

Newsletter

Committee meeting 23 January 2018



Bulgarian Presidency Priorities - Exchange of views with Mr Krasimir Valchev, Minister of Education and Science; Mr Krasen Kravev, Minister of Youth and Sports; Ms Amelia Gesheva, Deputy Minister of Culture

Two Ministers and a Deputy-Minister were present on the 23 January to outline the Bulgarian Presidency's priorities in the fields of culture, education, youth and sports. This is the first time Bulgaria has held the Presidency, with its six months in the chair beginning on 1 January 2018. The Presidency undeniably comes at a crucial moment with the upcoming negotiations on the MFF and the programmes, which will start during the Presidency, but also the substantial internal challenges, such as Brexit and the rise of euro-scepticism and extremist movements.

The Presidency, which has as a motto *"United we stand strong"*, has as one of its overall priorities the future the EU and young people. All three Ministers underlined that this would also be the headline priority in youth and education policy, together with the new digital economy and the skills. The Bulgarian Presidency will therefore support the increase of the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 in the future MFF, in particular during the debate on the future of the Erasmus+ programme during the Education Council on 15 February 2018. The Presidency will also work to increase best practice exchange between schools and teachers, including mobility for teachers and mentors, measures to counter social isolation and radicalisation and to foster the dissemination of knowledge and common values. A paramount priority is to increase the number of young people benefiting from Erasmus+, which requires not only larger budgetary funds, but also vital partnership networks. In the culture sector, the focus will be on the promotion of culture and cultural heritage as a vector of values, cohesion, economic growth and democracy. In the sports field, the Presidency will concentrate on the promotion of fair competition and access to sports as a fundamental right. In this context, the Presidency is preparing Council conclusions on "Promoting EU values through sport", to be discussed and adopted in May. Many Members took the floor and a recurrent plea to the Presidency was the need to substantially increase budgetary support for Erasmus+ and the other CULT programmes, to strengthen EU solidarity through volunteering and to mainstream education and culture across policy fields.

European Semester - Employment and Social Aspects - Consideration of draft opinion (Julie WARD, S&D)

Against the backdrop of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Commission Communication on "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture", published ahead of the recent Gothenburg Summit, the Rapporteur applauds the new impetus given to social policies in the European Semester. She welcomes the progress made on key education policy objectives, notably early school leaving rates and higher education attainment, though cautions that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners risk being left behind and need much more targeted support.

Ms Ward also calls for greater efforts to enhance basic skills and develop better validation mechanisms for skills and qualifications acquired through lifelong learning, and reiterates her call for a Child Guarantee to work alongside an effective Youth Guarantee.

In the subsequent discussion, Members generally backed the Rapporteur's approach, arguing for a greater focus on digital and entrepreneurial skills. Some Members also stressed that overall progress masked some worrying disparities among Member States with respect to education indicators, while others stressed that mobility programmes, notably Erasmus+, also have to do more to open doors to disadvantaged groups. The draft opinion will be voted on at the next CULT meeting on 21-22 February.

The EU Youth Strategy

Public hearing



The afternoon session was dedicated to a public hearing on the future of the EU Youth Agenda. The hearing is part of an implementation report on the EU Youth Strategy, drafted by Ms Eider Gardiazabal Rubial (S&D).

The current global context exposes young people to a variety of challenges, first and foremost - a fast-changing society and extremely competitive labour market. This triggers demand for adaptable skills and competences, therefore putting pressure on education and training systems, which are not always flexible enough to adapt. The low level of participation among young people in the political and social life of their communities is another cause for concern.

Therefore, in their presentations, the four experts and the representative of the Committee of the Regions focused on the need to increase the democratic participation of young people through active citizenship. It was underlined that further support at local and regional level is needed to reach out to and motivate young people who are not currently members of organisations, especially in remote areas. It was also suggested that the new strategy should provide a cross-cutting approach with systematic youth checks on new legislation in the policy making process. Finally, it is important to enhance youth participation in the decision-making process. The experts recommended that the Structured Dialogue be revised and stressed the need to take up, implement and monitor recommendations made by young people.

Members highly praised the quality of the presentations and questioned the experts on how to improve the EU Youth Strategy so that it better reflects the concerns of young people.

The invited experts were:

- Ms Marguerite Potard, World Organization of the Scout Movement
- Mr Ville Majamaa, European Youth Forum
- Mr Denis Itxaso, Gipuzkoa County Council, Donostia - San Sebastian, Spain
- Mr Csaba Borboly, European Committee of the Regions
- Ms Lilya Elenkova, National Youth Forum, Bulgaria



2016 discharge - Vote on draft opinions (Rapporteur: Bodgan ZDROJEWSKI, EPP)

The Committee overwhelmingly approved both opinions on the 2016 discharge (24 in favour, 0 against, 3 abstentions for the Commission; 27 in favour, 0 against, 0 abstentions for the Translation Centre).

The opinion on the Commission welcomes the results achieved by Erasmus+, but calls for further simplification, improvements in the youth strand, better dialogue with beneficiaries and, critically, a thorough assessment of the Loan Guarantee Facility. On Creative Europe and Europe for Citizens, it once again points to the chronic underfunding, though welcomes the promising start made by the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility, which, it argues, should quickly receive the funding promised through the proposed frontloading from EFSI. The opinion reiterates the Committee's long-standing criticism of the European Schools' financial management, though highlights that some progress has been made and that the Schools' new Financial Regulation offers an opportunity for further accounting improvements. It also emphasises the uncertainty Brexit has caused for pupils and parents at the European Schools and calls for some clear thinking on the way forward. Finally, the opinion recalls the Committee's backing for independent media coverage of EU affairs and welcomes the continuation of the grant for Euranet+.

