



For debate in the Standing Committee — see Rule 15 of the Rules of Procedure

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Enhancing the visibility of the Council of Europe

Report
Political Affairs Committee
Rapporteur: Mr João Bosco Mota Amaral, Portugal, Group of the European People's Party

Summary

Transparency, accountability and democratic oversight are among the core values promoted by the Council of Europe. To be consistent with these values, the Council of Europe should endeavour to bridge the distance that separates it from the general public by devising and implementing effective instruments to enhance its visibility with a view to increasing the public's familiarity with the principles it upholds.

The Assembly considers the elaboration of a comprehensive Council of Europe communication strategy as the next urgent and necessary step to bring the Council of Europe closer to its 800 million citizens while raising awareness about the relevance of the Organisation and its shared values in today's Europe, and ensuring consistency in its overall message.

A. Draft resolution

1. Transparency, accountability and democratic oversight are among the core values promoted by the Council of Europe. To be consistent with these values, the Council of Europe should endeavour to bridge the distance that separates it from the general public by devising and implementing effective instruments to enhance its visibility with a view to increasing the public's familiarity with the principles it upholds.

2. The prerequisite for visibility is clarity as to the Council of Europe's mandate and sphere of competence. In this respect, the Assembly recalls that the 2005 Warsaw Third Summit of Council of Europe Heads of State and Government clearly identified the priorities for the Council of Europe, thus contributing to the effort of clarifying the unique role of the Council of Europe in the years to come.

3. The Assembly considers the elaboration of a comprehensive Council of Europe communication strategy as the next urgent and necessary step to bring the Council of Europe closer to its 800 million citizens while raising awareness about the relevance of the Organisation and its shared values in today's Europe, and ensuring consistency in its overall message.

4. This communication strategy, whose elaboration falls under the responsibility of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe who is assisted in his task by the Directorate of Communication, should aim at enhancing the external visibility of the Organisation by improving and rationalising the use of instruments such as press, public relations, audiovisual and multimedia, by facilitating access to Council of Europe documents, by implementing a strategic and coherent publication policy and by organising thematic campaigns, aimed at reinforcing the image of the Organisation and the impact of its activities. In addition, a Council of Europe communication strategy should aim at spreading a communication culture within the Organisation, by ensuring a regular information flow among different departments in a spirit of mutual co-operation.

5. Such a comprehensive communication strategy devised by the Secretary General should not limit the plurality of voices which is characteristic of the Organisation and which is at the core of its institutional balance. In particular, such a strategy should respect the autonomy of the Council of Europe's statutory organs - the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly - as well as of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights in devising their own communication policies and deciding over the content, timeliness and recipients of their communication, by reason of the nature of these bodies and of other specificities stemming from their mandates. On the other hand, the Directorate of Communication should be in regular liaison with the Communication Units of the above-mentioned bodies, making available information, databases and other tools useful to their work, while ensuring synergy with other Council of Europe activities in terms of media impact.

6. In addition, in order to increase the visibility of the Organisation as a whole, consultation and co-operation between the representatives of statutory organs, the Secretary General, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights should be improved, in view of realising concerted actions in terms of communication.

7. Finally, the Assembly believes that, as a political and representative body, it can play a major role in enhancing the visibility of the whole Organisation, by ensuring the political and media relevance of its agenda, urging its members to make better use of their dual mandate, associating the media more closely in its activities and respecting the principle of maximum transparency in its work.

8. In light of the above, the Parliamentary Assembly:

8.1. resolves to pursue further streamlining of its political agenda by identifying priority issues, around which it encourages its committees to organise visible activities and events and, where possible, the elaboration of tailor-made media strategies;

8.2. invites its committees to make better use of Standing Committee's meetings as an opportunity to encourage the discussion of topics which are of particular relevance for the country hosting the meeting;

8.3. urges its members to act as multipliers of its activities in their national parliaments, in their constituencies and in their contacts with the national and local press;

8.4. calls on its committees to facilitate access of journalists and media representatives to their meetings and events and, when appropriate, enable them to accompany Rapporteurs during fact-finding visits.

