

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

2006/2087(INI)

18.9.2006

OPINION

of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the White paper on a european communication policy
(2006/2087(INI))

Draftsman: Michael Cashman

SUGGESTIONS

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

- A. whereas the right to information and freedom of expression should be at the heart of democracy in Europe and underpin the political systems at European and national levels and thus, insofar as is possible, information should be made available to the public,
- B. whereas democratic participation is a cornerstone of the political process and should have a direct bearing on the Union's policy formulation,
- C. whereas transparency and openness are preconditions for communication and such communication is a two-way dialogue with European citizens, which is an essential element of democracy and indispensable for fostering public debate,
- D. whereas the aim of a 'period of reflection' is to make the Union more democratic and effective and to 'reconnect' it with the citizens,
- E. pointing out that European issues and the "added value" of Community legislation are rarely acknowledged during national debates, with national politicians often taking credit for European "success stories", while, conversely, national politicians are quick to criticise the EU, often for failures in policy which arise at national level,
- F. drawing attention to the Presidency Conclusions of the Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments (6 and 7 May 2005), which called upon the national parliaments to hold a debate, preferably in plenary session, each year on the annual legislative and work programme of the European Commission,
 - 1. Calls on the Commission to ensure consultation with stakeholders and the public at an early stage of policy shaping; considers that key proposals could be accompanied with the additional section in the impact assessment specifying how citizens' concerns have been taken into account when drafting the proposal; points out that the impact of public consultations on the EU's decision-making process should be clarified;
 - 2. Believes that transparency and access to documents is one of the main pillars for ensuring communication with citizens on the EU and its activities in order to bridge the gap that currently exists; invites the Commission and the Finnish Presidency to take the necessary steps to review Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, as requested by Parliament, to ensure that legal opinions, positions and amendments are made public on a public database before their final adoption; believes that, with a view to creating a common database, the current public databases must be linked and made as user-friendly as possible; considers that the Prelex database on monitoring the decision-making process between institutions could be used to this end;
 - 3. Considers that all Council, Commission and European Parliament committees' agendas and documents, as well as easily understandable background information, should be published; points out that this information should be easily accessible to the public, notably via the Internet, through publication of such documents and the live and retrievable transmission of meetings;
 - 4. Calls on the Commission to develop a dynamic and reactive communication policy,

which, instead of mostly reporting the final consensus achieved, is more focused on reporting the evolution of decisions which are adopted at different stages in the decision-making process; considers that the aim of the Union's communication policy is to give citizens a clear understanding of how European law is made;

5. Encourages the national parliaments to enhance the scrutiny role of their governments when they act at the Council, thus raising awareness and thereby the democratic accountability of the EU institutions;
6. Encourages the Member States to build a European dimension into national debates, thus bringing the European agenda to the attention of citizens;
7. Considers that the debate should take into account specific needs and activities of disabled people and minority groups as well as national and local audiences and specific target groups; points out that more attention should be paid to channelling relevant, as well as regionalised information, to defined target audiences, thereby connecting European issues with citizens' daily lives;
8. Urges the Member States to transpose Community legislation appropriately and promptly in order to ensure that all EU citizens enjoy the same level of rights as conferred by Community legislation; calls on the Commission to ensure more actively that provisions of Community legislation are applied; encourages the Commission to work in partnership with Member States' governments to inform citizens of their right of access to justice and redress should their rights be infringed.

PROCEDURE

Title	White paper on a European communication policy
Procedure number	2006/2087(INI)
Committee responsible	CULT
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	LIBE 6.4.2006
Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary	
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Michael Cashman 15.5.2006
Previous drafts(wo)man	
Discussed in committee	12.7.2006 13.9.2006
Date adopted	13.9.2006
Result of final vote	+: 35 -: 2 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Alexander Alvaro, Alfredo Antoniozzi, Mihael Brejc, Michael Cashman, Charlotte Cederschiöld, Carlos Coelho, Fausto Correia, Panayiotis Demetriou, Agustín Díaz de Mera García Consuegra, Kinga Gál, Patrick Gaubert, Lilli Gruber, Timothy Kirkhope, Ewa Klamt, Magda Kósáné Kovács, Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler, Barbara Kudrycka, Stavros Lambrinidis, Henrik Lax, Sarah Ludford, Jaime Mayor Oreja, Claude Moraes, Lapo Pistelli, Martine Roure, Ioannis Varvitsiotis, Stefano Zappalà, Tatjana Ždanoka
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Marco Cappato, Bárbara Dührkop Dührkop, Maria da Assunção Esteves, Anne Ferreira, Ignasi Guardans Cambó, Sophia in 't Veld, Hubert Pirker, Antonio Tajani, Kyriacos Triantaphyllides
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Thomas Wise
Comments (available in one language only)	