



2019/2055(DEC)

22.1.2020

OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, Section III – Commission and executive agencies
(2019/2055(DEC))

Rapporteur for opinion: Sabine Verheyen

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the conclusion of the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 22/2018 on mobility under Erasmus+ that the programme has a positive effect on participants' attitudes towards the Union and generates many forms of European added value; however, stresses also that further efforts should be taken to fully align indicators with objectives, and that there is a need to simplify the application and reporting process;
2. Highlights the conclusion of the European Court of Auditors (the 'Court') that complex rules increase the risk of error, which results in a higher percentage of material errors in certain programmes; concludes that there is a need to simplify the application and reporting process; calls, therefore, on the Commission to reduce the bureaucratic burden for applicants and beneficiaries of Union financing;
3. Is worried that the Court concluded that beneficiaries of Union funding under the Erasmus+ programme were in some cases obliged to follow national rules that were not fully in line with Union principles; stresses that the Commission should closely monitor the coherence of implementation measures throughout all Member States;
4. Welcomes the positive effect of the Erasmus+ programme in promoting the inclusion of people from disadvantaged backgrounds, as noted in the Court's Special Report No 22/2018; calls for the improvement of the definition, reporting and monitoring in this area to ensure the inclusivity of the Erasmus+ programme, as well as that of the European Solidarity Corps and the Creative Europe programmes;
5. Underlines the need for increased financing of the Erasmus+ and the Creative Europe programmes, keeping in mind the success of the programmes and the added value they bring;
6. Acknowledges that, as the Student Loan Guarantee Facility has not produced the expected results, the Commission decided to reallocate the relevant funds;
7. Welcomes the result of the efforts in favour of the school projects and VET within the Erasmus+ programme, giving better access to adapted mobility for wider categories of pupils and students and thereby acting for a better understanding of the Union, proving that the Erasmus+ programme has developed well beyond a student mobility action;
8. Welcomes the 11 000 placements offered to young people by the European Solidarity Corps programme; regrets, however, the lack of data on the number of placements in the occupational strand of the programme; notes that by December 2018 more than 93 000 young persons had registered to take part in the programme but only 11 000 have had the opportunity to engage in solidarity activities; calls therefore for the appropriate funding to ensure full coverage of demand, particularly in the volunteering strand;

9. Highlights the progress in the success rates in the Creative Europe programme compared to 2017 (31 % for Culture and 48 % for the MEDIA sub-programme), but stresses that more adequate levels of financing are required to tackle those still unsatisfactory results;
10. Calls on the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency ('EACEA') to pay due attention to the simplification and adaptation of the application processes to the target audiences to improve accessibility to the programmes;
11. Welcomes the efforts made in the context of the Creative Europe programme to bring about greater gender parity in the creative and cultural sectors, and in particular the percentage of women running projects financed by the MEDIA programme; deplores, nonetheless, the fact that the number of women responding to calls for tender remains disproportionately low (71% men compared with 29% women);
12. Applauds the good results achieved by the guarantee facility in the cultural and creative sectors, in that access to funding for small and medium-sized enterprises has been facilitated and financial intermediaries have been made aware of the needs of such enterprises;
13. Calls on the Commission to showcase the results of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, which received funding to the tune of EUR 8 million and during which over 23 000 events were organised in more than 37 countries, as is referred to in the Commission's report of 28 October 2019 on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018; strongly encourages the Commission to maintain its efforts in promoting heritage, by applying the European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage, which was published following the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018;
14. Notes that the internal control system of EACEA still needs major improvements, as identified by the reservations raised in the second phase of an audit on the Erasmus+ and Creative Europe programmes grant management; calls on EACEA to adopt all the necessary corrective actions, in order to guarantee the highest quality implementation of the programmes;
15. Reaffirms its support for the Commission's multimedia activities, which contribute to independent reporting on Union affairs in the media and to the promotion of a European public sphere; is alarmed, however, by the conclusions of the Court's rapid case review No 6/2019 on Euronews, which highlight the lack of transparency and accountability in the arrangements for the provision by the Commission of financial support to Euronews and the insufficiently robust nature of the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; urges the Commission, furthermore, to increase transparency in respect of the budget for multimedia activities and to improve accountability for expenditure, in particular by creating separate budget lines for the various activities and by carrying out a comprehensive audit of fund use;
16. Welcomes the fact that the Court found no material errors in the final consolidated financial statements of the European Schools for 2018; notes with concern the significant weakness in the internal control systems of the Central Office and selected European Schools, in particular in payment systems, control environment, in

procurement procedures and in the documentation of the recruitment procedures; expresses growing concern that the European Schools are not acting on problems repeatedly identified by the Court and highlighted by the European Parliament in its discharge reports; urges, therefore, further efforts from the European Schools to act on the Court's recommendations laid out in the Court's 2018 Annual Report on the sections of accounting, internal control system, administrative operations, recruitment, procurement and on payments;

17. Draws attention to the challenges that lie ahead for the European Schools during the process of withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the 'United Kingdom') from the Union and calls on the Commission and the European Schools to report to the Committee on Culture and Education in relation to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom and on how they intend to continue to offer first class English-language teaching within the European Schools after the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union;
18. Highlights the under-representation of women (31 %) in middle management positions at the EACEA; calls on the Agency to achieve the objective of 40 % in 2020.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	21.1.2020						
Result of final vote	<table><tr><td>+: </td><td>24</td></tr><tr><td>–: </td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>0: </td><td>1</td></tr></table>	+:	24	–:	3	0:	1
+:	24						
–:	3						
0:	1						
Members present for the final vote	Asim Ademov, Isabella Adinolfi, Christine Anderson, Andrea Bocskor, Judith Bunting, Gianantonio Da Re, Laurence Farreng, Claire Fox, Alexis Georgoulis, Hannes Heide, Irena Joveva, Petra Kammerevert, Niyazi Kizilyürek, Predrag Fred Mati , Dace Melb rde, Shaffaq Mohammed, Peter Pollák, Andrey Slabakov, Massimiliano Smeriglio, Sabine Verheyen, Julie Ward, Theodoros Zagorakis, Milan Zver						
Substitutes present for the final vote	Christian Ehler, Loucas Fourlas, Ibán García Del Blanco, Catherine Griset, Marcel Kolaja						

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

24	+
ECR	Dace Melbārde, Andrey Slabakov
GUE/NGL	Alexis Georgoulis, Niyazi Kizilyürek
NI	Isabella Adinolfi
PPE	Asim Ademov, Andrea Bocskor, Christian Ehler, Loucas Fourlas, Peter Pollák, Sabine Verheyen, Theodoros Zagorakis, Milan Zver
RENEW	Judith Bunting, Laurence Farreng, Irena Joveva, Shaffaq Mohammed
S&D	Ibán García Del Blanco, Hannes Heide, Petra Kammerevert, Predrag Fred Matić, Massimiliano Smeriglio, Julie Ward
VERTS/ALE	Marcel Kolaja

3	-
ID	Christine Anderson, Gianantonio Da Re, Catherine Griset

1	0
NI	Claire Fox

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention