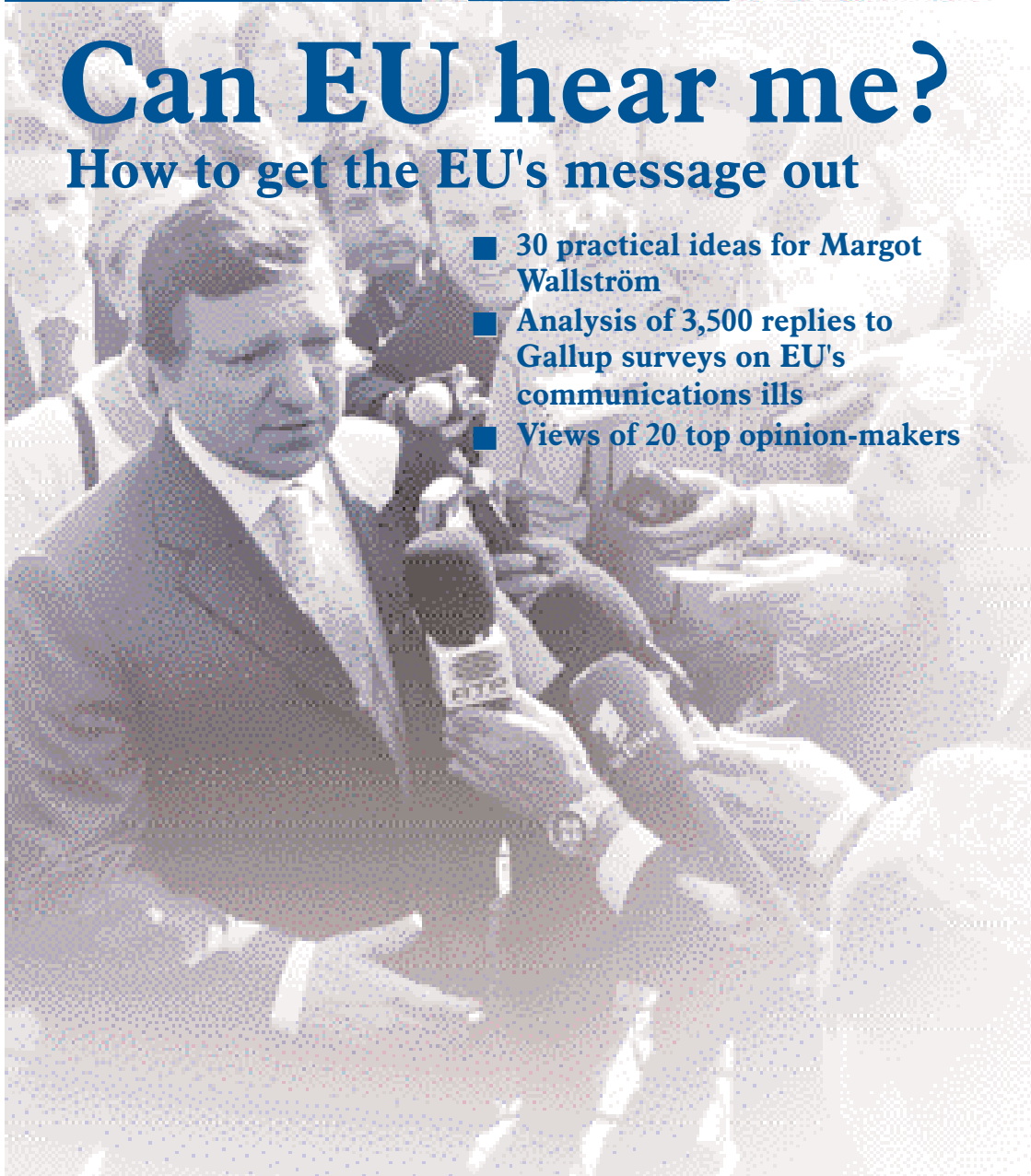


# Can EU hear me?

## How to get the EU's message out

- 30 practical ideas for Margot Wallström
- Analysis of 3,500 replies to Gallup surveys on EU's communications ills
- Views of 20 top opinion-makers



# **Can EU hear me?**

How to get the EU's message out

**October 2004**

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How to get the EU's message out

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October 2004

## This report would not have been possible

*without the input of the 3,500 people who replied to the Gallup surveys and the following individuals:*

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**Giuliano Amato**, Former Prime Minister of Italy  
**Jacques Attali**, President, A&A Group  
**Joachim Bitterlich**, Executive Vice-President, Veolia Environnement  
**Peter Blackie**, Former Commission Official  
**Jens-Peter Bonde**, Member, European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs  
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**Caroline Wunnerlich**, Senior Vice-President, GPC - Fleishman-Hillard  
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### Disclaimer

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## Introduction

“Can EU Hear Me?” is an unusual report. It takes a very original approach to the familiar problem of how the EU and its institutions can better connect with Europe’s citizens. It is part opinion poll, part survey of political leaders and opinion makers, and part study group findings.

The ideas that have emerged from this year-long project have been distilled into 10 overall recommendations, each of which is backed by three sub-recommendations. These 30 practical ideas are presented at the beginning of this report in the form of an Open Letter to Margot Wallström, the incoming Vice-President of the European Commission whose task will be to improve the EU’s Information and Communications.

These recommendations have been drawn from four principal sources.

1. The input into a working group that has met regularly at the Brussels’ offices of *Friends of Europe* and Gallup Europe as a forum for senior EU information officials, MEPs, national governments’ communications specialists, consultants and journalists. The group’s activities culminated in a major brainstorming session in Brussels on September 2.
2. The results of an extensive Gallup Europe opinion poll in the spring of 2004. Over 2,000 people replied to 25 questions that had in large part been shaped by the Working Group.
3. The frank opinions expressed by the 20 top politicians, journalists and opinion formers who were extensively interviewed by *Friends of Europe* during the summer of 2004. Their views offer anecdotal evidence that complements the more scientific findings of the opinion polls.
4. As well as the Spring 2004 Survey by Gallup Europe, working in partnership with the EurActiv.com EU web portal, a further poll was conducted in early autumn. This on-line survey put forward 30 questions arising from the Working Group’s discussion, and was answered by 1,500 people.

This report brings together these different parts of the project and attempts to make them into a coherent whole. What it does not attempt is to present a consensus of opinion. *Friends of Europe*’s role is to stimulate pan-European debate on the EU’s future, so we have selected ideas that are original and at times revolutionary.

We hope this report will prove useful to all those whose concern is that the EU should be heard, and better understood, by its 450m citizens from the Arctic Circle to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Giles Merritt and Geert Cami, *Friends of Europe*  
 Christophe Leclercq, EurActiv.com  
 Robert Manchin, Gallup Europe

*Brussels, October 2004*

## An Open Letter to Margot Wallström

Dear Commissioner,

We want to congratulate you on your appointment as Commissioner for Communications Strategy from 1 November 2004. You have a huge task ahead of you.

*Friends of Europe*, Gallup Europe and EurActiv.com have carried out extensive consultations with people in business, the media and civil society as well as in the European Institutions to find out their views on how the EU communicates with its citizens. We would like to contribute the following suggestions based on their insights.

### Getting going

#### 1) During your first six months visit each EU Member State

- In each country, hold public forums to hear what people have to say about the EU.
- Use local third party endorsers – groups of beneficiaries or supporters – to describe how the EU has helped them.
- Meet the most important national media editors and the leading politicians.

### The message

#### 2) Promote the benefits of EU Membership

- Carry out surveys in each Member State to find out the impact of the EU on people’s lives and the losses they would suffer if their country withdrew from the EU.
- Publicise the results widely by engaging a professional communication agency with a pan-European network to devise a tailor-made strategy in each country.
- Employ ‘goodwill ambassadors’ (i.e. well-known people from all fields – culture, sports, films, celebrities) to talk about the benefits of Europe.

#### 3) Make the EU news message more interesting

- Don’t turn people off with too much detail – keep the message down to three key points at most.
- Adapt your message to your audience. Always give specific examples of how new policies affect ‘the person in the street’. If you can, have such a person on hand to talk about their experience.
- Be open about the political disagreements and encourage journalists to report them. Do not be afraid to discuss openly the tensions in the discussions and to present news with some kind of risks.

**4) React faster to news**

- Set up a ‘rapid response’ unit to react quickly to events – have press releases out within 4 hours after something important happens in a Member State.
- Speed up the approval procedure for press releases.
- Set up an EU newsroom to feed the world and European media with up-to-date, high standard footage of what happens in the EU.

**Tools for conveying the message****5) Adapt the media channels to the story and the Member State**

- Carry out a media survey in each Member State to find out the relative size, popularity and penetration of each national and regional media channel (TV, radio, press or internet) for the different audiences you may need to reach.
- Set-up “Reporting the EU” scholarships to bring young journalists to Brussels for intensive training courses on how the Union’s political machinery works, and on the major issues confronting the EU.
- Before you release a story, decide which medium in each country is the most appropriate – TV, radio, press or internet, or a combination thereof.

**6) Change the prevailing culture towards communications in the EU institutions**

- Force through more integration of the EU media operations.
- Get rid of the administrative hurdles between different EU Institutions that prevent them from collaborating on media campaigns and cut down on the bureaucracy that stifles the freedom of press departments to do their job.
- Bring in more professionally trained staff to the EU press offices, both journalists and other media specialists and give proper media and communications training to Commissioners and EU officials.

**7) Use business and events media to reach specialised audiences**

- Motivate business and events media to get involved in promoting EU ideas, policies and benefits.
- Further use independent audiovisual and internet companies to strengthen news distribution and increase the number of co-productions with TV stations.
- Set up a database of specialist and national media in each country, that may be called upon to publicise EU events.

**Reaching the audience****8) Get the message out to people in Member States**

- Give Member States more responsibility for publicising new policies, which have an effect in their country. Evaluate and compare countries’ communications performance annually.

- Make EU officials and Commissioners more responsible for telling their own country nationals about the benefits of the EU. As Commissioner for Communications Strategy, you should visit each EU Member State as often as possible – this will greatly help to increase Europe’s visibility in each country
- Set up a ‘Communications Task Force’ in each Member State to bring together EU officials, politicians and journalists to discuss how to get the EU message out nationally. This Task Force should report regularly with concrete recommendations.

**9) Use ‘CCC’ – Citizens Convince Citizens – to transmit the EU message**

- Use people who have benefited from EU policies and national experts as EU ambassadors, and provide them with the relevant communications tools to do this.
- Oblige organisations and people who have benefited from EU support, for example Erasmus scholars or researchers, to spread the word in their own countries.
- Make further use of local business and civil society organisations to promote the benefits of EU Membership. Provide them with EU materials in their national language or encourage them to adapt the texts themselves.

**10) Make a special effort to reach young people**

- Push for every country to include relevant and interactive EU-related material in the secondary school curricula.
- Use new technologies (MMS, SMS, digital television, etc) and young people’s media like the internet or TV stations like MTV or MCM to pass on the message.
- Concentrate on reaching young people when a new programme that particularly affects them is set up.

Finally, Commissioner Wallström, we hope that these suggestions will stimulate a debate about communicating the European dream. This is a dream we all passionately share.

We wish you every success.

## Executive summary of the Findings

### Growing doubt and disenchantment about Europe

The first element of the report looks at the reasons for the current disenchantment about Europe, and decides that part of the blame lies with the EU's Communications policy. "People don't waste their time voting for useless things", said one opinion survey's respondent, rather unkindly.

It was felt that this resulted from the EU policy of giving out information rather than engaging in dialogue, "Communication is dialogue, information is one-way", said **Giuliano Amato**, former Prime Minister of Italy. Most people agreed that the EU needed a cultural shift in the way it viewed its audience.

It was also pointed out that good public information also has economic benefits, particularly in a digital information society. Better informed people make better decisions. The estimated value of public information inside the EU is €68bn.

### What message are we communicating about the EU?

The second major theme examined exactly what was being communicated about the EU because, as **Jacques Attali**, former adviser to the President of the French Republic 1981-1991 and President of A&A Group, put it: "No one communicates the European dream". Those polled believed that Europe's core values were peace, liberty and security, but only 44% thought that the main function of EU communications policy was to publicise these. The suggestions that Europe be marketed as 'a brand' did not win much support.

Many of those consulted thought that there was too much boring and technical language, and that the policy should "focus on informing the public of the relevance of the EU for the European citizen". A very popular idea was to carry out and publish an EU study to show the benefits of EU Membership, and what would be lost if countries withdrew.

A second strand was to make the news more dynamic by reporting conflicts between countries and politicians and by responding quicker when a news story broke. 65% supported the idea of setting up a newsroom-style rapid reaction unit to deal with day-to-day stories.

### Improving communication and getting the message across

Everyone consulted thought that Member States should play a bigger part in publicising the benefits of EU Membership, as 71% commented on the lack of collaboration by Member States to promote the EU. Half wanted a "name and shame policy" if Member Countries openly attacked Brussels using false arguments.

It was felt this would prevent Member States denying responsibility for agreeing to unpopular legislation, blaming "bloody Brussels bureaucrats", as **António Vitorino**,

European Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs, with responsibility for Information and Communication, put it.

*Citizens Convince Citizens – CCC.* The report suggests an extensive use of 'multipliers': local organisations, clubs or professional bodies to put the EU message across, and 68% of our Survey respondents thought that those who had benefited from EU funding should publicise this. "We need more involvement with local groups", said **Jan Truszczyński**, Deputy Foreign Minister of Poland and former Chief Negotiator for accession to the EU. Education was also flagged up as an important means to reach people while they are still forming their ideas and 74% wanted all Secondary Schools curricula to include a section on the EU.

The report suggests carrying out a survey of the use of television, radio, press and the internet in each Member State. This will help to improve news coverage by channelling stories through the right media, adapting them to both the subject matter and the country targeted. It also emphasises the importance of increasing the internet use to reach young people.

The final part of this section suggests ways of improving EU relations with the media. This could involve arranging for Commissioners to meet directly with the key editors, either in Brussels or in their own countries, having a better communicator as head of the Commission than in the previous years, and forcing EU Commissioners to spend more time in their own countries to publicise the EU.

*Putting the EU Communications house in order.* The report suggests that bringing in these changes means moving communication higher up the political agenda. The idea of appointing a Commissioner with a Communications remit was widely discussed and recommended by Friends of Europe in its information manifesto of June 2004, published in collaboration with EurActiv.com, Gallup and the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS).

It was agreed that it was important to improve the coordination between the EU institutions. It was felt that the experience of the euro launch had shown the benefit of this, "Co-operation is essential", said Belgian MEP **Pierre Jonckheer**.

Respondents wanted to continue and expand the policy of using outside experts or media professionals, either to head up parts of the Communications team, or as sub-contractors to publicise certain programmes. "We need more professionals", according to **Alberto Navarro**, Spain's Secretary of State for European Affairs.

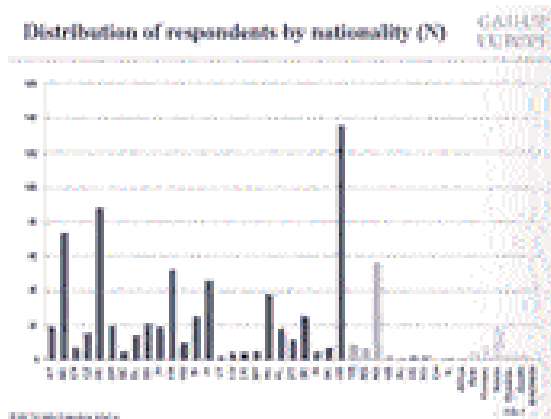
### Evaluating the results

Obviously with all the proposed changes it will be important to monitor the results. Opinion polls, media monitoring and the Eurobarometer were all suggested, but in the end it went back to whether these changes would increase the turnout in elections. As **Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca**, Vice President of the European Parliament put it: "The main method for evaluating the results will be the turnout in elections and the turnout for referenda".

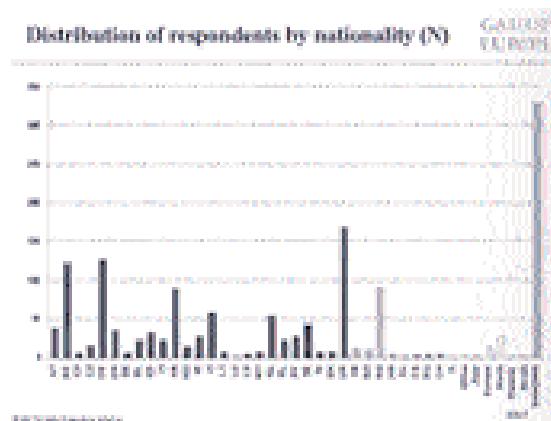
# The full report

## Who responded to the first and second Gallup surveys?

### Nationality of respondents to the first Gallup Survey



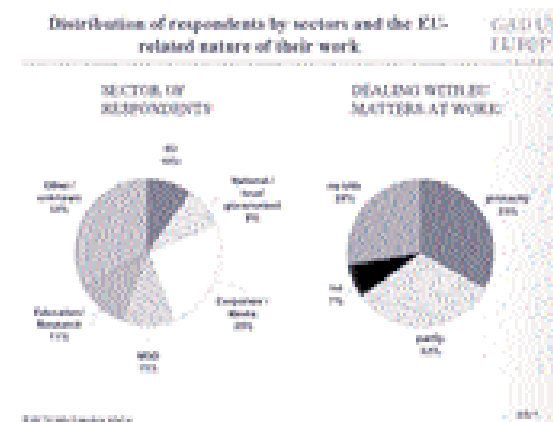
### Nationality of respondents to the second Gallup Survey



## Respondents' professions

For the first Gallup Survey, 12% of respondents worked directly for EU bodies (European Commission, European Parliament and other institutions), 10% for EU governments at different levels, 8% for media. Around 18% were from NGOs, 18% from the corporate sector and 15% from the education and research sectors (19% unknown).

### Distribution of sectors in which respondents work and the EU-related nature of their work of Gallup 2 respondents.



## Shaping the dialogue

### What do you think of EU Communications policy?

Many of the Gallup Survey respondents found the EU unfriendly and elitist, distant from ordinary people and using a bureaucratic language that barred people understanding it. However, it was mainly respondents from some of the most populous Member States: Germany, Italy and the UK who took such a negative view. Scandinavians or potential Candidate Countries like Romania and Turkey were more positive.

Respondents also commented that the EU appeared to be driven by complicated and unclear, sometimes even unreasonable, procedures. This strong anti-institutional bias is surprising, given the familiarity of 90% of those who responded with the EU-related issues (first survey).

However this antagonism could be one of the prime causes for voter apathy. Speaking for many of the Gallup respondents, one person said. "People don't waste their time voting for useless things. If we don't pass the message that EU politics are important, the problem will stay".



**Jens Peter Bonde**, Danish MEP: "The EU is like a monster that no one believes any information comes out of".

**Jack Leslie**, Global President of Weber Shandwick Worldwide: "I am depressed by the EU's 'mind-numbing bureaucracy".

**Hanna Brogren**, Head of Information, Swedish Government Offices: "There is a lot of prejudice and we tend to blame Brussels for problems in the Member States".

Assonime's Director General **Stefano Micossi**: "An improved communication effort is certainly required in explaining to public opinion the Union goals and priorities. This would require an ability to identify a few clear priorities".



**Caroline Wunnerlich**, Senior Vice-President, GPC - Fleishman-Hillard: "EU Communication until now has been all top-down. In future it needs to be more bottom-up. It should be conceived and orchestrated like any effective political campaign: test your ideas and messages, speak the language and reach out to targets through their preferred channels".

### Would more money help?

One of the issues the Survey raised was whether more resources would solve the problem, or whether it was a question of changing the current communications culture. Just under 30% of Gallop survey respondents thought the problem was the lack of finances spent on information.

However, they believed that more resources allocated to the local and regional press could improve coverage of 'Europe' in the Member States, at least for the regional and local authorities. This is because officials use the media as their primary channels of EU information.



**Joachim Bitterlich**, Senior Vice President, Vivendi Environnement: "The existing money has to be spent in a much more efficient way".

**Andrew Gowers**, Editor, *Financial Times*: "Too much is already spent on vapid information and irrelevant press trips".

**Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca**, Vice President of the European Parliament: "Everything boils down to money eventually".

**António Vitorino**, European Commissioner for Justice & Home Affairs with responsibility for Information: "It is a matter of both money and culture".



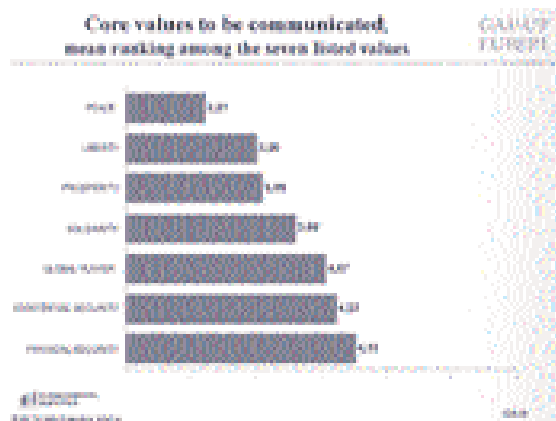
## Getting the message right

### Communicating Europe's core values

Gallup asked people about communicating Europe's core values. Peace, liberty and prosperity topped the list, while security (physical and existential) came at the bottom. However, only 44% of respondents thought that the major role of EU communications was to communicate these core values.

**Core values to be communicated**

(note: those at the top of the slide, indicate those most favoured by respondents)



Gallup asked whether the EU should be sold as ‘a brand’, but only 32% thought this was a good idea. Some commented that if a brand was foisted on an already cynical public it could ‘boomerang’. Another commented “it is absolutely no good and dishonest to the public”. One respondent felt that to talk of branding was an unfortunate way to describe a shared vision of Europe as a Union based on the ideals of peace, diversity and democracy.

**Broadcasting the benefits of Europe**

A huge percentage of Gallup correspondents – 81% - felt that not enough was known about the benefits of EU Membership. They believed that an EU-wide study should be made on the impact that Europe had had on its citizens – from the Erasmus scholarships to the euro and the single market – and that this should then be widely broadcast.

A second suggestion was that studies should be carried out in each Member State about what the average citizen would lose if their country withdrew from the EU. This was a popular idea and won an average 70% of support in the survey.

**Widely Agreed Statements**

Statement	agree	disagree
An EU-wide study should be made about the impact on people’s daily lives of Europe (Euro, Single Market, ERASMUS, free movement, etc.)	81%	7%
The curricula of secondary schools in Europe should contain a large section on the history and background of the European Union.	74%	9%
All people or organisations benefiting from subventions or EU funded programmes should be obliged to credit the EU, including researchers, ERASMUS students, etc.	68%	16%
A study should be made in each Member State about the Cost of Non-Europe, to make the benefits of membership more visible.	67%	15%
The new President of the Commission has to be more visible and active than Prodi.	66%	13%
The problem about the EU is really that there is an overload of (technical) information that is perceived as boring and far from people’s daily lives.	66%	16%
The EU has to immediately set up a newsroom-style rapid reaction unit for quicker communication on day-to-day news stories and events.	65%	13%

**EU gives out too much technical knowledge**

Many Gallup participants felt that the EU news topics were too technical and, to quote one response “should focus on informing the public of the relevance of the EU to the European citizen”.

However, others felt that it was not the message that was too technical, but that it was not explained clearly enough, “In all policy issues, a way needs to be found to give “digestible” information to the European citizen”, one said. A massive 77% of Gallup respondents from New Member States, 71% from Candidate Countries and 65% of core 15 Member States thought there was an overload of boring technical information, removed from everyday life. Many Gallup participants believed the success of the euro campaign came down to the fact that it had shown how the new currency impacted on people’s lives.



