



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Working Party on Information
Subject: Draft communication budget 2014 and impact on future cooperation with Member States

1. The General Secretariat of the Council recalls that the WPI addressed this issue at its meetings of 12 July and 13 September 2013. The concerns of delegations and the explanations of the Commission's representatives were summarised in the reports of those meetings¹.
2. In particular it is recalled that the Commission's DG COMM representatives pointed out that the decision to discontinue MPAs as from 1 January 2014 does not imply that cooperation among the Institutions and between the Institutions and the Member States will stop and recalled Art. 2 of the Joint Declaration "Communicating Europe in Partnership", which encourages convergence of views of the key players in order to communicate on the EU together.
3. Since the last WPI on 13 September the Presidency and the General Secretariat have received additional feedback from delegations who wished to draw attention to the following aspects:

¹ see docs. 12607/13 and 13832/13

- a. a wide variety of communication initiatives could only take place because of the multi-annual character and cooperative nature of the Management Partnership Agreements (MPAs). For the great majority of MS concerned, these tools were the nucleus of EU communication at national, regional and local level;
 - b. the MPAs have significantly increased the capacity of the national partners to communicate the EU. They enabled to do it at large scale, through high visibility events and complex educational and media projects with bigger outreach and impact. Consequently, the discontinuation of MPAs' would reduce the scope and scale of EU communication targeted at general public;
 - c. the MPAs framework contributed to the creation of new synergies between government communication authorities and the representations of the EP and Commission;
 - d. while awaiting more details from the Commission on how to manage other forms of partnerships, alternative models should be explored which could provide reliable coordination structures, smooth funding mechanisms and cooperation on equal footing.
4. Delegations will find attached in Annex some considerations from the Presidency on possible steps forward.
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Considerations from the Presidency

In view of the IGI meeting on 5 November 2013, the Presidency takes note of the state of play on the budget exercise with regard to the communication lines¹ and considers that viable options to maintain and enhance collaboration in this domain could be centred on a number of core principles, namely:

- decentralisation of the communication activities, to enhance proximity, respond to citizens' expectations and foster their engagement, particularly in view of the upcoming European elections;
- adequate structures, resources and synergies to enable smooth and effective implementation;
- appropriate coordination mechanisms to ensure coherency and consistency.

With regard to further steps on the inter-institutional communication agenda, the Presidency believes that the IGI meeting on 5 November 2013 could confirm a common commitment to some core principles of EU communication such as:

- the importance and impact of work in partnership, in the context of European challenges that are expected to intensify rather than diminish in the year ahead;
- the need to renew and reinforce cooperation at national, regional and local level in order to communicate with citizens focusing on policy issues which concern their real needs and respond to their expectations, creating confidence and proximity and inspiring engagement.

After the IGI meeting, Institutions and delegations could pursue the debate on this issue as follows:

- WPI meeting on 22 November 2013: as agreed in September, the Commission is invited to give a comprehensive overview of its communication projects and activities (envisaged within or without the partnership framework) planned for 2014;
- communication directors from institutions and governments will respectively examine this file informally (plenary meeting of the Club of Venice on 14/15 November) and formally ("Communicating Europe in Partnership" - C.E.P. meeting on 27 November and WPI meeting on 13 December).

¹ Outcome of the EP's reading: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/outcomeEPplenary23.10.EN>.
The conciliation phasis has just started.

The Presidency believes that, at future meetings of the WPI, consideration could be given to improving existing instruments and exploring new ways and means which could help reinforce cooperation among the key players, for instance:

- a thorough evaluation of MPAs ¹ and all other forms of partnerships and an MOU or the updating of the Declaration on "Communicating Europe in Partnership" to emphasise the need for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the communication projects;
- possible cross-links among existing programmes and projects; the possible adaptation of the structure of strategic partnerships, by introducing/safeguarding the "tri-partite" coordination (EP, Commission, national Implementing Body) which was at the basis of the MPAs.

¹ The Commission (DG COMM) has meanwhile informed the General Secretariat that the results of its on-going horizontal evaluation of MPAs will be available in December 2013.