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**COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION**

**Communicating Europe through audiovisual media**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The June 2007 European Council emphasised "the crucial importance of reinforcing communication with the European citizens, providing full and comprehensive information on the European Union and involving them in a permanent dialogue. This will be particularly important during the upcoming IGC and ratification process"<sup>1</sup>. Television and radio, as the primary media used by citizens of the European Union, have a key role to play. In line with the Commission's White Paper on a European Communication policy<sup>2</sup>, Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate<sup>3</sup> and Communicating Europe in Partnership<sup>4</sup>, better use of the audiovisual media should aim at supplying information in a form that is attractive to users, promotes active European citizenship and contributes to the development of a European public sphere.

This Communication (together with the Internet strategy paper of December 2007<sup>5</sup>) defines the Commission's approach to the audiovisual media and markets and builds on the Commission's decision<sup>6</sup> to support networks of EU-content broadcasters, and to double EbS's capacity so as to cover a wider range of EU activities. It includes a pragmatic Action Plan reflecting the outcome of studies, market analyses and opinion polls, as well as of the public consultation and stakeholder conferences. It creates synergies with other Commission initiatives, including those promoting transparency and openness, a Europe closer to the citizens, active European citizenship and European culture.

Finally, while mainly describing the Commission's strategy towards communicating Europe through audiovisual media, the Commission's proposed action plan will have a positive knock-on effect on all EU institutions. Just as EbS, Euronews and EUTube already do, the future broadcasters' networks will aim to cover the whole range and spectrum of EU related news, including activities of all EU institutions (see the Supporting document on Inter-institutional and internal frameworks and working methods, Chapter 1).

The proposals in this communication can be implemented within the existing multi-annual financial programming, as set out in SEC(2007)500 of May 2007.

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<sup>1</sup> European Council, 21-22 June 2007, Presidency Conclusions

<sup>2</sup> COM(2006) 35 – 1 February 2006

<sup>3</sup> COM(2005) 494 – 13 October 2005

<sup>4</sup> COM(2007) 568 – 3 October 2007

<sup>5</sup> "Communicating Europe via the Internet – Being Global, Going Local" SEC(2007) 1742

<sup>6</sup> Communicating Europe in Partnership, COM(2007) 568 – 3 October 2007, "*The Commission will contribute to greater and more sustainable coverage of EU affairs on existing audiovisual channels, and encourage European networking by broadcasters*".

## 2. SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE THROUGH AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

The oft-perceived deficit in terms of a debate on the European Union does not stem from a lack of information about the EU in the written media. While a certain part of the written press provides a “remarkable level” of European facts on debated issues, it is far from being the main source of information for the majority of the population. Daily newspapers reach between 30% and 70% of the adult population, and less than 30 minutes per day on average is spent reading them<sup>7</sup>. By contrast, more than 95% of the population watches television for an average of more than 3 hours a day.

One of the factors currently constraining a citizens' debate on the European Union is the very limited coverage of EU information in the audiovisual media. According to a recent Eurobarometer survey on audiovisual communication<sup>8</sup>, 64% of people are interested in news about the EU. Furthermore, citizens would prefer to receive this information on their favourite TV and radio channels. However, the EU-related information provided by national audiovisual media takes up less than 10% of the time allocated to national news. At least as much time is devoted to events or developments in the USA.

Moreover, a European public sphere exists only to the extent that traditional radio broadcasters have international, multilingual programmes and that broadcasters such as EuroNews, BBC World, Deutsche Welle, France 24 and Arte can offer pan-European programmes covering news items from several Member States, sometimes in various languages. Increasing EU-related cross-border programmes will contribute to the development of a European public sphere as well as to mutual understanding.

The biggest hurdle is the language issue. Developing programmes, images and multilingual content is costly and time-consuming. While capillary action with all TV and radio operators is not possible due to limited financial resources, the Commission can nevertheless use its resources to promote the broadcasting of EU content on networks of existing channels. This will be done in full compliance not only with the EU *acquis*<sup>9</sup>, but also taking into account the Council of Europe rules on freedom of expression and on the editorial freedom of the press, as well as the provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty on the definition of a public service mission and on financing in the audiovisual sector. This is why, in 2004, on the basis of best practices, the Commission drew up an EU editorial charter which forms part of all its contracts and guarantees the editorial independence of the media with whom contracts are signed.