**Jacques Attali:** “No one communicates the European dream”.

Former Prime Minister of Belgium, now MEP **Jean-Luc Dehaene:** “You can explain at a meeting that Europe is good for stability and peace, but when people arrive home, they don’t see the link. People know, but don’t experience it anymore”.

**Elaine Cruikshanks,** CEO and Chairman Western Continental Europe, Hill & Knowlton International: “When advising spokespersons we are often told that their contents is too complex to be attractive. However, when looking at their issues more closely, it often is a matter of tailoring the contents in a relevant way, and releasing it at the right moment”.

**Giuliano Amato,** former Prime Minister of Italy: “An institution that is only perceived as the regulator of the size of apples cannot raise any sort of emotional attention”.



**Keith Richardson,** former Secretary General of the European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT): “What is needed is to work out a small number of very clear messages and put them over”.

**Eberhard Rhein,** former Director in the European Commission: “The Commission has to supply information in the most intelligible and non-technical language. It must constantly check what is important to the average citizen and explain why”.

**Eric Mulders,** Managing Director, Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide: “The work of the EU affects everyone. All too often however, people misunderstand its role; messages therefore need to “touch” the man or woman on the street. After all, simple messages are the most effective ones and with public support nothing can fail”.

One complaint that surfaced during the discussions of the working group was that the “Overpaid Brussels Bureaucrats” image damaged the EU. One of the participants quipped: “Stop making the EU look like limos and old people in suits”. Gallup asked whether Commissioners’ and officials’ salaries should therefore be reduced. Among all non-European nationals, 58% agreed, and among the 25 EU Member States, 44% agreed to reduce salaries and ‘perks’.

### More dynamic news stories

Another way to spice-up news stories is to make them more dynamic. Survey respondents believed that EU Communications fed journalists news that always conveyed consensus, not disagreements. However, it is the drama that makes the news alive. One respondent felt “The key problem is that the European Parliament is not sexy enough. It’s not clear ...how votes can affect the legislative process”.

Just 32% of those in the core 15 Member States and 36% of those working in the media who answered the Gallup survey thought that there was not enough drama between EU political heavyweights.

**Andrew Gowers:** “We need to have a view of real debate. There needs to be more access to what is going on in the Council of Ministers as well as the Parliament”.

**Aljosh Perterle,** Former Prime Minister of Slovenia and now MEP: “I think people need an insight into the decisions that are taken. They also need to find out more quickly – better access to what is going on in meetings”.

**Nikolaus van der Pas,** Director General for Cultural and Education, European Commission: “We should give a coherent message about the on-going fight between the Commission and the Parliament and the Council. Fights about new initiatives are a reality”.

### Reacting faster when news stories break

Like any news team, EU Communications also needs to react faster to events and this was a very popular idea with those surveyed. Approximately 65% of all those polled agreed with the idea of the EU setting up a newsroom-style rapid reaction unit to deal with day-to-day news stories and events.

## Improving communication

So if the message is right, how should it be put across?

### Decentralisation

Is decentralisation the answer? All those polled believed that some of the news transmission should be devolved to Member States, although only 27% in Gallup favoured total decentralisation. Gallup respondents wanted to strengthen the role of European Commission's delegations in Member States by more financing and staffing. They also wanted Member States governments and local media to play a role. As one respondent put it, the Member States are "on the ground, close to the citizens". But it was agreed that the Commission should still retain final control of how the message was transmitted.

### Least Affirmed Statements

Statement	agree	disagree
Europe needs more drama so disagreements need to be sharply portrayed by the EU Institutions themselves, instead of focusing on "boring" consensus stories.	36%	40%
Europe is a brand and should be communicated similarly to major commercial brands.	35%	42%
The single most important task for the new European Commission is to be seen day-to-day in the member states.	31%	40%
A TV soap opera about life in Brussels "Euro-land" should be produced and broadcast in each of the member states to promote understanding and appreciation of the EU.	29%	52%
All communication efforts by EU institutions need to be decentralised.	27%	38%

However, there was considerable criticism among the Survey respondents about the lack of collaboration at Member States' level to promoting Europe – 71% of those in Europe-25 complained about this. At the same time, 33% of EU citizens thought that this might be because of language problems, and the necessity of retranslating documents into the country's language. As one respondent put it "We all know that even people who can read foreign languages are far more likely to read something in their own language. Often journalists don't have the time to translate texts".

53% believed that Member States should be evaluated and compared annually on their EU communication and information results. Nearly 50% advocated an open "name and Shame" policy if Member Countries openly attacked Brussels using false arguments.

However, there are some Member States that have worked hard to enthuse their population about the EU. The Irish model of Forum for Europe held before the second Irish referendum is one very positive example. After the high negative 'no' vote, the government organised Forums where all interested parties were invited to give their views. By the time of the next referendum vote, citizens had changed their minds about being part of Europe and there was a resounding 'yes' vote, which Pat Cox believed was thanks to the work of the Forum.

**Jean-Luc Dehaene:** "Information at the local level is easier because there it is mostly immediately visible for the citizen".

**Koos Richelle,** Director General of EuropeAid at the European Commission: "It would also contribute to realism if governments would positively defend measures for which they took responsibility in Brussels".

**Antonio Vidal-Quadras Roca:** "More should be done by the Member States to promote European consciousness. They should take it more seriously".



**António Vitorino:** "If they (Member States) continue to use Brussels as a scapegoat when things go wrong at home and talk about 'bloody Brussels bureaucrats', we will not be able to put across information about the concrete measures that make their lives more safe".

### Citizens Convince Citizens – CCC

Recent studies show that most people rely on their friends, families and work colleagues for their news and views. Participants at the September 2 brainstorming favoured using different channels to pass on the message so Gallup asked for opinions on the best channels. For the survey respondents, the most popular channel was the press and media, followed by local or regional authorities, then grass roots initiatives from professional to voluntary bodies, EU institutions, Member States, and finally 'Goodwill ambassadors' like celebrities or sports personalities. PR agencies were the least favoured channel (see graph on page 23).

A typical Gallup response was: “Initiatives with civil society and employers might help to encourage more interest”.

However, it was noted that the financial procedures in the European Commission and the excessive bureaucracy involved in using grants are making it especially difficult for small NGOs working with volunteers to receive funding for their activities, thus excluding potentially important initiatives from EU support.



**Jack Leslie:** “They (ie. EU Institutions) first need to listen to understand the public’s needs and have a clear strategy on exactly what they want to communicate”.

**Alberto Navarro:** “In Spain we are planning a very comprehensive strategy through the media and multipliers, to inform people what has been achieved during our 18 years of EU Membership. We have good multipliers such as the universities, the trade unions, regional governments and chambers of commerce”.

**Jan Truszczyński:** “We need more involvement with NGOs and we need more practical information for groups like farmers and other professional bodies”.



A sizeable percentage – 68% – of Gallup participants thought that all people or organisations which had benefited from subventions or EU funded programmes should have to use their experience to publicise the benefits of Europe. A further 57% thought these people or organisations should receive guidance on how to do this.

Gallup respondents thought that one particularly important ‘multiplier’ was to use young people to get the message about Europe across, and the way to reach them was through their schools, universities or youth groups. Over 74% wanted all European Secondary schools’ curricula to include a large section on the European Union’s history and background. One person even suggested that “Education on EU topics, its institutions, etc.... should be compulsory”.

### Choosing the means for transmitting the message

Those we consulted with experience in PR and media said it was crucial for the EU Communications team to select carefully the medium for getting the particular message across. For example, studies have shown that in most of Europe 65% of the population receive their news from television, while 45% receive news from printed media, so there should be more emphasis on television. In some Member States, radio is the most popular medium.

However it is not a question of ignoring the print media, but of deciding which one to target with a particular story, choosing the most relevant method. Christophe Leclercq from EurActiv.com explained how different media channels could be used for different purposes. For example, “TV could be used for dramatic stories, or for personalising a story, while print media should be used to influence public opinion, or for reference. Online communications should be used to diffuse information and for debate and feedback”.

Our media experts suggested analysing the media in each EU Member State so that stories could be adapted to the relevant media in each country. For example if a particular story needed good coverage in a country where radio was widely listened to, then it should be presented in the format for radio, while if a story were aimed at the UK, then it should be prepared in a format for television.

Gallup’s Survey asked how TV channels, including EuroNews, could play a more prominent role in providing background information. Most of those who responded felt that there should be more TV programmes, but they did not agree that there should be a dedicated TV channel. Some found that a channel like EuroNews, specifically aimed at promoting the EU and Europe could not do the job and did not cover breaking news. Instead, people suggested using existing channels by commissioning documentaries showing how EU policy affected people’s lives. Our media experts felt it was important to increase the use of the internet, particularly in reaching young people and that TV channels like MTV, that have a young audience, should be used more.

In general it was agreed that regional or national TV companies made a good job of promoting the EU, and 43% of Gallup respondents wanted to make more money available for co-productions with various regional and national TV Stations. Gallup respondents also agreed that the policy of subcontracting programme-making to individual production companies was a good one that should be continued.

A very popular suggestion among Gallup respondents was that there should be an EU newsroom that could feed the world and European media with prompt, up-to-date, high standard TV footage of what was happening in EU circles. One controversial suggestion was to produce a TV soap opera about life in Brussels ‘Euroland’ to promote understanding and appreciation of the EU. However, this idea went down like a lead balloon in our survey, and received a derisory 29% of support from those in Europe-25.

Respondents were excited about the possibilities of new media and new technologies. There was general approval about the EU's internet presence, which they felt could be built upon by providing short internet news bulletins.



**Jean-Luc Dehaene:** "EU material does not reach the audience. Today, attention is still focused most on written information, although we live in a visual culture where radio and television are more important".

**António Vitorino:** "There should be more frequent recourse to the audio-visual. The website provides the needs of the converted, but more films and documentary programmes are needed for the news channels. But they must not be boring."

Setting up a cable link on the lines of the US C-Span has also been suggested, but **Koos Richelle** was critical of this idea which he felt would not be broadly enough available.

**Improving relations with the media**

Participants looked at the ways that relations with the media could be improved. Those at the September 2 brainstorming and those taking part in our surveys contributed various ideas for dealing with specialist, regional and international journalists. These included organising a press department for each EU country, organising cross-country regional media exchanges and offering study tours for regional journalists and covering the costs of these tours.

The EU Press Departments were criticised for not being proactive enough, in terms of contacting journalists or sending notifications of meetings.

A high percentage – 75% of Gallup respondents felt that the EU suffered from a lack of charismatic figures to defend or explain it, and wanted the new President of the Commission to be more visible and active than the outgoing one: 71% of Europe-15 and 69% of Europe-25 and 75% of those who dealt directly with the EU supported this idea.

Others were concerned about the image of those who broadcast the news to the public – those at the September 2 meeting suggested that EU specialists should also be available to speak to the media, rather than the ubiquitous, "faceless" spokesmen or women. It was felt that this would improve the quality of information offered and make it less bland.

**Jens Peter Bonde:** "All meetings should be open to journalists".

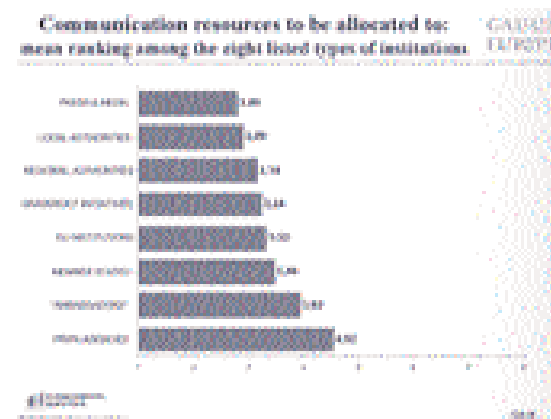
**Alberto Navarro:** "I want a change of culture within the organisations so that part of a Commissioner's function would be to travel to different Member States to meet the people, as well as publicising the EU in his/her own country".

