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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 23 January 2015
To: Delegations
Subject: Working Party on Information 16 January 2015

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as set out in document CM 1013/1/15 REV 1. The following item has been added under AOB, Ombudsman complaint 2049/2014/NF.

2. Communication / Information policy

a) Organisation of the spokesperson's service of the President of the European Council

The spokesperson of the President of the European Council outlined today's institutional and inter-institutional challenges and focused on the main changes undertaken in the organisation of the press and communication team.

The main challenges are closely connected to the different tasks of the President, notably: his role as "consensus maker and facilitator" at negotiations, which requires rather a "low visibility", and his other tasks such as the EU's external representation in the field of common foreign and security policy, for which it is crucial to have "high visibility" and give the EU institutions a human face.

With regard to the organisation of European Council meetings, the President envisages to:

- as a general rule, include foreign policy issues on the agenda;
- concentrate on fewer topics on the agenda, resulting in more concise conclusions;
- start the meetings earlier and make them shorter, facilitating wider and prompt contact

with the press enabling it to report at ease within the tight deadlines.

The European Council messages will be made clearer, simpler and more transparent in order to facilitate their dissemination.

The President's press and communication team is part of his cabinet and will continue to work closely with the Media and Communication Directorate of the General Secretariat of the Council. Therefore, no deputy spokesperson has been appointed. The team also includes two speechwriters.

b) Former Italian Presidency's communication activities

The former Italian Presidency's spokesperson outlined Italy's communication strategy, tools and results of the second semester of 2014, recalling the presidency's engagement in a number of core issues and focusing on statistics on the content of website, the social media accounts and media participation.

The Italian representative also referred to the endorsement by the "General Affairs" Council on 16 December 2014 of the list of core topics selected by the WPI as communication priorities for 2015-2016 and thanked the delegations for their fruitful cooperation in the identification process.

c) Latvian Presidency, first semester 2015

The Latvian Presidency outlined the main elements of its communication strategy which is based on the three main Presidency's priorities: competitive Europe (focus on jobs and growth), digital Europe (seizing the digital market) and engaged Europe (taking responsibility on global issues).

The objectives of the strategy are to inform national audience to create a better understanding and appreciation of the EU and create visibility at international level to increase Latvia's reputation and strength in the eyes of international partners.

The main tools to achieve these objectives are: press work, the presidency website (www.eu2015.lv), two Twitter accounts (@eu2015lv and @es2015lv - for tweets in English and Latvian respectively) and the YouTube channel (EU2015LV).

The Presidency highlighted the main features of its website, which provides information in four languages (LV, EN, FR and DE) and drew attention to a) a section which helps better understand the Presidency's role and activities through individual experiences shared by people who worked for this presidency or have been involved in former presidencies; b) the "#MindPower" project (videos of stories and poems related by celebrities); c) a Facebook app, and d) a video tutorial "Keep in step with the Latvians".

3. Transparency / Access to documents

a) Council Open Sessions - Statistics on Open Sessions during the Italian Presidency (July - December 2014)

- Information from the General Secretariat of the Council
Doc 5104/15 INF 4 API 4

The General Secretariat gave a presentation on statistics related to Council Open Sessions held during the Italian Presidency.

b) Confirmatory application No 40/c/01/14

- Docs 17089/14 INF 350 API 154
17090/14 INF 351 API 155

The Council Legal Service presented the draft reply and explained the approach proposed in the draft reply (doc. 17090/14). It informed the Working Party that linguistic suggestions made by the UK delegation will be included in the final text to be submitted to COREPER II and the Council.

Delegations agreed with the draft reply and with the publication of the votes. The draft reply will be submitted to COREPER II on 21 January 2015 and to the Council (ECOFIN) on 27 January 2015.

c) Confirmatory application No 40/c/04/14

- Information from the General Secretariat of the Council
Doc 5105/15 INF 1 API 11

The Chair informed the WPI that the General Secretary had received a new confirmatory application for access to several documents related to the negotiating mandate of an international agreement. Given that the next WPI meeting is scheduled for early February, it will be necessary to consult delegations as regards the draft reply to this request by e-mail in order to meet the legal deadlines.

4. Any Other Business

a) Calendar of WPI meetings during the first semester 2015

The General Secretariat distributed the calendar of WPI meetings foreseen during the Latvian semester.

b) Russian propaganda campaign in Europe

The Lithuanian delegation commented a "Non-Paper" dated 8 January 2015 signed by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania and United Kingdom and sent to the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The document aims to contribute to a EU strategic communication approach in the field of Eastern Neighbourhood and to facilitate Member States' reflections at the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 January 2015. It contains a number of practical suggestions to enhance cooperation in the field of communication, stressing the need to focus on awareness-raising, assertiveness (pro-active approach and enhanced interaction), credible and competitive information and accountability.

Some Member States expressed their support and shared the concerns expressed in the non-paper. While awaiting the outcome of the discussions of the FAC meeting, delegations:

- underlined that the objective of the communication strategy should be to allow to all multipliers to get free access to objective information in the Member States as well as in the Eastern Neighbourhood countries;
- explained that several Council bodies will be involved in this issue as far as the policy aspects are concerned and welcomed the deepening of discussion on the communication aspects in this and the following WPI meeting;
- encouraged EEAS and the Commission to take the lead in this matter.

The Commission DG COMM representative suggested that the WPI coordinates its further steps also with the COEST Working Party.

Concluding this item, the Chair :

- indicated that some aspects of the communication strategy have already been discussed between EU institutions and that some actions mentioned in the Non-Paper are already being taken;
- suggested to convene, after the FAC discussions of 19 January but before the next WPI meeting scheduled on 6 February, an informal meeting to discuss the follow-up on this issue with Member States, the Commission, the EEAS and the General Secretariat of the Council.

c) Ombudsman complaint 2049/2014/NF

- Information from the General Secretariat of the Council

The Chair informed the WPI that the Ombudsman had asked for authorisation to inspect two documents to which the European Council had refused access following a confirmatory application for public access. The General Secretariat will launch a written procedure in the European Council next week, in order to authorise this inspection.
