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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 7 October 2022
To: Delegations

Subject: Summary of discussions at the meeting of the Working Party on
Information (Communication)

The meeting had one main discussion item: the exchange of views on communicating the EU response to the energy crisis. The following information points were also covered: the upcoming Club of Venice seminar in Prague, simulation event for students and information about Europe Day 2023. Another information point on the “You are EU” communication campaign by the Commission was presented before the main discussion point.

Communication the EU response to the energy crisis - *Exchange of views*

A presentation was made by the **Commission on the “You are EU” campaign** (slides available). “You are EU” campaign is linking energy issues with EU values. The Commission presented the messages, the campaign assets, the contractors used. The campaign runs in 24 languages in all EU countries. The duration of the campaign is six weeks, to finish by end of October; dates were adapted in some countries to the electoral calendar. An online survey in four countries shows a generally positive perception. The Commission noted that due to extreme urgency derogations in the Financial Regulation were used. No questions were raised by delegations.

The Chair then introduced the discussion by outlining some of the latest findings from opinion polls organised at EU level, which showed that main concerns of Europeans are inflation (state of

economy) and energy supply. Both had a large percentage increase in the surveys compared to spring.

The Czech Presidency confirmed the priority of the issue and the fact that it is regularly addressed both as Presidency and at national level, communicating intensely on both national measures and joint EU action and combating disinformation which is very much present on the issue.

The delegations who intervened in the exchange shared their experience and best practices, highlighting among others:

- The energy crisis is one of the most discussed topics in most countries. In this respect, communicating on the energy crisis is a serious challenge for most of those that intervened. The different national support measures are being communicated.
- Some countries communicate on the energy crisis in the framework of the war in Ukraine (linking the war as a reason for the energy crisis). In most countries tackling disinformation is important part of their communication efforts with various degree of allocation of resources to this: some have a special person (task force) for tackling disinformation.
- Many promote energy savings in view of the coming heating season with centralised public campaigns. Different tools are being deployed in these activities; many countries use TV, radio and social media; one country mentioned a podcast featuring the prime minister; one country used flyers distributed with the energy bills.
- Some countries try to focus mostly on positive messages rather than a crisis narrative. Messages, appealing to individual citizens, focus on concrete examples like of energy efficiency such as shorter showers, washing machine use, using LED lights, switching off devices on stand-by, cooking savings, etc.
- Some countries communicate on efforts made in public buildings, e.g. lowering the temperature in government buildings.
- A few countries explain the importance of renewables as a long-term solution.
- EU communication materials were welcomed, in particular explanatory ones.
- An overview of what is done in various countries was seen as useful by some of those who intervened.

In closing, **the Chair** noted that most interventions show a focus on similar aspects, namely energy security and reducing consumption, with two different angles – for some Member States an emphasis on the reasons linked to the war, the regional situation; and for others a more positive narrative focused on environmental benefits. The chair also noted that disinformation in this field is

a wide-spread concern. On the request of several delegations, the Chair invited delegates to share with the WPI Secretariat their best practices (e.g. assets of their campaigns) by end of next week so that the GSC could compile and share them with all.

A. Club of Venice seminar in Prague - *Information from the Presidency*

The Czech Presidency briefly presented the informal meeting of the Club of Venice on 13-14 October in Prague. The main focus is government communication in times of crisis. The detailed programme will be shared by email.

B. Simulation event for students - *Information from the GSC*

The GSC presented the initiative of a student simulation with participants from all Member States, outlining the rationale, the main elements of the project and current state of play (conferences of rectors or equivalent organisations from all Member States contacted and on board, agreement in principle of incoming Swedish Presidency and discussions on date being finalised). A few delegations intervened to welcome the project and inquire about choice of level of students and possibilities for Permanent Representations to engage with the students in the margins of the event – the GSC will intermediate contacts to allow for this, leaving free choice to Member States.

C. Europe Day 2023 - *Information from the GSC and the Commission*

The GSC and the Commission outlined the main open issues regarding the Europe Day celebrations in 2023, namely the date (linked with school holidays) and the duration (one or two days) of the physical component. Inter-institutional discussions are due to start on 12 October. The GSC outlined its position (staying close to the actual Europe Day, allowing representation of all Member States and avoiding disproportionate impact on core business) and committed to keep Member States informed. The Commission also noted limitations linked to the involvement of Commission Representations in the celebrations. One delegation called to avoid the focus on distribution of gadgets and find a more environment-friendly way of engaging.

In closing the meeting, **the Chair** updated the delegates on the ongoing development of a game related to the Council, in the form of a mobile app. Following wide testing with external audiences the game is expected to be launched in November 2022 under the name “EUcraft – negotiate and reach an agreement in the Council of the EU!”.

The **next meeting** of the Working party on Information (Communication) is scheduled for 25 November 2022.