 1974-1975 of the Commission of the European Communities

The European Parliament,

- once again drawing attention to the importance of the effective information of public opinion in the countries of the Community for the gradual development of a European awareness and to the need for a loyal attitude on the part of the public so that it will cooperate in the realization of the process of European integration, the aim of which is the creation of a European Union;
 - recalling its resolution of 10 February 1972 on the information policy of the European Communities,¹
 - having regard to the report by the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth (Doc. 106/74);
1. Notes with approval the aims, priorities and methods for information policy set out by the European Commission for 1974 and 1975;
 2. Agrees with the Commission that the effectiveness and success of this policy depends to a great extent on the achievement within a reasonable time of practical results in the implementation of the programme established during the Paris Conference of Heads of State or Government;
 3. Urges the Governments of the Member States, duly bearing in mind that the positive cooperation of the European people is required for the development of European integration, to take definite action, now in order to make a genuine Community policy possible at a very early

¹OJ No. C 19, 28 February 1972, p. 32

date in all the sectors which are important for the future of Europe and to take decisions to increase the effectiveness of the institutions and accelerate the process of democratization of the Community;

4. Considers it the duty of the Governments of Member States and of all the institutions of the Community to use all appropriate means to point out, particularly to youth, the necessity of the European process of integration for the creation of optimum living conditions and personal development opportunities for future generations, and for contributing to a peaceful solution of the extensive problems facing Europe and other countries of the world;
5. Stresses the Commission's duty to highlight the role to be played by young people in the construction of Europe in the information it passes to them and through the importance attached to the formation of a Committee for Youth Questions and a Youth Advisory Committee, for which proposals have been submitted;
6. Reminds Member States of their obligation under Article 50 of the EEC Treaty to encourage the exchange of young workers within the framework of a joint programme;
7. Considers it wrong that the groups which in the Commission's view must be given priority in the field of information should not include consumers;
8. Is aware of the special problems of the new Member States in the sphere of information about European problems, and emphasizes the need to contribute, by means of a specific information policy, to greater awareness and a positive assessment in the new Member States of the objectives and activities of the Community;
9. Is pleased that the Commission has clearly appreciated the special measures which are necessary to gain an insight into the information needs of the various sections of the population and points out that all these measures must be given practical form; expresses the hope that the Commission will be able to continue to improve its information policy by means of opinion polls and a critical assessment of the information returns;
10. Calls for a closer examination to be made within the framework of the information programme of the need to strengthen the press and information offices and of the role of these offices and of the disseminators in achieving greater involvement of the population in the Community and furthermore draws attention to the importance of systematic investigations into the availability of information on Europe to the various sections of the public;

11. Believes that a thorough investigation of the role of mass media and modern audio-visual aids in providing information is of great importance and that particular attention should be devoted to the use of video-cassettes;
12. Notes with approval the Commission's plan to give increased consideration, in the proposed priority subjects, to steps to remove obstacles to the free movement of persons and goods and to ensure the mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas which are matters of great importance to the European public;
13. Believes that the resources for the information of teachers and those working in the field of adult education should be fully exploited and that it is desirable to train them, in a European context, to use new teaching materials in the most effective way; points to the need to ensure that the information material intended for teachers is in fact made available to them;
14. Feels that information on European integration can be given in the upper classes of primary schools, provided this is done in a didactically responsible manner, and to this end urges the Commission to compile suitable reading material in cooperation with teachers and to take any other useful action;
15. Asks for measures to be taken to bring the reception facilities for groups of visitors in Brussels into line with the information requirements of those who wish to gain a coherent impression of the Community's activities while visiting the Commission's headquarters and expects adequate personnel to be provided for this purpose by the information offices in the Member States at an early date;
16. Notes with approval the Commission's plan to systematically review policy on publications and emphasises the importance of periodical and other **publications** for the creation of a broad flow of information from the Community to the people, and from the people to the Community;
17. Considers quicker reaction to events and decisions of significance to Europe of great importance if information is to be effective;
18. Notes with pleasure that a central documentation service is to be created to support the national Information Offices and urges that these offices should be adequately staffed in order to fulfil their tasks efficiently;
19. Considers it important to have, at the earliest opportunity, an account of the appropriations made available to the Commission for the implementation of its 1974-75 information programme;

20. Appeals to the Governments of the Member States to give their constant backing to the Commission and to support it in every respect in its task of fulfilling the objectives of the Information Programme 1974/1975;
21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Council and Commission of the European Communities and for information to the Governments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. The main task of the Commission's information policy during the coming years is the realization of the objective formulated by President Ortolí in his speech to the European Parliament in February 1973: 'It is essential to associate the peoples of Europe with the building of the Community.' One of the means by which this could be achieved is by 'objective and accessible information.' The Commission appreciates that the realization of this objective depends to a great extent on the resolve or lack of resolve of the Governments of the Member States to put the programme which was approved at the Paris Summit into effect. If this is not done within the deadline set, it may indeed diminish interest in the Community and rouse criticism of the Community as such.

There is, therefore, every reason to draw attention to the close link between the effectiveness of information given by the Community and the successful creation of the European Union including progress which must be made in the short term towards coordination of policy on political, economic, social and regional matters.

The Commission is fully aware of the seriousness of the situation and it is, therefore, to be welcomed that clear priorities are given for information both with respect to the subjects to be dealt with and with respect to the target audiences and the choice of media and methods. The Commission has also drawn up priorities for the provision of information to third countries, bearing in mind the nature of the relations existing between these countries and the Community, and the present information requirements.

The Commission also considers it vitally important for the results of its information policy to be followed as closely as possible and for the extent to which certain measures are required in the light of possible new requirements to be investigated.

2. In order to ensure a more effective information policy, the Commission took a number of decisions on 26 September 1973, concerning inter alia the reorganization of Directorate-General X, a definition of the duties of the Spokesman's Group, and efficient cooperation between these services. It is also acknowledged that cooperation with the information services of the Member States and with the information services of the other Community institutions must be strengthened.

3. The strong criticism of the Community, especially in the new Member States, the United Kingdom and Denmark has been noted. This criticism is described in very general terms. It is important to form a precise picture of the nature and background of this criticism. Especially in the

new Member States, it could be very useful to carry out a prior investigation of the needs and attitudes of the various sections of the population vis-à-vis the Community in order to offer the most effective information possible from the outset. To provide for this, the Commission has formulated a number of principles which are, however, not put into practical terms.

It is admitted that various measures are needed to adjust information to the requirements of the public, based on decentralization of information. To this end, the Commission's information programme provides for the creation of sub-offices and a larger, but more selective, use of disseminators whilst the reorganization of D-G.X will provide for information at three levels (daily reporting - documentation - complete detailed information).

4. The information programme could have been more specific on the necessary building up of press and information offices and the possible role of disseminators in the analysis and processing of return information, opinion polls, etc.

It would also be useful if the Commission could indicate which sections of the population were most receptive to European information. Investigations in such fields could provide valuable guidance for information policy.

5. The programme goes on to admit the necessity of the greatest possible publicity on moves to abolish frontier obstacles and moves towards mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas, and with respect to the recent proposals for greater budgetary powers for the European Parliament. In view of the controversial nature of these proposals, your committee feels, however, that information on this subject should be provided by the information services of the European Parliament. Clear information on the democratization of the Community in the context of the objective of a European Union may well contribute to greater understanding and better judgement on the part of public opinion. In this connection, it is very important for the Commission to maintain fruitful contacts with journalists, experts, specialized organizations in the Member States, etc. D-G.X is at present looking into such contacts.

6. The priority target audiences for information given are:

1. the trade unions;
2. youth;
3. teachers;
4. political circles

It should first be noted that the above list does not include consumers. Your committee feels that this must be emphasized since there is growing awareness of the need for measures to protect the consumer and since the Commission has already made an initial statement on a coordinated consumer policy.

In the case of youth, D-G.X provides information on the activities of the Community to youth organizations at both Community and national level. Youth policy in connection with the Commission's proposals on the creation of advisory bodies for youth questions also comes within the terms of reference of D-G.X. The appropriations earmarked by the Commission for youth in the 1972 preliminary draft budget are not mentioned in the information programme.

With regard to a Community youth policy, it should also be pointed out that under Article 50 of the EEC Treaty the Member States are obliged to encourage the exchange of young workers.

7. As regards education, information will have to be concentrated particularly on secondary schools, higher education and adult education. It would appear useful for a start to be made with information on Europe in the upper classes of primary schools, on condition that this subject is dealt with in a clear and didactically responsible manner. Means have already been developed for providing teachers with the necessary material, such as the European Studies (Teachers' series) the organization of symposia, lectures, etc. It is hoped that these will maintain interest in Europe among teachers and encourage them to give consideration to European problems in their teaching. Mass media and modern audio-visual teaching aids could play an important part in teaching and especially in adult education. Although it is stated that the Commission must devote special attention to such resources in order to reach public opinion, it is very important to prepare the teachers concerned for the use of these new technical resources in a European context. The Commission should develop courses and training programmes for this purpose, in cooperation with the national authorities.

8. The Commission is considering concentrating its efforts on mass media, such as radio and television. In this connection, your committee believes it is important to make a detailed study of the possible role of such media in the dissemination of information. In view of the expected increases in the use of video-cassettes, particular attention should be paid to this medium in the study.

9. D-G.X is at present compiling tapes for a number of local radio stations in the Member States and also producing a number of films. One drawback of information films is that they are often seen as propaganda by the public at large. However, good experience had been gained with films for groups of visitors.