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<sup>7</sup> World Association of Newspapers (WAN) estimates, World Press Trends 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Audio-Visual Communication (Flash Eurobarometer n° 199), March 2007

<sup>9</sup> In particular, Communication on the future of regulatory audiovisual policy (COM(2003) 784); Directive on Television without frontiers (89/552/EC); Directive on audiovisual services (2007/65/EC).

### **3. COMMISSION ACTION PLAN FOR AUDIOVISUAL COMMUNICATION**

The Action Plan uses a three-pronged approach in developing an audiovisual strategy to respond to the information and communication challenge and progressively increase the provision of EU content on European radio waves and TV screens:

- The Commission will make available to media professionals, free of charge, a greater quantity of broadcast quality raw material on EU affairs;
- To promote a wider availability of EU current affairs coverage, the Commission will develop and improve its policy of creating networks of TV channels, while respecting full editorial independence. The Commission will offer financial assistance to such networks through contracts similar to public service mission contracts;
- In line with its communication priorities, the Commission will also increase production and dissemination on its own platforms of high-quality edited audiovisual reports and VNRs (Video News Releases) that illustrate or explain EU policies.

#### **3.1. Facilitating coverage of EU news by broadcasters**

##### *3.1.1. Europe by Satellite (EbS)*

EbS is an inter-institutional service that provides broadcast-quality, up-to-the-minute free-of-charge audiovisual coverage of EU news to media professionals around the world. It exercises no editorial influence over broadcasters since it only provides raw material without comment. It offers live streaming of EU news via digital satellite, through the platform offered by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), and through the EbS portal on the Europa server. The material on offer also includes other pictures and sound as well as archive material.

EbS is considered by media professionals as the most useful tool for monitoring EU events. However, its present capacity cannot meet the increasingly demanding requirements of its users. Demand for time on EbS has reached saturation point, with live coverage of events conflicting with the transmission of press conferences and raw footage news packages for professional journalists. The capacity needs to be extended. This will be especially necessary from 2009, with the expected entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the creation of a President of the European Council, the elections to the European Parliament and wider applicability of the co-decision procedure.

The new capacity, which will require properly planned programme schedules publicly on display on screen and via the web, will be used in three different ways. Principally, it will extend the live/recorded coverage and scope of events in as many languages as are available at each event (for example European Parliament debates, which are interpreted in all languages, will be transmitted in all of these languages). In addition, it could offer a personalised service to TV channels and journalists through the broadcasting of material on demand. Finally, it could provide regional and specialised media as well as those groups already identified as *ad hoc* users of the existing EbS – citizens' interest groups, NGOs, academics – with greater transparency and in-depth coverage by offering them appropriate programming, and covering EU events more fully.

The Commission launched a monitoring/traceability operation in February 2008, which measures media usage of audiovisual content provided by the EU institutions, either by satellite or via the EbS website. Daily monitoring reports will be automatically generated and analysed by the Audiovisual Service of the Commission with the aim of enhancing operations.

The existing radio and TV studios in the Berlaymont building that serve EbS and the Commission's needs can be used free of charge by accredited journalists. More than 30 professional TV/Radio organisations regularly use the Berlaymont studios for more than 400 hours per year. This policy will continue.

*The Commission will increase the scope of EU content transmitted by EbS and double its capacity to provide, as of 2009, more users with more varied and in-depth coverage of EU news, paving the way for a more personalised service for TV channels.*

### 3.1.2. *The audiovisual library*

The audiovisual library is the memory of the European Commission and, to some extent, also of the other European institutions. It contains all the audiovisual material produced since the birth of the institutions, and provides interested parties with current and historical material: video, audio and photo. These valuable assets are increasingly made available for downloading via the Commission's Audiovisual Portal<sup>10</sup>, which is open to everyone via the Europa server's Internet pages and provides a direct link to the European Parliament's library. During preparations for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, those historical pictures were crucial in showcasing 50 years of working together. These and other images and sound are also regularly used by schools and academics.

