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**REPORT:
COMMUNICATING EUROPE TO CITIZENS AND MEDIA**

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1. Introduction

On 28 September 2011, when delivering the "State of the Union" Address to the European Parliament, President Barroso declared: *'We should remember that our Europe is a Europe of citizens. As citizens, we all gain through Europe. We gain a European identity and citizenship apart from our national citizenship. European citizenship adds a set of rights and opportunities. The opportunity to freely cross borders, to study and work abroad. Here again, we must all stand up and preserve and develop these rights and opportunities'*.

The Barroso II Commission believes that communication should convey to citizens the message that the European Union is at their service, demonstrating in concrete terms how Europe contributes to improve citizens' lives. President Barroso has substantially reinforced the link between communication and citizens by placing Directorate-General Communication under the authority of Vice-President Viviane Reding, who is responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship.

In a crisis context, communication is even more important for ensuring an enhanced and closer contact with citizens. To that end, Vice-President Reding's strategy has been to ensure that communication becomes an integral part of the policy preparation and policy delivery of the Commission. Integrating communication into all policy initiatives, including during the different steps of the institutional decision-making process, is an

essential component of this approach. It has gained a renewed dimension with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and the opportunity it provides to EU institutions to transform the innovations brought by the Treaty into policy outcomes.

Communication is a strategic instrument to deliver policy, as effective communication is necessary to make sure that a policy proposal is known, understood and endorsed by the public. This is particularly important when it concerns citizens' rights and initiatives having a direct impact on their everyday lives. As the Commission cannot possibly address all European Union citizens directly, the media play a fundamental role in improving the outreach of information on Europe. Better media coverage of European affairs and improved accuracy and quality of this coverage are essential objectives of the work of the Commission's Spokesperson Service (SPP) and of all other services providing content to journalists.

The Commission has also improved direct communication with citizens. The decentralisation of information and communication on the EU and the progressive involvement of national and local players in this work are important developments, which were supported by the European Parliament *Report on journalism and new media*¹. The tools put in place to achieve this, in particular reinforced Representations, Management Partnerships, European Public Spaces and Europe Direct Information Centres, pursued activities aiming at improving their effectiveness.

This report intends to briefly present activities set out by the Barroso II Commission in the field of communication and an outline of main projects for the near future.

2. Implementing EU Citizenship Report 2010 communication actions

The political objective of making EU citizenship a tangible reality in citizens' daily lives has guided the Barroso II Commission since the beginning of its mandate. President Barroso, in his 3 September 2009 "Political Guidelines for the new Commission", stressed the need to reinforce EU citizenship, by revitalising the link between the citizens and the EU and by giving real effect to their rights. He stated that *"EU citizens still face numerous obstacles when they try to source goods and services across national borders. They should be able to make use of their rights as EU citizens in the same way as they use their rights as national citizens. The Commission will draw up a comprehensive report on these obstacles for citizens and propose how they can best be removed (...)"*.

The *EU Citizenship Report 2010 – Dismantling the obstacles to EU Citizenship*, drafted under the responsibility of Vice-President Reding, presents a comprehensive overview of the obstacles citizens still face and proposes how these can best be removed. One obstacle that prevents citizens from enjoying their rights is a lack of awareness. Therefore this report proposes several communication actions and services to raise citizens' awareness, which will be further developed in the following chapters.

Citizens must have easy, direct access to information on the EU. They should know the rights offered by the EU and their opportunities in the EU. Europe must literally be at their fingertips, or just a phone call away. The development of a one-stop-shop for

¹ Report on journalism and new media – creating a public sphere in Europe, Committee on Culture and Education, Rapporteur Morten Løkkegaard, 2 July 2010

information on the rights of citizens and businesses in the EU, which is easy to use and accessible both via the web and via a free phone number, represents a significant development proposed by the Citizenship Report.

The Commission also carried out a streamlining exercise of the information networks in the Member States so that citizens easily find the right contact point at national, regional and local level. The Commission's Representations in the Member States, together with the 487 Europe Direct Information Centres, improved their co-operation and interaction with existing EU-level assistance and problem-solving services and networks.

