Communicating Europe in partnership. Political declaration

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PURPOSE: to present a proposal for an Inter-institutional Agreement on Communicating Europe in Partnership.

CONTENT: three of the key EU institutions namely, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission have agreed to common objectives on communicating European issues to a wider audience. The main objectives of the Agreement are:

- to give everyone access to fair and diverse information on the EU;
- to enable everyone to exercise their right to express their views and to participate actively in the public debate on European issues.

The Agreement specifies that all EU public actors are responsible for pursing these objectives, observing the principles of inclusiveness and pluralism, participation and empowerment, openness and transparency. The Agreements seeks to highlight the need for, and the added value of, better coordination in the way the EU institutions and bodies communicate on EU issues. To that end it provides a framework for coordinated action.

While recognising that participation in the process is entirely voluntary, the three Institutions encourage all Member States to participate actively. The three institutions also recognise the leading role of the Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI) in coordinating the communication of EU issues. The IGI will have the following tasks:

- to define broad guidelines for coordinated communication on EU issues;
- to select annual EU communication priorities based on a proposal from the Commission;
- to adopt the annual common work plan on communication activities, based on actions proposed by each of the institutions; and
- to monitor the implementation and follow-up of the annual common work plan.

In order to communicate effectively, the three institutions encourage each Member State to nominate a high-level contact person as "**national communication director**" on matters relating to communication on EU issues. The three Institutions agree to organise, at least twice per year, meetings of all national communication directors in order to share information and disseminate best practices, thereby encouraging and supporting the involvement of the Member States in communicating on EU issues. An electronic EU Information Network (EU-Infonet) will be developed in order to facilitate the permanent monitoring of communication on EU issues. Results will be assessed annually by the IGI as well as the three institutions. This debate will take place in the European Parliament.

The functioning of the Inter-institutional Agreement will be reviewed at the beginning of the term of office of the incoming Commission and Parliament.