**Eberhard Rhein:** "Every six months the Commission should invite a small number of media editors for a one day, free-rolling discussion with changing groups of Commissioners. "

**Putting the EU communications house in order**

There was general agreement that while EU Institutions had started to change the way they operated, more needed to be done to broaden their media coverage. Richard Upson of ECAS felt that the EU should be more transparent in its approach, and suggested that Europe Direct (a service offered to European citizens who can pose questions about the EU on Internet, by e-mail and telephone) should be better publicised so that it is used more widely.

Where communications resources should be allocated  
(note: those at the top of the slide, indicate those most favoured by respondents)



### Putting communication higher up the political agenda

This was discussed both in the Survey and with the expert group. Those from the Survey felt that work should be done on a country level, with the creation of a network of Commission and Member States' communications services.

53% of Gallup respondents thought that EU officials should spend a considerable amount of their time in their Member States listening and communicating with citizens. The same percentage thought Commissioners should be evaluated and compared in terms of their EU information and communication results.

*On appointing a Commissioner for Communications (the question was put prior to the nomination of Margot Wallström as Communications Commissioner).*



**Hanna Brogren:** "There would be a risk of that person working with 'propaganda'. Another way of dealing with this problem could be to integrate communication into every portfolio".

**Aljosh Peterle:** "It is a controversial proposal".

**Eberhard Rhein:** "I am in favour of the idea, and want this Commissioner to establish a Communications strategy and decide on the Commission's information priorities and impose these on the Commissioners' college".

### Better coordination between the EU institutions in communications

Those we consulted agreed that good internal communication between the different EU Institutions would also improve the EU Communications Policy, but 60% believed that there were various administrative hurdles inside the EU institutions that would prevent this from happening.

It is tacitly acknowledged that competition between Commissioners for coverage is one of the biggest stumbling blocks to different EU departments coordinating their communications efforts. However, the EU Institutions have begun to put their house in order with initiatives such as 'PRINCE' (Priorities Information Activities), which coordinates EU campaigns. PRINCE proved particularly successful for the Euro launch, where it brought all institutions together. As one Gallup respondent put it, "We were all, public and Brussels, going for one goal in which the majority believed. So it was sold with enthusiasm and honesty and it was recognisable".

**Pierre Jonckheer:** "Cooperation is essential so that people can see the process of decision making".

**Hanna Brogren:** "Internal communications need to be improved".



**Alberto Navarro:** "There should be more coordination between the institutions on communications.... and more transparency".

**Eberhard Rhein:** "Put an end to confusing and costly competition between the media efforts of different EU institutions and get agreement among EU institutions on the basic messages to pass at any moment".

*Two of our experts wanted the PRINCE campaigns to be expanded:*

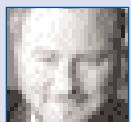
**Joachim Bitterlich:** "The common and coordinated efforts of the Commission, European Parliament and the Member States in the preparation of the introduction of the euro have been a positive example. Why not repeat this experience?"

**António Vitorino** who had overseen PRINCE campaigns felt they should be used more often.

### Bring in the outside professionals

Most of those consulted agreed with the system of bringing in outside experts, for, as one respondent put it, "the EU communication officers have not received any training, they are often learning their skills on the job". To overcome this, "Let media people run the system," said one survey respondent. Other media experts *Friends of Europe* spoke to said that, while there were now press officers from the private sector working in the EU Communications offices, often they found their efforts frustrated by the 'bureaucratic machine'.

**Giuliano Amato:** “Coordinating activities can be much more helpful than having a Commissioner (for Communications). A plurality of coordinated sources of information and communication can have a wider and more brilliant impact”.



**Andrew Gowers:** “I think it is important to establish a clear message, cut down the vague, scattergun priorities and adopt a more orderly approach to communication”.

**Alberto Navarro:** “We need more professionals, better briefings to the press, a better communications strategy and better methods”.

The use of outside professionals is not new, as the Commission already brings in professional agencies to work on particular campaigns. How could this system be improved? Our Gallup respondents felt that it should be simplified, “A more flexible way is needed for companies to find out the procedures. A database – at a national level – with companies, organisations and professionals able to cooperate would be good.” Others wanted the calls for tender to be more widely disseminated.

Aidan White of the International Federation of Journalists felt that one way to work would be to build links with existing media networks and production companies. He also suggested that decisions on awarding production contracts to outside companies should be taken by an independent committee to ensure that it was done transparently.

### Evaluating the results

Obviously with all the proposed changes it will be important to monitor the results. Media monitoring was suggested by a number of players, with Elaine Cruikshanks from Hill&Knowlton, putting the emphasis on also thinking of qualitative evaluation: “Of course, it is important to evaluate how many citizens could be reached with the coverage, and in which markets. However, what is often neglected in the evaluation of communications projects is the qualitative aspect. The real question needs to be: (how) did my messages come across? And if they did not: How do I need to adapt my strategy in order to make it come across to my target audiences in the future?”

Opinion polls, Eurobarometer, perception audits and focus groups were suggested as well, but in the end it went back to whether these changes would increase the turnout in elections. As Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca, Vice President of the European Parliament, put it, “The main method for evaluating the results will be the turnout in elections and the turnout for referenda”.

## ANNEX A: What *Friends of Europe* suggested in earlier reports

### *Friends of Europe's 10-point plan for improving the EU's public profile (2001)*

- 1) Better not more EU information is needed, so a new system of encouraging reader-friendly texts is proposed. The readability and relevance of EU information would be improved by introducing a simple “grading” system under which general interest material would not be subject to the same constraints of officialdom and dense language as information of a politically sensitive or highly technical nature.
- 2) The EU institutions should widen their information responsibilities and not limit them to issuing their own material. For example, the Europa Website should offer links to relevant non-official sites, be they those of NGOs, industry associations or media. EU information mechanisms should include a comprehensive on-line press library with a sophisticated search engine.
- 3) The EU institutions’ information resources should extend to offering material that may be contrary to, or even critical of, policies they themselves advocated. The institutions can make their own case on any issue, but should also enable searchers to find general background information and “outsiders’ ” views.
- 4) The European Commission should analyse and publish the cost of its information and communications efforts. In parallel, it should use established communications industry techniques to measure the results and impact of these efforts.
- 5) EU Member States’ contributions to the task of making European-level issues interesting and relevant to the general public need a major and concerted improvement. As well as publicly earmarking government funds for this, Member States should give improving EU information a strong political boost by tabling it on the summit agenda of a forthcoming European Council.
- 6) A steering group of the heads of Member States’ government information services should be formed to coordinate efforts, and the Council of Ministers committee that handles communications matters should be re-vamped, with the present comparatively junior national officials and diplomats replaced by substantially more senior colleagues.
- 7) A radical restructuring is needed of the Commission’s national information offices in the EU Member States and in major representations elsewhere. These should be recognised as potentially the most effective generators of press and public interest in EU affairs, as they are able to tailor information to local conditions and make unfocussed general topics of greater interest to the media there.

- 8) The European Parliament should work with the other EU institutions to prepare background material that can be offered to the press, civil society organisations and the general public on the issues they are interested in.
- 9) An EU Information Task Force representing all the EU institutions' information services as well as those of relevant Commission DGs should be formed under the chairmanship of the Commission's Director General for Press and Communications. Its function would be to define the information needs of sectors ranging from education to business and industry, and from NGOs to the media, and produce clear-cut targets for both EU and national-level actions.
- 10) To overcome the challenge to the European Union of growing public indifference or scepticism, the EU institutions led by the Commission should widen their information efforts far beyond their present constituencies of Brussels-based journalists and industry representatives. A much more determined and imaginative effort must be launched to engage TV programmers' interest in the debate over EU reform.

### Information Manifesto on the occasion of the election of the European Parliament

In June 2004, *Friends of Europe* in cooperation with the European Citizen Action Service, Gallup and EurActiv.com worked on a three-point manifesto produced to coincide with the election of the new European Parliament and the beginning of a new 5-year EU term. Its three points were:

#### 1. The new European Parliament and Commission must deepen contact with its citizens

EU level information and communication policies have suffered from years of neglect, so much so that informing the public better has become a political issue in its own right. It is increasingly seen as everyone's responsibility, in the EU Institutions, in the Press, and among local and regional authorities, NGOs and others. As long as the EU is undermined by a serious information deficit its work will suffer, with the result that "under-information" is making the democratic deficit a permanent and debilitating feature of EU political life.

The powers of the European Parliament may have increased over the last 20 years, but voting in elections to the Parliament has fallen from 66% in 1979 to 49% in 1999:

- Why has no major campaign been launched to reverse this decline, despite calls from the European Parliament itself and many experts?
- How surprising is it that the Constitutional Treaty is in danger from national referenda when only 28% of the EU's population has heard about the Convention that drew it up?
- Why was the Convention such a missed opportunity for EU information and communication policy?
- What information shortcomings led to enlargement's lukewarm welcome from people in the new Member States, where only 20% consider that they were sufficiently well informed?

#### 2. Unless the EU informs and communicates better, the whole European project will be in danger.

In the wake of enlargement and this year's EP elections, the EU will not find it easy to agree an all-embracing project for Europe. But they can connect to citizens, where the issue is not so much a problem of what to do but more on what scale to do it. The key challenges are making a success of enlargement and securing a Constitutional Treaty. The EU has blueprints aplenty when it comes to informing its citizens better. It made a success of its information campaign on the introduction of the euro, by involving governments and the private sector.

#### 3. The EU can connect to its citizens by acting on three fronts:

##### Earmarking resources

Spending €1 per EU citizen per year on communicating with people would be about 0.5% of the EU's €100bn, but about 10 times what is spent now.

As a first stage, the information budget should at least be doubled. Resources must be provided for multi-media campaigns that include public information slots on TV. Because of its small budget, the Commission at present relies too much on the Europa website which although good is increasingly an alibi for the lack of a genuine information and communication strategy.

The European Parliament's key role will be ensuring the funding needed to inform people about the EU.

##### Better decision-making

There should be a full-time Commissioner for information and communication, not only to give the Institutions a public face, but also to pull together dispersed departmental efforts, and to be fully accountable to the European Parliament.

Progress has been made recently towards better coordination of the EU Institutions and member states, but with 25 countries and 20 languages this has become more important than ever. An Information Commissioner should be matched in the other EU Institutions at appropriately senior political level including regular (and not informal) Council of Ministers meetings.

##### Proper legal basis for EU citizens' right to know

The 2003 *Friends of Europe*-ECAS conference on EU Information and Communications resulted in a proposal to the Convention by Mr. Vidal-Quadras Roca, Vice President of the European Parliament, to include "a binding obligation on the institutions to inform all citizens of the activities of the Union." This demand progressed during the Convention and became official policy of the Commission and the European Parliament. That it was not included in the draft Constitutional Treaty does not mean that it was rejected, and it still stands a good chance in the future. Meanwhile, the EU Institutions should reach a more binding agreement among themselves to create a permanent information and communication campaign.

## ANNEX B: What the professionals say

Three leading consultancies have put forward their own views for inclusion in this report



### Reaching audiences, speaking their language, engaging a dialogue

Can lessons from the largest-ever publicly funded anti-drug campaign in the US be relevant for future EU communication?

One of the largest social marketing and public communication campaigns ever-run in the United States is the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign that Fleishman-Hillard has developed and implemented for the ONDCP - the Office of National Drug Control Policy - since 1998.

This award-winning non-advertisement communication campaign has had tremendous results. It is a key contributor to the first reduction in drug use rates among the target youth audience in more than a decade and to a key shift in youth perceptions of drug use risk.

The EU is definitely not an addiction. Yet its communication deficit has intriguing similarities with the challenges faced by anti-drug campaigns in the US:

- A mass of information exists but is not heard by kids in the blocks or the man in the street;
- Traditional communication approaches have shown their limitations and could even be counterproductive by raising more defiance than support;
- Plenty of information channels and stakeholders interact or compete without effectively reaching their audiences.

Seven lessons can be drawn from this experience and reinforce key findings of the report “Can EU hear me?”:

#### 1. Align all communication with the objective

There is no single message or winning slogan to address complex issues. But ensuring the consistency of messages and aligning actors around common values and objectives are essential.

