

THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR ENLARGEMENT IN THE APPLICANT COUNTRIES

PROGRESS REPORT #1 [FEBRUARY 2002]

The European Commission published in March 2002 its first report on the implementation of the communication strategy for Enlargement, covering the period since the launch of the strategy in May 2000. The report is available at http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/communication/pdf/explaining_enlargement.pdf.

The following is a monthly update of that report, covering [...] 2002. It lists the various activities carried out as part of the communication strategy for enlargement in the candidate countries, and provides background material, such as opinion polls. For more information on the situation of public opinion, please see the section on the enlargement web site at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/opinion/>.

For more information on the activities of the Commission Delegations in the candidate countries, see [link to the new part of the “Who does what” section listing the individual delegations]

The DG Enlargement Information Team

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This is the first of regular monthly updates of that report, including information from the candidate countries, as well as important background material, namely opinion polls. The period covered is the month of February 2002.

What the polls say

- Public debate in the applicant countries increasingly focuses on EU's internal issues like the introduction of the Euro or the convention rather than being a mere discussion of the terms of accession. The detailed results of the EuroBarometer survey published in March 2002 (See http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/) support this assessment.
- According to a recent poll the majority (53%) of the Czech population would support the EU membership of their country in the case of a referendum. Positive responses increase according to a higher level of education.
- Attitudes of Estonians towards EU membership developed positively. The results of a poll published on 20 February show that 68% of Estonian citizens view EU accession as positive or rather positive and only 19% as negative or rather negative.
- On the other hand the rate of positive attitude towards the EU accession has dropped by 2% in comparison to January in Lithuania. Only 55% of Lithuanians would have voted in favour of accession if a referendum were held. This – in comparison to Estonia – contrary trend perhaps reflects the different reactions on recent financial proposals by the commission.
- In terms of opposition to the EU, Estonia still ranges second, followed by Latvia and only topped by Malta, where a recent poll showed 49% of the population would vote for accession to the EU in a referendum, 30% were against while 12% did not reply. In Poland, to compare, 71 % of those who would vote in a Referendum declared they would support Poland's accession (previously 74 %).

Events and creative ideas

- In order to involve the general public into the discussion on Lithuania's future membership in the EU a *mini-Convention* was organised on the initiative of the Lithuanian Parliament.
- The Budapest Delegation was represented in Jaskiser where the central tele-cottage was opened. The network of Hungarian tele-cottages (more than 400 throughout Hungary) could help as a very useful and important tool in order to disseminate information. The tele-cottages give free access of the Internet even in small villages. The Delegation provided and will provide in the future the new members of the network with information materials on the accession and the EU in general.
- Using local TV and radio is, according to the EuroBarometer findings, the most popular way to gather information on the EU. The popular Estonian TV magazine for senior citizens *Prillitoos* carried two EU inserts in its Sunday programmes. The topics included a prognosis on what will happen to prices and what will happen to the Estonian language and culture once Estonia joins the EU.
- A Youth Evening on topics related to gender equality has taken place at the European Union Information Centre (EUIC) in Latvia.
- In Poland discussions were held with the Chancellery of the President on a cycling rally for young inhabitants of the countryside. It is planned that young farmers will be answering EU-related tests.
- In Romania an *Euro Café* will be included in the concept of the Youth Campaign as a form of franchise for some selected Internet Café clubs. The objective is to promote Europe for youth in an unconventional way through communication and friendship.

THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY BY COUNTRY

Bulgaria

Public opinion

- In January 2002, the positive attitude of Bulgarians towards EU membership prevails, according to the BBSS Gallup International monthly comparative survey.

Publications

- The *Europanorama* Newsletter has been produced and distributed.
- Desktop calendars on the Euro introduction were produced and distributed to the participants at the "EU Programmes Get Together" meeting.
- Free material of the European Council was provided with the assistance of the IC in Veliko Turnovo.
- EU information-material was provided for the organisation of EU seminars at the American University and the Magistrate's Training Centre. Two regional libraries were provided with publications on EU integration.