10. Policy in respect of publications is given a very important place. D-G.X publishes monthly magazines in all the Community languages. Generally speaking, the reactions of the public who read these magazines are favourable. It is indeed possible to carry on a dialogue with a large section of the population by such a medium.

The Commission does, in fact, intend to continue publishing periodicals and at the same time, to systematically revise and adapt circulation files so that its political preoccupations are reflected more directly. The Commission admits that information feedback from the recipients of magazines should be processed more systematically.

It should also be pointed out in this connection that there must be quick reaction to any European problems that arise and generally to any significant Community activity so that the public is correctly informed and positively influenced from the outset. It is necessary to ensure that such reaction is quicker than has been the case in the past.

11. With regard to the reception of groups of visitors, there is the problem of a shortage of rooms with simultaneous interpreting facilities. D-G. X has introduced strict criteria for the selection of visitors, based on the priorities fixed for information policy. Attention is now being given to the possibility of Information Offices increasing their capacity to receive groups and thus to supplement the Commission's capacity. These offices represent the most important means for the Commission to maintain direct contact with the public in Member States. It is, therefore, very important for them to be in a position to work efficiently. For this purpose, it is proposed to give priority to the creation of a documentation service in cooperation with the Spokesman's Group, as part of the plans for the creation of a modern documentation centre (ECDOC).

12. The Commission has decided to set up sub-offices in England and Italy and the possibility of having such offices in other Member States is being studied. Practical proposals are to be made on this in the 1975 budget programme.

13. Priorities are also established for the information policy for third countries. They are determined by the need to safeguard economic interests, vis-à-vis the Community's main trading partners, links with the Associated States and with countries with which the Community has concluded free trade agreements. The Commission has naturally also fixed priorities in respect of the subjects of greatest interest to these countries. The Commission gives priority to the establishment and development of 'correspondents' comprising associations outside the Community which are capable of offering a platform to Community speakers. Direct personal contact, supported by adequate documentation and 'follow-up' is seen as the most efficient way of reaching the relevant persons and sections of the population.

Naturally, the implementation of an information programme depends, to a large extent, on the existence of an adequate infrastructure in the third countries. This may consist of press and information offices of the Commission, and of press attachés and consuls of the diplomatic missions of Member States in third countries. The existing cooperation between the press and information offices of the Commission, and the press attachés of diplomatic missions of the Member States was given official status by the Council decision of 31 January 1972. This cooperation is reflected in reports to the Council and Commission on the situation in the country concerned.

14. The following observations arise from the above points:

- (a) the Information Programme gives a fairly complete outline of the objectives, priorities and resources of the European Commission's information policy.
- (b) As the aim of the information programme is to give general guidance, it is understandable that various subjects are only briefly indicated and not formulated in more detailed terms. This is particularly true of the practical measures necessary to ensure the prior investigation and critical assessment of the attitude of public opinion to the Community in the new Member States. It is stated that information must play an important role in associating the peoples of Europe with the Community, but it would perhaps be useful to indicate explicitly what tasks must be covered by the press and information offices and the disseminators. Here the Commission has great expectations of the decentralization of information services and the reorganization of D-G. X.

- (c) The importance of modern audio-visual media for reaching public opinion is also recognized. It would, however, be highly desirable for the Commission to institute an in-depth investigation of the enormous potential of these media which could play an important part both in providing the European public with information and in education policy. In order to ensure the proper use of such new media, the Commission should work out courses and training programmes at European level for teachers.
- (d) The effectiveness of national information offices could be increased by the establishment of a documentation service as proposed by the Commission. At the same time, it is important to know what other means are being considered for the consolidation of Information Offices. Although new offices have been established in Copenhagen and Dublin, and the staff of the London office has been increased, it is admitted that some other offices are experiencing serious difficulties and should really have more staff and resources. The Commission should, therefore, indicate how it intends to provide adequate staffing for the Information Offices and by what date such staffing can be successfully achieved.
- (e) If the policy on publications is being systematically revised, it would also be worthwhile ascertaining exactly which of the publications produced by D-G.X have been discontinued and which have been maintained, with data on circulation and distribution. Does the Commission perhaps intend to increase the number of periodicals, especially in the new Member States?

It is also important to know what steps the Commission envisages to expand the facilities and reception services for groups of visitors in Brussels and what criteria are, in fact, applied for the selection of such groups.

Although it may be desirable for groups of visitors to be received by the Information Offices, this should not be regarded as a substitute for the possibility of their visiting the Commission's headquarters in Brussels to obtain first-hand information. Finally, it is, of course, important for the Commission to give, at the earliest opportunity, an overall account of the appropriations which are being requested for the various items of the 1974-1975 information programme.