

## Clear Writing

# "It's everybody's business"



Clear  
writing  
campaign

**L**aunched in 2010, the Clear Writing Campaign may have important implications for the way the Commission works in future, as set out in the Task Force's recently published report (see link below). Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou shared her thoughts with *Commission en direct* on the report, and on the wider challenges of ensuring multilingual clarity in EU communication. (See also *Cen+* special on Clear Writing.)

### The Clear Writing Task Force has recently published its report. How do you feel about it?

I welcome the report. It confirms what I think we all knew already – that there is plenty of scope for making Commission documents clearer.

### What are the problems with the way we write?

Typically, we produce documents that are too long, too wordy and too full of jargon. Bureaucratic style will obscure any text, regardless of the language in which it is written, and even if the author is a native speaker. To make matters worse, many Commission documents nowadays are drafted in English by non-native speakers, and few of these texts are ever properly checked.

Both external and internal communication suffer. Externally, we are failing to explain European policies to the European citizen in clear and comprehensible language. Internally, poor drafting is wasting a lot of time and energy. So we all have an interest in doing something about it.

### What do you feel are the report's most important conclusions?

I would highlight three of them. First, the Commission needs to commit itself



to a corporate culture of clear writing. Second, the Commission should introduce more systematic quality control. Third, Commission staff should be given more help and training to write clearly.

### Those seem laudable aims. But how exactly could they be achieved?

The report makes some very specific recommendations. For example, that major policy documents and anything intended for the public should always be edited before being sent for translation or publishing. That would mean changing our document workflow to allow time for editing at the appropriate moment.

*"There is plenty of scope for making Commission documents clearer."*

To help staff write clearly, the report recommends training and mentoring new recruits, and making all officials aware of the advice and guidance available. In-service training for all staff should be encouraged – and it should be targeted at the needs of particular groups.

In addition, the report recommends requiring better drafting skills from candidates in recruitment competitions. Managers should also reward good drafting skills when carrying out the annual appraisal exercise.

### Are you happy with those recommendations?

Yes, I think they are spot on.

### Do they have any relevance to other EU Institutions, or to the Member States?

They certainly do. The other EU Institutions are keen to improve their own drafting and are looking to the Commission for leadership. At the same time, clarity campaigners in countries right across Europe are watching our work with interest, and we in turn are supporting their efforts. This widespread interest is evidenced by the many national experts and institutional representatives who have attended and spoken at our three Clear Writing conferences.

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## RAPIDO

### Recherche et innovation

Le 19 juillet, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, Commissaire en charge de la recherche, de l'innovation et de la science, a annoncé l'injection de près de 7 milliards d'euros, pour stimuler l'innovation à travers la recherche. Libérée au titre du 7e programme cadre de recherche de l'Union européenne (7e PC) – 53 milliards d'euros pour la période 2007-2013 –, cette somme représente la plus importante enveloppe financière de cette nature jamais octroyée par la Commission. Elle devrait créer environ 174 000 emplois à court terme, près de 450 000 emplois sur quinze ans et quelques 80 milliards d'euros de croissance supplémentaire. « *La compétition organisée à l'échelle de l'UE pour l'obtention de ces fonds rassemblera les meilleurs chercheurs et innovateurs européens pour leur permettre de s'attaquer aux plus grands problèmes de notre temps, comme l'énergie, la sécurité alimentaire, le changement climatique et le vieillissement de nos populations* », a déclaré Máire Geoghegan-Quinn. En adoptant la stratégie Europe 2020 puis en approuvant l'Union de l'innovation en février dernier, les Etats membres ont mis la recherche et l'innovation en tête des priorités politiques européennes.

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Politique agricole commune

# Promouvoir les saveurs de l'Europe

Le 14 juillet, sur proposition du Commissaire Dacian Cioloș, le Commissaire européen à l'Agriculture et au Développement rural, la Commission a adopté un livre vert qui lance un débat pour définir une nouvelle stratégie de promotion et d'information ciblée et ambitieuse, à même de mieux valoriser les ressources du secteur agricole et agroalimentaire européen.