Information Centre

- The Information Centre hosted the presentation of the Annual report *Competitiveness of Bulgarian economy 2001* of the Centre for Economic Development. A debate about the economic priorities of Bulgaria in the light of Bulgaria's future accession to the EU developed.

Networking events

- A number of meetings between the Chairman of the Committee for European integration of the Bulgarian Parliament and the Director of the Centre prepared the ground for co-operation on the debate of the Future of Europe and the forthcoming Convention.
- An EU Program meeting was organised for those dealing with EU projects in the country. The main objective was to establish communication channels in the future and to improve publicity of the EU-funded programs. Nearly 300 people attended the meeting.

Cyprus

Networking events

- The Delegation co-operated with the Chamber of Commerce in the organisation of a panel composed of EU officials.
- The House of Representatives held a ceremonial launch of the debate on the Future of Europe on the day of the start of the European Convention. During a special session of the plenary – transmitted live on TV - the significance of the occasion, both in terms of its historic and practical dimensions and in connection to the accession of Cyprus was stressed. The launching ceremony allowed for considerable space to be devoted to the future of European topics in the media.

The Czech Republic

Public opinion

- According to polls executed by the GfK Agency Prague more than half (53%) of the Czech population would support an EU membership of the Czech Republic in case of a referendum. More men than women would support membership. This is also true for younger respondents (59% of the population younger than 29 years pro EU). Positive responses increase according to a higher level of education. 75% of Czechs with university education support the EU-membership of their country. These results are backed by the outcome of a survey by the Median Agency conducted over the course of nine months.

Media

- A Press Conference on the evaluation of student responses to questionnaires from the *Generation Europe Diary* took place at the EUIC on 7 February.

Information Centre

- EUIC staff ran six lectures for students and gave a special lecture on EU information sources to a group of schoolteachers in the Ústí nad Labem region.
- The EUIC provided info material for all participants at a conference organised by Senator Jitka Seitlová. Mayors and businesswomen from throughout the country attended the conference entitled *Women in Politics*.

Public seminars

- On 31 January a special public seminar on the Spanish presidency was organised in co-operation with the Spanish Embassy. The Spanish ambassador to the Czech Republic spoke to nearly 100 visitors on the priorities and programme of the Spanish Presidency.

Networking events

- The newly established joint committee of the Czech Republic and the EU's Committee of the Regions wants to focus on informing citizens about EU enlargement.
- A regional roundtable and whole day visit of the Head of Delegation took place in Brno on 12 February. Agriculture dominated the debate. A second regional event was organised in Pardubice on 20 February, where debate centred on possible changes in the role of regions in the EU.
- A meeting with the regional representation of trade unions reiterated the need for regional dialogue. The meeting with pensioners was dominated by general questions on the Czech accession to the EU.
- The *Team Europe* meeting took place on 30 January. It focused on the communication strategies of the Czech government and of the Commission. Another *Team Europe* meeting took place on 27 February.

Publications

- Newly completed publications include posters for promotion of the EUIC. Translation work has begun for the publications *Still Enlarging* and *Working for the Regions*.

Internet

- The delegation's Website changes are in a final stage. The purpose of the new design is to allow user-friendly surfing including a first-time user entry, most frequently asked questions and easier access to information for the press. 23.000 hits were registered in February 2002.

Estonia

Public opinion

- On 20 February the Estonian national daily Eesti Päevaleht published the results of a public opinion poll. According to this poll 68% of Estonian citizens see EU accession as positive or rather positive and only 19% as negative or rather negative. In a referendum 34% would vote for accession and 22% against, while

44% have not yet decided. However, the vast majority (78%) of the undecided sees Estonia's EU accession as positive or rather positive.

- On 6 March the Estonian opinion poll company EMOR published the results of their two most recent surveys according to which in February 59% of Estonian citizens supported or rather supported the accession, 35% opposed or rather opposed it and 7% did not know.