Video content has become increasingly popular with citizens (via Internet in particular, YouTube is an example). There is greater demand from broadcasters for coverage of EU-related events. Much content is available from the Directorates-General in charge of specific policies, but there is no editorial line or real overview of what is available and where. Although the library is the central repository, it receives material regularly from only about half of the Commission DGs (see the Supporting document on Inter-institutional and internal frameworks and working methods, Chapter 2.4). However, a central video library can be of value to TV channels and journalists only if all relevant pictures are available.

To address these issues, the Commission has started:

- developing a media asset management system (BELUGA) to regulate the workflow of the Audiovisual Service and provide more facilities, such as several language versions;
- reinforcing the central repository of audiovisual material produced within the Commission, providing a web interface to the various Commission services to describe and transfer the material to the audiovisual portal which is to become a shared portal for pooling all audiovisual productions of the Commission;

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<sup>10</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/home/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/home/index_en.cfm)

- digitalising all audiovisual material with a view to increasing the volume of titles accessible online and through the search engine on the audiovisual portal;
- providing access to audiovisual material via other strategic applications, such as RAPID (the EU institutions press release database), the EU Affairs Calendar and Intracomm News.

*To maximise the Commission's role as a provider of EU affairs material, the audiovisual library will develop into a truly central repository, access point and dissemination source for all Commission's audiovisual productions.*

### 3.1.3. EU events calendar

Getting EU news into the media has proven difficult – not only for the reasons outlined above but also because planning tools are limited and it is hard to access the right information at the right time. It takes time and forward-planning to prepare TV and radio programmes (other than “hot news”), newspaper and Internet articles. Media professionals have repeatedly requested a tool that would give them advance notice of EU events and projects and their content, enabling them to select newsworthy items.

Such a tool would enable the Commission to draw the media's attention to upcoming events and help them to access basic and factual information on these events in all corners of the EU – in other words, to go local.

It is therefore proposed that the Commission launch an online, interactive EU events planner allowing the media and others to access background texts, videos, sound, facts and figures on a given event, and also on legislation and projects, weeks or even months in advance (see the Supporting document on Inter-institutional and internal frameworks and working methods, Chapter 3). Interested parties will be able to download the information or access the site where it is stored, via the Europa server, the EU press room site and EbS homepages on Europa.

*The Commission will launch a "one-stop-shop" EU events calendar on 1 June 2008, allowing all users to have advance notice of major events, to download pictures, sound and text on a given subject and to plan ahead.*

## **3.2. Promoting the broadcasting of EU content and supporting networks of broadcasters**

### 3.2.1. European radio network – EURANET

In line with the undertaking given by the Commission in its paper *Communicating Europe in Partnership*, adopted in October 2007, the Commission endeavours to boost coverage of EU-related features and news by inviting independent broadcasters to form networks. Networks of audiovisual media pooling production efforts and broadcasting similar kaleidoscopic programmes at similar times increase the outreach to the EU citizens. They increase the capacity to offer cross-border views of EU-related events and citizens' reactions. They also reduce the purely national angles and allow for multilingualism and media pluralism.

Such a policy has already begun. In December 2007 a network was set up, initially consisting of 16 radio stations (plus seven associated radio channels) from 13 Member States (see the Supporting document on Inter-institutional and internal frameworks and working methods, Chapter 4). Over a period of five years it will receive €5.8 million per year to produce and broadcast 4 221 hours of EU programmes per year, with full editorial independence. Initially, broadcasts will be in 10 languages but the number will gradually increase to 23. New members are welcome to join the network. The audiences will gradually grow, especially in the EU, with the expansion of the network.

*The Commission will continue supporting the European radio network, extending its reach and language coverage. The network started broadcasting in April 2008, initially in 10 languages, gradually increasing to 23. The network is expected to have an initial daily audience of 12-19 million listeners and its Internet portal is expected to generate 60-80 million page views per month. Moreover, it is open to new entrants.*

### 3.2.2. European TV network

The Commission will promote the creation of a network of European TV channels, with an associated internet portal, in order to facilitate production and distribution of EU-related programmes. This network will be similar in nature to the European radio network, although adapted to the specific needs of TV.

The European TV network will offer citizens programmes on EU affairs in their own language, but with a broader European approach than what is commonly available today. It will also allow these programmes to reach a large number of viewers, both through the participating TV channels in the primetime programme slots and through its web portal (for more detailed information see the Ex-ante evaluation, accompanying this Communication).

