

COURTS AND COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE
INTERNAL COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP
Hungarian Academy of Justice, Budapest
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MINUTES

Workshop leader:

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The aim of the workshop was to find out how the participating countries think about communication within their organization. Three different techniques were used during the sessions that helped to understand each other in an interactive way. By these methods every representative of the different countries had the chance to present their thoughts about the topics and to describe how things work within the judicial system of their countries. Participants were active in every game and shared a lot of different points of view on the discussed topics.

Methods used

Tetris challenge

The first technique applied in the sessions was Tetris Challenge. It is a social media-related challenge that have spread on the Internet a few weeks ago. The aim of the challenge is to show how many things are needed for different professions in order to perform their tasks. In the pictures spreading all over the internet, people who work in different positions show their stuff, their equipment that they need in their work in an organized form, just like in the tetris game. Usually only the Hungarian colleagues have heard about the challenge, participants from other countries did not know about it yet.

The workshop leader separated the participants; every groups of 3-4 people had to visualise the equipment, the objects that they use in their everyday work, just like in the tetris challenge. Participants received a flipchart sheet and had to draw or write down what they need in their everyday job, in a tetris-like way.

After 5 minutes of drawing, every group had to present their work and explain what they drew on their flipchart sheet.

The results in the different workshop groups were the following:

Group 1

- 1) Speaker from Armenia: telephone, mobile phone, papers, pencils, stickers, recycle bin, stapler, coffee, newspapers, (law)books, files.
- 2) Speaker from Macedonia: desk, computer, chair, phone, library, recycle bin, calendar, cases, files, copy machines, and of course a judge, hammer/gavel, table lamps, some people also need glasses.
- 3) Speaker from Turkey: courtroom, showing the place of every participants of a lawsuit. Gown. In Turkey the office of judges is right next to the courtroom that they use in order to reach it easily.

Group 2

- 1) Speaker from Hungary: cup of coffee, gown, wig, computer, panel of cases, volumes of legal commentaries, chair and table, pen, dictaphone, telephone, smartphone, dictionary, camera
- 2) Speaker from Armenia: commentaries, flag of their countries and the EU, microphone, gavel, car, desk, suitcase, constitution, criminal code, gown
- 3) Speaker from Hungary: gavel, sculpture of Lady Justice, gown, coat-of-arms, clock, case file, microphone, computer, codes and books of substantial and procedural law

Group 3

- 1) Speaker from Macedonia: desk, computer, keyboard, pen, files, books, chair, printer, monitor
- 2) Speaker from Czech Republic: computer, mobile phone, printer, chain, chair, table, calendar, paragraph sign, telephone, bag, constitution.
- 3) Speaker from Armenia: rule of law, computer, scale, dove of peace, flags, gavel; every drawing represented a value of the judiciary.

The method served like an icebreaker in every group; participants actively explained all the tools and the meaning of them in their countries.

World café technique

The workshop leader asked to form small groups of 3-4 people again. Every group received one or two separate topics. Every group had an administrator who had the task to write down every thought the group mentioned in connection with the topic(s) given. In the different rounds of the game the administrators always remained the same and stayed in their sets, while the other members of the groups changed their seats in every round and discussed the other topics as well with the other administrators. At the end the administrators had to summarize the thoughts of the 3 different groups.

Group 1

1) Topic: stories

What stories are told in the different countries in the judiciary, or in other words, what are the hot topics nowadays among the members of the judiciary? What do they pass on to the next generations about the organization?

The group mentioned the following topics:

- Court cases, parties to a case

- Pressure on the judiciary
- Reform in the justice system
- Separation of powers
- Hungarian participant mentioned the topic of the future of the chief justice (Curia) in Hungary is a hot topic nowadays
- International developments
- Gossips

2) Topic: conflicts

How the judges of different countries solve them, how their organization deals with conflicts.

The group mentioned the following aspects:

- The solution is to talk together and communicate; direct, face-to-face communication
- Respect each other
- Independence of judges
- In Hungary members of the judiciary deal with conflicts calmly, while in other countries not

The workshop leader mentioned at this point that it seems that the participants mainly deal with problems calmly and that everybody is very polite with each other in their organization.

3) Topic: “My organization is like...”

Participants had to describe the organization where they work by a metaphore. How do they describe their workplace, their job?

The following metaphores were mentioned:

- Perpetuum mobile; new tasks are constantly arising.
- The Queen of the UK; a participant mentioned that his organization is fair and respectful, just like the Queen.
- Sporty; the Hungarian participant mentioned that in his workplace everybody does sport.
- Home; Armenian participant said that she likes her workplace just like her home.
- Conservative; mentioned by the Croatian and the Hungarian participant, regarding the Supreme Court.

