

Newsletter

Committee meeting 21-22 February 2018

Structured dialogue with Commissioner Gabriel



As part of its ongoing scrutiny of the executive, the Committee held its regular "structured dialogue" with Commissioner Gabriel, as provided for under the Framework Agreement on Relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission. Commissioner Gabriel is responsible for the digital economy and society and therefore leads on a number of key CULT-relevant policy areas. The Commissioner's presentation and the subsequent lively question-and-answer session, following the much more interactive ping-pong procedure of "one question, one reply", centred on the following themes:

- **Digital skills.** The Commissioner was unequivocal in her view that far more needs to be done to equip people in general and workers in particular with the right digital skills. She highlighted the recently launched Digital Opportunity traineeship, a pilot scheme funded by Horizon2020 and implemented through Erasmus+, to provide up to 6,000 students and recent graduates with a 500-EUR a month, 5-month digital skills placement between 2018 and 2020. She also described the Digital Skills and Job Coalition, one of the 10 priority actions under the New Skills Agenda, which offers a multi-stakeholder approach to identifying and remedying digital skills gaps. Finally, the Commissioner detailed the January 2018 Digital Education Action Plan, which aims to provide a more holistic approach to various digital skills initiatives by making better use of digital technology for teaching and learning, developing relevant digital skills and competences for the digital transformation and improving education systems

through better data analysis and foresight. Members quizzed the Commissioner, in particular, on how she intended to tackle the particular societal challenge of basic digital literacy among older people.

- **Digital content files.** The Commissioner urged the Parliament to complete the legislative procedure on the outstanding Digital Single Market files, though singled the CULT Committee out for praise for its swift work on the Copyright Package.
- **MEDIA sub-programme of Creative Europe.** With the new generation of programmes set for publication in May, the Commissioner stressed the changing conditions of the audiovisual environment, with more and more young people accessing content online through platforms. Responding to questions, she argued that the new programme – in whatever form it takes – should remain committed to cultural and linguistic diversity and competitiveness and should be fit for purpose in the digital age. She also insisted that the Commission would argue for a budget that is in line with the programme's enhanced ambitions.
- **European films.** On the related subject of access to European films, Ms Gabriel outlined her initiative to create a directory of European films to give them greater prominence and make them more widely accessible. The two-stage approach will begin with a business-to-business directory to allow professionals to see where content is available and being exploited. The prototype should be ready in October 2018, with the directory going live in early 2019. The aim for stage two is to explore scope for a B2C platform directing consumers to legal content online via existing platforms. The Commissioner insisted that, with respect to stage two, she is very open to proposals and suggestions and that the Commission's thinking is at an embryonic stage.
- **Fake news.** The Commissioner explained that a public consultation closed on 23 February. The Commission is already discussing the issue with online platforms, media providers, think-tanks and civil society, notably through the recently created High-Level Group on Fake News. Ms Gabriel reiterated the Commission's commitment to striking the right balance between freedom of speech and access to information on the one hand and proper responsibility and the right not to be misled on the other. The Group is working on a tight definition of fake news and seeking to establish a set of principles for self-regulation. The work will result in a publicly available report due in mid-March and a Communication in April.
- **Digital for Culture.** Finally, the Commissioner trailed a new initiative called "Digital for Culture" centred on the idea that digital can reinforce culture and offer new opportunities. The initiative will, inter alia, seek to enhance access to culture, promote talent and make the most of Europe's cultural assets.

Beyond these key themes, Members also raised questions on online safety, copyright rules for cultural heritage institutions, countering fake news in the European elections, membership of the High-Level Group on Fake News, online barriers in access to culture and the Commission's failure to deliver its mid-term evaluation of Creative Europe within the legal deadline.

Structural and Financial Barriers in the Access to Culture

Public hearing and consideration of draft report (Rapporteur: Bodgan ZDROJEWSKI, EPP)

The afternoon session on Wednesday was dedicated to access to culture.

The invited experts represented different policy areas so as to cover the various issues at stake.