## 1 Quel est l'enjeu?

La politique actuelle de promotion des produits agricoles a obtenu de bons résultats, mais l'UE est convaincue qu'elle pourrait être simplifiée et améliorée afin de mieux répon-

dre aux besoins des marchés européen et mondial. Avant de proposer des solutions de nature réglementaire, l'UE souhaite recueillir l'avis des parties concernées. Une nouvelle politique de promotion contribuera à mieux faire connaître les atouts de l'agriculture européenne sur les marchés intérieurs et extérieurs, tout en permettant aux consommateurs du monde entier de découvrir la richesse des produits alimentaires européens.

« Nous pouvons être fiers de notre secteur agricole et agroalimentaire. Il faut résolument promouvoir la qualité des pro-

duits européens. Ceux-ci respectent des normes de productions en matière sanitaire, environnementale ou de bien-être des animaux sans équivalent dans le monde », a expliqué Dacian Cioloș.

## 2 Qu'est-ce qui va changer exactement?

Rien pour le moment. Le livre vert permet simplement aux parties concernées et au grand public de donner leur avis sur les mesures à prendre au niveau de l'UE pour promouvoir l'agriculture.

## 3 Qui en bénéficiera et comment?

Les agriculteurs européens, qui bénéficieront

d'un juste revenu en rapport avec la qualité de leurs produits. Les consommateurs, qui pourront faire leurs achats en connaissance de cause. Les acheteurs de produits alimentaires (y compris l'industrie agroalimentaire et les détaillants), qui accéderont plus facilement à un plus grand choix de produits. Toutes les parties intéressées, qui pourront plus facilement promouvoir les produits grâce à la simplification des règles.

## 4 Pourquoi l'UE doit-elle intervenir?

Il incombe à l'UE de promouvoir des normes de qualité élevées pour

les produits agricoles européens et d'encourager des programmes de promotion conjoints entre plusieurs pays de l'UE ou plusieurs secteurs agricoles.

## 5 Quel est le calendrier prévu?

La consultation se clôturera le 30 septembre 2011. Des options concrètes seront ensuite présentées dans une communication d'ici à la mi-2012. Elles pourraient être suivies de propositions réglementaires d'ici à la fin de 2012.

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① <http://tinyurl.com/agri-green-paper>

## SUR LE TERRAIN

Poland

# Wrocław Europa House opening

On 1 July, Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding and European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek officially opened the new Europa House in Wrocław, the capital of Lower Silesia, which will accommodate the Commission's regional Representation and the European Parliament's Information Office.

"The street we are on bears the name 'view'; it is a 'view of Europe,'" proudly declared Viviane Reding in Polish. With Poland once again at the heart of Europe, an ever important symbol for a unified continent, she underlined the fact that Poland now joins the group of large Member States with regional offices. Citing the words of Pope John Paul II regarding the continent's reunification, Viviane Reding stated that "Europe must breathe with two lungs".

Jerzy Buzek declared: "The establishment of the new regional office symbolises the will of Poland to be increasingly active in the European integration process. With the European Parliament and the European Commission at Europa House, I look forward to seeing even closer cooperation between the EU Institutions and the millions of citizens living in the south-western region of Poland." Jerzy Buzek stressed that Poland, holding the Presidency, is now responsible for the entire EU, and must seek to overcome the crisis in Greece.

The Commission Representations and the European Parliament Information Offices – along with the Europe Direct network – directly serve EU citizens. They also provide the EU Institutions first-hand information about the political, economic and social



Vice-President Reding meets the Head of the Commission's regional Representation in Wrocław, Natalia Szczucka (on the VP's right), and staff.

situation in the Member States. Employees of the new office, which is located near Wrocław's main square and town hall, will closely cooperate with the Parliament, Commission and other EU Institutions, as well as the Representation in Warsaw.

