

MINUTES

3rd Annual European Conference on Courts and Communication

workshop #1-3 held on the 16th October 2015

Workshop #1 (from 09.40 to 10.25)

Topic: strengthening of court public relations, new trends of communication

Moderator: dr. Judit Bayer

Assistant judge: dr. Péter Bozsó

Secretary: dr. Sándor Zsolt Sipos

Participants: see attached list

After introducing the staff and welcoming the participants, the moderator:

- gave different notions of PR,
- gave pros and cons concerning “focus on tradition” and “open court” model (what kind of message to transmit towards society about the courts: friendly or powerful),
- tried to paraphrase a common understanding of PR,
- gave the interpretation of PR in the Hungarian judicial system,
- introduced the aims, goals and tools of the Hungarian judicial system via a matrix scheme,
- introduced the structure of PR activities of the Hungarian judicial system (Canadian model),
- expressed the main goals: accessible judicial system (open and communicative), securing core values.

The moderator asked the participants to introduce their national model of court PR and selection between “focus on tradition” and “open court” model.

Estonia:

- video conference for witness hearings (for prisoners, elders, unhealthy/abroad residing witnesses),
- free legal advice is given by attorneys (logistically supported by courts),
- official court presence on Facebook,
- active participation in EU cross border procedures (hearings by CCTV),
- judges do not comments on any cases, but legal adviser spokesmen give comments.

Lithuania:

- judges can speak on their own verdicts, not only spokesmen,
- free quarterly court magazine in print (distributed in libraries) and by e-mail to build court (judge) CSR,
- journalists are free to role play court procedures at open days (successful).

BiH:

- direct messages (programs) tailored to clients (focus groups) as necessary,
- use of different international funds for different focus groups (judiciary, media, general public, etc.),
- six designated pilot courts (since 2012) with open days (incl. mediators, media campaign),
- establishing trust is slow process,
- celebration of EU Justice Day.

Romania:

- journalists are free to role play court procedures at open days (successful).

The moderator concluded the common values in national approaches as follows:

- PR strategy messages should not be centrally controlled, but only guide-lined and supervised,
- importance of determining focus groups,
- importance of tailored messages.

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Workshop #2 (from 10.45 to 11.30)

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The moderator asked the participants to introduce their national model of court PR and selection between “focus on tradition” and “open court” model.

Lithuania:

- prefers the “friendly (client oriented) and open court” model,
- all courts all allowed to have its own Facebook profile or website,
- not comments, information only on Facebook profile or website.

Greece:

- participation in the yearly meeting of national representative judges in Luxembourg,
- invites international lecturers for their judges,
- respect for tradition and friendliness are mutually exclusive,
- client oriented approach: open to citizens and other visitors (10.000+ per year), guided tours (explanation of procedures),
- not favor of Facebook,
- prefers Twitter for press releases, expected dates of judgements in high profile cases,
- Twitter more popular than Facebook (14.000+ EN, 7.000+ FR followers).

Spain:

- focus of communication (not punishing but defending citizens' rights),
- playing trials in schools,
- meetings for journalists to explain procedures,
- open Supreme Court Day,
- official presence on Facebook and Twitter (for e.g. high profile cases, customer rights, citizen rights),
- programs for judges (integrity, transparency),
- job interviews with judge candidates for presidency are published via internet.

BiH:

- audio recordings of all judge candidate interviews,
- all candidates can access judge candidate interviews to avoid complaints.

Austria:

- each judicial system should have PR concept, PR professionals,
- spokesmen are judges,
- other judges from spokesmen are not authorized to give comments,
- skeptical about court presence on Facebook,
- only website,
- Supreme Court decides which case goes online,
- bad experience with open court (3 judges shot in the 80s, 1 secretary shot in 2014),
- 1 open day per year, but no organized programs.

Montenegro:

- no official presence on Facebook,
- each court has its spokesman,
- spokesmen are not judges, but PR professional with legal training,
- trial schedule on internet,
- tv shows,
- days of mediation (including free legal advice),
- judges can speak on his/her verdicts.

Bulgaria:

- no official presence on Facebook.

The moderator concluded the common values in national approaches as follows:

- PR is important in court management,
- no specific PR department in courts,
- spokesmen are more likely to be judges,
- court accessibility and transparency to people is a must,
- skepticism about court presence on Facebook,
- easier to get messages through by one-way communication,
- no newsletters needed,
- IT needed to make messages tailored.

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Workshop #3 (from 11.50 to 12.40)

Topic: strengthening of court public relations, new trends of communication

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Assistant judge: dr. Péter Bozsó

Secretary: dr. Sándor Zsolt Sipos

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The moderator asked the participants to introduce their national model of court PR and selection between “focus on tradition” and “open court” model.

Mr. Landbroek:

- organizational transparency (budget, schedules, efficiency, etc.) is welcome,
- 100% transparency is not welcome (judges are to be sealed off from direct access for personal security reasons),
- ECtHR has no presence on Facebook,
- ECtHR has its presence on Twitter,
- separate “fair” court from “friendly” court,
- ideal approach: not friendly, but open, fair, client oriented,
- communication strategy must rely on examinations beforehand,
- set goals first, then set tools to reach goals.

Slovenia:

- no use of social media makes no possibility for debates.

Ukraine:

- judges should set personal example (way of behavior, strong personality, public figures).

Estonia:

- no official court presence on Facebook,
- use of typical PR page (website titled “artofjustice”),
- comments are welcome.

Bulgaria:

- simulated trials with students and journalists,
- youngsters believe in myth, symbols, mystery and theatre.

The moderator concluded the common values in national approaches as follows:

- importance of PR to:
 - show integrity,
 - actively design its image,
 - transmit messages,
 - building trust,
 - building credibility,
- new tools gives direct access to focus groups without (push type) media (pull type),
- PR helps courts to have their neutral presence on the internet,
- PR helps courts to present themselves (the judiciary, not separate courts),
- it is not about creating image, but forming it.