Beyond the benefits of production pooling, one advantage of such networks is the ability to cope with the language problem at quite low cost. The operational cost of the TV network is estimated at a minimum €8 million in the first year (2009). The TV network is expected to reach 60 million viewers per day or 15-20% of adult viewers in the EU.

To reach the widest audience and ensure interactivity, programmes will be adapted by broadcasters in as many languages as possible and distributed also on the web, through a multilingual portal, operated by the network. Each operator will insert the programmes produced by the European TV network in their schedules and give them a local angle.

The TV network will deliver the following results:

- Original production of EU-related news: up to 10 minutes per day.
- Regular weekly magazines on EU affairs: 25-55 minutes per week.

This adds up to over 70 hours of EU-related TV programmes per year, to be adapted and re-used across the network. In return, the Commission will be able to re-use some of the material produced by the broadcasters receiving EU support.

*To help develop a European public sphere, the Commission will endeavour to support a TV network by 2009-2010, increasing the amount of information about the EU for*

*citizens and making it available free of charge to broadcasters across Europe. Such networking will introduce points of view from other Member States into national reporting on the EU, as part of the effort to support the development of a European public sphere and should encourage other similar networks to develop.*

### 3.2.3. EuroNews

EuroNews has become the principal international news TV channel on the main European markets, equalling CNN in audience size. It is far ahead of its other competitors such as BBC World and Deutsche Welle, with a daily audience of 7 million. The channel, which is owned by a consortium of European and North-African public broadcasters produces news features and transnational magazine programmes as well as live coverage of EU events. A Community contribution to the operating costs, currently amounting to €10.8 million a year, has allowed EuroNews to extend its broadcasting to new languages and to develop its commentary and analysis programming beyond the regular news coverage. These programmes, drawn-up in full editorial independence add up to an equivalent one hour per day in 7 languages, plus an international version (images without text). These productions, available to others via the EBU exchange platform, can also be re-used by the Commission if the material is copyright-free.

From July 2008 EuroNews will produce and broadcast a full Arabic version on all its existing distribution platforms, including the Internet, and on satellites covering the Middle East and North Africa. Arabic will be its eighth language, potentially adding 164 million households (56.9% of the region's population) as potential viewers. Although part of the EU institutions' Public Diplomacy policy, the main objective is to reach the Arab-speaking community within the EU (see the Supporting document on Inter-institutional and internal frameworks and working methods, Chapter 5).

EuroNews has achieved a rapid expansion of its coverage, in terms of both languages and potential viewers, in recent years. This is a welcome contribution to European news coverage, and the Commission is ready to sustain its financial support to EuroNews activities in the future, with a view to broadening further the transmission to new European languages as well as to increasing the audience and geographical outreach of EuroNews. Such support must go hand-in-hand, however, with continued efforts by its shareholders to consolidate and expand the basis for EuroNews operations.

*Given the quality and regularity of EuroNews's EU information programmes, its pre-eminence and its large and growing audience, the Commission is prepared to continue providing support, with the expectation that EuroNews shareholders will continue to expand the number of European languages and the channel's outreach. The Commission's funding will ensure that the EuroNews service in Arabic starts broadcasting in July 2008.*

## 3.3. Improving the Commission's own audiovisual material

### 3.3.1. Video production

Responding to an ever-increasing demand from citizens and interested groups for high-quality video material, the Commission already produces video packages on a wide range of subjects. A budget of €1.8 million has been earmarked for video production, and the

Audiovisual Service is being reorganised with a view to producing more high-quality edited video reports in all the official EU languages and in different formats (broadcast quality, DVD, multimedia), illustrating or explaining EU policies to the wider public.

DG COMM is preparing specifications for new service contracts that will facilitate the production by Commission services of high-quality documentaries and video clips, covering a range of priority policy areas, relevant to the citizen, and aimed specifically at the general public.

*The Commission will increase production of its own audiovisual content. Video material will, as a priority, illustrate and explain what the Commission and the EU do in the chosen areas.*

### 3.3.2. Video and audio on demand

At present, the Commission offers three types of video on demand via the Audiovisual Portal on Europa: users can view current news material, they can download high-quality images and sound from EbS and the audiovisual library and broadcast this material on their channel, or they can watch videos on EUTube, a channel created by DG COMM in July 2007 to post citizen-oriented videos on YouTube (see the Supporting document on Inter-institutional and internal frameworks and working methods, Chapter 2.3).