9. Moreover, the Assembly calls on the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to:

9.1. ensure that the Directorate of Communication, as well as the single Communications Units, are provided with sufficient resources to carry out their mandate in a professional and efficient manner;

9.2. instruct the Directorate of Communication to:

9.2.1. devise a comprehensive communication strategy aimed at reinforcing the visibility of the Council of Europe while respecting the autonomy of the Communication Units belonging to the Council of Europe's statutory organs, as well as of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and of the European Court of Human Rights;

9.2.2. facilitate accessibility to Council of Europe documents by providing for a rationalisation of Council of Europe webpages and by creating thematic webpages covering all the activities of Council of Europe bodies and institutions on some given important issues;

9.2.3. rationalise the use of symbols and logos by Council of Europe's bodies and institutions in order to enhance the 'corporate image' of the Organisation;

9.2.4. make strategic use of the publication policy;

9.3. enhance the media emphasis of the Council of Europe offices based in Paris and Brussels.

B. Draft recommendation

1. Referring to its Resolution (2006) ... on Enhancing the visibility of the Council of Europe, the Assembly considers it essential for the Organisation to make flexible use of existing instruments as well as to establish new ones, with a view to enhancing the visibility of the Council of Europe among the public at large and to increase the public's familiarity with the principles it upholds.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly, therefore, asks the Committee of Ministers to:
 - 2.1. commission an independent research study to assess the visibility of the Council of Europe in its member states and make recommendations on how to enhance it;
 - 2.2. give concrete follow-up to its decision of principle to set up Council of Europe outposts in every Council of Europe member state, as mentioned in its Resolution (2000)2 on the Council of Europe's information strategy, if necessary by establishing appropriate partnerships with national, regional or local authorities, universities or other international institutions, with emphasis on information and communication work;
 - 2.3. consider the readjustment of the location of Information Offices of the Council of Europe to ensure that they are present in all those member states which are engaged in the process of consolidation of democratic institutions, in those for which the Council of Europe represents the main interlocutor in the process of European integration, as well as those with a prominent and relevant presence of international organisations with which the Council of Europe maintains strong co-operation;
 - 2.4. modify the terms of reference of Information Offices of the Council of Europe so as to ensure a stronger emphasis on communication and media work;
 - 2.5. allocate sufficient resources to the Organisation's communication activities for them to reach the public at large.

C. Explanatory memorandum

I. Introduction

1. *'An organisation that does good quietly'*¹: this is how the image of the Council of Europe could be described. Moreover, this is the image of a restricted circle of actors because the public, in general, is not very familiar with the Council of Europe's mandate and activities, and often confuses it with EU institutions.

2. Unfortunately, despite many differences, most international organisations nowadays share a problem of distance from the people on whose behalf they work: the negative votes in the referenda on the EU constitutional treaty sounded like a wake-up call for the European Union in this sense; likewise, the Third Summit of Council of Europe Heads of State and Government highlighted the need to bring Europe closer to its citizens.

3. The limited visibility of the Council of Europe is not only a source of dissatisfaction for those who put a great deal of energy and hard work into the Organisation, but also a contradiction with the core values it promotes, such as transparency, accountability and democratic scrutiny. To be consistent with these values, the Council of Europe must be able to devise and put in place effective instruments to achieve its mandate and to explain what it does to the public, in a clear, transparent and accountable manner.

4. It is my conviction that an international organisation which does not manage to bridge the gap that separates it from the people, in our times, given the high degree of development of civil society, does not have any prospects. The age when intergovernmental organisations provided services addressed exclusively to governments and national administrations without explaining to the wider public in what activities they were involved is behind us.

5. The present report is based on meetings I had in Strasbourg with several high ranking Council of Europe representatives and officials as well as some journalists who follow the Organisation for their work (see *attached programme*). I wish to thank all of them for their frank and illuminating contributions.

6. It has been of great comfort for me to realise that all those holding high responsibilities in the Council of Europe are aware of its limited level of visibility and are committed to raise it. Some actions have already been taken while others are being considered: for instance, for the first time a communication strategy is being developed, while Ambassador Vlasta Štěpová is Rapporteur on Information Policy for the Ministers' Deputies. I consider my work as an effort of reflection to create synergy between the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers and the Secretariat.

II. The premise for external visibility: clarity and relevance

7. I think that in order to be visible it is necessary first of all to have **internal clarity as to our mandate, objectives and instruments**. The Third Summit of Council of Europe Heads of state and government represented an effort of reflection in the right direction. The tasks of the Council of Europe in the coming years, as indicated in the Action Plan are: *'Promoting common fundamental values: human rights, rule of law and democracy; (...) Strengthening the security of European citizens; (...) Building a more humane and secure Europe; (...) Fostering cooperation with other international and European organisations and institutions'*.

8. If I am allowed a further effort of synthesis, I shall say that the Council of Europe is the primary forum for the protection and promotion of human rights in Europe, as well as for the promotion of democracy, rule of law and good governance. It pursues its aims by ensuring political cooperation between its member states and by setting legal standards, namely in the form of international agreements. All the activities of the Council of Europe can be positioned under one or more of these categories – human rights, democracy, rule of law, good governance, political cooperation, and legal standards.

9. The Council of Europe has a very precise sphere of competence, which distinguishes it from the other regional and international organisations; and yet this specificity, which should be **our brand**,

¹ Action Plan, September – December 2005, Directorate of Communication

is not spelt out clearly enough. Even the Council of Europe homepage says 'Council of Europe, 800 million Europeans, 46 member states', but 'human rights, democracy and the rule of law' are not as clearly mentioned.

10. Once clarity is made about the mandate of the Council of Europe, it should be self-evident that, if the Organisation aims to be active and vital, it has to adapt to the evolving situation in member states, by undertaking a constant process of assessment of political priorities.

11. Thus, in the '80s the Council of Europe played a major role in accompanying the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe, and enabling these countries to join the fold of European democracies. Now that all European states, with the exception of Belarus, have become members of the Council of Europe, we should have the flexibility to review our political priorities and devise appropriate instruments to pursue them, in the respect of our mandate.

12. What are the issues nowadays that most concern our member states and their citizens? How can the Council of Europe assist its member states in addressing them? We have to show **courage and innovation in identifying priorities and channelling our resources** towards them, keeping in mind the budgetary constraints that are imposed by our member states. The Council of Europe should be flexible in prioritising its activities and pro-active in explaining to the 800 million Europeans what it does and why it should continue to do it.

13. I feel that nowadays Council of Europe member states and their citizens are interested in inter-cultural and inter-ethnic dialogue, multiculturalism, human security, the protection of human rights in the fight against terrorism, the consolidation of democratic institutions, the expansion of democracy and human rights beyond European borders, etc. An effort should be made to tune Council of Europe activities to relevant issues, and I think that the Assembly can play a key role in this respect.

III. An effective communication strategy

14. I have formed a clear idea that there is scope for enhancing the visibility of the Council of Europe starting, first of all, by the Council of Europe communication policy.

15. One of the major elements which have had a negative impact on our visibility so far is, in my opinion, the **absence of a comprehensive Council of Europe communication strategy**: however surprising it might seem, so far the Council of Europe has never had a clearly defined communication strategy; in fact, a number of bodies – such as the Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the European Court of Human Rights - have made up for this absence by setting up their own Communication Units.

16. Additional hurdles include:

- **a lack of communication specialists**: for instance, a large proportion of the DC staff has a technical or secretarial profile; media specialists are in very limited number, and so are specialists who can translate the political message of the Organisation into media terms;
- **excessive emphasis on the use of IT instruments**: in recent years the Council of Europe has privileged the Internet as a means of providing information on its activities. This method is very passive and requires a pre-existing knowledge of the Council of Europe and a willingness to keep up-to-date with its activities, notwithstanding the difficulty of searching on different and uncoordinated websites; it can be used as an instrument of 'information' but cannot replace 'communication', which implies a pro-active role, personal contact and ability to explain a complex or technical message in simple terms;
- **a lack of coordination in using logos and symbols**: currently there are more than a hundred logos relating to the activities of the Organisation, many of which do not bear even a slight resemblance to the official Council of Europe logo comprising the twelve golden stars on a blue background.

17. As I mentioned in the introduction, there is willingness to redress this situation. The current Director of Communication has prepared an Action Plan which outlines a comprehensive communication strategy, based on the use of professional and modern communication tools as well as on the spreading of a culture of communication and information-sharing within the Organisation. Clear priorities have been defined in the five areas of press, public relations, audiovisual and multimedia, internet and publications. To give an idea of the financial means which are available to the DC I shall

mention that its draft **budget** expenditure for 2006 is 6.091.300 euros (as opposed to 7.094.700 in 2005 and 7.385.370 in 2004).

18. I think that it is beyond my mandate to comment on technical measures suggested in the framework of this Action Plan. I wish, however, to make comments on the general approach.

My recommendations:

19. The elaboration of a **comprehensive communication strategy** is needed to ensure consistency in the overall image of the Council of Europe and raise awareness about its aims and activities. It should not, however, limit the role of existing communication units in bodies such as the Assembly, the Congress and the Court, which have the unique advantage of having first-hand knowledge of the subjects, working methods and sensitivities of the specific field concerned. Besides, in the case of political bodies such as the Assembly and the Congress, an attempt to coordinate their communication under a single Council of Europe policy might risk placing limits on their prerogative of taking and voicing their position with full independence from other Council of Europe bodies and when they so decide. Having said so, I agree that it is necessary to improve cooperation and internal communication between the various parts of the House, and this should be done mainly through the Directorate of Communication.

20. I should add that, in my opinion, the **plurality of Council of Europe voices** (the Assembly, its President, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the Chair of the Committee of Ministers, the Court, the Commissioner on Human Rights, the Congress, etc.) does not have a negative impact on the visibility of the Organisation as a whole. This has been confirmed by some journalists themselves, who have stressed that different Council of Europe bodies receive different attention in the national media according to the relevance of the issues with which they deal. For instance, the Congress receives considerable media attention in countries where local democracy is consolidating; the decisions of the Court receive wide media coverage in the countries directly concerned, etc. as is the case of the European Union, nobody is surprised that distinct bodies express themselves separately. While it is important to ensure consistency in the use of language, symbols and tools, the centralisation of communication would be detrimental to the visibility of the organisation since it would impose a unified model to institutions having different characters, needs as well as rapidity and freedom of action. I am in favour of a **decentralised communication structure, 'orchestrated' and supported by the Directorate of Communication.**

21. Though in favour of pluralism, I think that **repetitive statements** by different Council of Europe bodies on the same issue should be avoided whenever possible: they overload those who receive them, they are hardly ever followed by media coverage and are counterproductive. As a French idiom says *'too much news kills news'*. Often these statements do not even contain 'news', but only opinions, and sometimes not necessarily strong enough to be of interest to the media. During my meetings in Strasbourg, my attention was drawn to the difficulty of issuing joint statements rapidly, given that different actors are not as easily reachable. I think that at least for uncontroversial or humanitarian issues, a procedure should be worked out to facilitate the recourse to joint statements or, alternatively, to agree on a division of labour. This idea is not new. Resolution (2000)2 of the Committee of Ministers on the Council of Europe's information strategy mentions the implementation of a *'rapid reaction process involving, as far as possible, the Secretary General, the Chair of the Committee of Ministers and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly'*. I think that this idea, however complicated to implement from a practical point of view, should be pursued, and concrete proposals should be made to this end. For instance, on humanitarian issues or on other issues on which the three representatives wish to take the same stand, there is no need for separate statements.

22. I fully agree with the proposal of the Director of Communication to increase the recourse to **pro-active communication** methods (such as press and public relations) rather than rely primarily on information tools such as the internet. Pro-active communication is even more necessary when the complexity or the technical level of some Council of Europe documents is considered, such as Court judgements, CPT reports, etc. In these cases, it is necessary to have staff capable of translating the message to the media in simple terms, so that it can reach the general public. Some budget flexibility should be made possible to allow this change of emphasis.

23. Strategic use should be made of Council of Europe **publications**, for which at the moment the relevant policy is being revised. In my opinion, the potential of targeted and timely publications to enhance the visibility of the Organisation has not so far been fully used. Publications should be

instrumental in reinforcing the visibility of the work of the Council of Europe among certain target groups, such as academics, students, etc., especially if they are used in conjunction with other communication tools.

IV. The role of the Assembly in enhancing the visibility of the Council of Europe

24. The Assembly already contributes in a substantial manner to the visibility of the Council of Europe, as a substantial part of the media coverage on the Organisation is related to Assembly texts or activities. In fact, since the PACE Communication Unit (CU) was set up in 2000, media coverage concerning the Assembly has virtually doubled, thanks to the pro-active efforts of its staff to spark media interest before and after the adoption of texts, as well as on the occasion of events, such as hearings, colloquies and Rapporteurs' visits, organised by Assembly committees.

25. Recently, the Assembly initiated a reflection on how to improve its communication policy: the previous Secretary General of the Assembly presented to the Bureau a memorandum on Communication Policy of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).²

26. In this document, the then Secretary General sets out the general approach that '*as a statutory part of the Council of Europe and a political body accountable to Europeans, PACE bears sole responsibility for its communication. (...) In line with its democratic mandate, PACE and its subsidiary bodies should aim at maximum transparency in their work, and maximum public access to their documents (...)*'. Besides, a number of specific objectives for the CU are listed, to improve the visibility of the Assembly with the support of the Directorate of Communication.

