



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 13 March 2014
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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Working Party on Information on 7 March 2014

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda set out in document CM 1825/14 was adopted with the inclusion of three items under AOB:

- Seminar on "Public communication: regaining citizens' confidence in times of crisis", Athens, 27-28 March 2014 (as requested by the Greek Presidency) (5(a));
- Outcome of the proceedings of the 2478th meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee held on 11 December 2013 (5(b));
- Own-initiative enquiry OI/6/2013/KM by the European Ombudsman concerning the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission (5(c)).

For consistency reasons, the confirmatory applications under item 3. were discussed in a different order than listed in the agenda.

2. Communication / information policy

a. Information activities in view of the 4th EU-Africa Summit (Brussels, 2-3 April 2014)

The Deputy Spokesperson to the President of the European Council introduced the item by explaining the context of the Summit, which will be organised in Brussels for the first time (previously hosted in Cairo (2000), Lisbon (2007) and Tripoli (2010)). Given the level of participation (until present, 37 African and 13 EU Heads of State have confirmed their attendance), the event will require a huge endeavor from the organisers. The Summit will start in the afternoon of Wednesday 2 April with thematic discussions followed by a gala dinner. Work will be resumed the following day in the morning and be concluded by a joint EU-Africa press conference before lunch.

The objectives of the press and communication activities are three-fold:

- i. to increase public awareness of the EU-Africa partnership;
- ii. to highlight the deliverables and outcomes of the summit;
- iii. to create expectations for future cooperation with Africa.

A number of challenges will have to be taken up: the high-level participation will attract a lot of media; the range of deliverables will be rather limited, but likely with focus on a final joint declaration outlining the state of play and the way ahead; a considerable number of side events have been or are being organised in the framework of the Summit.

Key-messages will reflect the main themes of the Summit: "People, Prosperity and Peace. The Council will make introductory videos for each of the three themes which will be shown at the beginning of the debates.

Finally, the Deputy Spokesperson to the President of the European Council gave an overview of the main communication channels and instruments dedicated to the event:

- the main source of information, which is the dedicated web portal within the European Council's website: <http://www.european-council.europa.eu/eu-africa-summit-2014>;
- the mobilisation of the EU delegations in the African countries as well as in the EU Member States, who will be playing an important role to tailor messages to the local audiences;
- the preparatory travel to Africa by the EUCO and Commission President;
- a tool kit on the summit prepared for delegates, journalists and liaison officers;
- a twitter hash tag #EUAfrica";
- a Storify-story;
- a final joint press conference and national press briefings.

The representative of the European Commission (DG DEVCO) shared some additional information with regard to a number of "side events" which are being organised in the run-up to the Summit. He referred in particular to:

- the 5th EU-Africa Business Forum foreseen in Brussels from March 31st to April 1st, which will bring together about 500 participants including private sector representatives, business people from across Europe and Africa and government officials from both continents. This meeting will offer the private sector a high level platform to engage in a constructive dialogue with political leaders from the EU and Africa;
- the 3rd Africa-Europe Youth Summit, organised by a steering committee composed of five youth organisations from both continents, which will take place as well in Brussels in the same days (31 March-1 April), bringing together around 70 youth representatives aiming to develop a common youth vision and to identify specific youth initiatives likely to be implemented in the coming years;

- other events which are being prepared such as round-table discussions which would take place right after the Summit to tackle specific priority themes with the participation of high-level personalities. As an example, the European Commission representative mentioned the "Roundtable: Visionary Africa", being organised on 3 April together with BOZAR and UN Habitat, focusing on urban planning and on an urban African agenda (with possible President Barroso's concluding intervention).

Information on related events can be downloaded through several hyperlinks from the above-mentioned web portal.

In reply to questions raised by the NL and ES delegations, the General Secretariat of the Council provided information on some logistical aspects with regard to meeting rooms which will host national press briefings of the EU Member States and the African countries, as well as bilateral meetings.

The Chair concluded by:

- reiterating that the main source of information is the dedicated web portal;
- recommending delegations to stay in contact with the Council's Press Service in order to get up-to-date information and brief journalists accordingly.

3. Transparency / Access to documents

a) **Confirmatory application No 04/c/01/14** **Docs. 6099/14** **6100/14**

The General Secretariat of the Council (the "General Secretariat") outlined the subject matter of the application and explained the approach proposed in the draft reply (doc. 6100/14), which consisted in confirming the decision taken at the first stage, i.e. to grant partial access, while refusing access to paragraphs 3 - 7 of the requested document pursuant to Article 4(3), first sub-paragraph, (protection of the institution's decision-making process) of Regulation No 1049/2001

The Working Party agreed to the draft reply which, according to schedule, should be submitted to COREPER II on 12 March 2014 and subsequently to the Council (TTE) on 14 March 2014 for adoption.

b) Confirmatory application No 8/c/01/14
Docs. 6511/14
6512/14

The General Secretariat summarised the background for the application and explained the approach proposed in the draft reply (doc. 6512/14), i.e. full public access may be granted to point 1 of the requested document.

