Implementing the information and communication strategy for the European Union

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The committee adopted the report by Luis Francisco HERRERO-TEJEDOR ALGAR (EPP-ED, ES) on the EU's information and communication strategy.

MEPs stressed that the object of this strategy should primarily be to keep the Union's citizens continually and properly informed about the functioning of the EU institutions in order to develop their knowledge, concern and participation in EU affairs and bring them closer to the Union . They said that greater attention should be paid to the content of the messages put out, so as to stimulate the interest of citizens by tackling their concerns. A decentralised information system should be established to make it easier to reach specific groups which should be targeted with individually tailored messages in all cases.

The committee was convinced that information and communication policy would not be effective until knowledge of the EU and its institutions was included as a subject in the Member States' school curricula. Universities should also be called upon to be proactive in spreading and fostering common European values. The report stressed the importance of making greater use of communications media with the technological capacity to reach the homes of all European citizens, such as television, radio and the Internet.

The EU should also create a centre of excellence for communication within which there would be structured cooperation amongst all the EU institutions and which would provide scope for working with professionals and experts in the communication sector. The committee stressed the need for the institutions to improve their press releases and the quality of all information intended for the press, in order to facilitate the work of all professional journalists closely following events in Brussels . It also called for the institutions' press releases to be prepared as far as possible by professional communications experts.

MEPs said that some of the information resources should be devoted to promoting the European 'brand' and that in the next few years pilot schemes should be introduced with a view to making certain programmes (i.e. *Media*, *Youth*, *Culture* or *Education*) more appealing to the general public and promoting the positive 'image' of the Union. They therefore welcomed the organisation of a European Youth Week with activity days under the banner 'Young People in Parliament', which would strengthen young people's links with Europe .

With regard to the European Constitution, the committee stressed that the campaign of information and communication should become the main priority in the Union 's information and communication strategy over the near future. This priority should be approached from a dual perspective:

- the EU's institutions have a duty to inform citizens clearly and objectively about the content of the Constitution and the meaning of the changes it introduces as compared to the current Treaties;

- in addition, Parliament, the Council and the Commission have the political responsibility to support the ratification of the Constitution, always acting in agreement with Member States and taking into account the relevant national legislation.

As to Parliament's own information strategy, the committee welcomed the decision of the EP Bureau to commission a feasibility study on the possible establishment of a parliamentary information channel or

genuine EP television channel. It recognised that there were a range of different options for such a project and said that any channel should be independent. Such a channel could make a significant contribution to the development of a European public space. The committee also noted that, on earlier occasions, it had requested the Commission to launch an in-house impact study on such a European channel. Finally, the report stressed the need for greater synergy between the activities of Parliament's external offices and those of the Commission's representations.