27. As in the case of the Action Plan prepared by the Director of Communication, I do not intend to argue on the specific technical measures recommended by the Secretary General of the Assembly, but I wish to add some general suggestions.

My recommendations:

28. I agree with the approach that the Assembly, as a statutory body of the Council of Europe and as a representative structure with a political mandate, should bear **exclusive responsibility** for its communication policy. In particular, any external interference with the substance of the message it conveys, its timeliness and the choice of recipients risks infringing its political prerogatives and independence. On the other hand, the role of the Directorate of Communication should be of enhancing the impact of the Assembly Communication Unit, by ensuring an efficient flow of information inside the House, by providing technical support in a spirit of full cooperation and devising wider communication strategies to create synergy between the work of the Assembly and that of other Council of Europe bodies in terms of media impact.

29. The visibility of the Assembly greatly depends on the **issues** on its agenda. Therefore, a further effort should be made to privilege topics which are of immediate relevance for Council of Europe member states and the wider public, present a media interest on which the Council of Europe as an organisation can be authoritative. A typical recent example of this is provided by the investigation over the alleged CIA secret detention centres in some Council of Europe member states, which meets all three requirements mentioned above and has received substantial media coverage. Furthermore, dealing with such a topical issue has created a virtuous circle, by attracting media attention on other activities currently dealt with by the Assembly and the Council of Europe in general. It is clear that pursuing this objective implies courageous choices, such as risking going against the vested interests of some member states. I am convinced, however, that this is the choice to make to preserve the relevance of our parliamentary institution, provided that our work is done seriously and avoiding any sensationalism.

30. Besides, I believe that the Assembly's **agenda should be further streamlined**, so as to reduce the overall number of texts which are adopted at every session and allow a deeper background analysis of some priority issues, with a series of visible activities and events organised around them and possibly even a tailor-made media strategy for those of particular relevance. This of course requires the full cooperation of Assembly committees, where the streamlining of reports according to priority issues should take place in the first place.

² AS/Bur (2005) 83 rev, 29 August 2005.

31. The meetings of the **Standing Committee** should deal with at least one issue of major relevance to the country where they are held, so as to attract the attention of national media and other multipliers.

32. As the motion which has initiated this report says, '*PACE can additionally benefit, in communication terms, from the 'dual mandate' of its members – placing it at the heart of national debates – and the fact that it is often to the fore in respect of issues relating to society*'. Regrettably, however, rarely do Assembly members act as multipliers of PACE activities: those who inform their constituencies and relevant committees of Assembly activities are a very limited number, and even fewer are those who follow up Assembly decisions by action in their national parliaments. Given the suppression of the Committee for parliamentary and public relations in 2000, in my opinion, chairs of national delegations and chairs of Political Groups should bear special responsibility in changing this state of affairs.

33. The 'dual mandate' of Assembly members should be better exploited in terms of visibility in the national, regional and local press. To this end, the memorandum presented by the Secretary General of the Assembly proposes setting up a database of regional and local media contacts as well as developing links with the press departments of national parliaments. I think that these measures are essential but they should not exonerate Assembly **Rapporteurs** from their primary responsibility of giving publicity to their work in their own countries, through interviews, press articles, participations in conferences or other events, etc. The issue of databases is a good example of an area which can be coordinated by the Directorate of Communication for the benefit of all the Organisation's different communication units.

34. Whenever possible, Rapporteurs conducting **visits** in the framework of the preparation of reports should consider enabling journalists to accompany them.

V. A visible presence in its member states

35. Council of Europe offices in member states can play a role in enhancing its visibility. This presence, however, is very limited and, with the exception of bodies having specific thematic mandates³, is concentrated on 'new member states'. In this respect, the Council of Europe differs very much from the EU institutions, which have various forms of presence – from Commission delegations to Information and Documentation Centres – in a number of countries, including non-EU member states.