Media

- The popular TV magazine for senior citizens *Prillitoos* carried two EU inserts in its Sunday programmes. The topics included a prognosis on what will happen to prices and what will happen to the Estonian language and culture once Estonia joins the EU.

Networking

- On 27 February another forum in a series of *Eurofora* for Entrepreneurs was held in Tallinn on the issue of business & environment. The forum focussed on the EU's environmental regulations and their impact on Estonia's economy.
- On 7 March the Information Centre presented the Delegation's adapted Visual Identity Guidelines to a forum of approximately 60 officials from several Estonian ministries dealing with the management of Phare projects.

Internet

- During the reporting period the EUIC released four weekly electronic newsletters named *European Union This Week*. The Newsletter is mailed weekly to over 3,500 recipients.

Lectures and Seminars

- A number of lectures were held for the students of the Tallinn English College on topics concerning the EU and the Euro as well as EU information resources.
- The EUIC participated with its stand at the Concordia International University's Career Fair and gave a lecture on information resources on the EU.

Information Centre

- The EUIC and LIC started consultations on redesigning the Information Centre in order to accommodate more visitors in a user-friendlier atmosphere. The work was initiated in view of the expected rise in the number of visitors to the Centre as the referendum on joining the EU draws closer.
- The EUIC continued preparations for the regional *Europe Days 2002* with several EU member state embassies and regional co-operation partners. The *Europe Days* will take place in county centres during the period April to June 2002. All in all 12 different events will be held.
- The EUIC proposed starting a compilation of basic monographs and periodicals on the EU to form a small library that will be put at the disposal of the Information Centre's visitors. The initiative came as a response to several requests by visitors of the Centre.

Hungary

Media

- The Head of Delegation gave an extensive interview to the important political weekly *168 óra*, and to the German Radio *ARD*. The Head of the Information Section gave an interview to the *Time Magazine*, the Hungarian Catholic Radio, the English section of the Hungarian Radio and the Swedish *Europe Magazine*.
- Commissioner Philippe Busquin paid a visit to Hungary on 26 February. He held a joint press conference with Minister József Pálincás. Subjects of the press conference were the European Research Area and the 6th Research and Development Framework Programme as well as the negotiations.

Networking

- The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities, representatives of different minorities living in Hungary and experts from academic life were present at the monthly *Jour Fixe* organised by the Delegation. A book (*Europe In-Sight*) presentation by the Pillar Club brought up the idea to deal with minorities living in Hungary and the EU accession.
- Following the exchange of information initiated by the Delegation's Press and Communication section on 24 February the Head of Delegation (HoD) met with the heads of the six confederations of trade unions.
- A farmer's information day took place at Gödöllő on 18 February, the 3rd in a series focusing on agricultural issues. The programme's aim is to have an informal meeting with farmers in order to learn more about their concerns, fears and questions related to the accession.
- The Delegation was represented in Jaszkiser where the central *telecottages* was opened. The network of the *telecottages* (more than 400 throughout Hungary) could help to disseminate information on the EU. The *telecottages* give free access to the Internet even in small villages. The Delegation provided and will provide in the future new members of the network with information material on the accession and the EU in general.

Institutional Relations

- The Keszthely European Information Point (County Zala) organised a meeting for the information officers of the network.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has launched a special training series for teachers.
- The Delegation takes part in the preparation works of the 2002 series of *Europe Days*.

Publications

- A special meeting on publications and publishing activities was held on 6 February. The principal outcome was a new emphasis on small, simple leaflets covering a single topic in a user-friendly way, which could be produced in large quantities. The market for reference works and high-level debates on European issues is by now large enough for the Delegation to retire from this field.

- The Hungarian version of DG REGIO's brochure *How do the regions work?* came out in February in 5000 copies. A handbook on Structural Funds was published.
- The Hungarian versions of *European Union – Still enlarging* (DGPRESS) and DG ELARG's new text on Pre-accession programmes are being translated. The brochures will be published in 5000 copies. Final proofs of two new leaflets with the titles *10 questions on Hungary's accession* and *10 questions on Hungary's accessions – for farmers* are close to completion Both leaflets will be published in 20.000 copies in Hungarian.
- The Delegation decided to produce thematic slides in Hungarian that could be used for presentations.

