The use of modern communication tools such as text and instant messages in EU professional context meeting

Summary record of the meeting of EU institutions on 9 December 2022

The meeting was a first exchange between the EU institutions on the use of modern communication tools such as text and instant messages in an EU professional context. The participants discussed how the different institutions currently approach this issue and a possible collective approach or alignment of practices.

Current situation

Guidance for staff on the use of instant messaging

The situation varies across the Institutions – some have guidelines for staff on the usage of instant messaging (the Council, the European Ombudsman), while other institutions and Bodies participating in the meeting neither have any specific guidelines on this topic nor any plans to develop them. The existing guidelines exclude the use of these communication tools for professional exchanges as a general rule.

From a cybersecurity and good governance perspective, it is necessary to address the proliferation of the platforms for text messaging and chats, including social media. While the use of these tools should be discouraged in general, many of these means of communications raise serious security, data protection and other issues that exclude their use altogether.

Document management: registration and archiving of text messages

It was noted that it is not possible to completely exclude text messaging. There was general agreement that such messages could in some cases be subject to registration if they contain important information. A case-by-case assessment is required. There should be technological solutions in place to enable the registration of such messages if needed and staff should be instructed how to do it.

Collective approach

There was general support for cooperation and the exchange of best practices but the participants did not see a need for collective or joint rules. Smaller institutions expressed their interest to learn from the practices and rules developed by larger and more experienced institutions. Some institutions raised policy concerns as the rules may restrict the independence of their members.

Follow up

The Commission will prepare a scoping note for the purpose of further discussions and consideration by the Institutions and Bodies in the first quarter of 2023.
The note will notably take account of the practical recommendations proposed by the European Ombudsman (The recording of text and instant messages sent/received by staff members in their professional capacity - Practical recommendations for the EU administration | Correspondence | European Ombudsman (europa.eu))
Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS