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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 26 September 2017
To: Delegations
Subject: Working Party on Information

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The WPI approved the agenda in CM 4061/17.

2. Communicating Europe

a) **Communication aspects of the Bratislava Declaration: best practices, lessons learned and way forward**

The Chairman recalled the objectives of the debate: a) to exchange information on MS' and institutions' communication activities carried out following the tasking of the Bratislava Declaration; b) to share views on the MS and EU institutions' approach to enhance outreach, raise citizens' awareness of the EU's added value; c) have an overview of what is planned in the year to come.

The first contributions were provided by the Member States holding the presidency of the Council since the adoption of the Declaration.

The Slovak delegation underlined that the fact to hold a presidency was an excellent opportunity to raise Slovak citizens' awareness about the EU. The Declaration delivered a strong message of a united Europe, capable of improvements and globally engaged. Moreover, the very good coverage of the event and the variety of communication tools prevented disinformation risks.

Slovakia has adopted a first national strategic communication plan with the main objectives to enhance outreach to citizens. Social media campaigns and the engagement of the Permanent Representation staff in the "Back to School" EU initiative were also mentioned.

The Maltese delegation highlighted the results achieved by reconnecting the EU's agenda with citizens through an intensive campaign on social media, based on plain language and a transparent and informal way. The presidency semester reinvigorated the already high support for the EU among Maltese citizens.

Efforts are being undertaken to keep the momentum and reinforce cooperation with the EU institutions. Malta is committed to communicating on Europe and strengthening ties with civil society.

The Estonian presidency referred to its citizen-oriented approach and also emphasised the need to communicate in a clear language. During its semester, it will reinforce the use of videos and infographics.

The other delegations' interventions can be summarised as follows:

- The Belgian delegation, referring to its written contribution¹, welcomed the good cooperation with the European Institutions and highlighted the communication activities carried out in schools.

¹ The Belgian contribution is in WK 10061/2017 REV 1.
The Austrian delegation has also provided a written contribution in WK 10102/2017.

- The French delegation underlined that the Bratislava Declaration urged to renew the spirit of partnership among Member States and institutions. Accordingly, relevant communication campaigns should be thoroughly coordinated (in France, interministerial cooperation has been reinforced to this end) and carried out jointly and coherently. Professionalism, inclusiveness and listening to citizens' needs are crucial. Communication should be reinforced and focused on the future of the EU, on concrete priorities, promoting a less bureaucratic and more citizens-oriented Europe.
- The Italian delegation urged to find the necessary synergies to set up communication priorities responding to citizens' expectations. The Bratislava Declaration, the Commission's White Paper and the Rome Declaration showed the way. Italy is preparing a two-year communication strategy based on active knowledge and open debates, targeting students. A communication campaign on the positive European heritage is also underway. Furthermore, Italy stressed the importance of communicating on the EU's social dimension and promoting active knowledge of the EU in schools and through the social media. It welcomed the pursuit of the exchange of best practices within the WPI and underlined that increasing cooperation with the institutions is crucial, also in view of the 2019 elections to the European Parliament.
- The Finnish delegation indicated that Finland is reviewing its EU communication strategy regularly and underlined that the EU's success fundamentally depends on citizens' active participation in the society.
- The Danish and the Dutch delegations highlighted the usefulness of the Bratislava Declaration and stressed the need to measure clearly what has been done, set very concrete goals and show citizens that the EU can achieve them (an EU that is capable to deliver). The Netherlands stressed the need to remain focused on delivering concrete results.

- The Czech delegation welcomed the WPI's follow-up debate which enabled delegations to share knowledge and best practices. The Czech authorities are implementing a multi-annual communication strategy based on an annual priority settings, in cooperation with their own regional authorities as well as with the Europe Direct centres and NGOs. The National Convention continues to be a strong instrument to debate widely on the Czech EU policy. There is a need to enhance synergies and to re-establish the fruitful common communication priorities mechanism that was in place with the 2008 Declaration "Communicating Europe in Partnership" ⁽²⁾.
- The Polish delegation referred to the importance attached to cooperation, highlighting as an example the role Poland plays in the EU's Eastern Partnership context.
- The Bulgarian delegation welcomed the WPI's discussion, which provides useful elements for the finalisation of Bulgaria's communication plan in view of its future Presidency.

The European Commission's representative referred to the successful InvestEU campaign ("EU that delivers") and to its corporate campaigns foreseen in the coming months (on "EU that empowers" and "EU that protects") which will focus on successful investments, values and opportunities, through concrete storytelling and strong social media activities multiplying contacts with citizens. The aim is to offer a vision of an attractive EU, expanding the Future of Europe debate and capitalising on Citizen Dialogues'. Member States' collaboration will be crucial to help spread the information.

The European Parliament's representative welcomed the WPI's exchange of views and stressed the need to reinforce cooperation, capitalising on the Declaration's values to communicate Europe more effectively. In October 2017, the EP will adopt its communication strategy for the elections. The strategy will foster the "go local" approach, focusing on young people and promoting an "EU that protects". Language and content will be adapted to the target audiences. The EP wishes to implement it in close cooperation with institutions, national authorities and civil society.