- Pere Almeda, Adjunct Lecturer on Political Science at University of Barcelona and Coordinator at the Fundació Catalunya Europa, Barcelona, presented the study on **Public spending on culture in Europe**. Members welcomed the study's value given the different ways of defining spending on culture in the EU Member States.
- Jill Cousins, Executive Director of Europeana, focused on copyright as a barrier to accessing cultural content online and argued for an appropriate balance.
- Frederic Messeeuw from BOZAR explained the different financing models for art centres across Europe and the new social, educational and democratic role that art centres play in the 21st century.
- Dick Molenaar from Rotterdam University dedicated his presentation to cross-border tax policy issues, mainly taxes levied on performing artists, and explained how the distinct Member State tax policies hamper the mobility of performing artists.

Again, the ping-pong procedure of "one question, one reply" made for a livelier discussion and permitted direct exchanges between the speaker and Members. Members focused in their questions on the practical aspects of how to balance the fair remuneration of creators against access to cultural content online and how and to what extent to harmonise tax policies concerning artists. They also discussed the minimum sustainable level of public spending on culture, as well as insurance and national guarantee schemes for museums and art centres that would enable more international cooperation and exchange.



Subsequently, the Rapporteur presented his report, which focuses on four types of barriers: financial, educational, structural and technological. Educational barriers seem to lie at the very core of the issue, since Eurobarometer respondents most frequently cite a lack of interest as the reason for not engaging with culture. The Rapporteur underlines the need to educate children but also adults to become keen recipients of cultural content.

Other Members agreed on the need to enhance the presence of culture in education systems and that demand, rather than supply, is the key impediment. They all praised the work done in the field of cultural statistics and asked for more up-to date and precise data, especially with respect to digital audiences, their motivations, preferences etc.

Concerning digital barriers, there was a discussion around the balance of broad access to cultural content and cultural heritage against the need for robust copyright provisions. In some regions, internet infrastructure is still problematic and the digital gap is becoming wider, requiring structural efforts in ensuring internet access before promoting its use for cultural purposes.

- [Presentations and summaries](#)
- [Procedure file](#)
- Amendments deadline: 2 March at 10.00
- Committee vote: 25 April





Modernisation of education in the EU - Consideration of draft report (Rapporteur: Krystyna LYBACKA, S&D)

The draft report is based on the latest seven education initiatives launched by the Commission.

Firstly, the Rapporteur stresses the importance of education as a key plank of economic potential and a crucial factor for development in the information society. She then analyses the changing reality of education and pinpoints the challenges that this poses for particular stages of education. Next, the Rapporteur addresses the topic of teachers as the main guarantor of the successful modernisation of education systems. Finally, she makes a number of recommendations for the effective development and implementation of the educational reform process.

During the subsequent debate, Members praised the Rapporteur for the very comprehensive report, for the approach chosen and for the cooperation with the Shadows. Members agreed that covering all levels of education plus teacher training in one report is no mean feat and requires a well-structured approach.

The discussion revolved around the importance of education keeping pace with societal and technological changes. Moreover, education should firstly form citizens rather than workers and consumers. Education is not a privilege, but a human right and therefore of strategic importance for our societies and economic development. Education is essential in preparing young people for the world of work, in helping them to be the innovators of tomorrow, in making them feel part of society and in creating democratically active and engaged citizens.

• [Procedure file](#)

• Amendments deadline: 28 February at 14.00

• Committee vote: 25 April



Implementation report on the EU Youth Strategy - Consideration of draft report (Rapporteur: Eider GARDIAZABAL RUBIAL, S&D)

The current youth strategy, which ends in 2018, provides a cooperation framework for Member States to develop initiatives in the field of youth. The Rapporteur expressed the need for a cross-sectoral integrated approach towards youth policy, which successfully breaks down existing silos. One key plank is the creation of a "Child Guarantee" fund to support young children and their parents. The draft report also underlines the need to develop close cooperation with young people in developing policies that affect young people – a policy for, with and by young people! The new Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ can help to deliver on this aim.

Members also commented on the need to secure more substantial budgetary support for young people, in particular in the next MFF.

