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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Political Affairs Committee

on the European Community's information policy, with particular reference to
the Commission information programme in preparation for direct elections to the
European Parliament

Rapporteur: Mr W.J. SCHUIJT

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PE 48.667/fin.

As the committee responsible for information matters , the European Parliament's Political Affairs Committee, in preparation for the debate on the draft general budget of the European Communities for the financial year 1977, tabled a preliminary draft amendment to Section III of the budget of the Commission of the European Communities (Item 2729), increasing the appropriation for information projects relating to direct elections to the European Parliament by 600,000 u.a. to a total of 1 million u.a. It also requested that the full amount (i.e. 1 million u.a.) should be frozen until the European Parliament had approved the detailed programme of projects which the Commission intended to carry out.

This draft amendment was adopted by the Committee on Budgets (amendment No. 123) and approved by the European Parliament during the first reading of the budget.

The Council tabled a modification deleting this amendment, but Parliament restored it during the second reading of the budget at its sitting of 16 December 1976 (amendment No. 4 to the Council modification to Parliament's amendment No. 123 tabled by Lord Bruce on behalf of the Committee on Budgets.

Furthermore, as earlier requested by the Political Affairs Committee, the full amount of 1 million u.a. entered in the Commission's budget under Item 2729 'Information projects relating to direct elections to the European Parliament' has been frozen 'until the European Parliament has approved the detailed programme of projects which the Commission intends to carry out and until this programme has been coordinated with Parliament's programmes in this field'.

At its meeting of 8 February 1977, the European Parliament adopted a motion for a resolution, tabled by Mr W.J. Schuijt on behalf of the Political Affairs Committee, on the European Community's information policy with regard to preparations for the first direct elections to the European Parliament (Doc. 526/76).

In this resolution, Parliament called upon the Commission to submit its information programme in preparation for direct elections to the European Parliament by 30 March 1977 and also asked the Political Affairs Committee to draw up a report on this subject as soon as possible, and at the latest by the May 1977 part-session.

At the meeting of the Political Affairs Committee of 28 February 1977, the Commission of the European Communities submitted to it the Commission information programme in preparation for direct elections to the European Parliament (COM(77) 114 final).

In drawing up the motion for a resolution, the rapporteur also took into consideration the motion for a resolution on direct elections to the European Parliament (Doc. 561/75), tabled by Mr Alfred Bertrand on behalf of the Christian-Democratic Group pursuant to Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure. On 8 March 1976 Parliament had referred this motion to the Political Affairs Committee as the committee responsible on the grounds that it dealt with the problem of disseminating information in preparation for direct elections.

The motion for a resolution was considered by the Political Affairs Committee at its meetings of 25 April and 10 May 1977. It was adopted unanimously at the latter meeting.

Present: Mr A. Bertrand, chairman; Mr Schuijt, rapporteur; Mr Amadei, Mr Bersani (deputizing for Mr McDonald), Mr Blumenfeld, Mr Covelli, Mr De Clercq (deputizing for Mr Berkhouwer), Mr Fletcher-Cooke, Mr Granelli, Mr Jahn, Mr Klepsch, Mr H.W. Müller (deputizing for Mr Colin), Mr Scott-Hopkins (deputizing for Lord Reay), Mr Scelba, Mr Sieglerschmidt and Mr Zagari.

The explanatory statement will be presented orally by the rapporteur.

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The Political Affairs Committee hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the European Community's information policy with particular reference to the Commission information programme in preparation for direct elections to the European Parliament.

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the information programme drawn up by the Commission in preparation for direct elections (COM(77) 114 final);
 - whereas the first European elections should enable 180 million voters to participate on a large scale and in an informed manner in the development of a politically united Europe and whereas it is therefore essential for an effective information campaign to be put into effect without delay;
 - whereas it is the responsibility of the Member States' governments as well as the Commission of the European Communities and the European Parliament to promote by objective means a keen public awareness of the importance of this consultation for all the Member States, for Europe and for the strengthening of democracy;
 - having regard also to the need for political parties and movements to step up their activities during the actual electoral campaign by engaging in a democratic **contest**;
 - having regard to the report of its Political Affairs Committee (Doc. 93/77),
1. Considers the appropriations entered in the Community's 1977 budget to be grossly inadequate in view of the scale of the operations to be undertaken in the nine Member States and the fact that they are aimed at a potential electorate of 180 million people;
 2. Notes that the first programme drawn up by the Commission relates exclusively to the appropriations currently available and covers only the initial stages of the overall effort to be undertaken ;

3. Considers that the Commission should draw up an overall and more detailed programme - possibly with the assistance of organizations specializing in this field - as soon as possible and in any case not later than 31 July 1977, containing financial estimates which should also be taken into account in the 1978 draft budget;
4. Asks that a liaison body consisting of representatives of the European Parliament and the Commission, acting within their respective terms of reference, should examine and coordinate the operations relating to the use of appropriations specifically set aside for the year in question by Parliament and the Commission for the preparations for direct elections;
5. Asks its Political Affairs Committee to keep the implementation of the programme under review and to report to Parliament on the matter if necessary;
6. 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.

