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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**EU Participation at the World Expo 2015 in Milan "Feeding the Planet: Energy for  
Life"**

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**1. Introduction and context**

The World Expo 2015 will take place in Milan from 1 May to 31 October 2015 on the theme "Feeding the Planet: Energy for Life". This edition of the Expo is meant to become a milestone of planetary debate on food and sustainability and will be a platform for political discussions and policy initiatives on these issues. Over 120 countries have already confirmed their participation, attesting to the significant commitment generated by this event.

A total of 20 million visitors are expected, offering a valuable opportunity to inform and communicate with European (and International) citizens on the critical topics brought forward by the Expo. In parallel a "cyber Expo" targeting 1 billion Internet users will be deployed, further increasing the scope for impact.

Expos have always been major international events in which countries, private stakeholders and organisations present and promote their identity, their policies and achievements in relation to Expo themes. But more than just a cultural event, this edition of the Expo will also be political as countries and international organisations come together to discuss the ever-growing issues of food and sustainability. The EU should therefore aim to establish its role as a key player in this global debate and take this opportunity to work towards fruitful collaboration on these matters with other stakeholders, both public and private.

The European institutions have so far actively participated in all previous editions of the Expo which took place in the EU and in most of those organised overseas. Furthermore, reports from previous EU participation show that such an event can have an important impact on citizens' perception of and attitude to the EU.

On the basis of these considerations the Commission has been actively investigating options for participation. This Communication, which is based on extensive analysis of past Expos, sets out the planned objectives, practical considerations and suggested approaches to optimise the EU's participation in Expo Milan in close partnership between the Commission, the European Parliament and other interested EU institutions.

**2. Objectives and benefits of EU participation**

***Communication***

With the potential to reach millions of visitors, the Expo offers the occasion to communicate key EU achievements in the fields of food and sustainability. The timing of the event coincides with the closing year of the Millennium Development Goals and the beginning of a post-2015 framework that will address also the Sustainable Development Goals. The EU's contribution and successes in achieving these goals should be highlighted and, in parallel, what the EU sees as being the challenges ahead and how the EU is prepared to tackle them.

Furthermore, 2015 will be the midpoint of the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Expo will be the ideal occasion to showcase the interim results of the Strategy in the areas relevant to the Expo, including what the Member States acting together have been able

to achieve, and communicate the objectives for the second half of Europe 2020, hereby promoting positive reception and understanding of EU policies.

An initiative to nominate 2015 as the European Year for Development Cooperation is also currently underway. Should it be successful, the Expo would be an excellent communication platform.

The EU should primarily seek to communicate one clear and accessible message through its physical space encompassing the common aims of relevant EU institutions in the domains of food and sustainability. In addition, the participating EU institutions should delve deeper into more specific and contentious issues through the organisation of conferences and events.

### ***Policy Development***

The Expo will be the ideal opportunity for an open and forward-looking exchange with citizens, with a great potential for future policy development. Indeed, more than being just informative, EU participation should aim towards interaction with the visitors and be an occasion for discussion. Some relevant questions which would stimulate the visitors would be identified beforehand and tested on focus groups.

Moreover, in order to further strengthen the impact of the Expo as an impetus for progress and a solution-finding step in the domains of "food security", "food safety", "sustainability" and "food, peace and culture", the organisers have created a Strategy Document, which was distributed by the Expo 2015 Commissioner General to the country representatives on 10.10.2012<sup>1</sup>.

This document is a living document aiming on the one hand to lead to the publication of a manifesto to be signed by the visitors to engage them on a personal level and on the other hand to serve as an opportunity for a policy get together to move the political agenda. All participants will contribute to this living document in the run up to the Expo and the Commission will provide its reply to the first draft of the Strategy Document in the course of 2013.

### ***Education***

As well as being worldwide issues, the four topics given in the Strategy Document are also critical to many EU policies and affect the life of EU citizens on a daily basis. Indeed, these issues are far reaching: whilst food security, with hunger and under-nutrition, is a crucial issue, particularly in developing countries, there is also the growing matter in Europe of increasing obesity and diseases linked to over-consumption or ill-informed food choices.

