

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Constitutional Affairs

2004/2238(INI)

20.4.2005

OPINION

of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the implementation of the European Union's information and
communication strategy
(2004/2238(INI))

Draftswoman: Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

On the strategy as a whole

1. Welcomes the fact that for the first time Parliament has been called upon to discuss the information and communication strategy for the Union before its presentation by the Commission and thus has a real possibility of influencing the final content of this strategy, instead of merely reacting to it; considers this a very positive step in the deepening of its responsibilities as regards democratic control of the activities of the Commission;
2. Stresses that the object of the information and communication strategy should primarily be to keep the Union's citizens continually and properly informed about the functioning of the Union's Institutions in order to develop their knowledge, concern and participation in the Union's affairs and bring them closer to the Union;
3. Calls for a major joint debate in plenary on the strategy presented by the Commission and on the report of the Committee on Culture and Education, in which the Council should also participate;
4. Considers that this debate could lead to a joint declaration on the guidelines for joint information activities by the three institutions, while respecting the specific competencies of each institution and their right to develop their own information activities;
5. Considers that an annual debate on the implementation of the strategy and of the joint declaration should take place in order to evaluate the impact of the activities developed by the institutions and refocus these activities if need be;

On the Constitution

6. Stresses that the campaign of information and communication on the Constitution should become the main priority in the Union's information and communication strategy over the near future;
7. Considers that this priority should be approached from a dual perspective:
 - the Union'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, the European 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;

8. Stresses, as regards information on the content of the Constitution, the particular importance of:
 - the organisation of specific seminars for journalists on the Constitution - in the Member States and also in Brussels - aimed at transmitting clearly and objectively the content of the Constitution, as well as correcting any misinformation as to the content of the Constitution,
 - the need to develop specific activities for the academic world, namely by focusing the Jean Monnet action programme on European constitutional questions, organising academic seminars on the Constitution, helping to shape the content of academic programs and sponsoring studies or publications on European constitutional questions,
 - better promotion of the use of modern technologies, in particular, internet access to the text of the Constitution and explanations as to its content, as well as internet and telephone services to provide answers to questions on the content of the Constitution;
9. Stresses that the resources available under the PRINCE program should be concentrated on fostering public debate on the Constitution in view of the ratification campaigns in all Member States, and particularly in those Member States where a referendum will take place;
10. Therefore, considers it desirable that the Parliament and the Commission work together as closely as possible, namely by the signing of Memoranda of Understanding with all those Member States volunteering to do so; believes that the Parliament should participate in all the initiatives undertaken by the Commission at national level in co-operation with the respective Member State governments;
11. Stresses the importance of also involving national parliaments in these initiatives, whenever possible;
12. Recalls the important role of civil society organisations within the ratification debates and the need to make available sufficient support to enable such organisations to engage their constituencies in these debates across the EU in order to promote the active involvement of citizens in the discussions on ratification.

PROCEDURE

Title	Implementation of the European Union's information and communication strategy
Procedure number	2004/2238(INI)]
Committee responsible	CULT
Committee asked for its opinion Date announced in plenary	AFCO 16.12.2004
Enhanced cooperation	
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann 20.1.2005
Discussed in committee	14.3.2005 20.4.2005
Date suggestions adopted	20.4.2005
Result of final vote	for: 14 against: 1 abstentions: 0
Members present for the final vote	Richard Corbett, Panayiotis Demetriou, Andrew Duff, Maria da Assunção Esteves, Jo Leinen, Rihards Pīks, Marie-Line Reynaud, Alexander Stubb, Johannes Voggenhuber
Substitutes present for the final vote	Pervenche Berès, Antoine Duquesne, Ashley Mote, Georgios Papastamkos, Reinhard Rack, György Schöpflin, Jacques Toubon
Substitutes under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	