As requested by the Citizenship Report, the Commission proposed the designation of 2013 as the European Year of Citizens and the organisation of targeted events on EU citizenship and citizen-related EU policies during this Year. The EYC 2013 will provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that the EU puts citizens at the heart of its political agenda, strengthening citizens' awareness of their EU citizenship, their rights and responsibilities, and the impact these rights have on their daily lives.

An important goal of the European Year of Citizens will be the mobilisation of the electorate in the run-up to the European elections in 2014. A targeted communication campaign is at the centre of the Year, including a limited number of centrally-organised events and communication activities developed in a decentralised way. At the June 2011 meeting of the Inter-Institutional Group on Information the Commission called on all EU institutions and bodies to contribute to making this year a success. Ownership of this initiative by the EU institutions and bodies is a condition for its success.

3. Better service for journalists

Media play a crucial role in conveying information and opinions on European issues to citizens. Effective communication through media is fundamental for the Commission, which carries out several communication activities and provides several services for improving the quality of media coverage of European affairs. In this respect, the **Spokespersons' Service** is the Commission's first communicator for conveying information to the media, giving answers and developing clear arguments for journalists.

Television is by far the main source of information on EU affairs for European citizens. Taking this into account, the Commission launched several initiatives designed to increase TV stations' coverage of European affairs and to improve the quality of this coverage. **Europe by Satellite** (EbS) is the inter-institutional host broadcaster that provides footage on daily news and on live events about EU institutions and policies to journalists, free of charge. This will also make EU institutions more visible in the media.

Reaching out to journalists who are not accredited to the Commission in Brussels and who are based throughout the European Union and beyond, is an absolute necessity if the Commission wants to ensure effective and timely dissemination of information about European news and initiatives. To this end, as recommended by the EP *Report on journalism and new media*, offering **seminars for journalists** has become common practice. Journalists' seminars are one of the best established and most widely used services of Directorate-General Communication. Two recent visits to Greece by journalists from various Member States and one visit to Germany by Greek journalists have confirmed the key role of this instrument.

The European Commission has recently extended the geographical scope of the seminars and improved the quality of services offered. The main innovation is the possibility to organise seminars anywhere in the world. This is covered by one single contract responsible for all organisational aspects, from content to logistics. An inter-institutional dimension was also added, providing other EU institutions with the possibility of using this contract. In the future, seminars will be more closely linked to political priorities: in 2012 these seminars will be centred on the response to the economic and financial crisis, on major legislative and policy initiatives as well as on the 20th anniversary of the internal market.

European Commission Representations play an important role in raising the visibility of European affairs and Commission's initiatives in the media at national level. Their main activities in this field consist of placing Commissioners' articles in national media, identifying media opportunities, organising press conferences and answering journalists' questions. These activities are particularly relevant for national media that do not have correspondents in Brussels and for regional and local media, which tend to focus on topics relevant to citizens' lives. Moreover Representations' media work comprises briefing and training journalists, continuous analysis of the national and local media landscape and trends, identification of media opportunities, provision of intelligence on the editorial lines and reporting.

4. Supporting European media

The objective of the communication instruments managed by the Commission is to put citizens at the centre of the European project. This is achieved by giving citizens access to high-quality information regarding the European institutions, European policies and Europe's achievements. To achieve this objective, a set of instruments is being developed. The Commission supports media networking and co-operation in order to promote pan-European coverage of policy and events in the European Union, whilst guaranteeing editorial independence to the partners involved. The Commission supports three independent European media networks:

- **Euronews:** The Commission has supported the development of the pan-European TV news channel Euronews since the end of the nineties. This support was given considering that Euronews ensures a mission of European public interest in the field of information. Euronews broadcasts its programmes 24/24, 7/7, in 11 languages simultaneously: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, Turkish, Farsi and, since 2011, Ukrainian. In 2010, 7 million people watched Euronews every day. This increase demonstrates that Euronews has become the channel of reference on EU-related news. At the end of 2010, the Commission signed a new partnership framework agreement with Euronews aiming at simplifying its contractual relations and ensuring good management of public funds (based on non-profit and co-financing principles). This single, stable and transparent legal framework is open not only to all Commission services but also to other EU institutions. In addition, as of 2011, the Euronews grid is much more attractive and reactive with its original material originally produced in Brussels. Indeed, the support of Euronews by the Commission was reinforced with the opening of a Brussels antenna in 2011, as suggested by the Citizenship Report. This will be reinforced in 2012 through linguistic and broadcast extension in EU languages with the aim of boosting Euronews' audience. This step follows the recommendations of the EP *Report on journalism and new media*, within the commitment of the relevant national authorities.

- **European Radio Network (Euranet):** Launched in 2008, the radio consortium Euranet has experienced a steady expansion. In 2011, Euranet was able to attract new radios ensuring a wider audience for the production developed by the Network. Three new partners from Estonia, Cyprus and Slovakia joined the Network and one of its members signed a contract to distribute Euranet programmes in Spanish at national level. After four years of existence, Euranet comprises 22 international, national and regional professional European radio stations and 8 campus radio stations from European universities. It is broadcasted in 21 languages, covering 20 Member States and reaching a daily audience of more than 20 million listeners across the European Union. Euranet holds a particular importance, as radio is consistently ranked as the most trusted media for Europeans getting information on the EU. Following an external evaluation held in 2011, the distribution, presentation and contents of the materials produced were improved in order to reinforce their pan-European dimension.
- **PressEurop:** In 2009 the third media network was created. This news website offers a daily selection of press articles on EU affairs from national and international newspapers. To broaden the scope of the audience, articles are translated into 10 languages (English, German, French, Spanish, Romanian, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Polish and Czech). The portal has significantly increased its audience throughout both 2010 and 2011 and reaches more than 300 000 unique visitors per month. In 2010, PressEurop published 1 674 articles.

The Commission recognises the importance of **independent and critical journalism**, as recommended in the EP *Report on journalism and new media*. A media research base is currently being established by the Commission's Directorate-General Information Society and Media within the European University Institute, Florence. This initiative will support research work in the field of independent and critical journalism. Moreover, the Commission is taking steps to implement the 2012 preparatory action on investigative journalism through the launching of a feasibility study.

5. Improving information about the EU

The Commission is also developing a one stop-shop for information on EU rights "Your Europe", as announced in the Report on Citizenship and the Single Market Act. The "Your Europe" portal, in partnership with the Europe Direct Contact Centre and the Europe Direct Network, aims to simplify citizens' and businesses' access to information and provides assistance on EU rights on a multilingual basis:

- **Your Europe Portal:** As recommended by the Citizenship Report, the Your Europe website was entirely revamped in 2010 by creating a single information access point and providing assistance for citizens and businesses. The new Your Europe offers practical, user-focused information on EU rights, and also directs users to further help where needed. Your Europe offers information on a cross-sectoral basis. Your Europe also acts as a single gateway to all further help and assistance – it gives access to consumer centres, to SOLVIT, Your Europe Advice etc. The new Your Europe will be fully available in all EU languages in January 2012; it will be further developed next year, when information on national rules and procedures implementing EU law will be added. Your Europe is easily accessible via the web, from both EU and national websites.

