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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 20 January 2023
To: Delegations

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

The meeting's main substance points were presentation of the communication priorities of the Swedish Presidency and exchange of views on communicating Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its consequences – 1 year on. The following information points were also covered: the upcoming ConSIMium students' simulation, update on the recently launched EUcraft game and information about Europe Day 2023. Another information point on the results on You are EU communication campaign by the Commission was presented at the end.

2.Presentation of the communication priorities of the Swedish presidency - *Information from the Presidency*

The rotating Presidency presented the presidency logo and the art installations in the Council buildings. They explained the symbolism behind the choice of colours of the artistic exhibition. Photos from recent trips to Sweden of the Commission and of journalists were shared (slides available).

The Presidency motto is Greener – safer – freer. The four Presidency priorities were presented (slides available) as well as the organization of the work in the area of communication. As lessons learned, SE recommended to the GSC to consider blocking in advance the domain names for the future presidencies.

3.Communication on Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and its consequences

– 1 year on - *Exchange of views*

The Chair introduced the discussion by summarising some of the latest findings from opinion polls at EU level (slides available), which showed that a large majority of Europeans approve of EU support to Ukraine.

The Swedish Presidency presented a few communication activities on the war, screenshots from social media posts. (slides available). Swedish support to Ukraine by providing food, arms, reconstruction of buildings were presented. Sweden outlined the number of Ukrainian refugees received and the support provided.

The EEAS briefly introduced the focus of their communication activities in relation to the war in Ukraine. These include emphasis on the humanitarian and financial support, adaptation of messages for audiences outside of the EU and communication by EU delegations to third countries. The main line is projecting the message of unity and support to Ukraine but adapting it to the audiences.

The delegations who intervened in the exchange shared their experience and best practices, public opinion trends in their countries and highlighted among others:

- Most mentioned the reception of Ukrainian refugees and related communication, focusing on how those refugees integrate in the labour market and educational systems.
- All stressed the importance of addressing disinformation, as a major share of efforts; resources allocated to this were mentioned by several, as well as efforts to improve media literacy, incl. through formal education in schools.
- Special projects debunking or “pre-bunking” disinformation were presented – producing dedicated videos; working with the diplomatic missions abroad to counter false narratives; coordination with other EU countries and their diplomats; etc.
- Some countries communicate (for the first time) in other than their national language. Many try to reach out to the refugees and communicate in Ukrainian. Others have parts of their own population who speak another language and they addressed them in those.
- The big majority of countries communicate on the support their country and the EU provides to Ukraine. Some focus on humanitarian support, others on financial help, third on military support and moral responsibility. Many of the countries communicate on those different aspects of EU support at the same time (not focusing only on one).
- Virtually all countries use actively social media to communicate about Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and its consequences. Many countries produce regularly new

materials for different social media channels to explain certain political measures and support provided.

- In many countries, Russia is presented as an aggressor and its war being in origin of food and energy crisis.
- Some countries communicate on the sanctions on Russia by explaining them, why they are needed and how they work.
- The public approval of EU and national actions to support Ukraine differs from country to country but is generally very positive. In some countries, the support for EU and national actions has slightly decreased with time but it is still overall positive.

The Commission highlighted that their top priority is communicating the war, its consequences, EU support. The webpage Solidarity with Ukraine was set up very fast to provide information to refugees. The Commission also communicate in Ukrainian and Russian as well as in Arabic and Chinese. Disinformation is a serious issue, thus the Commission strongly with EEAS on fighting disinformation and welcomes various initiatives by the member states. Internal Commission network on disinformation was upgraded and used to identify disinformation. Europe Direct centres communicate on the war, as well as the Europe Direct Contact Centre – 13 000 questions answered until now, incl. in Ukrainian and Russian.

Closing, **the Chair** noted the main trends in communication. Many Member States clearly present Russia as an aggressor and the cause of food crisis and energy crisis. Coordination of factcheckers and fighting disinformation is also present in many countries. Debunking is not only telling people what is false or true but increasing media literacy. Many communicate in Ukrainian or Russian to some of the audiences. Many countries also think how third countries see Europe and its actions and communicate through their diplomatic missions. Many initiatives encourage citizens to keep their positive level of engagement and support. The Chair briefly presented GSC plans for communication which would focus on the summit in Kyiv. The relevant page of the Council website includes the latest product and infographics that are produced.

4.AOB – Information points

A. ConSIMium - simulation event for students - Information from the GSC

The GSC recalled that in the autumn the student simulation with participants from all Member States was presented. ConSIMium is a pilot project that will happen on 2-3 February in Brussels. Students were selected by the national association of universities. Six students per country – one playing a head of state, one minister, one ambassador, two experts in working parties and one

playing a journalist. The exercise includes simulation of European Council, working parties, COREPER and Council meetings. Some of the universities have been active on national level in promoting their participation in the project. The GSC invited delegates to interact with the students if they wish so, including by organising meetings with the teams, indicating the best slots in line with the programme of the event.

The rotating Presidency expressed full support for the project and hopes to have it as a regular project in the future. It would support increasing knowledge about the EU and Europe and could also encourage young people in pursuing a career in the EU institutions.

Some countries enquired for more information like the timetable of the event, materials for promoting to national media and social media, information about the premises and prior contacts from the different Perm Reps. The GSC would circulate documentation in writing after the meeting.

B. **EUcraft** - *Information from the GSC*

The Chair presented the EUcraft app and its main functions and invited delegates to have a look and spread the word. The app is available in the app stores on [Apple](#) and [Google Play](#). It can be played via a [web version](#) too and is available in all EU official languages. EUcraft explains how the member states work together in the Council. The GSC will inform Member States when EUcraft promotion activities start and will provide relevant materials.

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

The GSC explained the main elements of Europe Day 2023. The physical open door event is to take place on Saturday 6 May, and an online campaign is also planned. No policy content is envisaged. With a focus on sustainability, the intention is to limit the distribution of gadgets and focus on the journey of the visitors and the educational aspect. Each visitor will be provided with a “passport” booklet in which to gather stickers from different Member States (produced by the GSC); once completed, a prize can be claimed at the Council stand. Detailed logistical aspects will be circulated in writing.

The Commission briefly presented their plans and the inter-institutional coordination efforts. All materials will be shared on the Communicators Portal.

D. **“You are EU” communication campaign** - *Information from the Commission*

The Commission presented the results of the “*You are EU*” communication campaign (slides available). Target audience are families. Main channels were radio, TV and social media. The Commission informed that the campaign has reached 325 million people and has received 77.6%

positive reactions on social media. 320 European cities with 23k screens were covered. Spotify allowed to complement to radio.

Next steps – the Commission is preparing a second round of the campaign. The visuals are being updated and it would be launched in week 9 of 2023.

The meeting of the Working party on Information (Communication) tentatively scheduled for 9 March has been cancelled. The next meeting is planned to be on 27 April 2023.
