



Brussels, 5 July 2017
(OR. en)

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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 5 July 2017
To: Delegations
Subject: Working Party on Information of 27 June 2017

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as set out in CM 3194/17.

2. Communication/Information policy

a) **Joint framework in countering hybrid threats: strategic communication aspects**

The Commission's representative highlighted the multi-faceted nature of hybrid threats and recalled the 22 actions foreseen in the joint EEAS/Commission communication adopted in April 2016 (doc. 7688/16) as a follow-up to the Foreign Affairs Council of May 2015.

She outlined the main activities carried out in this field within four clusters: situational awareness, the EU' and its MS' cross-border resilience building, deterrence and swift responses.

The Commission's representative also pointed out that sustained efforts are being made in crisis prevention and response, including among others:

- reinforce cybersecurity, countering violent extremism and radicalisation
- synchronizing operational networking, in particular through the Integrated Political Crisis Response mechanism (IPCR) and the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), exchanging data and identifying knowledge gaps
- disinformation analysis and exchange of expertise and best practice
- developing common indicators of resilience in progress (doc. 10184/17).

Finally, the Commission's representative confirmed that in July 2017 the Commission will submit a progress report as requested by the Council in its conclusions on countering hybrid threats of 19 April 2016 (doc. 7857/16). She stressed the need for close cooperation with all Member States, internet industries (with whom the EU has signed a Code of Conduct), NATO and Europol and for an increased civil society empowerment.

The European External Action Service (EEAS) gave an overview of the EU hybrid threats Fusion Cell which coordinates the implementation of the actions foreseen in the April 2016 joint communication. The aim of the Cell is to respond to growing security challenges of high complexity and nature, by raising awareness and building resilience within the EU and in its neighbouring countries.

The EEAS also described the wide variety of hybrid threats, which often take shape through a simultaneous combination of events, focusing on:

- the role of its StratCom East Task Force ⁽¹⁾ in developing EU policies' communication campaigns in the Eastern Partnership region, strengthening media environment countering misinformation and propaganda activities;

⁽¹⁾ The EEAS StratCom East TF is operating since September 2015, as foreseen in the EEAS' Action Plan developed in line with the European Council conclusions of 19-20 March 2015 (doc. EUCO 11/15). It brings together communication experts from the EU institutions or seconded by EU Member States.

- the ongoing cooperation with a network of government officials, public citizens, NGOs, civil society, academies and the TF's information tools such as the "Disinformation newsletter".

Against this backdrop, the EEAS' representative urged MS and the Commission to strengthen cooperation in exchanging relevant information and specialised analysis, cross-boarder liaising, smoothening communication and coordinating prompt rebuttals to fake news, and nominating all national contacts for the EEAS' network.

Several delegations welcomed the EEAS' integrated approach in this issue and commented on the Commission's and EEAS' contribution. They supported the need to reinforce cooperation in this field, focusing on :

- concerted resilience building and action against propaganda
- the need to explain the hybrid threats' complexity to citizens
- the need for regional analysis and assessment of internet processes
- cooperation with embassies and employment of local-oriented narratives
- recognizing this topic as a common obligation and shape cooperation with the Riga Centre of Excellence and with NATO
- exporting the successful East StratCom concept model to other Task Forces
- improving media literacy and strengthening the EEAS' TF on Migration
- anti-radicalisation plans and public diplomacy's added value, particularly in view of the EU-Africa summit foreseen in November 2017.

The Estonian delegation highlighted the importance attached to hybrid threats and indicated that it would welcome a presentation by the Commission of its upcoming report in one of the WPI meetings organised during the Estonian presidency.

In his conclusions, the Chairman:

- highlighted the communication's role in the hybrid threats file
- indicated that all MS ought to be kept adequately updated horizontally on this issue, given its complexity and its impact on nations' security
- welcomed the Estonian delegation's request to have this item again on the WPI agenda
- indicated that the General Secretariat will map across the other Council's preparatory bodies to avoid redundancies and ensure the WPI will continue to fulfil its complementary role focusing on the communication aspects of hybrid threats.

b) The Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) mechanism and the Crisis Communicators' Network (CCN)

The Maltese Presidency informed delegations on the activities of the IPCR's Crisis Communicators' Network (CCN) during the semester.

It reported in particular on its last meeting held on 16th May 2017 where Member States, Institutions and the EU Agencies on the front line exchanged views on:

- the migratory routes' evolution (based on accurate information and statistics)
- the traffickers' disinformation campaigns targeting migrants
- the recently activated migrants' information portal managed by the Commission.

The Presidency also informed the WPI of:

- a possible exercise to map Member State's communication policies in the field of migration
- an upcoming report on the IPCR's web platform. In this context, it urged Member States to increasingly support this network and, if still not done, to appoint their national contact for it

and finally thanked the General Secretariat for its support.

The Chairman welcomed the Presidency's debrief and informed delegations that the WPI stands ready to continue facilitating the IPCR's network, helping check work in progress and raising awareness.

c) Council's future Visitors' Centre and cooperation of visits services

The General Secretariat presented the project for the new Visitors' Centre of the Council. Its objective is to contribute to a modern visitors' experience by providing an accessible and authentic presentation of the key roles of the Council and the European Council within the "House of the Member States".

The new Centre will include a conference room for presentations to groups and an interactive zone with multimedia equipment.

The General Secretariat looks forward to sharing further information with delegations with a view to a meeting with visits services foreseen on 11th July 2017 aiming to strengthen cooperation.

d) AOB (communication): Maltese Presidency's communication activities during the 1st semester 2017

The Maltese Presidency outlined its communication activities semester, focusing on its website, on the satisfactory social media traffic (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), on the open approach with the media and on the clarity of the information exchanged during the semester.

3. Joint session Communication and Transparency

a) **Workshop "From Delegates Portal to a Digital Council: Information and knowledge services for delegations in 2020 and beyond"**

The General Secretariat presented the results of the workshop held on 11 May 2017 in the margins of the WPI.

4. Transparency items

a) **Proposal for an Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register**

The General Secretariat informed delegations about recent developments on this issue.

b) **Own-initiative inquiry OI/2/2017/AB by the European Ombudsman concerning access to documents relating to Council preparatory bodies when discussing draft EU legislative acts**

Due to the late circulation of document 8808/17, the Chairman announced that the discussion on this item will take place at the next meeting of the Working Party on 13 July 2017. He also asked delegations to send their comments on the draft reply if possible by Tuesday 4 July 2017.

A delegation raised a question regarding the origin of the proposal mentioned in the last paragraph of the draft reply to question 9. The General Secretariat explained that this proposal is submitted to the delegations to ensure a greater coherence in the future.

c) **Open Data Draft Council Decision on an open data policy for the General Secretariat of the Council**

The General Secretariat informed delegations about main objectives of the draft Council Decision on open data policy and conditions of reuse of open data sets. Three delegations welcomed the initiative of the General Secretariat and asked several general questions: relationship between the draft and the Regulation 1049/2001, potential new obligations for the Member States, information flow between the General Secretariat and the Member States, differences between the Commission and the GSC. Questions were briefly answered by the General Secretariat, detailed discussion will take place at the next meeting of the Working Party on 13 July 2017.

d) Confirmatory applications

The General Secretariat informed the WPI about the two new confirmatory applications.

e) Long term preservation of documents

The delegations were informed about the questionnaire to be issued in July concerning the long-term preservation of electronic archives in the Member States.
