3. Information policy

A3-0238/93

Resolution on the information policy of the European Community

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Communication from the Commission of the European Communities of 3 June 1991 on keeping young Europeans informed (SEC(91)1010),

— having regard to the Communication from the Commission of the European Communities of 2 September 1992 on a Youth Information Action Plan (COM(92)0297 — C3-0370/92),

— having regard to the motion for a resolution by Mrs André-Léonard on setting up an educational project to teach European awareness to children aged between eight and twelve (European Passport Project) (B3-0266/92),

— having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media and the opinion of the Committee on Budgets (A3-0238/93),

A. whereas politicians are accountable to the people for their decisions and information is therefore a democratic duty,

B. whereas European integration is based on working towards the objective of an international legal order, which must be characterized by democratic scrutiny and by solidarity among Member States, and is therefore a matter of interest to all citizens,

C. whereas the narrower emphasis on an economic community and the manifest disagreement within the Council about fundamental issues, including nurturing democracy, have undermined the interest and confidence of individual citizens,

D. whereas a complex decision-making process has made the workings of the Community somewhat opaque, resulting in a lack of information and an inability to communicate on the part of the Community,

E. whereas an information and communication policy can not compensate for what is structurally wrong or non-existent in the Community, and whereas such a policy should draw attention both to the positive aspects of the Community and to those which still require correction,

F. whereas the general public is still very vague and uninformed about the role of the European institutions and consequently only interest groups familiar with Community structures manage to influence decisions,

G. whereas information and communication policy must help to democratize politics and be aimed at reducing the gulf between citizens and politics, and should therefore:

— address all citizens, whether they support or criticize Community policy,

— not address itself exclusively to people who are involved on a professional or institutional basis, but to the public at large,

— give a clear and objective picture of the values of the Community,

— explain in plain and simple terms why and how particular political objectives are being pursued,

H. whereas

— the Commission should implement its information and communication policy whenever possible by means of dialogue,

— from now on, the Commission should inform the public in good time of its plans, not just through press releases, but also by means of targeted measures, so that individual citizens and organizations can make comments and thus help to shape opinion in the Commission, Parliament and the Council,

I. whereas, given the size and structure of its population, the Community must have adequate means of communication and a broadly decentralized structure for disseminating information,

J. whereas an effective Community information policy will not be achieved without the cooperation of national, regional and local bases,

K. whereas the democratization of politics and narrowing the gulf between citizens and politicians requires policy-makers and politicians to be aware of the information impact of their decisions at each stage in the policy-making process, and whereas information requirements should therefore be high on the list of priorities,

L. whereas the democratization of politics and narrowing the gulf between citizens and politicians must lead to changes in the operation of the communication services of the Commission and Parliament such as to place them under political supervision and ensure that they operate close to the political sphere, while safeguarding the independence and integrity of these services,

M. whereas Community information and communication policy, being a permanent political mission, is subject to parliamentary scrutiny, and whereas the Commission must present a clear picture of it to Parliament for that purpose,

N. whereas Parliament should feel responsible for its communication with individual citizens and make optimum use of its staff and services not only during election periods but at all times, and where this can not be done, must decide to reorganize or reduce budgets or even abolish services,

O. whereas the Commission must apply the original principles of European cooperation in numerous policy areas and should communicate with individual citizens with a view to imbuing them with a sense of the values on which European integration is based,

P. whereas, alongside the Community, the Member States have a role to play at their various levels in information on European policy,

Q. whereas there are individual citizens and groups who are committed to the cause of Europe and the Commission has a duty to support them in this mission while respecting their identity,

R. whereas attempts by the Council to introduce greater 'transparency' into the Community are purely makeshift measures which merely obscure the fact that the Council itself is the prime obstacle to democratically controllable decision-making,

S. whereas it is vital for the Community to be represented in other countries in order to disseminate its views on the rule of law and democracy,

T. whereas the allocation of the budgets available for communication should reflect the effectiveness of the various methods used and the Community's responsibility *vis-à-vis* Member States and other countries,

U. whereas the criteria for recruiting and appointing officials should include commitment to European principles and a dynamic approach, as well as professionalism, and whereas a career development policy should be introduced which offers career prospects and fosters mutual cooperation,

Friday, 17 September 1993

1. Considers that the political groups, in cooperation with their member parties, should provide citizens and their organizations with information that is as clear and objective as possible with a view to soliciting genuine support for European democracy;

2. Hopes that the Community will develop horizontal information channels to allow social groupings to explain European policies, their implementation and their implications to citizens in the areas of concern to them;

3. Stresses that information policy should also enable people to put their views to the Community institutions so that decisions are not influenced only by professional interest groups;

4. Considers that Community information policy is not monolithic but can be divided into two main areas:

— information policy in the wide sense covered by the media and targeted at the general public; this deals with legislation being drafted or in the course of adoption, progress in discussions between the institutions or within each of them, major projects undertaken, key moments in the life of the Community (European Council, Parliament debates, etc.)

— providing practical information on programmes, grants, Community legislation, etc. to citizens and to representative bodies in general.