Given the extraordinary size, complexity, sensitivity and public nature of the US Campaign, there is a need not only to tap best practices of social marketing but also to closely align all approaches and to ensure accuracy and credibility in all communications, documents and reports.

Aligning content of online and offline communications also proves to be critical for launching and supporting special advertising and campaign efforts.

#### 2. Speak the language of the man in the street

Background activities included researching, testing and developing factual, audience-relevant resources.

Print and online activities have, of course, included development of culturally-tailored and in-language resources for a variety of multicultural audiences. Communication goes beyond translation and cultural adaptation. It requires speaking the right language - words, codes and references for each audience – whether teenagers or parents, teachers or journalists.

#### 3. Engage the audiences where they are

The communication strategy was developed as an integrated programme, launched with a strategy of engaging youth and adult audiences with messages wherever they live, meet, learn, work and play. In other words, go where your audiences are; don't stay in conference rooms.

Hundreds of millions of media impressions nationwide were placed in strategic places to intersect with target audiences. These included in schools, workplaces, malls, retail stores, bus terminals, youth-serving organisations and in airplane video programmes. Nearly 2m Campaign parent guides have been distributed, along with countless fact sheets and additional support materials.

#### 4. Mobilise and develop networks of third parties

Outreach activity included building an extensive workplace communication and information network to enhance perceptions of risk, combat misperceptions about drugs, and promote monitoring and early intervention behaviours through news articles, packaging and promotion of surveys and research. Public and private organisations participating in the @Work programme can today reach 10m workers.

The campaign has also reached a wide range of critical “influencers” through special resources and communications tailored and delivered to teachers, coaches and opinion leaders. An ongoing stakeholder “FLASH e-mail” system informs and offers Campaign participation opportunities to more than 5,000 volunteer, civic and community leaders nationwide.

Campaign programmes, communications and information dissemination activities have involved more than 400 local and national civic, volunteer and youth-serving organisations. These programmes have become part of the ongoing operations of key NGOs – non governmental organisations.

#### 5. Leverage the potential of Internet to effectively reach audiences

A comprehensive online strategy has proved to be pivotal to the success of the communication strategy. Campaign Web sites have garnered more than 31m visitors.

For the past 18 months, Freevibe.com, targeting teenagers, has averaged more than 1 million visitors and 3.3m page views per month. Time per visit on TheAntiDrug.com site designed

for adults was increased five-fold from 2001 to 2004. Thousands of other Internet sites have carried Campaign content or links back to Campaign sites, and more than a quarter million parent brochures have been downloaded from sites tailored for parents.

Youth initiatives have also included special Internet promotions, content syndication and placement across the Internet, outreach to teen entertainment media, peer-to-peer contests, youth journalism programmes and award-winning teen documentary and Cable in the Classroom projects.

## 6. Get news stories closer to the audiences and regularly measure impact

Media relations programmes have been developed around calendar hooks such as the end of the school year, back-to-school season and holidays; as well as specific risks such as drugged driving. A key to success has been finding fresh ways to create interest in the same topic and ensure ongoing delivery of Campaign messages.

Media activities - press events, backgrounder briefings for reporters, ongoing outreach – had a specific focus **on local radio, TV and weekly and community newspapers** – and have generated hundreds of millions of media impressions for the Campaign's messages, including national print and broadcast placement, multicultural media and parenting publications.

Of particular note among media results is that favourability of media coverage (i.e. stories including Campaign messages about youth and risks) jumped from 26 to 78% immediately following the launch of the marijuana initiative and remained high (66%) through the end of 2003. Over the same time period, the proportion of stories focusing on the role of parents has increased nearly eight-fold and the proportion of stories focusing on risk and harm tripled.

## 7. Evaluate results to adjust strategy

Activities have evolved and been adjusted to reflect changes in the programme based on a variety of internal and external evaluation mechanisms, most notably a shift from “tweens” (11 to 13) to “teens” (14 to 16) as the primary youth audience.

*To know more about the ONDP campaign visit [www.freevibe.com](http://www.freevibe.com), [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com). Fleishman-Hillard is one of the world's leading public relation firms. GPC international is the public affairs arm of Fleishman-Hillard - [www.fleishman.com](http://www.fleishman.com).*

## HILL & KNOWLTON Communicating Europe

It is a good sign that the new Commission is putting a stronger emphasis on communications. A number of lessons have been learnt by the EU decision makers over the past number of years. The EU has made substantial efforts to communicate more effectively after the disenchantment surrounding the Maastricht treaty, and the EU can look to some more successful communications actions and campaigns since - the Euro communication campaign probably being the most prominent one.

However, the outcome of the 2004 European Parliament elections underlines that there still remains an urgent need to effectively reach out and engage with the European citizen. The *Friends of Europe* report gives a number of very detailed recommendations on how to best meet this challenge. However, I would like to add three points:

### 1. Communicating a historical moment

The new Commission comes into office with 10 new member states, and others to come. Keeping the bigger EU machine moving forward while continuing to convince the newcomers, the accession candidates and the old member states of the benefits of the enlarged new Europe will be a key challenge for the coming years, but also an opportunity. It will certainly require pursuing new communications approaches.

### 2. Further professionalise communications

It is encouraging to see that Commission officials in various services are being trained in their dealings with the press; and that journalists and other communications professionals are joining the EU's information and communications teams at a number of levels. There are many other signs proving that the EU has been realising the importance and power of professional communications since Maastricht. We would strongly encourage the EU's first Commissioner in charge of communications to further continue this trend.

### 3. Simple is best

This may sound like a strange recommendation at a period when the communication challenges are many and complex. Yet, I would like to conclude with a plea for simplicity. Communications strategy does not necessarily need to be long or complicated. However, there are a few points that we would particularly recommend taking into consideration:

- Have a clear view of your target audience for the communication and in function of this the media vehicles and messages that will reach them effectively
- Build campaigns on issues that resonate and are relevant to Europe's citizens
- Make use of spokespersons and role models who are recognised in national markets
- Foster joint communications among the EU institutions to better explain the issue and its impact



## European Year of People with Disabilities 2003

Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide

Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide were appointed by the European Commission's DG EMPL to run the communications campaign for the European Year of People with Disabilities.

The aim was to launch and facilitate a campaign to ensure as many Europeans as possible became aware of the fact that disability problems are a human rights issue that demands prompt action. And, of course, to ensure that the role of Europe in bettering the lot of people with disabilities was properly recognised.

### Tough challenges

The challenges were many. On the specifics, the role of the European Union in helping disabled people was little known and even less understood. Despite their number, disabled people are not visible in most member states. On average, they are less well educated, less integrated into the world of work, and less involved in cultural activities than non-disabled co-citizens.

Added to this were the usual challenges of all pan-European campaigns: small budgets, huge target audiences, great cultural diversity, and significant Euro-scepticism in many member states.

### Innovative solution

Ogilvy's solution was to design, launch and run a people's grassroots campaign, to be run and owned by disabled people across Europe. We would provide tools, key messages, and some central direction – but encourage thousands of local groups to use these tools and messages in their own, local campaigns.

In addition to multiplying the impact of a small budget across all the Member States, this approach in itself helped raise the visibility of disabled people: being trusted by the European Commission to use Commission logos and symbols in their own campaign was highly empowering.

### Simple creativity

The key creative concept was to plan a year-long march of disabled people, to cross hundreds of cities in all Member States. Ogilvy provided the core of the march (a disabled-accessible bus and support staff), the visibility tools (a website offering logos, posters, stickers, T-shirts and the like in all EU languages), and centralised communications (media relations etc.), but most of the work was done locally, by local organisations: each national disability organisations was invited to organise its own leg of the march.

### The rights tools

To ensure success for this concept, a suite of basic tools was needed: a visual identity, strategic advice for the national organisations, a campaign supporters' network, a capacity-building programme, a community portal ([www.eypd2003.org](http://www.eypd2003.org)), promotional items and a 15-

country PR network to manage a full media relations campaign, and setting up a Corporate Partnership programme for fifteen Fortune 500 companies.

### Results

The format worked. Hundreds of thousands were involved in over 200 march-related events in 181 cities across 15 countries. Over 1000 other events that we know of were organised using the provided signage. Over 12,000 written media pieces were recorded, along with hundreds of hours of television and radio broadcast.

The impact of the campaign was confirmed by a Eurobarometer survey published in February 2004: "In September 2003, three months before the end of its programme, one-third of those polled across the European Union (33%) were aware of the fact that 2003 was the European Year of People with Disabilities (EYPD). There was a 'don't know' figure of only 3% across the fifteen Member States. Considering the other high-profile media issues in 2003 and the relatively small budget allocated to the EYPD, this awareness level is positive."

### Lessons learned

The key lesson is the most obvious one – but also one that the institutions may often find difficult to implement: open up, even at the cost of ceding control.

Building and empowering a large group of supporters, and letting them use European Commission signage to support their own campaigns, carries a risk (indeed, some of the events the Year was associated with may be a little radical for some tastes).

But the benefits are far larger. Thousands of groups representing hundreds of thousands of citizens are speaking with a common, European, voice. This gets picked up by the press at all levels, from the local paper to pan-European television stations. A common European image is born, and spreads.

Ultimately, it is the image of Europe benefits: instead of being seen as a remote bureaucratic body, Europe becomes part of people's local experience. It is notable, in this context, that a bias analysis of the media coverage of the Year threw up very little negative bias.

## ANNEX C: Ideas that did not make it into this report's recommendations

- Don't behave like a propaganda ministry, respect the press and be as open as possible.
- Have a Schuman day (or EU day) which is a public holiday for all EU citizens.
- Make cinema commercials about the benefits of Europe and show them in every Member State.
- Locate all the EU institutions in the same city.
- Have a page about the EU in national daily newspapers.
- Give internet access to all EU citizens at cheap prices.
- Name and shame Member States by showing how they voted in the Council meetings.
- Set up consumer orientated web sites, telling what you can get for free in the EU.
- Build the feeling of the European family or brotherhood across Member States.
- Create fun TV programmes, such as game shows, showing the benefits of the EU.
- Invest more in EU tourism, so people know more about other European countries.
- Provide more TV reports on the way of everyday living or about ordinary citizens in various regions.
- Close EP information offices in Member States capitals where the European Commission has already got one.
- Encourage EU spokespeople to work outside the 'Brussels EU ghetto' by setting up programmes to transfer them between EU and member states.
- Use outside specialists to reach the desired audience – for example negotiate with publishers to produce books and pamphlets to improve distribution.
- Upgrade the position of the Head of the national EU information offices to a Director General level.
- Make EU citizens learn Latin as the official and common language.
- Use specialised groups, eg, teachers or scientists in different countries who talk to each other as groups to promote the benefits of EU membership.
- In order to cut down on the EU jargon, take plain language initiatives and establish a form audit agency.
- Communications should be on the agenda of every weekly Commission meeting as well as on the agenda of the European Councils of Ministers.
- Organise media training workshops for politicians and set up a communications help desk to train Commissioners.
- Build a visual strategy to connect the news with the daily lives of the people.
- Each DG should select two issues each year to publicise which its press office should then focus on.
- DGs should compete to find the best communications practice.
- Communicate on an emotional level as well as an intellectual one.
- Make use of symbols like the European hymn and the European Youth Orchestra.
- Support new technologies and improve internet based communication – support online EU journalism.
- Give the media concrete examples of added value – for example what the EU is doing in Bosnia or Sudan.

## ANNEX D: Comments from opinion-makers

### 1. Is EU information and communications as bad as they say?

*Most respondents agreed that EU communications were poor. They stressed the need to decentralise information and to target it to the priorities of individual Member States, rather than issuing blanket information on Commission proposals and meaningless photographs after meetings of the Council of Ministers.*

**Jacques Attali**, former adviser to the President of the French Republic 1981-1991 and President, A&A Group

It is not as bad as they say but the problems vary with each Commissioner. No one communicates the European dream. I hope the new Commission will put across the vision. There was no problem when Delors was President. No billions can overcome lack of personal charisma and leadership.

**Jens Peter Bonde** MEP

It is pure propaganda. The Commission takes all news and manipulates it to fit its own priorities.

