"Legislation is communication"
Joint seminar of Directorates General: DG IPOL, DG EXPO, DG COMM

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It is very important that we are having here representatives from different Directorates-General working together on communication issues.

This relates to an observation I am making quite regularly and which is determining my own vision of management. Our professional life is happening in the 10 different Directorates General (DGs) we belong to, and in the Legal Service. And because this is determining so much our daily life sometimes we tend to confuse our organisational structure with the world as such. As our whole professional life happens in DGs, we may believe that they are the world or mirror its reality. But, in fact, this is just an organisational structure.
It is, of course, a logical one where the divisions are drawn or not drawn by accident. Division between the DGs have been drawn for a precise purpose. Nevertheless our work has to extend beyond the boundaries of our DGs on a very regular basis. The issues which we face clearly transcend the boundaries of the individual DGs. Because of this, we have tried to introduce in the last years some instruments and tools which, on the one hand, do respect the organisational hierarchy of the DGs, and, on the other hand, allow for more horizontal communication.

What we are doing today, with this seminar, is in fact putting this principle into practice. You are escaping today the narrow boundaries of your DGs. And you are giving a chance to a horizontal cooperation.

On the institutional level in the Parliament, we have installed several tools. 

*Inter-DGs Steering Groups* are an example. We have, for instance, an *Inter-DGs Steering Group* on resource issues, where the representatives of most of the DGs are coming regularly to meet together and to jointly develop policy contributions.

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We have established *Resource Directorates*. This means that in every DG, where the size allows it, we have a Resource Directorate. This allows for a better functional specialisation in every DG. And, on the other hand, it allows for cooperation across DGs in the areas of personnel, finance and technologies.

At the level of General Directors and Directors we do have the *Resource Management Team* and we have the *Policy Management Team*. 
We have reorganised in the last years several services. The bases for this reorganisation were the structures existing in DG IPOL and DG EXPO with five content areas: directorates A, B, C, D and, of course, the foreign affairs sector. We now have the same structures, or at least very similar structures in the Lawyer Linguists service, which allow them to interact more easily with the Committees. We now have similar structures in the Legal Service, which allow them to interact more easily with the Committees as well. We have comparable structures in the Press, with the same aim. We have similar structures in the Library, which allow it to work more easily with the Policy Departments. In that way, as we have introduced the same structures, we have paved the way for easier horizontal cooperation.

This does not mean that we are against the hierarchy. We - the Directors General and the Secretary General - we all like hierarchy very much because we have very nice positions within it. Nevertheless we also see the limits of the hierarchies. Because we see the limits of hierarchies we don't see it as a threat but rather as a surplus if we can facilitate the horizontal cooperation between DGs.

In fact, our issue today is 'legislation is communication'.

Of course, this is shortening the issue a bit. But it is what could be called 'useful provocation' because when we say 'legislation is communication' at least we are saying very clearly 'legislation is not only legislation'. When we are legislating we have to think from the very first moment communication with it.

We cannot have a division of labour in which we deal with legislation in the committees or the Plenary and then we have a specialised DG which is doing the communication. Because if you do not reflect on communication when you do legislation, communication will be a very difficult job to be done.

It is also true that the legitimacy for communication always has to come from the Members. We are a Parliament. A Parliament consists of Members directly elected. Our legitimacy does not stem from the fact not that we have an employment contract with this institution but it stems from the fact that 754 Members directly elected by 500 million citizens trust us to do the job.
If we communicate, when we communicate, the legitimacy for this communication has always to be derived from Members.

It is easy to say 'communicate' but, in fact, it is not so clear what we mean when we say 'communication'. We can easily say that we have a DG with hundreds of staff, close to a thousand altogether, and everybody there is communicating. But, in fact, under the same heading, in the 3 areas of DG COMM, you are doing very different things.

In the visitors' directorate, we now have a situation where we have now a world class infrastructure. That is surely the case of the Parlamentarium. I know no other Parliament in the world which has such a facility at hand. I know that some people are saying: 'Yes, but the US Congress has a huge visitors centre'. It is true, but have you found any content over there? I haven't found any content over there. What is this visitor's centre? Basically it is a reaction to 9/11 and the threat of terrorism. They have created huge meeting facilities underground, so that in case of a terrorist attack or another necessity they could very quickly have all the activities over there. But it is not at all something similar to what we are having. We have signed 3 weeks ago the contract for the construction of the House of European History for 26 millions Euros, which will complement what is already on offer. We have 80.000 visitors - official visitors - every year, so logically, over 5 years, in a legislature, that should be over 400000. So there is no doubt: we have a world class infrastructure. But, still, there is a number of questions as far as visitors are concerned.