• [Procedure file](#)

• Amendments deadline: 2 March at 11.00

• Committee vote: 25 April

Protection of minors in the digital age

Workshop organised by Policy Department B

The committee meeting also included a workshop organised by the Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, which focused on the four following issues:

- Child safety online: definition of the problem - Prof. Brian O'Neill - Dublin Institute of Technology
- Young Children (0-8) and Digital technology - Stephane Chaudron - European Commission - Joint Research Centre
- Solutions and policy dilemmas regarding the protection of minors online - Prof. Eva Lievens - Ghent University
- Recommendations for EU policy developments on the protection of minors in the digital age" - Professor Sonia Livingstone - London School of Economics

The widespread use of digital technologies is transforming what childhood means across the EU and globally. Rapid technological development offers extraordinary new opportunities for children in relation to learning and information, entertainment and play, communication and participation. Simultaneously, it poses risks to minors' safety, well-being and rights and presents a range of legal, regulatory and safeguarding challenges.

The experts explored the definition and scope of children's online safety as a policy issue, presented new data on digital engagement among young children, analysed the various regulatory instruments that may be adopted to achieve the full range of children's rights in the digital environment, identified a number of policy dilemmas that arise in this context and provided recommendations for the EU policy on the protection of minors online.

The debate that followed the expert presentations centred on how to share best practices among Member States, education policies regarding media literacy, carers' and teachers' digital empowerment and, involvement and responsibility-sharing among all relevant stakeholders (public authorities, industry, carers, schools...). There was also a discussion of support for research, the age relevance of different technological and regulatory tools, the fragmentation of existing codes of conduct and need for minimum standards and regulations.

Votes

The CULT Committee voted on **the provisional agreement on amending the Regulation establishing the Creative Europe programme 2014-2020 (EUYO) (Rapporteur: Silvia Costa, S&D)**. The text agreed with the Council was adopted by a large majority, with 24 votes in favour, 2 against and 0 abstentions, and will be tabled for the March plenary.

“European Solidarity Corps” - Adoption of draft report and the mandate to enter into inter-institutional negotiations (Rapporteur: Helga Trüpel, Greens/EFA). The CULT committee adopted - by a large majority (18 in favour, 3 against and 5 abstentions) - a report on a new EU programme for solidarity activities. CULT changed the scheme's name to the 'European Solidarity Voluntary Service' and also proposed that the financial allocation for the voluntary strand be increased to 95% of the budget, instead of the 80% initially proposed by the Commission. Moreover, the report calls for the use of fresh money for the overall funding of the programme in order to avoid any burdening of existing programmes, such as Erasmus+. A mandate for opening inter-institutional negotiations with the Council should be adopted during the March plenary.

“European Semester: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2018” - Adoption of draft opinion (Rapporteur: Julie Ward (S&D; lead committee: EMPL). The opinion will feed into the EMPL report and thus the Parliament's contribution to the Spring European Council. Drawn up against the backdrop of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the recent Commission Communication on "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture", it applauds the new impetus given to social policies in the European Semester and insists that this must translate into enhanced investments in education, youth and culture policies. It welcomes the overall progress made on key education policy objectives, notably early school leaving rates and higher education attainment, though cautions that geographical disparities persist and that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners risk being left behind and need much more targeted support. The opinion also highlights the basic and digital skills gap and supports more concerted action in both areas, calls for better validation mechanisms for skills and qualifications acquired through lifelong learning, underscores the value of EU mobility schemes and points to the particular value of the cultural and creative sector in driving job creation. Finally, it urges the Commission to complete its assessment on how best to shape a new Child Guarantee to work alongside a genuinely effective Youth Guarantee.

“Media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union” - Adoption of draft opinion (Rapporteur: Curzio Maltese (GUE/NGL); lead committee: LIBE). In its opinion, adopted by an overwhelming majority, the committee stresses that access to quality, free and independent information is a fundamental human right, that media freedom and pluralism are an essential pillar of democracy and that the media's independence from political and economic pressure of any kind must be guaranteed accordingly. It also details some challenges that the press is currently facing, including the high concentration of media ownership jeopardising media pluralism and the diminishing quality and reliability of information, giving rise to phenomena such as “fake news”. Finally, the CULT committee urges the Commission and the Member States to develop a comprehensive strategy to foster high-quality journalism by strengthening financial and legal support to independently operated media and recommends that Member States provide appropriate, proportionate and stable funding for public service media.

The next committee meeting: 19-20 March 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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