

Workshop III Conclusions

I. Appearance in social media

In the beginning of the discussion it appeared that only a small minority of the participating countries approved of the use of the social media for judicial purposes. Some of the pioneer countries in this field are Estonia, Norway, Ukraine, The Netherlands and Hungary. The difference in the supporting countries is that the courts have their own facebook page, or only one central facebook page is set up. However even those countries that don't support the use of social media operate judicial websites, either for the specific courts or for the judicial administration. Then, as reasons for and against were brought up, it seemed that many of the countries changed their minds. The supporting countries argued that this way information on court procedures are communicated more easily and reach more people, especially the younger generation. It's a rapid way to communicate. The opposing countries don't trust in the new means of communication and are in favor of increasing the effectiveness of the "older" means of communication.

At the end of the exciting and vivid discussion it turned out that the majority of the participating countries finally approved of the courts' appearance in the social media.

The question of allowing the public to make comments on these surfaces also caused a debate. We finally came to the conclusion that some comments can be useful, but others could cause such negative effects that moderation seems to be necessary.

The task of one of the small working groups was to make a general plan about what strategic regulations are necessary to operate a social media site.

The group decided to operate a FB page with the following characteristics:

- Target groups: lawyers, parties, students, NGO-s, other courts and authorities.
- Characteristics: the page should be fun – to some extent; less formal phrasing, informative; visualization – pictures, charts
- FB events (conferences, presentations)
- Interactive page – allow communication
- Brief – not to overload people with information.
- Contents: contact information, general information (competence), important decisions, legal practice
- Announcement of events
- Projects (educational)
- General guidelines for uses on how to reach the court
- Briefly present the rights and duties of the parties
- Glossary
- Guidelines for the journalists
- Events reports
- Photos of the judges (not too photoshopped)
- New legislation links
- Bycharts, colorful representation of statistics

Shouldn't be there:

- anything about ongoing cases, only the names
- spam
- personal information on judges
- vicious comments

The judges appearance was a different subject.

Most of the countries approved of the judges' appearance in the social media, however within the frames of judicial ethics. Naturally, neither of the countries allow their judges to comment their case or judgment in public. This seems to be a question of privacy. Norway elaborated that 20 years ago the debate was about whether judges should have an e-mail address. From this perspective, the use of social media is natural.

II. Websites and official communication

Almost all countries agreed that a web page is a necessary belonging of the court's official appearance, and it's essential to update that website with useful, up to date information.

The second one of the working groups had the task to theoretically create a court website. The group decided that one common judicial website should exist, with divisions for the separate courts, thus, appearance is uniform.

The indispensable elements of that common website are the following:

- names of the judges should appear, without photos
- all court decisions, anonymized
- schedule of hearings (time, date, judge)
- legislation with modifications and legal practice (via a link)
- announcements on press events
- court social events
- important information (opening hours, etc.)
- staff
- statistics
- rules of communication with media
- examples of behavior in criminal cases (where to stand, etc.)
- questions addressed to the court and their answers (FAQ – moderated)

3rd group: crisis communication action plan

Question was what kind of crisis should they focus on, and they agreed on high profile cases – crisis related to the press.

How to prevent crisis?

- Give inf to media (when will it start, where will it be, who is the judge, practical information)
- Security measures (where to go with cameras to security control)
- Establish a channel for the communication with some media representatives
- Spokesperson
- Big enough courtroom
- Accreditation of journalists

Crisis during trial:

- Identify the topic – what is the crisis
- Take one person who's in charge of communication – only he comm with the press and nobody else
- Never lie
- Don't say anything more than you know (avoid rumors, stick to the facts, no personal interpretation)
- Have a message

- Try to be the first to communicate, then you don't have to react.
- List of phone numbers

III. Trainings

All the countries agreed that communication trainings are really useful, and most of them organize such trainings for the judiciary. It was emphasized that spokespersons and members of the court's press unit should receive special training to be able to communicate with the press professionally.