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## "I" ITEM NOTE

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From:	Working Party on Information
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)
Subject:	Communication aspects of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

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## INTRODUCTION

1. On 8 October 2014, the Permanent Representatives Committee agreed to make public the TTIP negotiating directives. This agreement was confirmed on 9 October 2014 by the Council and the Representatives of the Government of the Member States through written procedure) <sup>(1)</sup>.
2. COREPER emphasised the need to reinforce the overall communication strategy on the TTIP and invited the Commission to strengthen further, in cooperation with Member States, its outreach activities and engagement with stakeholders.
3. To this end, the Committee invited the Working Party on Information (WPI) to further discuss how the EU's communication strategy on the TTIP could be enhanced and to rapidly report back to COREPER.
4. The WPI examined this issue at its meeting on 17 October 2014 <sup>(2)</sup>. The exchange of views within the WPI can be summarised as follows:

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<sup>(1)</sup> CM 4468/14.

<sup>(2)</sup> The detailed WPI's outcome of proceedings is in doc. ST 14713/14.

## STATE OF PLAY

5. Member States and the European Commission are committed to developing and reinforcing communication with citizens in this domain. Some Member States are already collaborating with the Commission's representations to organise tailor-made communication actions in this domain, and others are ready to engage in joint studies, surveys, etc.
6. Several information activities are already carried out such as publication of annotated directives to facilitate the public's comprehension, publication of parliamentary requests and institutions' replies, citizen's dialogues, public opinion research and explanatory publications and information provision on the dedicated TTIP website.
7. Cooperation with stakeholders (trade unions, advocacy groups and public services, practitioners, etc.) is already taking place in a number of Member States. The Commission has also set up an advisory group with representatives from the business, consumers and labour sectors.

## CHALLENGES

8. The Italian Presidency indicated that the publication of the negotiating directives was a good step forward, since citizens can now appreciate which issues are part of the mandate. Delegations generally agreed with the Presidency, some considering that this is a necessary but not sufficient step towards enhanced transparency.
9. The Commission and delegations agreed that despite the communication efforts made, an information deficit remains. Moreover, in the Commission's view more resources are required to address criticism and misperceptions.

## PERSPECTIVES

10. The following orientations emerged from the exchange of views:
  - a. The Commission undertook to upgrade media and press relations, ensure internal cross-communication, engage in national debates in partnership with national authorities and

set up a network with Member States' contact points to upload material and exchange best practices <sup>(3)</sup>.

- b. Institutions should look into ways to further increase transparency by e.g. producing factsheets and infographics, developing the dedicated website, engaging in seminar and conferences, enhance the outreach through social media, and in particular by exchanges of views and public consultations between EU and US negotiators and stakeholders.
- c. Member State authorities will continue to engage in national debates and organise public events on TTIP with representatives from civil society, the business sector and trade unions (such as the hearing which took place on the eve of the informal "External Trade" ministerial meeting in Rome on 15 November 2014).
- d. The Commission and the Member States will explore ways and means to increase cooperation in the exchange of best practice, interlink among TTIP-dedicated websites, monitoring of public opinion trends and promoting dissemination of multilingual information.

## CONCLUSION

- 11. COREPER is invited to take note of the WPI's proceedings.
- 12. The WPI will pursue the examination of the different aspects of the communication strategy for the TTIP at future meetings.

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<sup>(3)</sup> Delegations claimed that the current procedures enabling them to inspect the negotiations documents should be revised. The Commission observed that the internal handling of EU documents should be kept distinct from the need for communication and transparency towards the citizens.