- **Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC):** The EDCC is the main port of call for enquiries by citizens about general information on the EU and its policies and activities. Services are offered in all EU official languages by phone (free of charge telephone number from anywhere in the European Union) and email. The web assistance service is operated in the three working languages. The number of questions replied to by the EDCC increased from 94 000 in 2008 to almost 100 000 in 2010. In 2009 an extensive upgrade of the IT systems was carried out to better suit the needs of a pan-European information service, bringing gains in efficiency and productivity. An external evaluation of the Centre's services assessing their cost-effectiveness and their visibility within the Commission was finalised in 2010. The recommendations of this evaluation will be implemented in 2012. To further reinforce inter-institutional co-operation, the EDCC has also taken care of questions addressed to the European Parliament Citizens' Enquiry Service since July 2011. Under an informal agreement, the EDCC replies to certain types of citizens' enquiries forwarded by the Council.
- The **General Report** on the activities of the European Union has also become an important tool to provide both institutions as well as the general public with an overview of the EU's main developments and achievements during a given year, in an attractive format and style. As a Treaty obligation (Article 249 (2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), it is prepared for the attention of the European Parliament, but distributed as well to other institutions and bodies, national Parliaments and reaches a broader and more general public via the Commission's Representations and networks and the Europa website. In line with the Commission's policy to reduce print publications, the 2011 Report will be distributed widely in electronic version with a significantly reduced print edition.
- In 2011, as part of the EU agenda on the rights of the child, the Commission adopted a strategy to improve communication on the EU with schools and young people to ensure that they are informed about the EU, its activities and its importance. The aim is to bring together existing resources and to promote and enhance their distribution to, and use by, teachers and young people. A good example is the creation of the **Kid's Corner** site. This site is a one-stop-shop for games, quizzes, competitions and easily readable information about Europe for young people. The information is divided into age groups, and is available in all EU official languages. This initiative receives high visibility (top level on EUROPA) and promotion (notably through networks, including school networks and social networking sites). As part of this one-stop-shop, Kid's Corner is complemented by a dedicated Teachers' Corner, which contains learning material about Europe that teachers can use in class.
- 2011 also proved to be an important year for the '**EU Back to School**' initiative, which has acquired significant visibility since launched in 2007. In the framework of the exercise, EU civil servants visit their old secondary schools to make Europe more accessible for young people by giving it a "face". It provides a unique opportunity to help young Europeans better understand how the EU works and to explain them about the policies, educational programmes as well as various initiatives addressing youth. Through the 2011 edition, more than 80 000 students and 1 300 schools were reached in the 13 Member States involved. 2011 also marked a big step forward in building a more inter-institutional dimension to the programme, a real 'EU Back to School', as for the first time last year, the European Parliament and Council formally joined the initiative. In 2012, the 'Back to School' family is likely to grow with additional members, as the Court of Auditors and the European External Action Service have

also expressed their interest in joining this low-investment/high impact initiative which is very well appreciated by both schools and students as well as participating civil servants.

- During 2011, the Directorate-General Communication has set up the **Social Media Network** (SMN) to facilitate political communication, networking, exchange of knowledge and training for social media practitioners across the Commission. The SMN brings together social media experts from the Spokesperson Service, Directorates-General, Representations and Agencies. Directorate-General Communication runs corporate Commission accounts on Twitter and Facebook and assists Cabinets, Spokesperson and Representations in using social media in a professional way. Social media teams of all the EU institutions meet on a case-by-case basis to promote high-profile political events (for example "State of the Union"). To reinforce inter-institutional co-operation, Directorate-General Communication is exploring the integration of social media in the activities of the Inter-institutional editorial committee for the internet (Ceiii). The use of this media will continue to be reinforced in 2012, as recommended by the EP *Report on journalism and new media*. Moreover, the pilot project adopted in the 2012 budget on sharing Europe Online will be implemented in a decentralised manner through partnerships in the Member States.

6. Analysing European public opinion - Eurobarometer

In 2011, co-operation with the European Parliament included developing a new "Flash" Eurobarometer framework contract. This allows rapid opinion poll surveys to be carried out by landline telephone, mobile telephone or through a mix of these methods. The new framework allows also both institutions to survey specific target groups or e.g. to carry out internet surveys/panels.

Ongoing co-operation between both institutions includes regular exchange of information on opinion poll results which may be of interest to the European Parliament's Committees, individual members and officials.

For the future, preparations for the European Parliament's communication campaign ahead of the 2014 elections are already underway, based on the Eurobarometer framework contract for qualitative studies. A new Eurobarometer studies Framework contract is also being prepared by the Commission, taking account of the European Parliament's future needs such as deliberative polling.