36. In new member states, the presence of the Council of Europe takes the form either of Council of Europe Information Offices or Centres⁴ or of Offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary General⁵, who is sometimes called Resident Expert. In a few countries, both offices exist. In addition, the Council of Europe maintains premises and staff in Paris and Brussels, the latter to act as a liaison office with EU institutions.

i. Information Offices of the Council of Europe

37. At the moment, the Council of Europe counts 22 Information Offices or Centres, located in 19 member states which joined the Council of Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall. At first, these offices were conceived as Information and Documentation Centres *on* the Council of Europe (IDCs): their function was to fill a need for information and materials about human rights, rule of law and democratic values in candidate or new member states. To this end, they operated within the structure of national partner institutions; their staff was national and produced material in the language of the host country.

38. Over the following years, the Centres proved to be of increasing value to the Council of Europe by providing, in addition to their statutory functions, a base for facilitating Council of Europe

³ These are: the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (also known as North-South Centre) in Lisbon, the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz and the European Youth Centre in Budapest.

⁴ They are based in the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", and Ukraine.

⁵ Based in: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro (Belgrade, Podgorica and Pristina).

activities, such as the implementation of cooperation programmes or other projects. In 1998, the Committee of Wise Persons drawing up a report on Building Greater Europe Without Dividing Lines, recommended, *inter alia*, that *'the role of the Information and Documentation Centres should be reinforced in order to enhance the visibility of the Organisation'*⁶.

39. As a follow-up to this recommendation, the Committee of Ministers decided that the Documentation Centres on the Council of Europe should become Information Offices (IOCEs) of the Council of Europe, operating independently of the host institution, answerable to Strasbourg and with Council of Europe staff.⁷ In addition to the functions of dissemination of information, the IOCEs should *'contribute to the implementation of cooperation programmes and other Council of Europe projects, would help to implement the information strategy of the Council of Europe in particular vis-à-vis professional circles concerned with the work and activities of the Council of Europe and the media; provide logistical support, information and media coverage for Council of Europe visits and meetings taking place in the host countries.'*

40. So far, agreements to operate the transformation of the IDCs into IOCEs have been concluded with nearly all governments, with the exception of Bulgaria and Slovenia.

41. As I said in the introduction, a process of reflection has started within the Organisation, revolving around the following questions:

- how should the terms of reference of IOCEs/IDCs be revised to adapt them to the evolving priorities of the Organisation?
- are IOCEs/IDCs still a priority need in all member states in which they currently exist or should they be phased out in some of them?
- should IOCEs be established in other member states?
- should consideration be given to the idea of establishing information structures/points in all member states?
- should consideration be given to the idea of establishing an information structure/point in Belarus?

42. As a result of my exchanges of views I have formed some opinions on these matters.

My recommendations:

43. I believe that the terms of reference of IOCEs/IDCs should place **additional emphasis on communication and media work**. An effort has already been made in this direction, as nearly all IOCEs nowadays include one member of staff specialising in media or public relations; in addition, in 2004 Information Office Directors took part in a special media awareness training session in Strasbourg. This effort should be continued and country-tailored media strategies should be developed. IOCEs/IDCs staff should play a pro-active role in establishing contacts with national and local media to draw their attention to ongoing Council of Europe's work that might concern the host country. It is essential that the IOCEs/IDCs should be closely linked with DC in the implementation of the communication strategy.

44. A **readjustment of the location of the IOCEs/IDCs** should be considered. In my opinion these offices are most necessary in countries where the process of consolidation of democratic institutions and enrooting of Council of Europe values is still ongoing as well as those for which the Council of Europe represents the main interlocutor in the process of European integration. I am thinking of countries such as Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro, where there are no IOCEs/IDCs. This readjustment should allow a more efficient use of the limited available resources but should not imply the disappearance of IOCEs/IDCs in 'strategic' countries, where the IOCEs/IDCs have the potential of acting as liaison offices with other international organisations or can offer expertise and advice in specific fields, such as the European Convention of Human Rights.

45. Even if the presence of IOCEs/IDCs in some Council of Europe member states, at their current state of democratic development and degree of European integration, appears less of a priority, it is essential that the Council of Europe finds a way of ensuring **a presence in every member state**. When it comes to visibility, I have the feeling that the public in 'old member states' is sometimes less informed about Council of Europe activities and objectives than in 'new member states'. This presence could be established through agreements with the central or local

⁶ CM(98)178, paragraph 77

⁷ Resolution (99)9

administration, other international organisations or even university institutions. Its purpose would be to disseminate information about the Council of Europe and its activities and it should be accessible to the public.