AMENDMENT No. 4

tabled by Lord Bruce on behalf of the Committee on Budgets
to the Council modification to Amendment No. 123
adopted by the European Parliament on 16 December 1976

SECTION III - COMMISSION

A. Expenditure

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Title 2 | - Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous administrative expenditure |
| Chapter 27 | - Expenditure on publishing and information |
| Article 272 | - Expenditure on the dissemination of information and participation in public events |
| Item 2729 | - Information projects relating to direct elections to the European Parliament |

Increase appropriations by 600,000 u.a.

The full amount entered under this item (one million units of account) is to be frozen until the European Parliament has approved the detailed programme of projects which the Commission intends to carry out and until this programme has been coordinated with Parliament's programmes in this field.

B. Revenue

Increase revenue accordingly.

C. Remarks

Unchanged.

Justification

It will be recalled that the European Parliament's Political Affairs Committee proposed an increase of 600,000 u.a. and the freezing of all appropriations (1,000,000 u.a.) until the European Parliament had approved the programme of projects during the first reading of the draft general budget for 1977. Council deleted the increase and unfroze the appropriations believing that 400,000 u.a. would enable the starting up of an action programme for information in 1977 leading to its full development in 1978.

In proposing the restoration of this amendment it is felt that Parliament is perhaps in a better position than Council to judge as to the need of informing public opinion of the significance of direct elections to it. It is felt that 1977 is a year in which the programme should reach its

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climax since from the beginning of 1978 it is clear that non-partisan information will be difficult to assure in view of the expected party political battles. Furthermore it is felt that to guarantee Parliament's rights in examining the programme the device of freezing appropriations, over which Parliament has the last word in any case, is most appropriate. The Committee on Budgets feels, moreover, that these appropriations should not be unfrozen until the Commission's programme has been coordinated with those of Parliament in this field.

The Council has pointed out that the current Financial Regulation does not provide for the freezing of appropriations under a heading. The views of the Committee on Budgets in this connection are as follows:

- the Financial Regulation does not exclude the possibility of freezing appropriations under a heading.
- the institutions accepted the freezing procedure by joint agreement in the case of the 1976 budget,
- Parliament's power of final decision on certain types of expenditure entails the possibility not only of increasing and reducing appropriations but also of freezing them.

COMMISSION INFORMATION PROGRAMME
IN PREPARATION FOR DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Introduction: The Role of the Commission

In the light of the forthcoming direct elections to the European Parliament the Community's institutions and political parties must make a concerted effort to make the people of Europe more aware of what is involved in the European venture by focusing attention on the Community's successes and difficulties, its origins and its future. The Commission has a major role to play here and to this end must make the best possible use of its information programme and the additional funds which have been allocated for this purpose.

The Commission feels that, if the 180 million or so voters are to take an informed decision on polling day, they must know how the Community operates, what issues are to be resolved at European level and why, and what proposals have been made to this end. The Commission therefore has two specific aims in mind: firstly to ensure that each and every voter is aware of the way Community decisions affect his life and the way he can help shape these decisions by voting; secondly, to make certain that the Commission for its part is aware of the attitudes and aspirations of the electorate.

Obviously the 273 press, radio and television journalists currently accredited to the Commission are the primary channels via which information about the Community flows on a day to day basis. Although they represent the world's media, a high proportion of their work is via the media of the nine member states of the Community. While respecting the complete freedom of expression of this press corps, this is where priority must be given in terms of the information programme.

It is true that the electorate as a whole favours direct elections. Successive Euro-Barometers have shown that by late 1976, 69% were in favour of the elections as compared with 61% in late 1973 (though these averages hide the fact that the situation in a number of countries is rather difficult).

But interest in European affairs is still largely passive: Euro-Barometers have revealed that in the Community as a whole only 22% of the interviewees claimed to be 'very interested' in Community problems, and only about 11% discussed them 'often'.

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The public as a whole does not see 'Europe' as a vital force for solving the practical day-to-day problems facing the man in the street. The successes of the sixties tend to be forgotten: the public sees inflation, unemployment and energy problems, and it doubts whether the Community can play a major part in tackling them.

Of course the way the Community responds to such problems is vital for it and for each member state, and against this sceptical background direct elections stand out as a major event in the history of our Community. For the first time ever all the people of the Community will be asked not only to demonstrate their willingness to press ahead but also to pronounce on the Community's objectives. For this reason direct elections are a genuine 'first'. The occasional referendums which have been held within the Community were something quite different. In 1978 the voter will have to select the individuals or political parties he wants to see representing the people of Europe in the European Parliament.

