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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Working Party on Information on 19 January 2017

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as set out in document CM 1097/1/17 REV 1, with an additional AOB item 3e (European Council - new organisational aspects).

2. Communication / Information Policy

a) Presidency's communication strategy and web site

The Maltese Presidency outlined its Presidency's communication strategy and presented its official logo.

The Presidency's web site <https://www.eu2017.mt> will provide information in four languages (MT, EN, FR and DE). Interaction with public audiences will be also assured through Facebook and Twitter.

The Presidency's strategy aims to keep citizens at the centre of the debate on the EU. Particular emphasis will be given to reconnecting with the wide public by means of full transparency and simple messages and to enhancing relations with the press.

The Chairman welcomed the new Presidency, ensuring full support and highlighting the need to measure the semester's achievements by providing statistics.

b) Refugee and migration crisis: communication aspects (focus on the countries of origin and transit)

The Chairman introduced the item recalling the Council's request of 9 November 2015 to the Commission elaborating a common information strategy in the field of migration.

The Commission's representative (DG HOME) informed delegations of work in progress:

- a Migrant Information web Portal (MIP). This platform, financed by an EU grant and run by a consortium of European leading media with international audiences, should become operational towards mid-February. Working as an information hub for people in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan, it will provide content in French, English and Arabic and be accessible through all devices. The dual objective is to provide trustworthy information and contrast misinformation;
- an awareness-raising campaign to be launched in Afghanistan aiming to provide information and encourage development programmes;
- cooperation with DG Communication and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in the production of audiovisual material and other sources of information on relocation, resettlement, activities in the hotspots and voluntary return;
- cooperation with the Structural Support Reform Service (SRSS) in providing reliable information in the Greek hotspots.

Finally, the Commission informed the WPI of an ongoing technical scientific analysis on how migrants obtain information on their journey and two studies, respectively on the origin of migratory routes and on the migrants' arrivals in Italy.

Delegations (BG, DE, FR, MT, NL, PL and FI) welcomed the inclusion of migration in the Presidency's priorities list. Their comments focused on the need to:

- ensure continuity in the Task Force's work (its last meeting was in summer 2016);
- communicate more actively on progress made in the reduction of pull factors (areas such as the European Border and Control Coast Guard Agency intervention, the implementation of the agreement with Turkey, the renewal of Frontex);
- adopt a case-by-case nuanced/measured approach to respect sensibilities of the target countries, avoid misperceptions and negative reactions in the public opinion, and engage credible media partners in the countries of origin;
- mainstream communication on migration, reinforcing collaboration and exchange of information among the Commission, the EU delegations and Member States; extend the external dimension of the IPCR framework.

In his conclusions, the Chairman:

- given the very concrete and severe nature of the crisis, took note of delegations' eagerness to deepen cooperation in the topic and to the follow-up activities of the Task Force, stressing the need to deliver urgently;
- highlighted the need to define performance indicators on the implementation of the communication strategy;
- invited the Commission to provide a further update on work in progress at the next WPI's meeting on 21 February 2017.

c) **Updates from the Commission DG COMM**

The Commission's representative outlined the communication activities foreseen in 2017, coordinated by DG Communication, which will be based on a three-strands narrative approach:

- an EU that delivers on growth, jobs and investments (a corporate campaign to be carried out in 14 Member States, focusing on relevance and impact of EU investments);
- an EU that empowers, aiming on reconnecting citizens focusing on youth, with emphasis on inclusiveness and common values (Erasmus, 60th Anniversary of the Rome Treaties);
- an EU that protects, focusing on concrete actions and solutions in core areas such as development, humanitarian support, internal security, fight against terrorism, etc.

The Commission's corporate approach encompasses large scale communication actions targeting broad audiences. It aims to translate overarching topics into sustained communication.

To this end, DG Communication will pool internal financial resources with other DGs of the Commission and the EEAS. The budget allocated (44M€) will cover activities carried out in 2017 and 2018.

The Commission will adopt a “joined up approach”, availing of all relevant communication tools and ensuring strong governance.

The Commission's representative concluded by stressing the need to enhance inter-institutional relations and seize the opportunity of the 60th Anniversary of the Rome Treaties and the 30th Anniversary of Erasmus to seek synergies with Member States, for a stronger impact on the public audiences.

Delegations' comments (B, DE, NL, PT and FI) focused on cost-effectiveness and on the need to enhance collaboration among institutions and with the Member States. In this context, they also echoed that, given the lack of citizens' confidence in the EU institutions, joint efforts should be made to communicate together and strengthen messages, in particular on the occasion of special events like the 60th anniversary.