46. The case of **Belarus** is very special as the membership application of this country has been frozen since 1997. If, however, there are people in Europe who need to be informed in an objective manner about the Council of Europe, its values and activities they are the Belarusians. The Council of Europe should consider a way of establishing an information point in this country. Should this prove to be impossible, the idea of setting up an information point addressed to Belarusians – with Belarusian-speaking staff and providing material in Belarusian - in a neighbouring country should be considered. I draw the members' attention to the fact that the OSCE already has an office in Minsk, while the European Commission has recently decided to set up a Delegation.⁸ This recommendation is consistent with PACE Recommendation 1734 (2006) on Situation in Belarus on the eve of the presidential election, and the joint statement on Belarus issued by PACE President René van der Linden and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic Cyril Svoboda (Prague, 23 February 2006).

ii. The Council of Europe's offices in Paris and Brussels

47. The Offices of the Council of Europe in Paris and Brussels at the moment play a limited role in terms of visibility. They have a very small number of staff, they are not open to the public and they do not work with the press.

My recommendation:

48. I think that the offices in Paris and Brussels could be instrumental in overcoming, at least in part, the adverse consequences of the absence of Strasbourg-based journalists. **Creating posts for permanent staff with a media profile in Paris and above all Brussels**, with a pro-active role in 'selling' Council of Europe activities, in cooperation with the Directorate of Communication as well as relevant press units, would certainly contribute to increasing the visibility of the Council of Europe.

iii. Press correspondents

49. The Council of Europe avails itself of a network of press correspondents. These are professional journalists who exercise their profession in a number of member states and who also act as contacts with the national press and multipliers of Council of Europe-related news. Unfortunately, this network does not cover all Council of Europe member states, eastern European countries not being included. Besides, until recently; the work of press correspondents was not regularly monitored, nor was their impact regularly evaluated.

My recommendation:

50. In my opinion, the idea of having a network of national journalists acting as Council of Europe press correspondents is useful and should be further developed: the network should be extended to all Council of Europe member states. In addition, the Directorate of Communication should regularly monitor the work of press correspondents – for instance by asking them for regular feed-back on their activities – and set up a system to evaluate the impact of press correspondents on the national media. In addition, press correspondents should be regularly involved in all visits conducted by Council of Europe bodies and institutions to the country where they are based.

VI. Conclusions

51. On the basis of my discussions, I have reached the conclusion that there is large scope for enhancing the visibility of the Council of Europe and that some instruments to achieve this aim are within easy reach. They include:

- better cooperation and information-sharing between different departments of the Organisation;
- recourse to a more professional approach to communication;

⁸ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Opening of a Delegation in Belarus, COM(2005) 282 final, Brussels, 16.11.2005

- better use of existing resources; and
- better management and streamlining of activities.

52. Other instruments largely depend on the will to set a politically-relevant agenda, for the Council of Europe, as well as for the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers, the Congress and other bodies. If the Council of Europe has the courage to take authoritative stands on topics which are relevant at present for its member states and their citizens, visibility will follow.

53. Finally, more instruments would be within reach provided our member states decided to bear the financial costs. At the moment, even operations of internal restructuring to enhance the professional profile of the Directorate of Communication are limited by the 'zero-growth' budget rule and by efficiency cuts. Similarly, the proposal to set up Council of Europe information points in all Council of Europe member states, however useful, would face the obvious problem of funding.

54. Perhaps on the issue of enhancing the visibility of the Council of Europe as on no other, the synergy between the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers and the Secretariat is a pre-requisite to achieve concrete results. I hope that this report can contribute to stirring the debate within and among these bodies.

APPENDIX - Programme of the visit to Strasbourg (16 and 17 November 2005)

16 November

- 9 – 9.30 meeting with Mr Bruno Haller, PACE Secretary General
- 9.30 – 10.30 meeting with Mr Mateo Sorinas, PACE Secretary General Elect
- 11 – 11.45 meeting with Ambassador Vlasta Štěpová, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the Council of Europe, Rapporteur on Information policy
- 11.45 – 12.30 meeting with Mr Jan Kleijssen, Director of interparliamentary and institutional relations
- 3.30 – 4 pm meeting with Mr Jean-Louis Laurens, Director General of Political Affairs and Ms Maggie Nicholson, Field and information offices, Head of division
- 4 – 5 pm meeting with Ms Seda Pumpyanskaya, Director of Communication

17 November

- 9.30 – 10.45 meeting with Mrs Fernanda Gabriel (President of the Association of European Parliamentary Journalists – AJPE), Mr Kayhan Karaca (NTV correspondent, Turkey) and Mr Jean-Claude Kiefer, journalist (DNA, France)
- 11 – 11.30 meeting with Mr Jack Hanning, Director of external relations, Directorate General of Political Affairs
- 3.30 – 4 pm meeting with Mrs Micaela Catalano, Head of the communication unit, PACE
- 4 – 5 pm meeting with Mr Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Reporting Committee: Political Affairs Committee.

