

## Summary of the workshops

### Enhancing the PR of the courts, means and trends of communication Judit Bayer, PhD.

In this thread, all three groups were very different, the focuses and the attitudes were very diverse. The participants have shared their experiences about the using of new digital technologies (e. g. using of social media, sending e-mail to maintain a continuous relationship with clients) in the maintenance or enhancing of courts image.

In the first group a criminal case was mentioned by the German participant. The substance was that a compromising photo was posted about a German judge on the Facebook by one of his friends. It resulted in a legal process against the judge. The specific element was that the post wasn't made by the judge himself. Therefore, not having a Facebook account does not protect against such a problem, perhaps it even helps, because then the user can check the posts and the tags of other user.

The attendant from Netherlands told about the great benefits of using social media. Netherlands example is unique. It can make interactive and direct contact with the society. People could share their opinion in comments, but the court never do this. The court just try to explain the decisions, and never react to the comments, and never delete them. It is worth of consideration which attitude is better: not to react to aggressive and angry comments. They don't have special trainings about how to react to comments, but developing the image is a conscious activity.

Another interesting statement was that the old-fashioned communication technologies still work: e. g. writing on the board outside the court. In Netherlands the curiosity is that the fax is required, but they don't use it.

The participant from Azerbaijan has mentioned their electronic court system, and in connection with it he talked about the SMS communication between the court and the clients. This is very safe and fast, but the vast majority of the participants agreed that the privacy principles require that it happens only with approval of the person, the phone number should be collected directly from the person. While it was mentioned that courts in Azerbaijan are entitled to get the phone number, but in our opinion it should happen only in well justified, exceptional cases.

In the second group there were some other interesting examples. One of our topics was about, which values would like the courts communicate? In Slovenia a social survey was carried out. They cooperated with an University, and examined what are the expectations of the citizens, clients, of court employees, lawyers. Referring to the survey the citizens' expectations were different from the court employees' expectations. They try to make a balance, but it will be a slow process. It would be very interesting to share the results and conclusions of this survey, or at least the methodology.

The members of the group agreed that court PR is necessary. We can use „push-type programmes”, and push the informations to the society e.g. with trainings, making Youtube-videos, special education programmes. But it is important in our days that the courts don't need the media, it has the chance to communicate directly to the society without the media.

We dealt with an Albanian case of crisis communication also: a judge was charged with bribery, for accepting money in relation to a case, then he disappeared. The Court chose the attitude not to communicate, just declare that they do not comment until the case is decided. In this situation we have to define what is the message and what would like we communicate? Whether the image of

the court can be improved in any way if such cases happen and published by the press? We agreed that crisis communication can also be part of the direct relations with the public.

In Poland a law prohibits the press to comment on court cases until the first instance decision, but it is generally not complied with. It would mean that the press couldn't report about depending cases. In many countries, including Hungary, judges are not allowed to comment on cases, but in some other countries they can freely comment.

At last but not least there was another conclusion: communication shall be done by professionals, but not a separate company.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> group at first we collected many values which we would like communicate about the courts. E.g. independence, trust, integrity, transparency, dignity and others. The courts can reach directly the whole population thanks to the new digital technologies and tools. Facebook and Twitter are used by many courts but both are mainly used as a one-way technology, push-type communication, because courts prefer not engage in commenting. The EU Court of Justice doesn't have Facebook account, they use Twitter, because Twitter is more secure. Facebook is easy to hack. But for example the Dutch courts use Facebook, so there are some countries which use it.

After that we talked about the training of the judges and the journalists. The question was, whether it is a good idea to have a training for judges and journalists together? It would be necessary for journalists certainly, to learn about the special perspectives of the court. Judges may benefit of getting to understand the problems and difficulties that journalists face when interpreting court decisions and legal vocabulary. Some programmes were mentioned by the members of the group to come into contact with the targeted groups. E.g.:

- Morning session,
- 1 day training at the EU Court of Justice for journalist,
- Highschool, lower school, even kindergarten is targeted group in Slovenia.

To sum up conclusions of the workshop, it can be deduced that courts find it important to maintain close relationship with society, through careful design of their messages and the level of communication, which should be done by professional, dedicated persons. New technologies complete, but do not substitute traditional communication methods in this process.