**Hanna Brogren**, Head of Information, The Swedish Government Offices

There is a lot of prejudice and we tend to blame Brussels for problems in the Member States. It is a huge challenge to come up with clear communication, but that is what we need to do. Guys in the street have different interests from those of the politicians and these vary from one Member State to another.

**Jean-Luc Dehaene**, Belgium's former Prime Minister, Member of the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs

The concept of EU communication and the material that is available is good; the problem has to do with the channels through which the information is being transferred to the people, it does not reach the audience. Today, attention is still focused most on written information, although we live in a visual culture where radio and television are more important. The problem with television is that what we consider as good information, most people see as boring.

**Andrew Gowers**, Editor, Financial Times

The EU's obsession with how the institutions function and inter-relate, regardless of what they are doing, is a complete turnoff. People want to know more concrete information about the economy and other subjects that are directly affecting them.

**Jack Leslie**, Global President, Weber Shandwick Worldwide

The inherent distrust of government based on failed expectations is not unique to Europe. You see this acutely in South America. But the mind-numbing bureaucracy is unique.

**Alberto Navarro**, Spain's Secretary of State for European Affairs

No, but it is not well presented. We need more professionals involved, better briefings to the press, a better communications strategy and better methods.

**Alojz Peterle**, Slovenia's former Prime Minister and Member of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs

It is not so easy to sell everything that is decided in the institutions, but we could do better. I think people need more context and an insight into the decisions that are taken. They also need to find out more quickly – better access to what is going on in meetings, but in a more popular presentation. We need a European newspaper published in the languages of the Member States and a TV channel or co-operation on programmes.

**Eberhard Rhein**, former Director for Mediterranean Policy in the European Commission

The EU information policy is lousy. It is bureaucratic and boring. The multi-colour brochures published by different institutions provoke more of a yawn and confusion than rousing interest, let alone enthusiasm. Many press communiqués are an insult to language and common sense. The EU seems unable to convince its citizens of its value-added.

**Keith Richardson**, former Secretary General of the European Roundtable of Industrialists

Of course the Commission has a duty to transmit information, which on the whole it doesn't do badly. Techniques can always be improved, and better techniques are always available. But the real challenge is to put across the arguments and to make a case for what it wants to happen. This can only come from the top.

**Koos Richelle**, Director General, European Commission's EuropeAid Cooperation Office

There is a lot of competition going on within the Commission, about communication, a kind of beauty contest. Everybody is keen to send out his/her own message and even has a (small) budget for it.

The Europa site is still so full of cascading information that it is difficult to navigate. We need to do a lot of streamlining in order to make the loads of available information consistent and a joy to consume.

**Michel Rocard**, France's former Prime Minister and Member of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs

If you need information, you can always find it. The trouble is, people don't think they need information. The problem is with the press, whose reflex is to cover drama rather than the slow process of legislation. They are interested in substance, not process.

**Jan Trzuszczynski**, Deputy Foreign Minister & Former Chief Negotiator for Poland's Accession to the EU

I use the Europa website every day and can find what I need. I have no criticisms. It is transparent and well designed. But then, I am familiar with it.

**Nikolaus van der Pas**, Director General, European Commission's Directorate General for Education & Culture

People don't have the energy to follow technicalities. But even if the information were technically perfect it would not get the response we would like. People suffer from information overload.

**Antonio Vidal-Quadras Roca**, Vice President, European Parliament

Yes, it is as bad as people say. We see from surveys that the knowledge of the EU is very low. So either we are providing bad information or not enough information. A major problem is that the EU institutions have modest means to accomplish the task of communicating with 450m people, fragmented into 25 spheres. To put this complexity across is a huge task. More should be done by the Member States to promote European consciousness. They should take it more seriously.

**António Vitorino**, Commissioner for Justice & Home Affairs with responsibility for Information, European Commission

We are good at communicating with elites but not good at talking to people who know nothing and are not interested. The vast majority of people are informed by TV but a lot of the news is not very visual. We need to work on building a visual strategy to connect the news with the daily lives of people.

## 2. Is better communication the answer to the EU's waning popularity?

*The Commission's Communication on EU Information and Communications strategy, which was published in May 2004, is the latest in a series of initiatives designed to improve the negative image of the Union. Over several years the European Parliament repeatedly put pressure on the Commission to come up with a new strategy that prioritised both connecting with European citizens and closer coordination between the institutions. This led to the creation of the PRINCE programme, which was instigated in 1995. PRINCE developed several ways in which mass communication with the general public could be achieved. The euro campaign, which was the first major campaign to use PRINCE, was a notable success.*

*Another important element has been the emerging role of the Inter-Institutional Group on Information (IGI) a tripartite group comprising the Commission, the Council and the Parliament, which was set-up in 2002 following the publication of the European Commission's Report on European Governance. As a result, four priority information topics were identified: enlargement; the future of the Union, the area of freedom, security and justice, and the euro, to which a fifth - the role of Europe in the world – has now been added.*

*All the interviewees agreed that the Commission's proposals were only one way of addressing the problem. They thought that the negative image of the EU was much more deep-seated and that the problem would not be solved by better communications. Most of the interviewees said that good policies and convincing, charismatic people were essential to improve the image of the EU.*

**Giuliano Amato**, *Former Prime Minister of Italy*

It is not the only answer. The problem is a fundamental one. An institution that is only perceived as the regulator of the size of our apples or of the distance among our transported chickens cannot raise any sort of emotional attention. Brussels has become even more bureaucratic than needed, first of all in its language. And there is room for a great improvement even under the existing conditions.

**Jacques Attali**

No form of communication will counteract the absence of efficiency and leadership in Europe. Communications is an annex to the main issue, which is leadership.

**Joachim Bitterlich**, *Executive Vice-President, Veolia Environnement*

It is not the answer, but one of the answers. Information and communication assume a good content to be sold to the public. The new EU-Commission should therefore concentrate its efforts and policies on a small number of concrete themes of vital interest for the citizen.

**Jens-Peter Bonde**

Transparency is far more important. Without it, there is no confidence. The EU just seems like a monster. No one believes the information that comes out of it.

**Hanna Brogren**

Communications are only part of the answer. Good policymaking is also crucial, but they need to be put across more effectively. The two go together.

**Jean-Luc Dehaene**

The reference point between citizen and the EU is not often visible. Information at the local level is easier because there it is mostly immediately visible for the citizen. There is a difference between explaining the euro that everyone will use it and explaining a directive with respect to the environment. If a uniform identity card were to be introduced, the information would mean something immediately. However, in general this is not the case.

**Pierre Jonckheer** *MEP*

The communications/information problem is a symptom of a deeper malaise. There are more important factors at play, such as deciding what is the EU for. The failure to deliver on a foreign and security policy and immigration policy has been a disappointment to the population. They want to see concrete results from EU competencies – such as higher employment.

**Jack Leslie**

I think it's a function of the newness of the EU experience. It is daunting for people and it is not surprising that even well educated people are baffled. It almost looks as if the EU is trying to mystify the public.

Europe is trying to cope with a new way of governing and it will take time to adjust. It will eventually happen through the changes in people's daily lives – such as the euro. As people start to behave in a different way their attitudes will also change.

The first thing to do is to identify the wanted outcome of a communications strategy. This sounds easy, but it often gets lost in the mix. You have to be precise about how you want people to think about you, whether you are an individual or an institution. Then you need a benchmark – say 'bureaucratic,' which you can measure over time and can be tracked on a regular basis.

**Stefano Micossi**, *Director General, Assonime*

I believe that improved communication can contribute a bit, but not much to an improved perception of Union institutions and policies. I tend to see the real issue in that too many activities of the Union (Community) have been seen and designed in response to organised interests and do not appeal to the public opinion at large.

An improved communication effort is certainly required in explaining to the public opinion the Union goals and priorities: which would require first of all an ability to identify few clear priorities, fully shared by the European Council, Commission and Parliament.

**Alberto Navarro**

The EU project must be seen and felt by its citizens, which is not the case at the moment. A good educational campaign could be of great importance.

In Spain we are planning a very comprehensive strategy, through the media and multipliers like the universities, municipalities etc to inform people what has been achieved during our 18 years of EU membership. We will also tell them about the challenges we are facing. The campaign will stress the concrete results of policies, how the EU has changed the daily lives of Spaniards through initiatives such as Erasmus, the euro, military peace keeping and agriculture. We will also stress the issues that matter most to our country.

We will not be spending enormous amounts of money because we have good multipliers such as the universities, trades unions, regional governments and chambers of commerce. We will also be offering people a shortened version of the constitution to inform them in preparation for the referendum. Our aim is not to sell the EU but to open a debate. We are trying to avoid apathy.

**Alojz Peterle**

We need more transparency, not just communications. In the new Member States everyone asks about salaries, and expenses and the lack of power of the parliament, not about policies. But there is a good working spirit inside the institutions. We just need to let people see it.

**Eberhard Rhein**

Information policy will only be effective if policies solidly support it. The Commission has to supply information about its proposals, decisions etc. in the most intelligible and non-technical language. It should constantly check what is important to the average citizen and explain why. It is on a few really strategic subjects, which form the core of the Commission's 5-year work programme, that the information efforts should focus. The Commission must also put more focus on the two big Member States, Germany and UK, where the population feels least proud of being European citizens.

- Get agreement among EU institutions on the basic messages to pass at any given moment. This is much more easily said than done!
- Be selective. The average citizen needs to be shielded against any form of information excess, from whatever source.
- Do not confound photo opportunities, e.g. of European Council meetings, with messages. Citizens tend to react negatively to jumbo shows with little or no results.
- Put an end to confusing and costly competition between the media efforts of different EU institutions. Is there really a justification for having EP information offices in every Member State capital?

#### **Koos Richelle**

The biggest problem is that communications cannot undo the backlog, created by the negative information that has been built up by national governments, the private sector and NGOs. They do not have a feeling of pride about being in Europe and blame Europe for any problems that occur. Brussels is usually portrayed as a fossilised monster. Positive information might help but it will only be a drop of water on a roof. It would also contribute to realism if governments would positively defend measures for which they took responsibility in Brussels.

#### **Michel Rocard**

The EU image is that of a club for the rich. Information needs to touch the hopes and fears of the public. It needs to be emotionally in touch with them.

#### **Jan Truszczyński**

There are much deeper reasons for the current malaise. We need closer co-operation with the Member States, more involvement with NGOs. No trick in the book could turn these things around.

In Poland, EU legislation interests a small number of people, but the overall policies leave the public cold. The media is only interested when there is a whiff of corruption and they can denigrate Brussels.

Modern leaders are not perceived to have the same magnitude of challenges that faced leaders in the 1950s and 60s – such as democracy – so they are less interesting to the wider public.

#### **Nikolaus van der Pas**

To a large extent, better information would help although I think we already have enough information and it is of pretty good quality. However, it will take much, much, more than information to restore the reputation of the EU.

Most important is that the Member States show ownership of EU integration. This could be helped by increased co-ownership of information between the Commission and the national politics. If the population can identify European policies with a national politician they like, it will help.

#### **Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca**

The underlying problem is that the people of Europe are disappointed in the EU because there is a gap between its aims, expectations and the results they see.

#### **António Vitorino**

I am only responsible for the PRINCE campaigns. This is the first time that the three institutions have collaborated in this way and it should be expanded. The Commission's responsibility is the management of the information and the Member States and the regions are responsible for putting the message across. Much more should be done in the Member States because there is no such thing as European public opinion. For instance, enlargement is a completely different issue in Spain and in Germany.

The pattern is correct. We should decide on a global message in the institutions and fine-tune it locally.

### **3. Should the next Commission President designate one member whose sole responsibility is information and communication; and if so, what remit should the new portfolio have?**

*In the new Commission, Vice President Margot Wallström will be responsible for the Institutional Relations and Communications portfolio.*

*A majority of the interviewees said that the appointment of an Information Commissioner would not be a good thing. Their reasons ranged from impracticability, lack of credibility and tokenism to the possibility that the public would see it as propaganda. (Note: the interviews were done before the nomination of Margot Wallström as Communications Commissioner).*

#### **Giuliano Amato**

Not necessarily in my view. A staff has been created on the quality of regulations. This too is a matter of quality, a quality that should transversally be changed. Why shouldn't it have a similar attention? Firstly the product has to be improved, secondly it has to be sold to a wider public. Also for the sale a structure is needed, but I am not sure that a new Commissioner for it is really needed.