Reference to Committee: Ref. 3103, 24.06.05

Draft Resolution and draft Recommendation adopted unanimously by the Committee on 11 April 2006

Members of the Committee: Mr Abdülkadir **Ateş** (Chairman), Mr Konstantion **Kosachev** (Vice-Chairman), Mr Zsolt Németh (Vice-Chairman), Mr Giorgi Bokeria (Vice-Chairman), Ms Birgir Ármannsson, Mr Giuseppe Arzilli, Mr Claudio Azzolini, Mr Miroslav **Beneš**, Mr Radu-Mircea Berceanu, Mr Gerardo Bianco, Mr Alexandër Biberaj, Mr Luc Van den Brande, Ms Beáta Brestenká, Ms Anna **Čurdová**, Mr Noel Davern, Mr Dumitru **Diacov**, Mr Michel Dreyfus-Schmidt, Mr Adri Duivesteijn, Ms Josette **Durrieu**, Mr Mikko Elo, Mr Joan Albert **Farré Santuré**, Mr Per-Kristian **Foss**, Mr Jean-Charles Gardetto, Mr Charles Goerens, Mr Daniel Goulet, Mr Andreas **Gross**, Mr Jean-Pol Henry, Mr Joachim **Hörster**, Mr Renzo Innocenti, Mr Ivan **Ivanovski**, Mr Tadeusz **Iwiński**, Mr Elmir Jahić, Mr Ljubiša Jovašević, Mr Ivan Kalezić, Mr Oleksandr Karpov, Mr Oskars **Kastēns**, Mr Yuriy Kostenko, Ms Darja Lavtižar-Bebler, Mr Göran **Lindblad**, Mr Younal Loutfi, Mr Mikhail Margelov, Mr Tomasz Markowski, Mr Dick Marty, Mr Frano Matušić, Mr Murat **Mercan**, Mr Jean-Claude Mignon (alternate: Mr Denis **Badré**), Mr Marko **Mihkelson**, Ms Nadezhda Mikhailova (alternate: **Mr Ivan Ivanov**), Mr Mirzazade, Mr João Bosco **Mota Amaral**, Ms Natalia Narochnitskaya (alternate: Mr Ilyas **Umakhanov**), Ms Carina **Ohlsson**, Mr Boris **Oliylyk**, Mr Theodoros **Pangalos**, Ms Elsa Papadimitriou, Mr Christos Pourgourides, Mr Gordon Prentice (alternate: Mr John **Austin**), Mr Gabino Puche, Mr Lluís Maria **de Puig**, Mr Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando, Lord Russell-Johnston (alternate: Baroness **Knight**), Mr Peter Schieder, Mr Ingo Schmitt (alternate: Mr Johannes **Pflug**), Ms Juana Serna (alternate: Ms Maria **Aburto**), Mr Adrian **Severin**, Ms Hanne **Severinsen**, Mr Samad **Seyidov**, Mr Leonid Slutsky (alternate: Mr Victor **Kolesnikov**), Mr Michael Spindelegger, Mr Rainer **Steenblock**, Mr Zoltán Szabó, Baroness Taylor of Bolton (alternate: Lord **Tomlinson**), Mr Mehmet **Tekelioğlu**, Mr Tigran **Torosyan**, Mr José **Vera Jardim**, Ms Biruté **Vesaitė**, Mr Varujan Vosganian, Mr David Wilshire (alternate: Mr Denis **MacShane**), Mr Bart van Winsen, Mr Wolfgang **Wodarg**, Ms Renate Wohlwend (alternate: Ms Doris **Frommelt**), Mr Marco Zacchera, Mr Krzysztof **Zaremba**.

Ex-officio: MM. Mátyás Eörsi, Mats Einarsson,

N.B. : The names of the members who took part in the meeting are printed in **bold**

Head of the Secretariat : Mr Perin

Secretaries to the Committee: Mrs Nachilo, Mr Chevtchenko, Mrs Sirtori-Milner