3. AOB

a) **60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties: communication activities**

The Italian delegation shared some information on the initiatives foreseen to celebrate the 60th anniversary, among which:

- the informal summit of Rome on 25th March 2017;
- a travelling exhibition (starting in March 2017), in cooperation with national and EU institutional archives;
- the State of the EU conference foreseen in Florence on 5th May 2017;
- on Schuman's Day (9 May 2017), the celebration of the 30th anniversary of ERASMUS (addressing the Erasmus generations) and the award ceremony of the initiative "New generation EP" carried out with the European Parliament.

It also invited the Member States interested in using the official logo selected for the 60th anniversary to contact trattatidiroma@governo.it.

Finally, the Italian delegation recalled its message of 9 January 2017 in which it asked delegations' feedback with a view to exploring opportunities for synergies in the celebration of the event, and asked the Chairman to return to this issue at the next WPI's meeting on 21 February 2017.

The French delegation, which supported the Italian delegation, informed the WPI on the mobilisation of France to celebrate the anniversary. The aim is to mobilise civil society and work together for a concrete implementation of Bratislava's Declaration, respecting the principle of subsidiarity, focusing on citizens' protection (frontiers, defence) and on employment.

b) Outgoing Presidency's communication activities

The Slovak delegation circulated a brief overview of the communication activities carried out by the former Presidency, including statistics on social media activities, the presidency's web site, and press/media attendance and coverage.

c) Malta informal summit, 3 February 2017

The Maltese presidency provided some preliminary information on press logistics. Deadline for press accreditation is 27 January 2017. The Press centre will be located in the same premises used for the 2016 Valletta summit. National briefing rooms will be in a facility adjacent to the Press Centre. A detailed note will be circulated at a later stage.

d) EU institutions' Open Day 2017

The General Secretariat of the Council informed the WPI that the next inter-institutional Open Day will take place on 6 May 2017. For the Council, an important novelty for this year will obviously be the EUROPA building.

Delegations were asked to collaborate in renewing the initiative of the joint stand of Member States, which last year generated much interest among the visitors.

The General Secretariat will circulate practical information for Member States' participation in the joint MS stand and to ask whether delegations will be planning any special presentation.

e) European Council: information on working methods

The General Secretariat of the Council recalled the ongoing review of some organizational aspects concerning the European Council meetings. Delegations will receive a short questionnaire aiming to collect their feedback in this regard ⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾WK 601 2017 distributed to delegations on 20 January 2017.

4. Transparency

a) European Ombudsman

- Own-initiative inquiry on transparency on trilogues

- State of play

Documents 15107/16

15701/16

The WPI was informed that the reply to the Ombudsman regarding her proposals to increase transparency in the trilogue process was adopted by COREPER on 20 December 2016 . The reflection is on-going as to the follow-up to these recommendations. For some of them, the Council has to wait for the Court's decision on a pending case (Case T-540/15) before the Court of Justice before deciding what steps to take.

b) Issuing and release of LIMITE documents

- Information from the General Secretariat of the Council

5109/17

As a follow-up to the discussions concerning issuing and release of LIMITE documents the General Secretariat presented information note 5109/17. The Dutch delegation intervened thanking for the note and asking to be kept informed of further evolutions. The French delegation expressed its preference for a centralised assessment of the question whether documents should be circulated as public. The French delegation also considered that there seemed to be a contradiction between paragraphs 4 and 5 of the note as the former states that certain documents can only be made public if they are "clearly not covered" by an exception, while the latter says that the same documents are circulated as LIMITE when there are good reasons to consider that one or more exceptions apply. The General Secretariat clarified that, apart from the case of evident existence of an exception, the wording "good reasons to consider" in paragraph 5(a) refers to the *unclear* cases, under a "*Prima Facie*" examination, in which indeed the LIMITE marking is used, while paragraph 4 refers to the legal rules that are applicable.

c) **Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register**

- Information from the General Secretariat of the Council
- State of Play

5151/17

The Legal Service presented briefly the conclusions of its opinion on the Commission's proposal. WPI was informed that on 13 January 2017 the General Affairs Group had its first discussion on this opinion and will continue the debates in its next meeting on 27 January 2017.

d) **Council Open Sessions - Statistics on Open Sessions held during the Slovak Presidency (July - December 2017)**

- Information from the General Secretariat of the Council

5243/17

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

e) **A.O.B (Transparency)**

- i) Questionnaire on Member States' legislation on access to documents
- Information from the General Secretariat of the Council on the state of play

The General Secretariat of the Council informed delegations about the state of play of this file. To date, the GSC has received 20 replies. The replies are currently being translated and will be made available to delegations via the Delegates Portal. The GSC will then analyse the answers received and present the results to the WPI in a forthcoming meeting.