Delegations agreed to the draft reply which is planned to be submitted to COREPER II on 12 March 2014 and subsequently to the Council (TTE) on 14 March 2014 for adoption.

c) Confirmatory application No 7/c/01/14
– **Information by the General Secretariat**
Doc. 6491/14

The General Secretariat informed delegations about a confirmatory request received on 12 February 2014. The applicant had requested access to *"reports/minutes adopted following the last trilogue meetings (5, 26 November and 10 December) and technical meetings (11 and 15 November) that have taken place with regard to the review of Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. These documents include the preparatory documents for the meetings as well as the documents received by the Council in relation to the matter discussed"*.

The General Secretariat informed delegations that a draft reply, would be circulated via written consultation.

The draft reply is planned to be submitted to COREPER I on 19 March 2014 and subsequently to the Council (Agri/Fisheries) on 24 - 25 March 2014 for adoption.

d) Confirmatory application No 05/c/01/14
Docs. 6234/14
6235/14

The General Secretariat presented the application and explained the approach proposed in the draft reply (doc. 6235/14), i.e. to confirm the full refusal given at the first stage. It is considered that disclosure of the document requested would jeopardise the protection of the public interest with regard to public security pursuant to Article 4(1)(a), first indent, (protection of the public interest with regard to public security) of Regulation No 1049/2001.

Delegations agreed to the draft reply which is planned to be submitted to COREPER II on 12 March 2014 and subsequently to the Council (TTE) on 14 March 2014 for adoption.

e) Confirmatory application No 06/c/01/14
Docs. 6478/14
6488/14

The General Secretariat presented the application and explained the approach proposed in the draft reply (doc. 6488/14), i.e. to confirm that full access to the requested document had to be refused pursuant to the second subparagraph of Article 4(3) of Regulation No 1049/2001, but that extended partial access to the document could be granted.

Delegations agreed to the draft reply which is planned to be submitted to COREPER II on 12 March 2014 and subsequently to the Council (TTE) on 14 March 2014 for adoption.

4. Annual report 2013 on access to documents

- **Presentation of the draft annual report by the General Secretariat**
Doc. 6972/14

The General Secretariat outlined the main aspects of the report:

- The draft annual report 2013 is divided into three main chapters. The first two describe the principal aspects of legislative transparency and the key developments in the Council's implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, whereas the third chapter reviews complaints submitted to the European Ombudsman as well as the rulings handed down by the EU Courts in cases concerning access to Council documents.
- On the basis of an analysis of the requests for public access, the report sets out a break down of the requests by policy area and of the occupational background and geographical spread of the applicants.
- The report also presents new types of requests for public access to documents and analyses the application by the GSC and the Council of the exceptions to the right of public access during 2013.
- Following its examination by the WPI, the report could be listed on the agenda of COREPER II on 7 May in view of its adoption by the Council (General Affairs) on 13 May 2013.

With regard to the occupational background of the applicants (initial requests) as set out in the draft report, the DE delegation wondered whether *inter alia* consultancies were included in the broader category of civil society representatives. The General Secretariat confirmed that it was the case.

5. Any Other Business

a) **Seminar on "Public communication: regaining citizens' confidence in times of crisis", Athens, 27-28 March 2014**

The Greek Presidency informed delegations about this event, organised jointly by the Greek Secretary-General of Information and Communication and the Club of Venice.

The seminar will focus on two issues:

- i. the communication on European recovery and its impact on the European elections debate;
- ii. the communication on youth employment: safeguarding social cohesion and political stability.

Invitations have been sent to spokespersons and communication directors from EU Member States and EU Institutions and Committees, as well as to the OECD, CEPS, the Adenauer Foundation and other external organisations and individual experts.

Participants will exchange views relating to their valuable communication experiences and orientations in these times of crisis. The aim is to send a strong message reminding all the European citizens of the European values of democracy, solidarity and prosperity.

WPI members are cordially invited to this event. The draft programme will be circulated through the Infonet.

b) **Outcome of the proceedings of the 2478th meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee held on 11 December 2013**

- **Item 106. Public Access to documents**
Doc. 7356/14

The Chair briefly referred to the outcome of proceedings as set out in document 7356/14 concerning item 106 of the abovementioned meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee.

c) **Own-initiative enquiry OI/6/2013/KM by the European Ombudsman concerning the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission**

– **Information by the General Secretariat**
Docs. 5219/14
5220/14

The General Secretariat informed Delegations about an own-initiative inquiry (OI/6/2013/KM), which had been opened by the European Ombudsman in December 2013, concerning the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.

The purpose of this inquiry is to assess to which extent, the three institutions may encounter difficulties in processing initial and confirmatory applications within the time-limits foreseen in Article 7 and 8 of Regulation 1049/2001.

In addition, the inquiry aims at assessing the time needed for the institutions to process complex or voluminous requests under the provisions set out in Article 6 of the Regulation, i.e. the so-called Article 6 (3) or "fair solution" requests.

As a first step in the present inquiry, the Ombudsman has asked the institutions to provide her with statistical data concerning the time limits for the handling of the three different types of requests during the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. The draft reply to the European Ombudsman, containing the requested statistical data relating to the Council is set out in document 5220/14.