One question I am having is as follows: 'What is the follow up we are organising for those visitors?' We are investing in 400.000 visitors to come to us over legislature, and then they are going home, and then what happens? These visitors should be our ambassadors in every city, in every village in Europe. These should be the people which we can use when it comes to an election campaign, at least those who are interested, open, and friendly to our message and who could be helping us to get the message distributed on the ground.

Another question which I am having is: 'Do we have unified messaging? Do we tell a specific story that is agreed to all our visitors? And what is that story?'
We are putting external offices equally under the heading of communication. But what do we mean when we say communication in external offices? What is the competitive advantage that we are having with our external offices?

Our external offices are placed in the capitals of Member States. So, very often you will hear from Members that they - as individual Members - see very little advantage for their own work in having external offices.

What is the competitive advantage of having external offices in capitals? The competitive advantage we are having is that we are in capitals very close to the major stakeholders in the political process at national level and very close to national parliaments. This is a competitive advantage. But we have to use it much better. Why?

- Because we are coming to a situation which has also been outlined in our study 'European Parliament 2025', where we see a fully developed system of governance. We have important decisions on the national level. But the national level has given decisions to the regional level and to the European level and, partly, we now have even decision-making on the global level. External offices have to become a tool to link these different levels of decision-making.

And again, also for the external offices: 'What is our unified message we try to transmit over external offices?'

The third area is the media area. As I said in the beginning, the legitimacy of our message in the Parliament stems from the Members. The legitimacy does not come from the fact that we have a contract with this institution. Whatever we communicate we have to bind it back to decisions and statements of Members of the Parliament, wherever they assemble.

On the internet: I have the strong conviction that we have to develop very quickly from a paradigm that could be called 'search' to another paradigm that I would like to call 'find'. In all major reference websites nowadays we have a search function. But you search after you have first found something. When we think about Youtube, you go on Youtube and you first find something that may interest you. And then you can search for other things. When you go on Google News, you find and then you can search for other things. You are immediately offered
content. We are now developing in this direction with the News Hub and with our new application on Think Tanks where first we will find something and where we will show the richness of our institution in terms of content and where we also of course offer a possibility to search. We have to encourage people to go to our website. In order to achieve that result, we shouldn't have a system where we ask them to go 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 clicks down the road before they find the content.

The third important trend is the present integration of medias. Journalists nowadays are working for newspapers but at the same time they are running their blogs and at the same time they are active in social media. The basic qualification they are having is not anymore linked to the print media but to the content that they are able to produce and disseminate in the media world. How are we reacting to this? How are we using the synergies between our different means of communication?

One of the ideas which we try to realize is a special Newsroom for the media.

The last thing I would like to say - and I think it is relevant in our discussion - is that the business model of the European Union is in full change. Why citizens cared so relatively little about the European Union up to now? The have cared so little about the European Union up to now because the effect of our activities at EU level was felt only two or three years down the road, once legislation was implemented, and even that implemented legislation was primarily perceived as resulting from decisions taken at a national level. To say it in one word: we had a low level of invasiveness into the daily life of citizens. This is about to change completely.

It has already changed with the Lisbon Treaty because we are now having the last word on all international agreements that fall in our remit. So, on decisions like SWIFT, passenger name record or ACTA everybody around the European knows that this is the European Parliament who takes those decisions.

This evolution is taking now another dimension. The European Union is not only intervening on elements of legislation, which might, at the periphery, change people's lives two or three years down the road. Now through the European Union action, we go into the heart of the economic and social living
conditions of people. You don't need to explain this to people in Greece. You don't need to explain this to people in Portugal. You don't need to explain this to people in Ireland and maybe in other countries as well. You don't need to explain this to this people.

Very quickly we will be in a situation where everybody in the European Union knows that the decisions taken at the European level have a direct effect on their personal economic and social living conditions. That is fundamentally changing our world. There will be a lot of attention. People will be concerned. People will finally understand that the key political decisions nowadays are taken on the European Union level.

Therefore I believe your seminar where you bring together leading experts is very timely and I wish you good luck. Thank you!