#### **Jacques Attali**

This would not work because the 25 Commissioners would only communicate about their own communications agenda.

#### **Joachim Bitterlich**

It is in fact, in spite of some doubts, a seducing idea. And there are some of the future Commissioners with a certain experience in this field (eg. Peter Mandelson). And this Commissioner would have to be the Spokesman of the Commission

**Jens-Peter Bonde**

It would be seen as propaganda, not communication. Information should be purely factual, not made to fit in with core values. Things are already looking better because the new President of the Commission has sent me a list of 3094 secret working groups, for which I have been asking for ten years. That is encouraging and will win people's confidence.

**Hanna Brogren**

Communications should be integrated into every portfolio to make sure that aspect is taken care of in every policy area. Communications should be inside the institutions as well as external.

**Pierre Jonckheer**

No, each Commissioner and individual ministers in the Council, and MEPs should explain policy proposals. It should not be focused on the Commission. A superman will not solve the problem.

**Andrew Gowers**

I wouldn't envy anyone this job. Who would he represent? I think it is more important to establish a clear message, cut down the vague, scattergun priorities and adopt a more orderly approach to communication. It should be clear and uncluttered. There should be less of it, and it should be handled by smaller, high quality teams.

A designated Commissioner wouldn't make the slightest difference.

**Alberto Navarro**

The remit should be to make the Commission more efficient in providing facts – it needs to be more speedy, to avoid rumours and negative publicity.

**Alojz Peterle**

It is a controversial proposal and I am not in favour.

**Eberhard Rhein**

The Commissioner in charge of information and communication should decide the information priorities for the Commission and impose these upon the college. This will not always be easy, far from it.

The Commissioner should also be in charge of establishing a sort of over-arching communications strategy for all EU institutions. This will be a difficult undertaking, but no less important.

The Commissioner in charge should be responsible for all aspects of Commission information and communication policy, including the spokespersons' group.

Trying to reverse the mood in the UK will be the litmus test for the Commissioner in charge of information. There is no time to be lost.

**Koos Richelle**

I think this would be a token decision because the Commissioner would not have the powers to put across a corporate identity in all kinds of media. There is also the problem of propaganda – which is something people talk about in private, but is rarely raised in public. Nobody wants to go there and communications and information must be genuinely neutral, addressing different audiences. It would be hell of a job to do this for 24 Commissioners.

**Jan Truszczyński**

Even if the information portfolio were beautifully packaged, the tendency in my country would be to denigrate it as another waste of money. It might be perceived as propaganda.

During the accession negotiations I looked at colleagues in the EC, but there was less than total dedication to the information campaign. It was necessary, but not really effective. But we can't measure effectiveness of these campaigns anyway.

**Nikolaus van der Pas**

The Information Commissioner should not have a political responsibility because that would be unworkable. He should not be a spokesman because there is too much inbuilt tension between directorates and if they disagreed with the new Commissioner it would be self-defeating for the Commission.

**António Vitorino**

I think that the ultimate political responsibility for communication should be upgraded to the level of the President and the Commissioners should be responsible for sectoral information. They can address their own public in their own language better than anyone else. They should also visit other Member States more often and should talk about other portfolios.

There is also room for improvement in internal communication – there is no synergy between sectors and people often don't know what is going on. There is often no connection between sectoral interests and overall priorities.

#### **4. To what extent should the Commission share its powers over information and communication programmes with other institutions and expert bodies?**

*The Inter-Institutional group in which the Commission, the Council and the Parliament jointly decide on EU communications priorities was set up in 2002. The interviewees were divided on the advantage of closer co-operation. Some thought the institutions should have separate communications in the interests of democracy. Others thought that it was important for the public to understand how the institutions interact.*

**Giuliano Amato**

This is something that can be much more helpful than having a Commissioner. A plurality of (co-ordinated) sources of information and communication may have a wider and more brilliant impact.

**Jacques Attali**

Communications should be separate. Each institution should make itself better known. I am in favour of strong communications but not a unified voice.

**Joachim Bitterlich**

The common and coordinated efforts of the Commission, of European Parliament and the Member states in the preparation of the introduction of the Euro have been a positive example in the past. Therefore, why not repeat this experience? In this context we should reflect, whether the “special Commissioner’s” portfolio should not include the institutional relations with the European Parliament?

**Jens-Peter Bonde**

There is no case for cooperation. It would produce more propaganda. The essential thing is to satisfy the need for transparency in decision-making.

**Hanna Brogren**

It is important that the interaction between the EU institutions is communicated to a wider audience. Unhappy politicians like to blame things on Brussels, which doesn’t improve the public’s understanding of how the processes work.

**Pierre Jonckheer**

Co-operation is essential so that people can see the progress of decision-making. However, paradoxically, the nature of EU decision making is that it takes a long time and if we keep people informed about every stage so they can participate, it is boring. If we don’t, it seems undemocratic.

**Andrew Gowers**

The Commission appears to have the preponderance on information. There needs to be more access to what is going on in the Council of Ministers as well as the Parliament. The institutions should not share their communications but there needs to be better balance.

To an uneducated eye the Commission is churning out initiatives that don’t emerge as real impacts. We need to have a view of real debates.

**Alberto Navarro**

There should be more coordination between the institutions on communication and more transparency, particularly in the Council of Ministers, which needs a face.

**Eberhard Rhein**

The Commission has to rely on Member States’ governments and their information services, especially for adapting EU information to local conditions. But it must also expect from governments and their spokespersons more objective information on EU subjects than is presently the case.

The focus of EU information policy should, however, be the media and not bureaucracies.

**Michel Rocard**

The main thing is that we must be seen to do things, not just deliberate.

**Jan Truszczyński**

If the institutions spoke with one voice it could damage the democratic image of the EU.

**Nikolaus van der Pas**

There is always a chorus of information from people from different institutions that are competing to put their message across.

We should give a coherent message about the on-going fight between the Commission and the Parliament and the Council. Fights about new initiatives are a reality. The EU is an alien institution to the general public. It is difficult to explain the distribution of power and translate it into the experience of the Member States.

**Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca**

Inter-institutional co-operation is essential as has been demonstrated by the Inter-institutional group over the past few years. Co-ordination should be extended on the practical side and should be increased between people working in information within the different institutions. This will strengthen the message.

**5. What measures would improve EU Information and Communications?**

*Over the past year, Friends of Europe has led a concerted effort to address the EU communications and information deficit. This programme has included a number of brainstorming events for communications experts and opinion makers. Claes de Vreese, from the Amsterdam University School of Communication Research, was one of the participants at Friends of Europe’s Understanding Europe – The Citizen’s Right to Know seminar, which took place in Brussels in April 2003.*

*Professor de Vreese has researched the quantity and content of television coverage of EU stories. His report concludes that media coverage should not be about “sending out a monolithic pro-European message that might ‘rekindle a European spirit’. It is about generating media attention, debate and discussion.” He suggested three ways in which this might be achieved:*

- News should be presented within a meaningful framework (such as conflict, human interest, morality) which tells a story;

- *There should be closer scrutiny of government/EU negotiations by national parliaments, to provide more interesting coverage;*
- *Give the EU a face.*

*The interviewees had particularly strong views about the responsibilities of the President and Commissioners in communicating Europe. They also highlighted the need for better training and more professional advice on communications.*

#### **Jacques Attali**

Commissioners and the President should be trained in communications. There could also be a communications help desk for Commissioners for personal training.

Communications should be on the agenda of every weekly Commission meeting. There is no point in training officials unless the people at the top change the way they think. Good practice won't move up through the organisation.

#### **Jens-Peter Bonde**

We need completely open meetings with access for all journalists. They should also have access to all documents. There should be no secrecy. The 300 council working groups should also be open to the public.

#### **Hanna Brogren**

The dissemination message has to be clear from the start. It should be on the agenda of a summit to decide how the message should be put across. Communication should be addressed at the meeting, not added on after. This will improve its accessibility. Communications should be integrated into the work of policymaking.

#### **Pierre Jonckheer**

We should deliver concrete examples of added value – for example in foreign policy – of what the EU is doing in Bosnia or Sudan.

#### **Andrew Gowers**

Apart from cutting back the volume and targeting better, we need to recognise that a Commissioner's work can be measured by his ability to communicate what he is doing. It should be a priority consideration when they are chosen.

There has also been a failure to engage with issues that matter in national governments.

The European Institutions should not devote so much time to banging a drum about themselves and should pay more attention to telling the public what they are doing. This applies to the Council as well. The image of decisions being taken in a smoky room is bad. It must be more open.

#### **Jack Leslie**

The EU should look for policy areas that are immediately relevant to ordinary people and not bother about communicating arcane policy areas. At the moment there is too much of the 'public information officer' style of communications.

They first need to listen, to understand the public's needs and have a clear strategy on exactly what they want to communicate. Then they need to craft simple messages, political as well as just information. But there is no point in add-on stuff like badges and special communication channels. Mass communications is not the way to engage with people. You have to use channels which are credible – it is much more difficult to think how to use them than special instruments.

#### **Alberto Navarro**

Clear messages should be sent through the right media. They should concentrate on the issues that really count in individual Member States. So we need better information from the Member States to enable messages to be targeted more effectively. The EU institutions need to prove that they work as a team with a clear goal.

#### **Alojz Peterle**

Commissioners should spend more time talking to the people. In the Convention we had good experience with the national forums. We should do the same kind of thing, making closer contact with civil society.

We also need better access to decisions on the internet, and more transparency about ideas as they arise. The programme of work of the Commission should also be available to the public.

#### **Keith Richardson**

I have always thought that every Commissioner must be an advocate in his/her own country. If the public opinion is the real customer for the Commission's ideas then that customer needs to hear the arguments in his/her own language. If communications is the greatest single weakness of the Commission system then communicating with the domestic audience should be a key responsibility for every Commissioner.

#### **Michel Rocard**

I would like to see an independent multi-disciplinary investigation into the image of the EU, paid for by the EU

#### **Jan Truszczyński**

The media needs daily proof that the EU can deliver. When they get the proof they may be more willing to use the information.

We need more targeted practical information for groups like farmers and other professional sectors. This could be channelled through advisory bodies, professional organisations and local information centres.

#### **Nikolaus van der Pas**

The single most important thing is a President and Commissioners who can communicate. It is crucial they should consider what kind of emotion they transmit. You can have a cupboard full of ICTs, but unless a person has a bit of soul - like Emma Bonino, Fischler and Lamy who have distinctive human images - it won't work.

**Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca**

There should be a universal communications tool in the hands of the EU institutions so that people have a sense of European governance. This should be a European television channel broadcasting Europe wide in the languages of the Member States. It should have entertainment as well as news. People need a European reference point – the media is essential for giving a sense of identity.

**António Vitorino**

- Member States should be more involved and engaged in communications. Information should be more flexible to reflect local priorities.
- The Commission should have a better grasp of public needs and priorities. This could be achieved by monitoring and dialogue through the delegations.
- Inter-institutional co-ordination should be increased, with a decentralised method of disseminating targeted information.
- There should be a more frequent recourse to the audio-visual. The website provides the needs of the converted, but more films and documentary programmes are needed for the news channels. But they must not be boring!

*6. Are EU topics too complicated to communicate to the general public?*

*There was overwhelming agreement amongst experts that EU topics were not too complicated, but that they were badly presented. Most of the interviewees said that the EU was dealing with matters which had an impact on people's daily lives – and that they would be easily understandable if communicated properly.*

**Jacques Attali**

Certainly not, if there is a clear vision. But complex ideas are a nightmare. Communication needs to be crystallised into key themes such as work, transport, environment, health etc. They should be simple to explain.