Natalia Szczucka is the first head of the Commission's regional Representation in Wrocław. She has been the executive assistant to the EU's Deputy High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, prior to joining the Commission, was Amnesty International's Director for Organisational Development in Europe.

A happening also took place in front of the new Europa House to celebrate the opening. Small orange gnomes were painted

in reference to the numerous Wrocław gnomes that have been springing up like mushrooms after the rain all over the city since 2005. Connected with Wrocław since the 1980s when the Orange Alternative Movement started, gnomes were painted on the buildings during that time as a peaceful protest against the Communist regime.

Wrocław is the fourth largest city in Poland with a population of over 630,000, almost one fifth of whom are students. With its multicultural history, Wrocław is often called "the city of meetings". No doubt it will play an important role during the Polish Presidency.

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**Clear writing is obviously important to you as Commissioner responsible for multilingualism policy. But how does it tie in with your other areas of responsibility?**

Let's take culture for a start. Communicating clearly across cultural boundaries is what enables people in Europe to understand and appreciate one another and to work together on common projects. Or let's take youth and education. How can we expect young people to take an interest in EU affairs and become active European citizens if we talk to them in bureaucratic jargon? How can we credibly promote language learning if we do not at the same time promote and practise clear communication – in speech and in writing? In fact, I see clarity as a cross-cutting priority in all policy areas. After all, clear multilingual communication is key to making the EU more efficient, transparent and democratic.

So it's not just a matter for the DGs for which I am responsible – it's a key issue for all DGs, for all EU Institutions and for Europe as a whole. It's everybody's business.

**What action would you like to see taken on the basis of the Clear Writing report?**

I would like the Clear Writing Task Force to continue its good work in driving the campaign forward. If the Commission is to encourage others and lead by example, we must first set our own house in order. Clarity begins at home! We must therefore make sure that we take systematic account of clarity objectives in our day-to-day work in the months and years ahead.

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① <http://tinyurl.com/clear-writing-report>

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qui fonctionne ou non. Chaque Etat membre pourra ainsi choisir les mesures qui semblent les plus indiquées dans son contexte. Les actions proposées par la Commission sont axées sur trois domaines prioritaires: des cours d'introduction et de langues; un engagement ferme de la société d'accueil et une participation active des migrants à tous les aspects de la vie collective.

Parallèlement, une série d'indicateurs européens communs a été définie pour évaluer les résultats des politiques d'intégration.

Une enquête qualitative Eurobaromètre consacrée à l'intégration a également été présentée le 20 juillet. Basée sur des échanges de vues entre citoyens de l'Union et migrants, elle a mis en lumière plusieurs zones de consensus: l'importance d'améliorer l'interaction sur le lieu de travail et dans les écoles, la nécessité de redoubler d'efforts de part et d'autre, l'apport positif des immigrants à la culture locale, les connaissances linguistiques insuffisantes et la ségrégation dans les quartiers défavorisés constituent les principales entraves à l'intégration des migrants. La capacité à parler la langue du pays, à trouver un travail et à comprendre la culture locale ont été identifiés par les citoyens de l'Union et les migrants — mais dans un ordre différent — comme les éléments principaux qui favorisent l'intégration.

Tout cela mène à la même conclusion: il faut plus de solidarité, de tolérance et de responsabilité dans nos politiques d'asile et de migration. Et ces valeurs doivent être traduites en actions concrètes.

CORALIE LION, CEND

▷ <http://bit.ly/portail-integration>  
▷ <http://bit.ly/eurobarometre-integration>

Europe 2020

## Illiteracy still holding back young Europeans

**W**e tend to think that in today's Europe, there is virtually no-one who has been through compulsory education who cannot read: illiteracy is commonly considered an evil of our grandparents' time.

