



**COUNCIL OF
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INFORMATION NOTE

From : the Working Party on Information
To : Coreper (2nd part)
Subject : EU common communication priorities for 2010

1. The political declaration on "Communicating Europe in Partnership" ¹ signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 22 October 2008 aims, *inter alia*, to seek convergence of views on the identification, in the context of the communication strategies, of a limited number of communication topics of concern for the EU citizens.

2. At its meetings on 4 and 23 November 2009, the Working Party on Information (WPI) examined draft proposals from the Commission on the identification of possible common communication priorities for 2010, pending the appointment of the new Commission. At that stage, the Commission identified three possible interinstitutional communication priorities:
 - a. "Driving the economic recovery and mobilising new sources of growth" (follow-up to the 2009 priority "EU's response to the financial crisis and economic slowdown"),
 - b. "Energy - Climate change and biodiversity"; and
 - c. "Making the Lisbon Treaty work for Citizens".

¹ OJ C 13 of 20.1.2009, p. 3

At its meeting on 23 November 2009, the WPI broadly agreed on the three topics suggested by the Commission. However, having regard to the increasing relevance of additional themes and their impact on the EU's agenda, several delegations stressed the need to consider as a common priority also the communication on macro-regional development and on energy security. Other delegations expressed some concerns about a too generic definition of the priority "Making the Lisbon Treaty work for Citizens" as well as for the absence of the "role of the EU in the world" from the suggested list of EU common priorities.

3. In its communication adopted on 31 March 2010 containing its "Work Programme 2010 - time to act"¹, the Commission confirmed the common communication priorities initially foreseen in November 2009. Only the denomination of one of the three topics has slightly changed: instead of "Energy - climate change and biodiversity", the Commission proposed "Climate action and energy".
4. The concept paper at Annex, drawn up by the Commission on 14 April 2010 in view of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Group on Information (IGI) in Strasbourg on 20 April, explains the typology of the different action areas comprised in the three common priorities and the possible impact of work in synergy and in partnership when communicating with the citizens on those key issues. In particular:
 - a. the Commission took onboard the need to communicate on "energy security" and the "macro-regional dimension";
 - b. an explicit reference was made to a "stronger role for the EU in the world" in the context of the EU's external policy, within the topic "making the Lisbon Treaty work for Citizens";
 - c. the Commission suggested to take onboard the abovementioned topics in a multi-annual perspective, since it considers that the suggested priorities concern longstanding issues which will keep all the key actors involved for the years to come and require adequate advance planning;

¹ Doc. 8388/10 (COM(2010) 135 final vol. I - see Chapter 5.2)

- d. the Commission indicated that "the communication strategy will have to take into account the different key concerns and interests of the various Member States". In substance, it agreed with a flexible approach, in order to adapt the information campaigns to the national and trans-national realities, for example through the partnership agreements.
5. At its meeting on 16 April 2010, the Working Party on Information confirmed its preliminary broad agreement recorded in November 2009. However :
- a. In order to prevent misleading perceptions, some delegations asked the Commission to amend its explanatory paper to indicate in more explicit terms that the communication on the macro-regional dimension does not only have a national or local connotation, but is a trans-national issue requiring attention at central level¹. The Commission agreed with this modification (see last paragraph of the document at Annex).
- b. The WPI agreed with the multiannual approach. However, whilst reiterating the broad agreement reached by the Member States on the three priorities as suggested by the Commission, delegations reserved the right to make adaptations on a yearly basis (in line with the political declaration on "Communicating Europe in Partnership) as appropriate.
6. At the last IGI meeting on 20 April 2010, the Council's representative welcomed the increasing number of partnership agreements signed by Member States and the Commission in the field of communication and shared the Commission's view on the effectiveness of work in partnership as a key instrument to facilitate the implementation of the common priorities.

With regard to the multi-annual perspective (2010-2011) envisaged by the Commission, the Council's representative accordingly reiterated the agreement reached by the WPI on the three main priorities, with a revision clause to cover a shift of priorities at the end of each year, if Member States deem it necessary.

¹ Several delegations supported the request by the Finnish delegation to ask the Commission to amend the last sentence of its paper as follows:
"This regional cooperation should therefore be included in the relevant national and regional communication plans implementing the above communication priorities ", in addition to the communication input by the EU based on commonly accepted strategies and policies".

The question of the Commission's suggestion to draw up annual reports on the information activities carried out at local level requires further reflection. Member States already expressed some concerns as this could imply additional burdening administrative tasks. Such exercises could take place on a voluntary basis.