7. Inter-institutional co-operation at central and local levels

Inter-institutional co-operation has developed over recent years and is now well-established. Directorate-General Communication aims to reinforce the follow-up of the Commission's main communication activities by closely co-ordinating with other Directorates-General within the Commission. This is particularly important for activities carried out in the context of political and inter-institutional communication priorities.

Decentralised information and communication involving national and local players is crucial for reaching citizens. The main means to achieve this are Representations, Management and Strategic Partnerships, European Public Spaces and Europe Direct Information Centres (see below).

The co-operation among European institutions around common inter-institutional communication priorities identified annually by the Inter-Institutional Group on Information plays a key role in ensuring coherent and decentralised institutional communication. The IGI serves as a high-level framework for the institutions and bodies to encourage political debate on EU-related information and communication activities.

The Parliament, the Council and the Commission approved the following three inter-institutional communication priorities for 2012: (1) Economic recovery, (2) Building a citizens' Europe and (3) Making the most of EU internal and external policies. The three institutions will communicate on these priorities and adapt them taking into account their own political agenda. The Commission will, as underlined in the State of the Union Speech, put greater emphasis on economic recovery, focusing in particular on economic governance and growth enhancing measures, including the internal market.

The following are some examples of successful inter-institutional co-operation **at central level** that took place this year:

- Opening of the joint European Parliament Information Office (EPIOs) and the European Commission Regional Representation (REP) in Wroclaw by President Jerzy Buzek and Commission Vice-President Reding to further strengthen decentralised communication efforts.
- Participation of Vice-President Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou at the EU-Level Thematic conference for the European Year of Volunteering 2011 in Athens and at the Annual General Meeting of the Europe Direct Information Centres in Malta in November.
- The Euromed seminar for journalists "The Euro Mediterranean relations in the wake of the Arab Spring: Assisting the transition to Democracy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East - Exploring new partnership opportunities", hosted by the European Parliament in co-operation with the European Commission.

At **national, regional and local levels**, different platforms have been developed for communicating jointly with citizens. They aim at developing synergies and addressing citizens on jointly agreed communication plans to reinforce the message and to raise the citizens' awareness of and interest in the EU.

Management and Strategic Partnerships

Within these trilateral partnerships² the Commission co-ordinates communication efforts jointly with the European Parliament and the Member States at a decentralised level. The partnerships' added value relies on increased resources for communication and stronger political legitimacy for the different communication activities as well as on enhanced co-ordination and better exchange of information between the partners. The three actors develop annual work plans to address citizens in line with the inter-institutional communication priorities set out by the IGI. Of course, these priorities are broad and flexible enough to be adapted to the local context and to the information needs of the citizens. In 2011, partnerships covered around 100 operations, most of them including several communication activities. A considerable increase of these operations is expected for 2012.

² 18 Management Partnerships and 5 Strategic Partnerships

The results of the evaluation exercises of Germany, Slovenia and Hungary during 2009 and 2010 show that these partnerships are efficient and effective and have increased the impact of the communication priorities significantly in the three countries. Further five partnerships³ are currently evaluated. Eight Management Partnerships⁴ will be individually evaluated in 2012, whilst the remaining ones will be covered in 2013. Next year, the whole scheme will undergo an evaluation in order to measure among others the impact of this instrument in addressing citizens. So, early 2013 the Commission will be able to decide on further steps to improve these partnership agreements.

In 2012, several communication activities will be organised in the framework of Management partnerships. These activities will include communication campaigns, TV programmes, debates, interactive simulation games, workshops and the distribution of publications as a supplement to newspapers and magazines. Teacher training activities about European topics will also be organised in several Member States.

European Public Spaces

The European Public Spaces (EPS) are the joint platform of the Commission and the European Parliament for organised activities. While a selected number of events address stakeholders and specific groups (e.g. journalists, experts), most activities target citizens. This successful co-operation between the two institutions was reinforced through the establishment of further three EPS in 2011. In 2011 the 16 EPS in the EU capitals received over 3 million citizens and this number is expected to increase in 2012. EPS play a key role in branding the European Houses in the capitals and in generating public interest in European issues. They are ideal platforms to address youth and schools and they attract Europeans through many cultural events with European dimension.

