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

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PURPOSE : to proposes a new framework for co-operation on activities concerning the Information and Communication Policy of the European Union. CONTENT : this communication explains how inter-institutional co-operation, particularly between the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council should take place; the framework is open for participation from the Council, the other institutions and the authorities of the Member States. New forms of co-operation will be established where relations with Member States, National Parliaments, Local Authorities and Civil Society are concerned. On several occasions the European Parliament has asked the Commission to establish a basis for co-operation in the field of information and communication. Likewise, the Helsinki European Council called on the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission to pool their efforts to put out co-ordinated general information on the Union and to make best use of resources. The communication does not propose at this moment a strategy for information policy. It constitutes a first step in view to build a global and coherent strategy on information and communication. It intends to launch a debate that would be concentrated on content, thus fleshing out and adapting the framework and enabling the Institutions to reach out to the citizen. The proposed framework is simple, un-bureaucratic and genuinely decentralised and is intended to create a basis of mutual trust and confidence. It takes as its starting point the autonomy and integrity of the Institutions which remain accountable for their actions and fully responsible for their contacts with the press and media. The framework proposes co-operation at : - the political level in the form of the Inter-Institutional Group on Information - at present composed by members of the Commission and the European Parliament - which will define and oversee general guidelines and priorities; - the operational level, i.e. the services responsible for information activities and instruments of both Institutions and; - the decentralised level at which execution takes place in the Member states, i.e. Commission Representations and Parliament External Offices. Regular consultations, information exchanges and reporting will be used to assure that the parties are aware of planned activities at all times. A wide range of instruments, means and ways of information will be employed. The main vehicles of information are described in the annex to the communication. All above activities and instruments will be subject to permanent evaluation in order to increase the effectiveness of the work carried out.