Information Centre

- In February the Centre received 844 visitors.
- The Centre continued to organise its Euro-Wednesdays every week. Many schools were interested in this event.
- IC staff participated in various conferences and information events, including a gathering of Hungarian Information Points, a meeting with Trade Unions and a seminar on Tourism.
- The Centre hosted one of the regular meetings between the Delegation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on EU related communication activities.
- Other activities included the revision of the fact sheet series and the editing of the Brussels regional policy brochure which is now available also in Hungarian.

Latvia

Media

- A press conference was organised on February 21 on the information programme of Delegation for the year 2002.
- On 7 February an informal meeting with journalists was organised to introduce the new Head of the Delegation. 15 journalists were present including leading commentators and analysts of major daily newspapers. During the meeting the Commission proposals for the financing of enlargement were discussed.

Information events

- Four Regional Information days have taken place in February. These Events have gathered representatives from local municipalities and students.

Internet

- The number of Website visitors in February was the highest since launching the web site.
- A discussion on the topic *Are arguments of the Euro sceptics that accession to the EU will destroy agriculture well grounded?* was initiated on the delegation's Website.

Products

- Starting in February inserts on EU impact on business will be published twice per month.

Information Centre

- Regular European Dialogues were organised on 25 February on the topic *A Book in the Virtual Reality*. The event gathered specialists from central and regional libraries as well as representatives from computer companies and research institutions.
- A *European Evening* was organised on 21 February on the topic *Accession and Beyond*. The event gathered many specialists from Latvian institutions, NGO's as well as press and media representatives.
- A Youth Evening on topics related to gender equality has taken place at the EUIC on 14 February. A number of EU information days were organised for students from different regions of Latvia.
- An EU Information day for NGO representatives was organised on 26 February. Among other topics the principles of the EC Delegation's Communication Strategy were addressed.

Lithuania

Public opinion

- The rate of positive attitude towards the EU accession has dropped by 2% in comparison to January. Only 55% of Lithuanians would have voted for accession if a referendum was held.

Media

- A joint TV project with the National TV went ahead under the title *EUROGRAZA*. The whole range of EU-Lithuanian relations was covered.
- Joint projects with the Public Radio as well as regional radio-stations continued. Inserts into different programmes, including some aimed at the Russian-speaking public, are being aired weekly.

Information Events

- A seminar *Preparedness for Lithuania's Accession to the EU and Actual Aspects of Negotiations with the EU* for regional journalists was organised together with the European Committee of the Government.
- In Sakiai a seminar-discussion *Preparations for Lithuania's accession to the EU: problems of negotiations over agriculture and sales of land* were organised.
- A seminar and training session for librarians working in public libraries who belong to the EU Information Network took place in Panevezys.
- The results of a public survey *on e-Europe matters* and copyright were presented.

Products

- Preparation of a reference book titled *99 terms on the EU* has started. The book is targeted at teenagers.
- A tender has been launched for a film on the EU's support for Lithuania.
- The Monthly newsletter *Europos žinios* has been published with a special insert on Ireland's accession to the EU.
- The Delegation's Infocentre produces the weekly electronic newsletter *e-Zinios*.

Information Centre

- The Information centre was involved in many activities mentioned above.

Competition and Awards

- Following a conference under the title *Visions of Lithuania in the Future Europe*, organised by the EC Delegation and the European Commission's Forward Studies Unit in February 2001, the Open Society Fund and the Directorate of the Lithuanian Millennium Celebration organised the contest *Lithuanian Future Scenarios 2010-2020*.

Other information activities

- In order to involve the general public in the discussion on Lithuania's future membership in the EU a *mini-Convention* was organised on the initiative of the Lithuanian Parliament.
- The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry has published the *Chronicle of Lithuania's integration into the EU*.