Food safety has become in the last fifteen years a central element of the EU policies in this area and the basis of a real model for the rest of the world; the EU approach to food is at the same time the precondition to guarantee the safety of its citizens and consumers and the milestone on which is based the reputation and success of the EU food industry worldwide. Sustainability is an issue of increasing importance to EU citizens as well as globally, as it is becoming ever more important to use resources more efficiently to ensure the prosperity of future generations and limit the impact on the environment, preserving already constrained natural resources. With this in mind, EU participation should also aim to be educative and not only raise awareness but also present visitors with solution-based approaches in the areas of food and sustainability, empowering citizens to make positive lifestyle changes for example by reducing food waste and making healthier food choices.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.padiglioneitaliaexpo2015.com/REXpoImpaginatocompleto.pdf>

### **3. Practical considerations**

The Exhibition site area is located northwest of Milan and will cover 1.1 million m<sup>2</sup>. The area of the Expo site will have a hosting capacity of 140 000 visitors per day and will be developed along two perpendicular axes, the "Decumanus" (1.5 km) where some 70 self-built exhibition spaces are located, and the "Cardus" (350 m) reserved for the Italian exhibitors.

The Expo is being constructed as a smart city, built with innovative design and the most advanced technologies for full interactivity (e.g. by using augmented reality and social networking), eco-design, smart mobility, queue managing techniques, energy efficiency, and waste minimisation and recycling. In order to ensure coherence, the design and construction of the different buildings will follow strongly harmonised rules.

In order to have a significant impact, ensure continuous interaction and communication with the visitors throughout the event and strengthen the image of the EU as a global political player, it would be optimum to have a physical presence for the EU for the duration of the Expo.

The Italian organisers have offered a prime space for the EU within the Italian Pavilion in the Cardus area in front of the Palazzo Italia and by the Lake Arena where major institutional, cultural and recreational events will be held. As it will be the most visited area of the Expo, this should further maximise the impact of a dedicated EU space.

The total space provisionally reserved for the EU is 1500 m<sup>2</sup>, which would be constituted of a 3-story building, the first floor reserved as an exhibition space, the second floor for meeting rooms and conference rooms and the third floor for an open air terrace. The proximity to Palazzo Italia, which will include a conference centre available also for EU events, would allow limiting space requirements and costs.

The presence of the EU in the Cardus area could be accompanied by a more widespread on-site presence which could make use of digital technologies of communication. This could also be the basis to create interaction and synergies with the Cyber-expo and its expected 1 billion cyber-visitors. In this respect, due to its highly innovative and technological profile, Expo 2015 will be radically different from all the previous World Expos: visitors will fully master and pre-arrange their visit and experience through the use of websites, apps and smart technologies. It will thus be essential to design new smart ways to interact and attract visitors, within and outside the EU space.

#### ***Budget***

In consideration of the current budget constraints, it is envisaged that the EU participates in the Expo Milan within a limited physical space of 1500 m<sup>2</sup>, which is half the size of the space used in Expo Hanover<sup>2</sup> with a view to limiting the associated costs.

The physical presence reserved by the Italian organisers for the EU institutions would require a core budget of about EUR 10 million spread over the years 2014 and 2015. Given the Expo's focus on agriculture and sustainability the baseline resources will be drawn from the relevant budget heading. Additional resources will be mobilised in 2015 for the organisation of thematic events and exhibitions in the frame of existing or planned budget.

### **4. Preliminary proposals for EU participation**

It will be crucial to have a simple EU message, emphasising the key role played by the EU in the food area. We can learn from previous Expos that citizens visit several pavilions, spending very little time in each one, and will remember a few key ideas only. It must also be noted that

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<sup>2</sup> In the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai, the EU was hosted by Belgium within its pavilion.

this message will have to be thought out with the view that there might be a shift from current concerns between now and 2015. This message will also have to be receivable by 'the man in the street' and should ideally be tested on focus groups prior to the Expo.