In 2012, activities within EPS will, above all, address young people and citizens through the organisation of activities such as conferences, students' debates and video competitions. Stakeholders' *fora* will also be organised. The EPS' work programmes will be communicated to Parliament together with an assessment of the previous year's activity.

Europe Direct Information Centres

To bring Europe closer to citizens and in light of the national and regional diversity across the EU, it is crucial that the 487 Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) are able to tailor their communication to the local level. Through this network it is possible to pursue a citizen-centred approach by engaging directly with local communities. This network has undergone a streamlining exercise according to a Citizenship Report's recommendation.

EDICs co-operate on a regular basis with the other institutions and Committees. The celebration of Europe Day on 9 May is one of many good examples where EDICs organise numerous events involving EPIOs and MEPs, Commissioners and representatives of Member States' Governments and Parliaments. Activities focus on themes of concern to citizens, e.g. the economic crisis, fundamental rights and citizenship, education and training. EDICs will also be an important partner in the

³ Belgium, Austria, Italy, France, Portugal

⁴ Poland, Malta, Latvia, Sweden, Greece, Spain, Finland, Lithuania

communication about the forthcoming European elections. Centrally-organised training for EDICs often includes speakers of the European Parliament and other Institutions and Committees.

In 2010, the EDICs organised around 10 400 events and published more than 13 700 information products. They made over 700 000 personal contacts, communicated with citizens in over 160 000 phone calls and dealt with around 276 000 emails. The ongoing mid-term evaluation of the EDIC network aims to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of its second generation (2009-2012). The final report will be submitted end of January 2012.

Visits' service

Information visits represent one of the best vehicles to communicate on the EU, its working methods and its policies. Therefore all the institutions have their own visits scheme. During these visits citizens have the opportunity to exchange views with Commissioners, MEPs, EU senior officials and staff. In other words, such visits give a human face to the Union.

The Commission Visits service has received around 47 000 citizens in 2010 and more than 52 000 in 2011. The rising interest from citizens in the EU is clearly reflected in the significant increase in the number of visits to Brussels. The Service expects the number of requests to increase significantly with the recent opening of the Parliamentarium. In 2012, the Commission will launch a scheme for school visits (pupils aged 13-15), resulting from the pilot action "EU Factory". This also includes co-operation with the EP Visits service: Schools will be able to combine their experience at the institutions, including a visit to the new Parliamentarium.

At national level, the Commission Representations in the Member States liaise closely with the EP Offices to co-ordinate visits for relevant multipliers such as journalists, members of the National Parliaments or political parties. The inter-institutional co-operation in the field of visits has proven effective and it ensures a well-mixed programme with speakers from different institutions: complementarities of programmes are crucial to have an overall view of the EU. At the request of individual MEPs, the Commission Visits Service welcomes a number of groups to its premises and organises general presentations for groups of visiting constituents.

8. Examples of Commission's communication actions in 2012

In 2012 the Commission will step up communication on **Europe 2020** as a frame to provide positive messages about economic growth. Directorate-General **Enterprise and Industry** will organise communication activities in this regard. The main themes of these activities will be: Greening SMEs, SME Performance Review and European Enterprise Awards. A series of TV Magazines will be broadcasted by Euronews (Working title: Start-up) and journalism seminars will be organised. Related to this: an Eurobarometer on SMEs and environment will be carried out.

As part of the **Single Market's 20th** anniversary, a number of communication actions will be foreseen with focus on hope for the future and growth potential more than on the anniversary celebration and past achievements. Three main initiatives are planned:

- A "Generation 1992" campaign aiming at giving young adults born in 1992 the opportunity to express their views on the Single Market through a competition, starting in March and ending in October with a winners ceremony.

- A set of 5 journalist seminars (2 in Brussels, 1 in Strasbourg, 1 in Denmark, 1 in Italy) on the Single Market in general with particular focus on the SMA key growth-enhancing priorities.
- A Single Market Week organised in October 2012 in conjunction with the SME week, during which a set of forum in Members States will be organised by the national authorities with stakeholders and the support of EU Representations. There will also be a European-wide 20th anniversary event in Brussels in co-operation with EP IMCO including the "Generation 1992" winners ceremony.