Malta

Public opinion

- A poll carried out in each candidate country by the GfK Group showed that in Malta's case 49% would vote for accession to the EU in a respective referendum, 30% against while 12% did not reply.

Media

- Meetings were held with journalists from *The Malta Independent on Sunday* and *I-Gens*.

Internet

- Two of the principle elements of the information strategy, i.e. the Delegation's Newsletter and the Website, were advanced during the period in question. The first issue of the Newsletter will appear at the end of February. The Website has also undergone significant development.

Networking

- Staff of the Delegation has given numerous presentations at locally organised events. Contacts with the media consisted of visits by journalists and press releases. The Delegation's support for those promoting the EU through various

initiatives is now well known and a large number of requests for such support have been received.

Poland

Public Opinion

- The results of a poll published on 8-9 February by the influential daily “Rzeczpospolita” showed that 70 % of the interviewed would take part in a referendum on Poland’s accession to the EU whereas in December only 66% declared to do so. This figure is confirmed by a survey conducted by CBOS, which found out that 72% of the interviewed would take part in a referendum on accession. 71 % of these answered they would support the EU Poland’s accession (previously 74 %).

Media

- An information kit and press briefings were prepared for leading agricultural journalists
- The *Future of Europe* debate was officially opened by the President of Poland, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister
- Candidates – journalists of Polish press and TV – for a press trip to France have been chosen.

Information events

- The finals of the National European School Competition took place in February in Pultusk.
- The grant contract with the Catholic Church has been completed. This project consists of a series of seminars organised by Jesuits concerning EU-related issues for incoming priests. The objective is to provide priests with information on the EU and consequences of the integration for the society and the Church.
- Discussions were held with the Chancellery of the President on a cycling rally for young inhabitants of the countryside. It is planned that young farmers will be answering EU-related tests.

Products

- The publication *Sources of Information on the European Union* has been released. The publication compiles addresses of administrations, institutions and information centres dealing with the European Union and European Integration.

Information Centre

- In February, the Info Point serviced 753 visitors of which about 450 were students. Seven groups were received for lectures and presentations.
- EUIC-staff participated in three Europe-related events outside Warsaw.
- A Seminar titled *Will Poland become a member of the European Union in 2004?*, organised by the Institute of Economics of the Polish Academy of Science took place on 14 February.

- A conference *Towards solidarity and space for co-operation* was organised in the EUIC 21-22 February.

Romania

Public opinion

- The Ministry for European Integration has published a brochure that sums up citizens' views on future Europe. Opinions were collected directly through 5000 questionnaires distributed in all counties as well as through the Website of the Ministry. A first evaluation of the questionnaires showed that most of the interviewees believe that EU accession will bring about economic advantages, better living standards, more jobs, trade development and free movement within the Schengen area.

Media

- The Delegation has changed slightly its approach as regards pro-active communication to the media via press conferences and reduced the number of press conferences, while maintaining the policy of informing through press releases on major decisions.

Information events

- The Delegation took the decision to invest more time in speaking directly to people, especially out of Bucharest, to communicate the EU's main values. A programme of visits of the HoD outside Bucharest every month should enable the HoD to visit more than half of Romanian counties in 2002.
- The Ministry for European Integration organised a public debate on Europe's future just before the official launch of the Convention. Ambassadors from EU Member States and candidate countries attended.
- On 28 February, the Euro Info Centre in Constanta organised a public seminar on the Impact of the Euro introduction on business in Romania. The Delegation supported the organisation of the seminar with visual materials.
- The mobile exhibition *EU commitment to Kosovo* was shown at the Information Centre of the EC Delegation in Romania.

Internet

- The Delegation Website received 2,614,908 hits, that is 14,851 visits. Most downloaded files were the newly launched *Roma situation improvement* reports.

Products

- Work was finalised for the two annual publications *The EC Delegation in Romania - Annual report 2001* and *How to get EU funding in 2002*.
- Work is underway for editing the texts and games of the info kiosk that is planned to be ready for public use in March 2002.

