Information, communication: framework for cooperation between institutions and with the Member States

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The Council welcomes the Commission communication on a new framework for cooperation on activities concerning the Information and Communication Policy of the European Union. It agrees to participate at the appropriate level in this new framework for cooperation, which represents a further stage in the process of bringing the European Union closer to its citizens. The Council wishes to contribute in a pragmatic and flexible manner to the definition at political level of those strategies, with the recognition that it will be for each Member State to determine the extent of its involvement in the concrete implementation of the activities in question. The Council should be represented in the new interinstitutional cooperation framework at political level by the Presidency-in-Office, accompanied by representatives of the Member State which will hold the following Presidency and assisted by the General Secretariat. It will be for the Working Party on Information, extended to include senior officials from national information departments or, where appropriate, in the presence of experts, to define the Council's positions in this area and to evaluate the results. The Council takes note of the Commission's intention to submit a new communication on the content of information and communication policy. The Council will decide on its priorities at the appropriate time, in the light of the powers conferred upon it by the Treaties. With respect to the organisation at operational level of cooperation between the Community institutions on information and communication, the Council favours the coordinated use of existing resources, with the emphasis on rationalisation of those resources and a desire to improve services. Audiovisual means and the Internet should receive priority consideration in view of their impact and potential. Other areas of activity such as publications, libraries, information visits, public events and media monitoring should also be the subject of synergies between the institutions. Each Community institution must have sufficient resources to enable it to inform the public of its own activities. In the case of information on the achievements of and challenges facing the European Union as a whole, the Council considers that the initiatives in question must be defined precisely, particularly from a budgetary standpoint, and must be implemented within the new framework for interinstitutional cooperation. The Council asks the Commission to submit proposals during the first half of 2002 with a view to continuing, in conjunction with interested Member States, to provide information in audiovisual format intended primarily for third countries. The Council points out that it is for the Member States to provide information on the European Union. These activities will be more effective if they are carried out in coordination with those of the Community institutions, which should produce comprehensive and objective basic information.