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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 16 December 2019
To: Delegations
Subject: Working Party on Information

1. Adoption of the agenda

The WPI adopted the agenda as set out in document CM 5125/1/19 REV 1, without any additional items.

Two delegations (EE and SE) were also connected in videoconference.

One delegation (UK) did not attend the meeting.

2. Transparency items

- a) **Practices in Legislative Transparency during the Finland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union - report on the implementation of the pilot project**
- b) **Reflections on the outcome of the seminar on "The Future of EU Transparency" (Brussels, 24 September 2019)**

The Presidency presented an exhaustive overview of the implementation of its pilot project (14856/19, being submitted to Coreper) as well as the results of its initiatives which included increased public discussions of Council meetings, open and clear communication, transparency in lobbying of political decision makers and improved legislative transparency.

The Presidency also briefly reported on the transparency seminar held on 24 September 2019, organised with the University of Helsinki and hosted in the Council's premises (12876/19), that raised a great interest bringing all kind of stakeholders' profiles together (institutions, member states and civil society).

Most of the delegations that took the floor (DE, DK, FR, HR, NL, PL, SE and SI) pointed to the short timeframe for implementation as well as to the limited legislative activity during this semester. They stressed the need for longer-term statistics and expressed themselves in favour of a continuation of the Presidency's pilot project, if need be, with certain adjustments.

Two delegations (FR and PL) underlined that the disclosure of progress reports should only take place after Coreper's endorsement.

The Chair concluded that continuation of the pilot project (or continuation in an adjusted version) was now in the hands of the future Presidencies.

c) Document status of digital communication (SMS, What's app, Messenger etc.)

After a short introduction by the Chair, the Council Legal Service (CLS) representative explained in detail the suggested approach (the same adopted in confirmatory application 09/c/01/19 - doc. 8/1/19 REV 1) for the forthcoming reply in a new similar case (confirmatory application 39/c/01/19 - doc. 14580/19).

In the absence of delegations' objections, the Chair concluded that the proposed approach was approved and that services would finalise the reply for the latter confirmatory which would subsequently require adoption by written procedure.

d) and e) - European Ombudsman files:

- **Complaint 640/2019/TE - European Ombudsman's Recommendation (transparency of the Council's decision-making process - annual adoption of the Council Regulation fixing TACs of fish species)**
- **Strategic inquiry concerning the transparency of the bodies involved in preparing Eurogroup meetings (OI/1/2019/MIG) and Strategic initiative on the transparency of the Eurogroup Working Group (SI/2/2019/MIG)**

The CLS representative :

- outlined work in progress concerning complaint 640/2019/TE (preparation of the Council's opinion on the Ombudsman's recommendation, deadline January 27th 2020 - WPI delegations will be consulted beforehand);
- reported on the positive outcome of the Ombudsman's Strategic inquiry (in the light of the Eurogroup updated transparency policy) and initiative (commended Council's handling of the requests for public access to Eurogroup-related activities).

f) Openness and Transparency at the European Council and the Council of the European Union: new digital publication

The General Secretariat presented its new digital product on Openness and Transparency, which is being translated in all the EU languages and will be disseminated through the Council website as well as in schools and visitors' groups and through multipliers.

This new publication aims at providing more visibility of the work of the European Council and the Council of the EU (including hyperlinks to a variety of digital information sources) through a non-bureaucratic approach and to show their close ties with Member States and the Presidency.

3. Communication / Information policy

**'Countering Disinformation - A joint exercise for EU Communicators'
(26 - 27 November 2019)**

The Presidency briefed delegations about the event entitled 'Countering disinformation - A joint exercise for EU communicators' that took place on 26- 27 November. A follow-up exercise could be considered in the future, building on the experiences and best practices of Member States.

4. AOB

Council working methods (possible update of the list of Council preparatory bodies)

The Chair reported on the discussion within Antici on 3 December 2019 concerning the suggestion from some delegations to suppress the WPI and to transfer its responsibilities to other preparatory bodies. The Chair indicated that a majority of delegations asked for more time to pursue their reflection on the proposals of suppressions/mergers/creation of Council preparatory bodies.