Information Centre

- The newly launched *10 questions about the Euro* was mailed to over 100 addressees involved in the European integration process.

- The Centre had 938 visitors during the month.

Other information activities

- The *Euro Café* will be included in the concept of the new Youth Campaign as a form of franchise for some selected Internet Café clubs.

Networking

- The HoD has continued the series of regional visits in two neighbouring counties: Cluj and Mures. launching of the *Partnership Fund for Roma* and of the book *The Nice Treaty*, hosted by the University Babes-Bolyai of Cluj.
- The aim of the Regional Information Officer's mission to Budapest was to have an exchange of good practices on networking with his counterparts from the EC Delegation in Budapest.

Slovakia

Public opinion

- An opinion poll conducted by the MVK polling agency between 18 and 24 January showed that 81 % of Slovakia's citizens support membership in the EU and that 12.8 percent oppose it. Compared with results of similar public opinion polls conducted in December 2001 the support to EU accession climbed by 5.9 percentage points to 81 %.

Media

- Slovak State Television aired a programme called *Goal Europe*, co-financed by the Delegation. Its February issue featured also the Financial Framework for Enlargement and the SAPARD programme in Slovakia.
- A contract with the major business weekly in Slovakia *TREND* was signed for supplements to be published on a fortnightly basis. Each supplement will cover a particular policy or instrument relevant for Slovakia's integration process.

Information Events

- The European Integration Day in Dunajská Streda on 19 February 2002 included a lecture for secondary school students and teachers from the Dunajská Streda region. In total 200 people took part. Another European Information day took place in Trenčín on 28 February 2002 with more than 300 people attending.
- The lecture *Sustainable development and Rio + 10* by Commissioner Wallstrom was organised in co-operation with the Slovak Technical University. 300 people, most of them students, took part.

Slovenia

Public opinion

- A survey carried out by the Centre for Public Opinion Research of the Faculty of Social Sciences showed that public support for Slovenia's EU accession dropped significantly in February. Only 43.8% of those polled were convinced that Slovenia would profit from EU membership (52% in January), while 36.6% were

of the opinion that EU membership would not be desirable. 48.6% would vote 'yes' (55.7% in January). 32.5% would vote against the EU accession (27.3% in January).

Media

- The Delegation and the *International Trust Fund for De-mining* organised a press conference to announce the European Commission's second contribution to the fund on 14 February.
- *Center Evropa* continued with publishing a weekly EU Q&A column in *Nedeljski dnevnik*, Slovenia's largest weekly newspaper.

Information Events

- A Town Hall Meeting was organised on 6 February in Trbovlje, including a public debate on the EU with the HoD, the official opening of the Delegation's Regional Information Corner in Trbovlje and a series of lectures on the *EU's 5th Framework Program*.
- A Public debate entitled *Euro – a step towards the political integration?* took place in Ljubljana's *Cankarjev dom* with speakers including the HoD and the Spanish Ambassador.
- A Special *EU Day* was organised in Novo Mesto with various lectures taking place in the City Library and special events organised for youngsters.
- The *Europe at school* initiative *Center Evropa*, being appointed by the Delegation to participate in the national *Europe at school* initiative, has taken an active part in the implementation of this year's project.
- Within the implementation of the Government's communication strategy several contacts with the Public Relations and Media Office took place in February to discuss joint projects. Moreover, joint participation in information activities was organised.

Internet

- The Delegation's web site received an additional section on the European Convention.

Products

- The *EU Novice/EU News* monthly newsletter (6500 Slovene copies and 500 English copies) was published.
- The *e@Evropa* electronic newsletter was sent to around 500 recipients and made available on the Internet.

Information Centre

- Four *European Wednesdays* were organised. Particularly successful was the monthly public lecture *Meet the negotiator*.
- The *Center Evropa* hosted an exhibition of paintings and other works of Dobrna Primary School.