**Hanna Brogren**

There can be a clash between the needs of politicians who want to be elected and communications experts who want to be heard. These need to pull in the same direction. EU policy covers most areas and it requires diplomacy to agree on communications to put its work across. Policymakers don't necessarily have the skills needed to do this. Often the target audiences are not carefully identified and the information released is just blanket conclusions or broad statements, which are not sculpted to fit the different needs of the audiences.

**Pierre Jonckheer**

Not inherently, but the way the public space is organised in the Member States makes it difficult to communicate the topics.

**Andrew Gowers**

No, but the way it is dealt with makes it difficult to understand. A good example was recasting justice home affairs legislation – the portfolio has moved on dramatically thanks to careful stealthy work by Vitorino. He got national governments to sing his tune and was very good at communication. It is a very important part of the job.

**Alberto Navarro**

They are not too complicated, but they need to be packaged properly. The national governments deal with the same subjects, so I can't see why the EU can't communicate the issues just as clearly. The jargon is a problem. The problem is a lot to do with the style of communication, not the content.

**Koos Richelle**

Some are, but a great deal of what is done in Brussels affects the daily lives of people, but they don't realise it. The information is hidden in terminology. People are interested when legislation affects them directly, such as the content of meatballs.

But matters concerning the environment, consumer affairs, transport and so on affect all of us and we must get this message across. The national governments need to translate the implications better to their national audience – there could be big information campaigns to interest local people, but information helps best when it is provided on a continuous basis..

**Michel Rocard**

One thing that would improve this would be better education of journalists – particularly in the field of economic culture.

**Jan Truszczyński**

Again, I am not neutral. It certainly shouldn't be the case. I think that anyone who has had secondary education should be able to understand the information.

The FAQs are particularly useful. But the weekly information after meetings of cabinets is sheer mumbo jumbo.

**Nikolaus van der Pas**

Many subjects are – like taxation – too complicated. But many others are accessible if people see a connection with their own lives, such as students in the Erasmus programme, they will be more interested.

**Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca**

I think it is just an excuse for poor communications. Many things are easy to explain and people are interested in them. I mean the environment, consumer affairs, the internal market, competition and foreign trade. Any good communicator could put these things across.

**António Vitorino**

As Pascal Lamy has remarked, it is difficult to love Frankenstein. It is not easy to simplify an organisation that has grown out of complex diplomatic agreements.

We should prioritise communication with schools and the media.

*7. Is an improvement of EU information and communication a matter of money or culture?*

*Most of those interviewed said that a change of culture – whether inside the institutions or in a wider sense – was the root of the communications problem. Some said that too much money was already being spent – and wasted. Another called for more communications on an emotional level to engage the general public.*

**Giuliano Amato**

It definitely is more a matter of culture than of money.

**Jacques Attali**

The institutions are already too communications oriented. They are too concerned with image and not enough with leadership. The important thing is to have something real to say.

**Joachim Bitterlich**

It is a matter of information and communication culture. The existing money has to be spent in a much more efficient way (one of the positive examples of the past was the campaign in favour of the introduction of the Euro, coordinated between Brussels and the Member states)

**Hanna Brogren**

I think it is a matter of culture, rather than money. Improvements should be made together, and should be integrated into each project. People within the EU institutions – even in the same Directorate-General often don't know what is going on. Communications therefore need to be improved inside as well as with the external audience.

**Jean-Luc Dehaene**

You can explain at a meeting that Europe is good for stability and peace but when they arrive at their homes they don't see the link anymore. People know, but don't experience it anymore. You can compare it with the Belgian state debt that needs to be reduced. You can explain that it is necessary to reduce the national Belgian debt, but when people arrive at home they don't feel they themselves have to contribute to that.

In the Convention I had to talk with civil society. But after putting in a lot of energy you have the impression that whatever you do will never be enough. You often have the impression that certain organisations you meet are as far from their members as the EU from its citizens.

**Pierre Jonckheer**

It's a matter of culture. But it is also a question of how the money is used, not just how much. We need to concentrate on putting across the values.

**Andrew Gowers**

I don't think it's a matter of money. Too much is already spent on vapid information, irrelevant press trips. The message needs to be connected to the real needs of people.

**Alberto Navarro**

We need a change of culture within the organisations. The Commissioners should travel more and meet the people more. They should learn more languages and take training. They should use their teams better to send messages to the Member States. The Commission has the means to do this. It doesn't require lots more money.

**Eberhard Rhein**

Money does not seem to be the problem. The EU should concentrate more on influencing opinion makers and let them put the message across. It should not reach out directly to member countries' citizens. This is psychologically wise and less costly. I have two concrete suggestions:

- Every six months or so the Commission should invite a small number of influential media editors for a one-day, free-rolling discussion with changing groups of Commissioners.
- It should equally organise a "European Debate", a monthly TV debate among key political figures, journalists, academics, members of parliament on issues of a European (not only EU) dimension, ranging from health to employment, environment, transport or science. It should be possible to convince public (and even private?) channels like BBC and ARTE to give it a try.

**Koos Richelle**

Member States should have their own campaigns. If they don't, we will need more resources – not just money, but better and dedicated expertise.

Within the organisations there is a level of impotence – there are not enough people with expertise in communications. Passing the 'concoors' doesn't mean one automatically knows how to communicate professionally. Communications is a line of business with specific skills that are not available to all.

**Nikolaus van der Pas**

"Improvement" is a matter of culture, rather than money. The press room is full of different cultures, and the people delivering the news are also very diverse, with different ways of telling a story. It boggles the mind to come up with a formula that would suit everyone.

Information/communication is more than words and pictures, it also involves shared experiences such as how you feel when you see the European Youth orchestra or see young

people singing the European hymn. Perhaps we need to think of communicating on an emotional level, with more symbols that bypass intellectual information.

#### Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca

Everything boils down to money eventually. Any large-scale effort is bound to be expensive – that’s why the Member States should join in the effort through public television channels, for example. There is a lack of political will to do this in the Member States. The institutions are powerless to do what is necessary. The job is too big for them to tackle.

#### António Vitorino

It is a matter of both. There are obvious cultural barriers to communication – such as language and it would help if the imperial culture of the institutions were lessened and tuned in to the priorities of the citizen. The culture of the Member States is also an important factor – how they perceive Brussels. We can’t do everything from here.

#### 8. What methods for measuring the success of present and future information and communication efforts should be introduced?

*The interviewees had various suggestions, from the numbers of rotten eggs thrown to referendum turnouts. They thought existing measures such as the Eurobarometer surveys were useful. One described how the improvement in quality of news coverage was monitored over the period of the Swedish Presidency.*

#### Giuliano Amato

First, the rate of information of our citizens on selected actions and decisions of the EU, second the rate of support (or even of debate) that such actions and decisions raise.

#### Joachim Bitterlich

“Euro-barometer” should be reviewed thoroughly (success and real capability up till now ?)

#### Hanna Brogren

To evaluate and measure the effects of communication is always important. During the Swedish Presidency we tried to evaluate feedback from the public – quantitatively and qualitatively. We measured a change in public knowledge about the Swedish priorities after increasing the communications effort. After 12 months there was definite improvement. Civil servants spoke to journalists, editors, TV, etc and tried to communicate what was important to us during the presidency. We found that EU news moved from the foreign pages to local news for example. This evaluation took a lot of effort but it was worth it.

#### Koos Richelle

We need to popularise more, but on the short term we should not follow the example of the American C-SPAN (C-SPAN is a private, non-profit public service of the cable television industry, focussing on Washington politics). That would be serving an incrowd (you have to

subscribe to a cable network) and the debating style in Brussels may call for a lot of explanation.

#### Nikolaus van der Pas

Flowers or rotten eggs would be a start. We already have all kinds of measurements such as the Eurobarometer and at a technical level there are lots of instruments to provide quick feedback from the delegations etc.

#### Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca

The main methods are the turnout in elections for the parliament and the turnout for referenda.

#### António Vitorino

We already have several ways of measuring the impact of communications, mainly through polls. We know that our campaign on enlargement resulted in more positive attitudes, for example, although it was not homogeneous. We can find out from polls about the image of the institutions, whether people are confident in the future and public opinion on issues. All this is useful.

#### 9. What is the difference between Information and Communication?

**There was general agreement that communication was dialogue, whereas information was a one-way traffic in facts. Most interviewees thought that the amount of information put out by the EU was plentiful, but opaque. Again, they stressed the need for it to be better packaged and targeted to the needs of individual Member States and interest groups.**

#### Jacques Attali

Information is sharing knowledge by a number of means and communications is the method through which this is achieved. It means finding target groups, defining audience, phasing and using tools. But the message is the same, whether you talk of information or communication.

#### Hanna Brogren

Communication is dialogue and debate. Information is a one-way process. You need both. You can’t expect large groups of people to be interested in communication – they need basic information and to know where to go to communicate on specific issues. This is necessary to keep democracy alive between voting in elections.

#### Nikolaus van der Pas

Information is like filling in boxes. Communication goes both ways. I stress that the emotional part is very important – if you don’t touch the emotions you can talk until you’re blue in the face and get nowhere.

**António Vitorino**

There is a clear difference between information and communication. Information covers basic awareness of what the EU does and factual knowledge of such matters is still very limited. Communication is a two-way process involving feedback from the citizens of the Member States. Spin is not enough to satisfy their needs, however good it is. We should ask only for results that can be delivered by information campaigns. We must give people what they want – security, economic stability, etc.

Specific information will not succeed if the Member States don't engage with the effort. If they continue to use Brussels as a scapegoat when things go wrong at home, and talk about bloody Brussels bureaucrats, we will not be able to put across information about the concrete measures – food safety for example – that make their lives more safe.



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Who are we?</b></p> <p>ECAS was created in 1990 as an international non-profit organization, independent of political parties, commercial interests and the EU Institutions. The mission of the association is to enable NGOs and individuals to make their voice heard with the EU. ECAS provides advice on how to lobby, fundraise, and to defend European citizenship rights.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>What can we do for you?</b></p> <p>We can help you achieve your European aims more quickly and easily because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Our staff specializes in lobbying fundraising and EU legal issues, supported by a sound infrastructure.</li> <li>■ Our guide to EU funding provides all important information on how to manage a successful funding strategy.</li> <li>■ We will provide the key to accessing the EU Institutions European level associations.</li> </ul>
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**ANNEX E: Friends of Europe**

*Friends of Europe* (FoE) is Brussels' liveliest think-tank and aims to stimulate new thinking on the future of Europe while broadening the EU debate. It is non-profit without national or political bias.

Our goal since 1999 has been to take discussion of the key issues confronting the EU beyond the charmed circle of the Brussels elite by linking up with major think-tanks, foundations, networks and the media in Europe's national capitals.

Two issues have formed a leitmotif of our debates and publications: reform of EU-level decision-making and ways of improving the EU's information and communication. These themes underpinned two ground-breaking FoE publications: "Blueprint for Reform" and "Getting the Message Across".

*Friends of Europe's* activities cover a wide range of topics in most of the key EU policy areas.

FoE offers an open forum that is both youthful and influential for EU and national policy-makers, business leaders, media, NGOs, MEPs, government representatives, researchers and consultants who do much to help shape legislative initiatives.

*Friends of Europe's* activities are overseen by a Board of Trustees chaired by Viscount Etienne Davignon and made up of senior figures who contribute substantially to the process of European integration.

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**Uffe Ellemann-Jensen** is a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and Chairman of the Baltic Development Forum.

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**António Vitorino** is the European Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs, responsible for Information. Between 1995 and 1997 he was Portugal's Minister of Defence.

#### SECRETARY GENERAL

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# This report is a substantial and original contribution to the EU's most serious challenge, that of winning over public opinion

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*Friends of Europe* has specialised in EU level information and communication policy proposals since its launch in 1999.

Activities have included three conferences:

- Opening the Debate – Towards a New EU Information and Communication Strategy **March 2000**
- Getting the Message Across **May 2001**
- Understanding Europe – The Citizen's Right to Know **April 2003**.

In **June 2004**, *Friends of Europe* produced its three-point Information Manifesto.

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