Consequently, all the Community's services should be organized in a way that allows them to fulfil this two-fold task;

5. Points out that the Treaty on European Union contains an Article 138a concerning European political parties which 'contribute to forming European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union' and therefore calls on the Commission to draw up, in close cooperation with European political parties, a work programme implementing this aim of the Treaty;

6. Proposes to hold an annual debate on the policy pursued by its own services on the basis of a strategic concept, the debate being based on a report by its Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media;

7. Decides, in its campaign for 1994, to draw the attention of the electorate to the respective responsibilities of the various Community institutions in the decision-making process;

8. Takes the view that the press and audiovisual departments of Parliament based in Luxembourg should be moved to Brussels and that Parliament's library should be in Brussels;

9. Considers that the audiovisual services should be selectively available to delegations visiting third countries (including the ACP-EEC Joint Assembly) or in places other than the three places of work;

10. Calls on the Commission to submit its communication policy for parliamentary scrutiny by presenting an annual report;

11. Asks that the Commission should develop the organization of its communication policy so as to establish intensive contacts between communication services and policy-makers at all levels and at all stages of policy-making and that communication services should be placed under political management so that a dialogue is engaged with individual citizens, which should extend to preparatory stages;

12. Recommends that when the Commission is drawing up and implementing decisions it should put across in its information to the general public the political aims formulated by the European Parliament and the Council for the relevant decisions;

13. Calls on the Commission once again to set up and regularly update a comprehensive data bank containing information on Community funding and programmes in all the official Community languages; this data bank should be readily accessible in all information offices;

14. Hopes that efforts will be made to achieve practical cooperation between all the institutions on communication policy, for example in relation to data banks, the press-cuttings services, publications and groups of visitors;

15. Considers that group visits and seminars should help to give citizens consistent information on the Community and should be of a high standard and of benefit particularly to opinion multipliers;

16. Hopes that a special effort will be made in relation to young people and primary and secondary school children, who are denied access to the European institutions and who are often much more inspired by the European ideal than their elders;

17. Suggests that in arranging such visits and seminars it should be borne in mind that it may be possible to present all the European institutions located in the places concerned;

18. Considers that publications should provide answers to questions which are commonly asked and should enable individual citizens to enter into a dialogue on the political significance of policy;

19. Calls on the Commission to submit to it within one year a proposal for open government in the Community;

20. Considers that the existing arrangements for refunding to broadcasting organizations the costs of using facilities (satellite and microwave links) should be simplified for reports concerning Parliament and that more ample facilities should be made available to the media so that:

(a) Members of the European Parliament can use audiovisual facilities (in the evening as well as at other times) during part-sessions in Strasbourg and Brussels and also during committee meetings in Brussels;

(b) accredited journalists no longer have to pay to telephone or fax their own editorial offices;

21. Believes that the potential of regional and other television and radio organizations should be recognized by not only supplying political information but also, to a modest extent, using other categories of programme by subsidizing projects undertaken by private production companies which are of interest to Europe;

22. Considers that its national offices should prepare an annual written report for Members on their publications and on the extent of their contacts with MEPs, the public, the press, local authorities, national authorities and non-governmental organizations;

23. Considers that its national offices should engage regularly in consultation with the national delegations of MEPs in order to prepare their information priorities;

24. Considers that the external offices must comply with the political guidelines laid down by Parliament or the Commission, but that on the other hand they should have sufficient freedom of policy to be able to respond to cultural diversity in Member States, which means that:

— the offices must have a say in the communication policy pursued by 'Brussels';

— offices should be housed together and the unsatisfactory accommodation of Parliament's press service in Brussels and Parliament's Belgian information office should be rectified immediately;

— offices should be opened promptly in countries which have applied for membership;

25. Considers that the external offices must be given the necessary manpower and material resources to carry out their work of informing the press, opinion multipliers and the general public in the best possible way;

26. Considers that the Commission should help to set up, in cooperation with the Member States, within existing regional and local structures (regional councils, educational establishments, chambers of commerce or agriculture, etc.) small information offices on the lines of the Euro Info Centres, to disseminate information and reply to questions in a more specific and more detailed way;

27. Considers that the information staging posts are suitable instruments for cooperation with Member States and with organizations in them, and that this is also true at local and regional level;

28. Takes the view that public libraries, as an easily accessible source of information, are an extremely appropriate structure for informing the public at large about European Community policy;

29. Believes that greater use should be made of new media such as multimedia systems, electronic publishing, teletext and videotext;

30. Considers that the Euronews experiment is a step in the right direction for disseminating European information, that it must therefore be supported and enhanced, and that the Community must ensure that it is always financed by a majority of European public and private capital;

31. Considers that the external offices should be given the opportunity to adapt Parliament's INFO-Memo or other public-information publications to local needs with the aid of local translation agencies;

32. Takes the view that a greater share of funding within communication policy budgets should be allocated to the audiovisual media;

33. Considers that adequate funds for a campaign to promote European values and democracy should be made available in the Commission's 1994 information budget;

34. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.

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4. Trade agreements with third countries and CAP reform

B3-1221 and 1228/93

Resolution on the effects of trade agreements with third countries on European agriculture and the success of the CAP reform

The European Parliament,

A. whereas the success of the CAP reforms depends on the Community's ability to control production volumes, particularly in sectors where there are surpluses,

B. whereas trade agreements with third countries often make provision for the importation of agricultural products duty-free or at a lower rate of duty and the products may compete with European products,

C. whereas trade agreements which make provision for agricultural imports can also open up markets to Community agricultural products,

1. Underlines the importance of trade agreements for the development of the Community economy as a whole and for the liberalization of world trade;

2. Calls in particular for the liberalization of world trade in agricultural products to be extended chiefly to benefit developing and newly industrializing countries rather than industrialized countries;