⁽²⁾ OJ C13 of 20.1.2009, p. 3-4.

The General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) outlined the WPI's role as discussion forum for ideas and message sharing (complemented by the informal framework of the Club of Venice), as a service provider (strong cooperation with the EEAS on audio-visual production, East StratCom, media monitoring, interinstitutional synergies) and as communicator on the Council's and Member States' behalf when empowered by them. The GSC shared the Maltese delegation's view that additional efforts are required to communicate in a clear language. This is in line with the Bratislava Declaration, which stressed the need to challenge simplistic solutions and set out a new spirit through a responsive, positive and active, not conflicting but reinforcing communication.

The Chairman welcomed the debate and acknowledged the work undertaken by Member States and Institutions. He also agreed on the need for language clarity and on further exploiting the social media outreach potential. He finally indicated that the WPI looks forward to hosting further strategic debates focusing on lessons learned.

b) Public opinion trends

The European Commission's representative's contribution focused on the main results of the standard EB 87 standard (Public opinion in the European Union) and on the special EB 461 special (Designing Europe's future: trust in institutions, globalisation, euro, free trade and solidarity).

The two surveys revealed citizens' concerns: unemployment ahead, but declining; terrorism and immigration on the rise, with 68% of Europeans being for a common European policy on migration; a progressive recovery with regard to the economic situation, but diverging perceptions in the Member States; globalisation seen as an opportunity for growth, but also increasing social inequalities; a strong majority's support for the EMU in all Euro area countries; the EU's image improving, but still far from the levels of 2006-2009; rising confidence in the EU, but a majority still not trusting it; same considerations for European and national institutions; low trust in the media; highest score reported with regard of "EU citizenship" feeling; general optimism on the rise.

The European Parliament's representative focused on the special EB of the European Parliament "Two years before the European elections". He welcomed the increased citizens' attachment to the Union and their perception that the EU is tackling the global challenges seriously, with a bigger impact. According to the EB results, citizens have acknowledged the EU's action in many fields, but still expect more from it when tackling issues of greatest concern.

The EP wishes to learn lessons and draw inspiration from this special EB and from the next public opinion surveys, looking thoroughly at what will emerge from the different socio-demographic groups. This approach is crucial for the EP's communication strategy in view of the 2019 elections.

Delegations' (FIN, FR) stressed the need for tangible and quick responses to citizens' concerns, their perceptions being strongly influenced by topical issues such as internal security and external border control.

The Chairman thanked the European Commission and the European Parliament for their contributions and indicated that the WPI stands ready to continue facilitating the debate and looked forward to the EP's communication strategy.

3. Any Other Business

a) 5th AU-EU Summit (Abidjan, 28/29 November 2017): communication aspects

The EEAS' representative outlined the objectives of the summit and the flagship projects being developed in close collaboration with the African countries.

The summit will focus on youth. Accordingly, the communication action plan developed by the EEAS' ad hoc Task Force will target young people through social media. It also foresees multipliers' platforms, interactive events and interviews, and a workshop for journalists. Traditional classic media will be mobilised as well. The EEAS invited Member States to help promote the summit using all the information material and to share with their COAFR delegates their feedback and know-how from previous cooperation with civil society, foundations, academics.

The French delegation welcomed the EEAS' contribution and its communication plan. It also supported the focus on the young public and the strong utilisation of social media.

Considering the aim to reach the widest possible audiences, the delegation asked to pay due attention to multilingualism.

b) Eastern Partnership (EaP) Summit - communication aspects
(Brussels, 24 November 2017)

The EEAS' representative presented the event, where leaders will take stock of the tangible benefits delivered to the citizens of the six partner countries since the last summit in Riga in 2015. The summit will focus on the four priority areas (stronger economy, stronger governance, stronger connectivity and stronger society). Tackling disinformation will be one of the core issues.

The summit will be followed by side events foreseen in October 2017 in Tallinn, aiming to foster cooperation in E-partnership, civil society and the business world.

The summit will take place in the Europa building⁽³⁾. The Presidency will work on coverage on social media and provide audio-visual content. The EEAS focused on the visual identity elements and the efforts to translate the information in all the EU's official languages.

c) EU Digital Summit (Tallinn, 29 September 2017)

The Presidency outlined the press/media arrangements of the informal summit⁽⁴⁾, that will bring together the European leaders to share views on how Europe will continue to embrace technological changes. The event is considered a platform to launch high-level discussions on building a digital future for Europe, enhancing investments on innovation and offering citizens new opportunities.

The summit agenda includes a media pre-programme on 28 September 2017, showcasing the Estonian experience in building a digital society⁽⁵⁾.

(3) <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2017/11/24/>

(4) <https://www.eu2017.ee/political-meetings/tallinn-digital-summit>

(5) https://www.eu2017.ee/sites/default/files/2017-09/EU2017EE_TallinnDigitalSummit_pre-programme_draft_19.09_1.pdf