On the Translation Centre, the Committee stresses its unwavering commitment to multilingualism in the EU and welcomes the Centre's role in delivering on that goal. It notes the Centre's reduction of its budgetary surpluses and increased client base (calling, in that regard, on agencies to use the Centre and avoid duplicating costs), salutes its commitment to quality and training and calls for continued investment in innovative language technologies. Finally, the opinion observes that the Centre has met staff reduction targets and cautions against further staff or budget cuts going forward.

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Europass - Vote on provisional agreement

In a meeting hosted by the EMPL Committee, the EMPL and CULT Committees voted on the provisional agreement resulting from inter-institutional negotiations, and confirmed by COREPER on 20 December 2017. The text, which regulates the new Europass framework, was adopted by a large majority, with 64 votes in favour, 4 against, and 0 abstentions.

The new Europass will improve the understanding of skills and competences and facilitate mobility throughout Europe. It will offer people a wider range of services, such as an enhanced tool for creating CVs and skills profiles in a user-friendly manner, free self-assessment tools to help individuals evaluate their skills, tailored information on learning opportunities across Europe, and information and support to help individuals get their qualifications recognised. It will help individuals when they move between countries and are looking for a new job or engaging in learning and career management across Europe.

Europass aims to reach all potential users from those with lower levels of education, people with disabilities, older people and the long-term unemployed to highly educated people with high levels of digital literacy. It will continue to evolve over time in line with users' needs and in order to make the most effective use of technological developments.

The final version of the text will be tabled for the March plenary. The Chairs and the Rapporteurs underlined the excellent collaboration between the two Committees on this file, which in their opinion should serve as an example for working on joint files under Rule 55.

[procedure file](#)

European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships - Vote on amendments to the EMPL motion for resolution

Following the CULT Committee's request for association to an oral question and motion for resolution on the *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships*, the EMPL Coordinators decided to invite the CULT Committee to table amendments to the resolution.

In its position, CULT recalls that poor literacy and numeracy impair the employability of young adults, arguing, therefore, that a solid foundation is vital to avoid reproducing the skills mismatch for future generations.

Moreover, it draws attention to recent evidence suggesting that, in a knowledge-based economy, early employment gains with vocational training may lead to later problems when specific skills become obsolete and workers lack the ability to adjust to a changed economic environment. Finally, it insists that all pupils should have access to a demanding, knowledge-based curriculum, as this is the best possible preparation for both vocational and academic studies, guaranteeing that young people who have opted for a VET programme have done so because that was their choice or vocation rather than due to low achievements.

The position in the form of amendments was adopted by a large majority: 25 in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention.

Cross-border restitution claims of works for art and cultural goods - Vote on draft opinion (Rapporteur: Nikolaos CHOUNTIS, GUE/NGL)

The CULT committee adopted the opinion by a large majority (24 in favour, 3 against). The committee recognised that there is an urgent need to promote high-quality and independent provenance research in order to identify looted art works, to facilitate their restitution to the legitimate owners, to achieve a fully transparent and ethical art market and to effectively prevent looting and trafficking.

To this end, the CULT opinion calls on the Commission to harmonise the rules on provenance research, taking stock on the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects, and to envisage the creation of a central meta-database that takes account of the available information. It also encourages both the Commission and the Member States to support special training programmes in provenance research at Union and national level.

[procedure file](#)

Presentation by the Commission on projects to increase independent news production around EU affairs

In June 2016, the European Commission launched a call for proposals in the field of data-driven news production. Applicants were invited to submit proposals to increase reporting on European issues, from a pan-European viewpoint and/or by comparing different viewpoints from within Europe. Originally conceived as one-off call, the action resulted in the funding of two projects, both launched in 2017:

- The European Data News Hub (EDNH) brings together three major European news agencies: the French AFP, the German DPA and the Italian ANSA. It will receive EUR 981.291 for its activities up to January 2019.
- The European Data Journalism Network (EDJN). It's made up of more than a dozen news companies and organisations, including Spiegel Online (Germany), NRC Handelsblad (Netherlands), El Confidencial (Spain) and Ouest-France, plus an offshoot of Poland's Gazeta Wyborcza known as BIQ Data. It will receive EUR 968.709 for its activities up to December 2019.

Both projects will receive support to inform Europeans on EU affairs from a pan-European point of view, i.e. showing more than only a national perspective, by making innovative use of data-driven techniques. Support is given for the production and dissemination of information and content, while respecting complete editorial independence.

The presentation stems from a desire within the CULT Committee to understand better what the Commission is doing within the Multimedia Actions budget line, which aims to engage citizens in EU policy-making process by providing them with information about European issues from pan-European points of view, beyond local and national angles.

The Commission (DG CNECT) was represented by Martin Dawson, Deputy Head of Unit for Audiovisual Industry and Media Support Programmes. From the two projects, the following speakers addressed the CULT Committee:

- Christiane Düsterfeld (Project leader, European Data News Hub) - Deutsche Presse-Agentur
- Catherine Fay de Lestrac (Editorial Coordination at AFP) - Agence France Presse
- Chiara Sighele (Project leader, European Data Journalism Network) - Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso
- Gian-Paolo Accardo (Executive Editor) - VoxEurop

During the debate, MEPs' questions revolved around issues such as cuts in funding for multimedia actions, fake news and how to counter it, sustainability of the projects, the need to cover as many EU languages as possible, and the possible enlargement of the scope of the project activities to cover subtitling of cultural programmes as a means to promote European identity.

The next committee meeting: 21-22 February 2018

Useful links

- [CULT Committee website](#)
- [Meeting documents](#)
- [Calendar of meetings](#)
- [Policy Department Publications in the EP](#)
- [European Parliament - Think Thank](#)
- [The Bulgarian Presidency of the Council](#)

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