



Brussels, 7 February 2020
(OR. en)

5909/20

API 16
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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 31 January 2020
To: Delegations
Subject: Working Party on Information

1. Adoption of the agenda

The WPI adopted the agenda as set out in document CM 1235/2/20 REV 2, with a new AOB item (IPCR activation - Coronavirus).

The UK delegation did not attend the meeting.

2. Transparency items

a) The Croatian Presidency's priorities

The Presidency outlined its political priorities for the semester and highlighted its attachment to "a Europe closer to its citizens" and to transparency of the EU institutions as one of the crucial components in strengthening the democratic legitimacy.

Concerning legislative transparency, the Presidency announced its intention to pursue the new practices introduced by its Finnish predecessor to proactively make public the documents on trilogues, while for progress reports the document should be public after their endorsement by Coreper. Building on the experience of this period and the information collected the Council will be on a better position to assess its practice.

The Presidency also confirmed its commitment to the transparency of its meetings with interest groups (in line with the approach agreed by the Trio of RO/FI/HR presidencies) and informed the WPI that a relevant page of its website is being adapted to this purpose and should be operational within a short timeframe.

Delegations welcomed the Presidency's approach, since it will enable them to evaluate the pilot exercise in a semester where the institutions are fully resuming their legislative activity.

One delegations expressed the wish to continue to follow the WPI meetings by connecting in video-conference. The rotating Presidency explained that they are not going to continue the video-conference exercise during its Presidency. The Chair informed the WPI that the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) is reflecting on the results of the test carried out in autumn 2019 and that the policy in this regard is under constant review, the transition towards a fully digital workflow being a gradual process.

b) Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001

The Commission representative:

- confirmed that, as indicated in its 2020 Work Programme circulated on 29 January 2020¹, the Commission will withdraw its two proposals for a recast of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 submitted in 2008 and 2011, since their content has become obsolete and outdated. However, it drew the WPI's attention to the need for modernising/supplementing the existing Regulation;
- underlined that President Von der Leyen has entrusted Vice President Jourová with the specific portfolio on Transparency as she fully supports an open and cooperative approach in this field;
- confirmed President Von der Leyen's intentions to reinforce inter-institutional cooperation, seeking agreement on policy design as well as on key instruments such as the Transparency Register, a joint legislative portal and the IIA on Better Law Making;
- indicated the Commission's full support to the Council Presidencies' efforts to increase transparency of trilogues.

Several delegations expressed themselves in favour of a limited technical revision ("Lisbonisation") of the current Regulation.

The Chair thanked the Commission representative and delegations for the fruitful exchange of views and indicated that the WPI stands ready to discuss further developments on this topic.

¹ COM(2020) 37 final (focus on Annex IV - Withdrawals)
https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-commission-work-programme-key-documents_en

c) **European Ombudsman**

Complaint 1069/2019/MIG - Ombudsman's Recommendation (sponsorship of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union)

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The Chair recalled the history and context of the draft Recommendation of the Ombudsman.

Many delegations supported the possibility to issue guidance on sponsorship, in line with the note submitted to the Working Party. Some delegations stressed that such guidance should be general and of a non-binding nature and that any decision in this regard should belong to each Presidency, based on a case-by-case assessment.

The Croatian Presidency announced that it had awarded a limited number of sponsorship contracts with local business and that it will shortly publish these contracts on its website.

Likewise, the forthcoming German Presidency informed the WPI that it had concluded some smaller local business sponsorship contracts aiming to promote regional interests, supporting informal regional events to be organized under the auspices of the Presidency foreseen in the second half of 2020.

The Chair concluded by informing delegations that the GSC will prepare a draft reply to the Ombudsman, to be submitted for consultation to WPI and thereafter for the Coreper and Council approval. Subsequently, it will draw up a draft of the envisaged guidelines on Presidency sponsorship.

3. Communication / Information policy

a) Presidency's priorities and communication activities

- *Presentation by the Presidency*

The Presidency briefed the Working Party on its priorities and communication activities.

b) New Commission Spokesperson's service

- *Presentation by the Commission*

Dana Spinant, Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission presented the new Commission Spokesperson's service.

c) Communication strategy on Civil Protection

- *Presentation by the Commission*

Petra Pereyra, Acting Head of Unit for Communication in DG ECHO, presented the Commission's ongoing work on the communication strategy on Civil Protection.

d) EU institutions' Open Day 2020

- *Information from the General Secretariat of the Council*

Pedro Alvito, Outreach Unit, informed the Working Party about the preparations of the EU institutions' Open Day taking place this year on 9 May and how Member States can take part. Member States will receive shortly an invitation to participate as exhibitors and propose additional activities to present their countries.

4. AOB

Novel Coronavirus

- *Information from the General Secretariat of the Council*

In the light of the current situation regarding the novel Coronavirus and the activation of the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) arrangements in information sharing mode as well as of the EU civil protection mechanism, Jan Alhadeff, Head of the Civil Protection Unit in the GSC, informed the Working Party about IPCR's Crisis Communicator's Network activities so far.