Conclusion: working in the judiciary is very hard, and it needs big responsibility.

Group 2

1) Topic: “My organization is like...”

The following metaphores were mentioned in this group:

- Home
- Being with friends
- A finely working office
- A luxury prison
- Being at the battlefield
- Warm and convenient place where I can do my job

2) Topic: tools of communication

Participants separated the different tools for internal and for external communication such as:

Internal:

- Rumours
- Emails, intranet
- Secret Facebook groups
- Telephone

External

- Guided tours
- Open day programmes; simulation of famous stories in the framework of litigation, mock trials
- Live broadcasts

3) Topic: styles of formal and informal communication

The group mentioned the following aspects:

- Personal data must be saved separately
- Private information about our colleagues are part of their private life
- According to them 3 styles exist that are used in different situations: in an open hearing, the style is professional; among only judges it is quite informal; and with the press it is mixed, because it must be professional, but at the same time understandable.

4) Topic: stories

Interesting aspects were mentioned:

- The Georgian participant mentioned ghosts in the court building, that can be maybe ghosts of ancient judges
- Participant from Latvia mentioned the sculpture in the basement as a story, which is a rumour in her city that Lenin's body is somewhere in the basement of the court.
- Stories about good times spent with the colleagues, that deepens cohesion in the organization
- Stories that carry important lessons to learn; how to manage crisis situations, tips and tricks
- Stories about older colleagues, how they started their career
- Stories about people who left the judicial profession

5) Topic: rules of communication

- Rules of communication are laid down in codes in Albania and Armenia
- In many countries members of the organization can communicate directly with the leaders as well
- The most important thing according to the group is that communication must be honest and clear

6) Topic: conflicts

- In many countries it is not yet formalized
- If it is a formal complaint, a file would be opened and the conflict can be solved in a formal way
- An informal conflict can be solved in an informal way

Group 3

1) Topic: “My organization is (like)...”

- Not boring
- Not funny
- Not like at home
- Nice building and environment
- Friendly atmosphere
- Second home
- A place that brings a lot of stress
- Prison
- Kindergarten
- A lighthouse
- Full of secrets
- Place where serious job is done

2) Topic: communication tools

Internal:

- Social media
- E-mails
- Face-to-face meetings with panels of judges
- Newsletters
- Phones
- All the time meetings (non-preferred)
- Statistical data (non-preferred)

External

- Tv interviews
- Different events at courts
- Social media (non-preferred)
- Publishing decisions on websites (non-preferred)

3) Topic: conflicts

- Between the workers and the organization
- Between judges (even within the same panel)
- Between the administrative staff
- Conflicts about the distribution of cases among judges; some judges may have much more cases than others and this can also generate conflicts
- Conflicts regarding different opinions about the political system

A discussion arises regarding how strict do judges must behave in their private life. Most of the participants think that there can always be closed rooms, where judges can behave just like they wish to behave.

4) Topic: rules of the communication

- Check out everything twice a day
- Be constantly available
- Dresscode
- Do not grow a beard
- Private e-mail blocked
- Change passport
- Do not use social media in your workplace
- Clarity
- Be careful with body-language
- Be respectful to people
- No political membership

5) Topic: stories

- Workplace gossips
- Funny trials
- Warning about colleagues
- Interesting cases

Question: what the participants would do if they got the task to create a video-blog about their judicial system.

Participant from Armenia mentioned that for example the European Court of Justice also has many videos that explain how they work, how the Court brings a decision.

There was also a discussion about recruitment of young people to work in the judicial system and to become a judge one day.

With **Group 1**, there was enough time to try one more group workshop technique. In this, three groups were formed again, and the groups received different topics again to discuss.

Forming three groups again, with new topics to discuss and presented by one member of the group.

The three topics were the following:

- Communication tools in the organization; what new technologies are used nowadays?
Are they useful or not?
Summary; according to the group, the face-to-face communication is still the most useful tool.
- Styles of communication; how honestly, directly can you communicate in your workplace?
Summary; direct communication, proper language is very important because legal language can be very difficult to understand. Judges also have some ethical restrictions when they communicate with others. In most of the participating countries it is not allowed to talk about pending cases. The problem of judges having a Facebook page was mentioned, but there was no time to discuss it in its depth.
- Regulation of the communication of different news; how does your organization communicate with the press?

The Croatian participant mentions that in his country it is not obligatory to have spokesperson in every court and that judges are not allowed to talk about their pending cases.