Unfortunately, this is far from the truth. One in five 15 year olds and many adults in Europe have reading difficulties. This startling finding, published by the OECD in 2009, triggered alarm bells, and since then EU countries have pledged to reduce the number of poor readers to fewer than 15 % by 2020, a target achieved to date only by Belgium's Flemish Community, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, and Poland, as well as non-UE member Norway.

Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou said: *"It is totally unacceptable that so many young people still lack basic reading and writing skills. This puts them at risk of social exclusion, makes it harder for them to find a job and reduces their quality of life. We've seen some progress in the past decade, but not enough. Literacy is the basis of all learning — that is why I recently launched a literacy campaign aimed at all ages.*

*Illiteracy isn't just about being unable to read books. We're surrounded by words and texts — on computers, phones, billboards, everywhere. I want to encourage reading in school, at home, on buses, on trains, in the street. We need to address illiteracy wherever and in whatever form it occurs to give young people a better future."*

To shed more light on the current situation and monitor the progress made by Member States, the Commission asked the Eurydice Network to produce a comprehensive picture of reading literacy across the EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Turkey. The education network, managed by The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), looked at the factors which impact on the acquisition of reading skills by children aged 3-15.

The Eurydice report will feed into the work of the High Level Group of literacy experts, set up by Commissioner Vassiliou in January and chaired by Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands. The group is examining how best to support literacy at all ages and will make its policy recommendations by mid-2012.

### More focused policies to be implemented

The study reveals that most European countries now have appropriate policies for promoting literacy: there is a common focus on building the foundations for learning to read in pre-primary education, diversifying reading materials and developing pupils' motivation for reading.

Nevertheless, researchers stress that these policies need to be implemented rapidly and suggest that schools diversify the way in which weak readers are taught, from improving reading comprehension to text-based collaborative learning methods.



Androulla Vassiliou: "I want to encourage reading in school, at home, on buses, on trains, in the street."

The latter approach enables pupils to read and discuss the texts, while improving comprehension and reading skills.

The researchers found that there is often a lack of educational focus on the groups most at risk from reading difficulties, such as boys, children from disadvantaged households, and migrant children.

The report also stresses that only a few countries provide reading specialists at schools to support teachers and pupils. Reading difficulties can be tackled effectively if problems are identified and addressed as early as possible, teaching material is adapted and teachers are offered continuing professional development.

However, the researchers observed that few teachers have the opportunity to specialise in this area and reading specialists are used mostly in a small number of countries: Ireland, Malta, the United Kingdom, and the five Nordic countries.

Clearly, there is still room for improvement, but with this new study European policy-makers have one more weapon to fight against illiteracy.

MATTEO MANZONETTO, CEND

▷ <http://bit.ly/vassiliou>  
▷ [http://bit.ly/eurydice\\_report](http://bit.ly/eurydice_report)

### Illiteracy curbs growth, funds help growth

When it presented the Eurydice illiteracy report, the Commission also put forward an encouraging answer to the growth restraints caused by an underperforming education system.

To boost EU jobs, the Commission plans to nearly double the number of young people, teachers and researchers benefitting from EU grants for study and training abroad — from 400,000 per year to almost 800,000 in the future.

The proposed new programme for education, training and youth would allocate €15.2 billion in 2014-20, underlining the priority given to investing in knowledge for the future in Europe.

The new 'Creative Europe' programme, encompassing the current Culture, MEDIA and MEDIA Mundus schemes, will provide extra support for the cultural and creative sectors with a budget of €1.6 billion — particularly for organisations and enterprises operating across borders who promote cultural and linguistic diversity. The Commission estimates that investing more in the creative industries will boost employment in a sector representing 4.5 % of EU GDP.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology and the Marie Curie Actions, which support skills, training and career development of researchers, will be part of the EU's new 'Horizon 2020' strategy for research and innovation, which would receive €80 billion under the budget proposal.

Detailed proposals for the new programmes will be presented shortly.

Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou commented: *"This budget is excellent news for people and organisations active in education, creativity and innovation. Investing in these areas is one of the best business and employment plans for the future of Europe."*