7. **At its meeting on 28 May 2010, the WPI was debriefed on the IGI proceedings and reiterated its favourable orientation on the EU priorities identified for 2010 and 2011.**

Several delegations stressed the need, when communicating on the common priority "*Driving the economic recovery and mobilising new sources of growth*", to take due account of the developments of the global financial crisis (persisting uncertainties of the markets, impact on the stability of the Euro currency, drastic economic measures being adopted by Member States). Success in the communication will depend on how Member States and EU institutions will be able to adapt their communication strategies on this topic and on the other priorities to the changing realities.

Some delegations drew the WPI's attention to the new communication "Digital Agenda for Europe"¹ adopted by the European Commission as one of the boosting initiatives to promote the "Europe 2020 Strategy" objectives². They indicated that, when implementing the common communication priorities, Member States should endeavour to exploit, *inter alia*, the full potential of the Agenda, which could play a key role to accelerate recovery, stimulate the economic and social development and regenerate the economic growth in the EU. The WPI welcomed this suggestion and agreed that flexibility in the implementation of the common priorities remains crucial.

¹ Docs. 9981/10 (COM(2010) 245 final) and 10130/10 ("TTE" Council Conclusions on 31.5.2010).

² Doc. 7110/10 (COM(2010) 2020 final).

CONCLUSION

8. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to take note of delegations' favourable orientations on the common communication priorities in the light of the IGI meeting on 20 April 2010 and ensuing from the debate within the WPI's meeting on 28 May 2010.

 9. According to the political declaration on "Communicating Europe in Partnership" EU institutions and Member States will endeavour to promote appropriate support for communication on the common priorities. It is pointed out that, while confirming the favourable approach to the work in partnership, concrete implementation will continue to be left up to the EU institutions and to individual Member States, respecting the individual responsibility of each EU institution and Member State for its own communication strategy and priorities.
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Possible inter-institutional Communication priorities for 2010

Following **President Barroso's Political guidelines for the next Commission** of September 2009 and the commitments he took vis-à-vis the EP and the Council, the College has adopted its work programme (CWP) for 2010¹ on 31 March 2010, focusing on four strands of action:

- Exiting from the crisis and sustaining Europe's social market economy.
- Building a citizens' agenda which puts people at the heart of European action.
- Developing an ambitious and coherent external agenda with global outreach.
- Modernising EU instruments and ways of working.

The Work Programme takes a multiannual perspective, reflecting the reality that major policy initiatives require planning, preparation and analysis, and that much of the Commission's energies this year will focus on initiatives to be adopted in subsequent years.

In this context, the **three main Communication priorities** of the Commission for 2010 will be:

1. Driving the economic recovery and mobilising new sources of growth.
2. Climate action and energy.
3. Making the Lisbon Treaty work for Citizens.

The **first two priorities are ranking top on EU citizens' immediate concerns**. With the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, there is a need to explain to the public in simple, concrete terms the **impacts of this new Lisbon Treaty on citizens' daily life**, the workings of the EU and its policies as reformed by the Treaty and the benefit of belonging to the EU.

¹ COM(2010)135 final

1. Driving the economic recovery and mobilising new sources of growth

- As Europeans are mostly concerned over unemployment (52%) and the economic situation (46%), it should be explained what the EU is doing to tackle these fundamental issues. Unemployment rate is expected to increase to at least 11.5% in 2010 for EU 27. Uncertainties still remain on the strength of the recovery of the European economy in 2010.
- This gives floor to an increasing expectation on taking actions at EU level, and provides a momentum to explain how the **EU's coordinated action add value to the national economic and employment situation in the Member States.**
- Actions taken at the EU level should be explained in concrete terms by highlighting **the EU's core economic assets**: the benefits of the single market, the Euro stability, the advantages of the EU's competition policy, the new system of financial supervision and the coordinated exit strategies taken by Member States.
- In parallel, the **Europe 2020 strategy** will focus on the drivers of Europe's social market economy for the coming years: a **smart growth** by developing a knowledge-based economy led by research, education and innovation; a **sustainable growth** promoting low-carbon and resource-efficient activities; and **inclusive growth**, fostering high employment levels delivering social and territorial cohesion.
- In this context, the EU's policies aim at favouring the **creation of new sources of growth and jobs** exploiting fully the potential for "green jobs" and the SME-supporting policies. Communication would focus on how EU programmes help Member States to equip people with the necessary updated skills.
- However, the EU institutions should carefully consider the **gap between the citizens' immediate concerns and expectations and the EU's strategy and competencies** in delivering policies in the employment area.