Introduction of the democratic process at Community level will call for a major effort on the part of all the political parties, the Member States and the Community's institutions. The task - making 180 million voters more aware of Community issues - is immense. It is essential that all concerned join forces if we are to ensure that as many people as possible vote in the first direct elections. The main objectives of the Commission's programme must be defined here and now.

The Commission's programme will be implemented in association with the European Parliament's information services to ensure a greater degree of coordination and hence efficiency in the campaigns launched by both institutions. Regular contacts have already been established between the two institutions and between their respective Information Offices.

The Commission must obviously continue to play its proper political role. But its information programme must be factual, providing objective information on, for instance, the working of Community institutions, the common policies, proposals put forward by the Commission, the debates sparked off by these proposals, the decisions finally taken, and so on.

It will then be for the political parties, in the context of their own campaigns, to assess this information in political terms.

The Resources available

One point is clear: the present programme covers this year only and is therefore no more than a 'lead in' to 1978.

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Bearing in mind the relatively limited means at our disposal we will direct our efforts in 1977, almost exclusively, to 'opinion makers'. By contrast in 1978 the aim should be to achieve more direct contact with as many voters as possible. Of course, if this is to be achieved, available funds will have to be increased since the information programme will have to be geared, both in scope and timing to the differing political and economic situations prevailing in the nine member states. The costs for this will be far higher than would be the case if identical programmes could be conducted in all nine countries.

In fact apart from its normal information programme the funds available to the Commission to try and present the facts to 180 million voters only amount to one million units of account at 0.00555 per voter.

Within this limit it is impossible to call on public relations firms to mount large-scale information campaigns, although the Commission's information services will continue to make occasional use of specialized firms for certain specific projects.

Similarly, any individual project aimed at reaching voters directly is out of the question (for instance, an all-out Community-wide poster campaign would cost something in the region of 5 million u.a.).

For this reason and if an effort in this direction is to be made the Commission must consider diverting a proportion of its resources under the 'normal' information programme to supplement the special budget.

The Information Programme

The Commission's information effort will therefore fall under two separate headings, namely, its 'normal' information programme for 1977 and the special election programme.

'Normal' Information programme for 1977

- (a) Throughout 1977 the 'theme' of direct elections, calculated to involve Europeans in the construction of Europe, will be given a priority in all information activities launched under the Commission's 'normal' information programme, which was forwarded to Parliament in December 1976.

At a rough estimate - it is impossible to be more precise at this stage - 65% of the Commission's information effort in the Nine under the 'normal' programme in 1977 will deal in some way with the direct elections theme - through the publication of articles in Commission periodicals, the organization of lectures during information visits, the distribution of written or audio-visual material on Community

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policies, the designing of special displays for exhibitions, and so on.

- (b) The theme of direct elections, and the profound significance of the event itself, will become the key feature of the 1977 programme as time goes on. This will call for the preparation of specific written, sound or audio-visual material, increased use of the Commission's radio and television studios, the mounting of special exhibitions to tour certain countries, utilization of special venues, such as shows, fairs and exhibitions which attract large audiences for setting up Community stands, poster campaigns, etc.

Special election programme: Information directed at 'opinion makers'

The Commission will also implement a special information programme to be financed from the special budget earmarked for preparations for direct elections (1 million u.a.).

The media

It is clear that there is obviously no question of reaching 180 million voters without the help of the mass media, whether it be the press, radio or television.

We have already drawn attention to the particular role played by journalists accredited to the Commission. In addition the Commission intends via its Information Offices to supply fact sheets on Community policies relevant to direct elections, to journalists of national and regional newspapers. Sectorial newspapers, e.g. of trade unions will also constitute an important target. The Commission will also organize a special programme of visits to Brussels.

The Commission intends to enhance its contacts with national radio and television networks. Its efforts in this direction have already borne fruit in the form of much more extensive coverage of Community affairs. Close links have been established with national networks and with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).

The Commission's new colour TV studio will soon be linked to Eurovision to allow extensive, up-to-the-minute broadcasting of Community news. National networks will also have access to other technical facilities and a series of working meetings will be organized in Brussels to promote cooperation between networks. The Commission will also offer organizations willing to help with the publicity campaign facilities for producing slide programmes, video-cassette programmes and other audio-visual material.

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External Organizations

In a different way, senior staff working for organizations particularly involved in the 'public' aspects of national life are 'opinion makers' too.