Within the context of this message and through the organisation of events by the DGs, several examples of EU initiatives and policies in the domains of food and sustainability could be explored, such as the following:

- The Expo themes are primarily directed to agriculture, a sector in which the EU, most notably through the CAP but also through many other policies, is extremely active. For example, it would be an interesting test case to follow up on the outcome of the International Year of Family Farming (2014) and look in detail at the agricultural cooperative movement, with a clear focus on institution building in developing countries, especially Africa.
- Food represents a building block of the EU economy: the EU is the biggest world exporter in the field and the EU food industry is its largest manufacturing industry, generating an annual turnover of almost EUR 1 trillion and employing more than 4 million people. The active presence of the EU in the Expo will be crucial to shape policy debate and possible strategies for the future of this area and by doing so to further promote industrial competitiveness and export.
- The EU is the largest development aid donor worldwide and this will be the opportunity to show European citizens and the world the extent of EU actions in the domain of food and nutrition security in the most vulnerable regions of the world. Still within the context of food security, a particular focus of the Expo will be the issue of food waste. Indeed, whilst hunger is still a critical global problem, especially in developing countries, 40% of the food produced for human consumption is wasted annually around the world. The EU is leading the way in the commitment in this field and aims to halve the disposal of edible food waste by 2020. Specific work in this direction has already started with the direct involvement of stakeholders and the Expo will be the opportunity to show results and communicate best practice.
- Food is part of our common and diversified cultural heritage, a worldwide symbol of the "EU way of life". This is partly the result of the policies put in place by the EU in the crucial fields of food safety and food quality. Particularly with regards to food safety, the EU, with its science-based approach founded on the clear separation between risk assessment and risk management, is acknowledged as being a model for the rest of the world. Regarding food quality, this is becoming increasingly important in today's health conscious society and in view of the ever clearer link between food and health. Once again the EU is at the forefront of the discussion in this field, promoting, both in terms of education and policy development, healthy standards in the field of nutrition, based on the parallel track of stakeholders' active commitment and consumers' information.
- The issue of environmental sustainability which is becoming a worldwide priority and a growing concern in our society is intrinsically linked with the topic of food. EU achievements in the sector of sustainable energy, in particular for efficient use and sustainable production of energy should also be emphasised. In this context, the impacts of the "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative launched in 2012 on the Expo themes could be explored.
- Finally, the Expo would be the ideal opportunity to build on EU activities and achievements in the field of research and innovation, for instance by showcasing

results from important R&D projects supported by the EU Framework Programmes which are relevant to the future of food and agriculture, also in the context of the Expo scientific programme.

### ***Expo and Cultural and Scientific Events***

The Expo will be an exceptional occasion for participants to organise cultural and scientific events (conferences, seminars, temporary exhibitions etc.) to further bring forward key EU messages, better communicate and stimulate exchange with citizens. These events will require long-term planning in order to manage budget and workload constraints and to maximise impact.

In addition to this, relevant events that are already scheduled for 2015 could be set up in Expo Milan rather than at another location.

With regards to scientific events, the European Commission (Joint Research Centre)'s site of Ispra is located just 60 km from the Expo site and hosts several experimental laboratories, including the EU reference laboratories for Food Contact Materials and GM Food and Feed. The Joint Research Centre (JRC) is also carrying out research activities which are closely related to the theme, such as on water management, climate change, land use, desertification, biofuels, etc. In preparation for the Expo, the JRC is currently building a new visitors' centre that would be able to host a larger number of visitors. The JRC will offer its support and infrastructure to other institutions who may wish to organise expert events in Ispra back-to-back to other events in the Expo. Regular shuttles may be organised for interested experts and researchers who wish to visit the JRC site in Ispra.

### **5. Conclusions and steps to be taken**

Expo Milan 2015 represents a unique opportunity for the EU to reinforce its role as a global actor in the development of future initiatives on food and sustainability, to communicate with its citizens and to convey past achievements and future objectives to its citizens. In order to maximise the impact, it is appropriate for the EU to have its own space for maximum visibility. This space has been offered by and should be rented from the Italian organisers.

To ensure high value for money, the preparation of EU participation should start early and take into account current budget constraints. In view of these constraints, the Commission proposes to limit the EU's physical presence to half of the space used in the last European Expo in Hanover in 2000. This will require a core budget of about EUR 10 million spread over the years 2014 and 2015. Additional resources will need to be mobilised in 2015 for the organisation of thematic events and exhibitions in the frame of existing or planned budget.

The Commission invites the Parliament and other interested EU institutions to join in close partnership with the Commission in order to maximise the benefits from the Expo by presenting a common EU approach and coherent policy messages to the public.

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