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

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Following a request from the European Council and the European Parliament, the Commission today agreed on a new approach to information and communication. It outlines the importance of working more closely with the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament in real partnership with the Member States to inform citizens better about European issues and to enable them to participate in European debates. For the first time decision-makers at European, national and regional level will be working together to close the European information gap. The institutions and Member States have reiterated their political will to develop a concerted information strategy on the main issues affecting the European Union. This new joint approach should lead to synergy between the different methods applied by each partner, with Member State involvement allowing the European Union to speak with one voice and also to benefit from the hitherto lacking yet crucial multiplier effect. The scale of the challenge is immense, and the means available are limited. The Commission is therefore proposing a two-pronged approach that is both realistic and gradual: - giving the European Union the capacity to formulate and disseminate messages geared to and focused on its priority issues; - establishing a voluntary working partnership with the Member States fostering genuine synergy between their structures and know-how and the activities of the European Union. The Commission welcomes and underlines the need for a greater cooperation with its partners in all areas of information and communication. In that respect, it specifically invites them to work on four key policy areas: enlargement, justice and home affairs, the future of Europe and the role of the Union in the world. The new information and communication strategy stems from a political determination shared by the three institutions, which will be given shape by the decisions of the Interinstitutional Group on Information (IGI). It implies a change of culture for each of the institutions, entailing major adjustments, especially in terms of coordination, so as to improve the provision of information and ensure that it reaches the European public. Besides the political awareness shared by the three institutions and the Member States, the proposed strategy is based on internal evaluations (consolidated result of the round table meetings organised by the representations and replies to a questionnaire from the various networks) and on preliminary external studies of the strategy itself and the state of public opinion in Europe (focus groups).