- (a) There are many organizations of this type including political associations, trade unions, university associations, women's groups, farmers' associations, youth movements, teachers' associations, environmental protection and consumer information groups and so on. The Commission is planning to organize a special series of briefings on European affairs for the leaders of the different political, social or cultural associations throughout the Community. Once briefed participants will be in a position to lead group discussions on Europe within their own organizations.

These briefings will be organized by the Commission, again in close collaboration with the European Parliament's information services, at regional, national or Community level. It is hoped that approximately 3,000 people will be reached in this way.

Regional or national briefings will last for one or two days and will, for practical reasons, be confined to groups of not more than forty. Programmes will be built around the special interests of each group, but will invariably include a series of talks on the scope and significance of direct elections and on the aims and achievements of the Community.

A limited number of in-depth briefings will also be organized in Brussels. These will be geared to key groups; it is felt that these should be brought into direct contact with the Commission. The briefings will last for not more than two days and will involve twenty people at a time.

- (b) The external speakers used by the Commission to address public meetings organized at regional or local level form another category of 'opinion makers'.

Information material and documentation

The Commission is in the process of preparing information material and documentation to back up and facilitate the work of 'opinion makers' and to meet the large number of requests for information which will be received (witness the referendum campaign in the United Kingdom).

- (a) Publications will include:
(i) additional runs of the 'basic booklets' (dealing with the

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historical background, the main areas of Community activity, and the working of its institutions); these are aimed at a public with some knowledge of European affairs;

- (ii) a general brochure (a first run of 400,000 copies) and even simpler leaflets (a run of approximately one million copies); both of these publications will be produced by the Community's Information Offices so that they can be tailored to local audiences; they will however be built around a 'common core';
- (iii) specialized brochures to cater for specific national needs;
- (iv) information kits for organizers, mainly intended for participants in the seminar programme.

- (b) Audio-visual material, most of which will be prepared by headquarters information services. This material will be designed for use at seminars organized for 'opinion makers' and, more generally, at lectures, talks or meetings of all kinds organized as part of the campaigns which will develop as the elections draw near.

Arrangements have already been made for four sets of slides with commentaries (the history of the European Community; the European Parliament and its role; Community policies; European elections and the young) and two 15-minute films (drawing in the main on archive material, the other highlighting the importance of the first European elections).

Subsidies for programmes mounted by outside agencies

The Commission will be prepared to assist information programmes mounted by movements particularly interested in the European venture and activities which could be promoted with the help of the universities, notably European Institutes or Study Centres or associations of these bodies.

The Commission's present intention is to set roughly one third of the special budget (approximately 300,000 u.a.) aside for this purpose.

These organizations are in a position to distribute information efficiently and many of them have been receiving Commission support for a number of years. The Commission has been able to assess their impact on public opinion. A Commission subsidy, combined with the other sources of finance available to these organizations, will allow them to reach a wider, sometimes a considerably wider, audience.

As far as the universities are concerned, the Commission has been made aware of the value of their analysis and research work on many occasions. It knows that the impact of these activities can be considerably greater

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in areas where European Institutes or Study Centres are located.

Strict criteria will be applied to select the programmes which will receive financial backing; presentation of detailed programmes, political balance, impact on public opinion, multiplying effect, proportion of the cost being met by the movement or organization presenting this project.

The Commission will monitor implementation of the programmes subsidised to ensure that they do in fact deal with the European elections.

Of course the programme outlined above will have to be adapted or indeed given new direction to meet changing requirements in the period between now and polling day. That programme will need to be flexible enough to respond to relevant headline news; we may have to change our approach in the light of public reaction and we will have to take account of the findings of the survey of public attitudes to direct elections to be organized by the Commission at Parliament's request.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

tabled by Mr Alfred BERTRAND

on behalf of the Christian-Democratic Group
pursuant to Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure
on direct elections to the European Parliament
(Doc. 561/75)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the approval given at the Rome Summit on 2 December 1975 by the Heads of Government to direct elections to the European Parliament;
- having regard to the European Parliament's resolution of 14 January 1975 on direct elections¹;

decides to institute, in this period leading up to the elections, all the measures which will enable it immediately to take such action and give such support as is necessary for the successful accomplishment of direct elections to the European Parliament, with the primary aim of providing the electorate in the nine Member States, at a sufficiently early stage, with adequate information on the powers and activities of the European Parliament.

This information effort, to be undertaken jointly by the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament, will require in particular

- the publication and dissemination of additional information material (brochures, films etc.), and the coordination of all information work;
- opportunities for holding meetings of parliamentary committees and working parties in the regional capitals of the member countries;
- the intensification of information activities directed at groups of visitors, together with improved public relations and a judicious selection of visitors from among all the sectors of the population;
- the examination by the Political Affairs Committee of possibilities for further action and publicity among the electors and the drawing up of a programme for such activities.

¹ OJ No. C 32, 11.2.1975, p. 15