Video packages are in principle available to broadcasters and citizens via the Commission's Audiovisual portal, but new ways of presenting this material are being explored. The Commission has the technical facilities to offer more, using its video production capacities and know-how and the various technological platforms at its disposal: satellite TV, audiovisual portal, EU events calendar, EUTube, podcasting and vodcasting and RSS feeds.

*DG COMM will put in place a strategy to maximise the video and audio on demand tools potential and manage their operation. This is already in place for EUTube, whose site is regularly updated. To date the videos on this site have been viewed more than 10 million times.*

### 3.3.3. Improving central guidelines for audiovisual products

The Commission also needs to improve the way it works internally. Given the need to present EU affairs coverage in a user-friendly way adapted to the format of the platform used, DG COMM will provide central guidelines on video production and dissemination aiming a fostering greater synergy between departments as well as increasing the overall effectiveness of the Commission's audiovisual policy. All of these guidelines and manuals, as well as information on available audiovisual service contracts, will be permanently available on DG COMM's WellComm intranet site, as part of a communication toolbox, at the disposal of all Commission services (see the Supporting document on Inter-institutional and internal frameworks and working methods, Chapter 2).

*DG COMM will provide common editorial, technical and legal guidelines for all Commission services, ensuring that our audiovisual products meet the requirements and are disseminated through various platforms and match citizens' expectations and habits.*

### 3.3.4. *Promotion of Commission products and activities*

Promotion of the Commission's audiovisual production will continue along the lines established over the past few years. The following actions are envisaged in this area:

- Presence at professional media fairs, such as Ecran total, MIPTV (Marché mondial des contenus audiovisuel et numériques), DISCOP (Content Business in Central and Eastern Europe) and NewsXchange (yearly conference of broadcasters);
- Updating and distributing DVDs, CD-roms and brochures presenting the Commission's audiovisual service to professional broadcasters, at international, national, regional and local levels, to draw their attention to the available audiovisual material;
- Arranging seminars for journalists;
- Enabling Commission staff to engage in open debate with a whole range of external interlocutors, including the media, to take forward these actions.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The Commission's overall objective, in the very fragmented, multifaceted and evolving audiovisual market, is to increase coverage of EU affairs and thus help people to engage in a properly informed and democratic debate on EU policies.

Building on the Commission's existing and successful tools and taking into account its limited financial and human resources, the Commission intends to take the following steps:

- (1) Increase the news content of EbS and double its capacity;
- (2) Reinforce the role of the audiovisual library as the memory of the Commission and the central access point for all the Commission's audiovisual productions;
- (3) Launch the EU events calendar in June 2008 and promote its use by professionals;
- (4) Prepare a network of TV channels in 2009-2010 in order to supply more information about the EU to citizens;
- (5) Continue cooperation with the European radio network, extending its reach and language coverage;
- (6) In conjunction with continued efforts by its shareholders to consolidate and expand the basis for its operations, continue support Euronews with a view to broaden further the transmission to new European languages. Ensure that the service in Arabic starts broadcasting in July 2008;
- (7) Increase the Commission's production of audiovisual content and improve distribution via different technological platforms;

- (8) Provide common guidelines on audiovisual productions for all Commission services to meet the requirements of the various platforms and match citizens' expectations and habits;
- (9) Promote the Commission's audiovisual products and activities more efficiently.

The Commission's proposed action plan will have a positive knock-on effect on all EU institutions. The most widely used inter-institutional audiovisual communication tool, Europe by Satellite (EbS) is run by an inter-institutional editorial committee which sets the programme schedule on a weekly basis. The European radio and TV networks will aim to cover the activities of all EU institutions, much as Euronews does. EUTube is of course already open to all EU institutions. The audiovisual communication services of the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament are finally also preparing a common manual for the EU institutions' own audiovisual productions

While the European Parliament is the second largest contributor to EbS after the Commission, it also runs its own web streaming service and is preparing to launch a new Web TV service, "europartv". Other EU institutions are regular contributors to EbS and are keen to expand coverage of Parliament and Council debates in particular (more information on inter-institutional developments can be found in the Supporting document on Inter-institutional and internal frameworks and working methods, Chapter 1).