

PUTTING EUROPE IN THE PICTURE

The audiovisual communication of the European Commission

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The effects of the European policies in daily life are concrete and visible: one currency for the majority of the Europeans, a “common market” where goods and services are traded, a largely free-border area for travellers, diplomas which are increasingly recognised internationally, and real job opportunities in countries other than one’s own... And yet, the European construction is not a popular topic. It is facing public indifference or scepticism. Benefits of belonging to the EU are not fully perceived by its citizen¹.

Results coming out from the community budget have to be better publicized, both in term of effectiveness and efficiency of actions. Fighting *euro-apathy* in the current critical political agenda and increasing confidence in EU institutions call for a change in the communication process. In that perspective, only TV and radio can reach large audiences. On average, each European watches TV during 200 minutes each day. Indeed, these media are the main, and sometimes the only, access to information for most of Europeans. They are unequalled for their ability to connect the EU with its people when messages and storyboard are properly designed.

The main mission of DG Press and Communication of the European Commission is to help media professionals to treat European subjects in all areas of information. Its Audiovisual Service provides TV and radio journalists and editors with genuine news coverage of the activities carried out by the EU institutions, direct access to unique audiovisual archives and technical assistance to stations wishing to produce programmes on the EU.

A broad range of products and services are offered free of charge and rights:

- News: key EU events are available via Europe by Satellite (EbS) which is used by over 600 TV stations around Europe: Press conferences and briefings, debates in the Parliament, open Council sessions, European Councils, etc. are available live and/or recorded on EbS in all available languages.

All EbS programmes are also available worldwide on the EbS website (253.000 visitors during the first quarter 2004).

¹ According to the Euro barometer of December 2004, the public opinion in the EU, 53% of the European interviewed consider that on balance their country has benefited from belonging to the EU, compared with 34% who are of the opposite view (12% without opinion).

- Background material: video dossiers on key topics. Related to anti-fraud communication, a stock shot has been realized on the fight against cigarette contraband. The pictures timely broadcasted have been widely used by TV.
- Archives: Video, photo and audio library 26.839 photos, 2.526 audio documents - and 33.566 video since 1951, open to all journalists (on-line overview on the web).
- Technical assistance: Commission's fully-equipped radio and TV studios and editing suites available on request to journalists. These facilities are fully used every day by a wide range of radio and TV stations (during around 3.600 hours per year). Deutsche Welle, radio France, France 2 and 3, RTBF, TVE, ARD, South Eastern TV are some of the regular users.
- Working with national, regional and local radio and TV stations: The Commission's Representations in the member states give priority to working with national and regional programme makers and journalists. The press officers are in several Representations supported by specially recruited audiovisual correspondents for this purpose.
- Visits to Brussels by radio and TV journalists: Organised on group or on individual basis – in close cooperation with the Representations, the visits are crucial to provide journalists with premium information on the achievements and the transparency of the financing.

However EU topics are often complex or sometimes too technical to make immediate attractive visuals. A revisited media strategy is required with the main objective to raise the overall European awareness. The challenge is to make EU activities more attractive to TV viewers, directly relevant to people daily life, more transparent on how tax money is spent. *Putting Europe in the picture* through a new audiovisual strategy should therefore be the priority for the Commission communication policy.

This strategy relies on the 7 following points:

- Ensure that communication via TV and radio is fully integrated on all communication activity from the Commission through a global and coherent strategy. Give priority to TV and radios when giving interviews, statements and participating in discussions.
- Make a clear selection of messages and targets through a critical mass of actions.
- Ensure a sound balance between the effectiveness (results and impact), the efficiency (cost-efficient indicators) and the transparency of the actions.
- Give priority to News programmes, contradictory debates and short understanding keys programmes in the co-financing policy through the call for proposals.
- Introduce systematically the human dimension and stories in the information policy to render the European Union institutions, its people and achievements nearer to the citizen.
- Find ways for an efficient dialogue with the key players in the European TV market.
- Last but not least, develop the analysis and evaluation tools necessary to elaborate professional and efficient media strategies that can be submitted with clear indicators of performance for political decision.