Directorate-General **Regional Policy's** communication strategy will also be fully in line with Europe 2020 and the MFF. One important priority is consequently to continue communicating on and explaining the Commission's proposal on Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 presented in October 2011, i.e. how it will affect regions and cities and how it will be implemented on the ground.

Communication activities will focus on demonstrating the main strengths and successes of EU Cohesion Policy, in particular with regard to how it contributes to growth and how this can be further enhanced after 2013. Discussions on the scope and level of ambition of cohesion policy after 2013 will most likely be influenced by on-going global economic crisis. It will, thus, be essential to demonstrate the added value of EU Cohesion Policy and the real benefits it brings to EU citizens, for example by helping regions to come out the crisis stronger. Several events will be organised in 2012:

- the OPEN DAYS 2012 (10th anniversary), 8-11 October 2012
- Regions for Economic Change conference, 14-15 June 2012
- RegioStars awards ceremony 2012 (5th anniversary) on 14 June 2012
- Urban Forum on 16/02/2012 and a Forum on Outermost regions on 2-3/07/2012.

The European Year of Active Ageing will also be an important communication activity, managed by Directorate-General Employment in 2012. Active ageing is crucial to Europe's ability to achieve its ambitious goals under the Europe2020 strategy: without more employment of older workers the employment goal of 75% will be out of reach, and it will be impossible to prevent a rise of poverty in old age. The European Year will cover three dimensions of active ageing: active ageing in employment, participation in society and independent living. Its objectives are: to raise awareness: combat ageism, highlight today's contribution of older people to society and the importance of active ageing; to identify and spread good practice; to improve the opportunities and conditions for active ageing, encouraging policymakers and stakeholders at all levels to facilitate active ageing by committing themselves to specific objectives and activities.

Directorate-General **Agriculture and Rural Development** will focus its communication campaign on the Common Agriculture Policy, with three objectives and three target groups: inform media and other multipliers on CAP Reform; mobilise decision makers support for CAP post 2013 reform; raise general public awareness on CAP's answer to society needs (Europe 2020).

In 2012 Directorate-General **Education and Culture** will celebrate the 25th anniversary of Erasmus with a big conference in Copenhagen in April and activities around the Europe Day in the Member States. The Youth on the Move campaign will continue, with

several events involving dozens of thousands of young people in many Member States including Cyprus, Slovakia, Finland, Ireland, Portugal, Germany and Romania.

2012 could also be the year to discuss future possible EU communication projects, to be carried out in partnership between the European Parliament and the European Commission, such as participation in the world exhibition **Milan 2015** whose theme is "Feeding the planet, energy for life."

9. Conclusion

Since the beginning of its mandate, the Barroso II Commission has consistently focused its efforts on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its communication actions and services. An important principle underlying these efforts is rationalisation: in these times of economic and financial crisis and with public finances tightening, it is important to use the most effective and efficient means to communicate with citizens.

This was done to a great extent through the reinforcement of communication services that proved in the past to offer good return on investment. In addition, the Commission strengthens communication with media and citizens in the Member States. Efficient instruments are available, such as the Commission's Representations and European information networks. Their proximity to the public and their knowledge of countries' political and cultural diversity put them in a position to adapt the Commission's messages to the main interests and concerns of citizens. These decentralised communication activities are often carried out in co-operation with the European Parliament, as well as with national, regional and local authorities.

To improve communication in a way that contributes to empowering citizens to make use of their rights is of key importance and an ongoing task for the European institutions. Even if all our institutions recognise that more needs to be done in this respect, it is clear that the institutions better achieve this objective when they act together. The European institutions and bodies share the responsibility to communicate Europe in a transparent and accessible manner to citizens, a prerequisite for citizens' participation in the democratic life of the Union and for Europeans to be fully aware of the opportunities available to them across the Union.