- The **European Year for combating Poverty and Social Exclusion** provides a good framework to present concrete EU activities to protect and help the most exposed people to fight unemployment and access labour market.
- Naturally, the communication strategy will **take into account the different key concerns and interests of the various Member States** and across different stakeholder/target groups so as to raise fitted awareness and gain the largest realistic support.

2. Climate action and energy

- Most European citizens think that industry is not doing enough to address climate change and that fighting climate change can have a positive impact on the economy (last Eurobarometer survey of autumn 2009).
- Given the acceptance of the EU's role on **fighting climate change**, there should be a **shift from simply raising awareness** following the COP 15 conference in Copenhagen in December 2009 to explain more in-depth the main elements of a possible global deal, including measures to adapt to climate change and the commitment to developing countries.
- The narrative provided under the flagship initiative “Resource efficient Europe” in Europe 2020's should be considered as a framework, while focusing on specific aspects such as energy efficiency, with key actions to achieve the energy saving potential of 20% in building and transport services or a strategy to ensure secure, sustainable and competitive energy supplies for households and firms.
- Intrinsically linked to the fight against climate change are the implementation of the action plan on energy efficiency to reach EU's 20 % target by 2020 and the measures to decarbonise transport as one of the major initiatives in 2010 with an important impact on citizens' every day life.

- The move towards a low carbon economy, the advantages of exploiting the potential of EU environmentally-friendly industries, services and **technology** will remain top in the EU's efforts for the next few years.
- Last but not least, **energy security** will definitely continue being one of the hot topics in 2010, with the expansion of physical infrastructures and a fully developed internal energy market, which should make Europe less dependable of foreign energy supply.
- Communication should therefore aim at **increasing visibility and generating support for EU climate policies** and at **the transition to a sustainable growth** based on a **low-carbon economy, and energy security**.
- The above mentioned issues are of interest to a large audience, from public authorities to citizens, through stakeholders. In order to implement efficient communication strategies, specific target audiences and key messages will need to be carefully identified.

3. Making the Lisbon Treaty work for Citizens

- Although in public perception European institutions are somewhat less trusted than before, the level of confidence in the EU is still considerably higher than in national governments and parliaments (see recent Eurobarometer surveys). There is **widespread public support for more EU-level decision making in key policy areas** of highest relevance to citizens which are **affected by the Lisbon Treaty**.
- There is need to demonstrate with concrete examples how the Lisbon Treaty renders the EU more democratic, more efficient and more able to act. This should also be the occasion to bring again the core values underlying the European Union to the attention of the citizens.
- Communication particularly highlights how the EU's increased role to act impacts policies such as **Justice, Liberty and Security** (e.g. the EU's increased capacity to combat terrorism) or **External policy** (the role and added-value of the reinforced High Representative and new institutions (European External Action Service) to ensure a stronger role for the EU in the world).

- Communication will show in detail the **democratic innovations** of the Lisbon Treaty in terms of direct and representative democracy, the new **citizens' right of initiative**, the **bigger role for** the EP and national **parliaments** in the decision-making process and the increased capacity to act (due to the **extended rules of qualified majority voting in the Council of ministers**) in areas such as the fight against organised crime and terrorism, border checks, immigration, civil protection, and social protection.
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights rendered legally binding by the Lisbon Treaty provides all European institutions with a common framework for linking concrete EU achievements to the underlying values of the EU when communicating to the public at large. This is key to meeting people's need for meaning in public affairs and especially in European affairs and raising their awareness of the political and historical dimension of the EU and its decision-making process.
- Besides the rights and freedoms of EU citizens as reinforced by the Charter and the European Citizens Initiative, the **rights of EU citizens** as students, workers, businesspeople and consumers will be also be highlighted.
- Access to information about how the EU works as reformed by the Lisbon Treaty is to be guaranteed in all Member States. At the same time communication must be differentiated, taking into account national sensitivities related to the Lisbon Treaty and European integration overall. Concerning target groups, communication will be geared towards different social groups which express particular concerns towards the EU in the various Member States. A preliminary choice of target groups valid in several countries is to include two key social groups: women and young people.

Taking into account the differing public attitudes and importance attached to EU-action in the areas mentioned above, communication will follow a decentralised and differentiated approach. The **macro regional cooperation** (such as Baltic, Mediterranean, Black Sea and Danube) is an important instrument in achieving the above mentioned policies. This regional cooperation should therefore be included in the relevant national and regional communication plans implementing the above communication priorities, in addition to the communication input by the EU based on commonly accepted strategies and policies¹.

¹ Amendments requested by the Council and accepted by the Commission.