

## Newsletter

Committee meetings  
13 July 2021

Dear Reader,

The first half of 2021 was special and challenging in many respects, in particular due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the repercussions of which continue to weigh heavily on the EP's work and that of its committees, including the Committee on Culture and Education. The necessity of organising all committee activities – including exchanges of views, hearings and especially votes – remotely or in a hybrid format resulted in considerable constraints on Members, their staff, and the Secretariat alike. I would therefore like to thank each and every one of you for having actively contributed to the proper functioning of our Committee even in times of crisis, thus ensuring that the voice of our democratic institution continued to be heard across Europe and that parliamentary scrutiny over European policies was guaranteed. The latter was all the more important since 2021 marked the beginning of not only the EU's new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), but also that of the implementation of the new editions of the three EU funding programmes falling within the remit of the CULT Committee, namely the Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps programmes. Having achieved considerable budgetary increases for the CULT MFF programmes in what can undoubtedly be described as a difficult political and economic context was certainly one of the main achievements of our Committee in late 2020, and it is now our task to ensure the proper implementation of what has been agreed on in the interinstitutional negotiations. As well as parliamentary scrutiny over the MFF programmes, the work of CULT in the first half of 2021 also dealt with a series of legislative and non-legislative dossiers, among them the own-initiative reports on the European Education Area, artificial intelligence, digital education, European media policy, the situation of artists, as well as on the establishment of a European digital public sphere.



The second half of 2021 also sees a full calendar for our Committee, hopefully in a continually improving pandemic context, which makes the task of strengthening culture and education, sectors which have suffered considerably during the crisis, even more pressing.

Before that, however, I wish all of you a pleasant and well-deserved summer break.

With kind regards,

Sabine Verheyen  
CULT Chair

## The Slovenian Presidency presents its policy priorities in the fields of education, culture, youth and sports



Two ministers, Ms Simona Kustec, responsible for Education, Youth and Sports, and Mr Vasco Simoniti, responsible for Culture, presented the priorities of the incoming Slovenian Presidency of the EU. The Slovenian Presidency comes at a time when the true extent of the pandemic's impact on the sectors concerned is becoming more visible. Ms Kustec began her presentation by inviting the EP to work together with the Presidency to build societies that are more resilient, and by establishing strong synergies between the education, youth, and sports sectors in order to better address present and future challenges. In the education sector, the Presidency will work on recommendations on blended learning and the strengthening of digital knowledge and skills. Minister Kustec also underlined the need to focus on youth and the creation of safer public open spaces, for dialogue and active participation of young people. On this note, the Presidency will propose

a resolution on the outcome of the 8<sup>th</sup> cycle of the youth dialogue. The mobility of young volunteers will be also addressed by the Presidency.

Minister Simoniti outlined that the main efforts of the Slovenian Presidency in the cultural field will focus on the audio-visual and media sectors, where market patterns were completely restructured by the Covid pandemic and aggravated by Brexit. The Presidency will therefore commission a study on the impact of Brexit on the media markets. The New European Bauhaus will also be a priority for the Presidency, with financial resources being combined from different sources.



CULT Members focused their questions on the need to expand the digital infrastructure in the EU, the timely completion of the EEA by 2025, the protection of journalists, in particular against SLAPPs (strategic lawsuit against public participation), and the financing of the New European Bauhaus initiative.

## CULT Committee holds an extraordinary exchange of views on repression of students, young people, journalists and activists in Belarus

CULT Coordinators requested an exchange of views on the situation in Belarus, with particular focus on the tailored measures that the Commission has taken to support young people, students, journalists and activists who were affected by the political repression in Belarus.

Mr Vassilis Maragos, Head of unit at DG NEAR,

presented the measures that the Commission has to support civil society and to preserve the existing channels of support.

The Commission has provided emergency assistance to victims of repression and supports the independent media to work from safe jurisdictions, to keep growing their networks and to support innovative and original content creation, ensuring diversified access to objective information for citizens. According to Mr

Maragos, the Commission is also putting in place a dedicated scholarship scheme for the upcoming academic year, which will offer students and young professionals the opportunity to pursue their academic interests. Support to the European Humanities University in exile in Vilnius is also underway.

Members had great interest in this point on the agenda. They have all deemed the situation in the country as unacceptable. The standing rapporteur on Belarus in the AFET Committee,

Mr Petras Austrevicius, underlined the massive and systematic violations of human rights.

Members of the CULT Committee called for wider support to young people and students expelled from the education system in Belarus through scholarships and support programmes with universities in neighbouring countries. Members gave examples of imprisoned students and expressed their support for the continuous efforts towards democratic transition.

## Public Hearing “The Future of Media and Media Pluralism in Europe”



In the context of growing and unprecedented attempts to restrict media freedom and pluralism of opinions, the CULT Committee held a public hearing to shed more light on the current situation.

Invited experts began with the simple, but essential formula: democracy cannot function properly without free and pluralistic media, which has a great impact on the public sphere.

On this note, Thomas Gibson, EU Representative in the Committee to Protect Journalists, discussed the physical, legal, and digital threats that journalists face because of their work. Wide spread legal threats (SLAPPs) are used to intimidate and increase the vulnerability of journalists. According to him, we are also witnessing attacks on journalists through measures supported by national authorities that result in “captured media”. He underlined that a better monitoring and country specific recommendations on the safety of journalists

are required.

Lukas Lipinski, deputy Editor in Chief of the Polish magazine Polityka Weekly, underlined the importance of the economic autonomy of media. 84% of the advertisement market worldwide is composed of tech giants, resulting in an economically weakened press sector, which can easily fall victim to governmental pressure and interference.

Lutz Kinkel, the Managing Director of the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, pointed out how dangerous journalism has become as a profession. He reported some 600 cases of harassment and psychological abuse in 2020 (EU and candidate countries). According to him, journalists are particularly vulnerable when participating in public demonstrations, where they can be easily identified and targeted.

Scott Griffen, the Deputy director of the International Press Institute, and Mogens Bjerregard, President of the European Journalist Federation elaborated on the sustainability of a working business model for the future development of the sector. Making good and fair use of public financial support, but also massively investing in infrastructure and information start-ups, is essential to guarantee better working conditions for a more pluralistic media, according to the experts.

In their concluding remarks, the experts also suggested more efforts should be made to educate people, especially young people, on the need to have access to diverse and impartial sources of information and to ensure full transparency over ownership of media groups.

Members of the CULT Committee emphasised that attacks on journalists were unacceptable in democracy. Through their interventions, they made a clear commitment to work hand in hand with the Commission and the Member States towards improved media freedom and a workable and sustainable business model for the sector, with particular focus to SMEs and local and regional media.

## Consideration of draft opinions

### Single Market for Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC

#### *Consideration of draft opinion*

Sabine VERHEYEN (PPE)



The CULT Committee held a presentation of its draft opinion on the Digital Services Act (DSA) (Rapporteur: Sabine Verheyen, EPP) which is an important legislative initiative aimed at regulating the digital services market.

Some of the main concerns expressed in the draft opinion are linked to the fact that existing legislation (e.g., AVMS-Directive;) could be affected by the DSA, creating regulatory uncertainty, and market distortion and affect media and the audio-visual sectors disproportionately.

Against this backdrop, the Rapporteur underlined that she will ensure that the CULT voice is heard. Ms Verheyen proposes a number of amendments to ensure legal consistency with legislation in place, to harmonise the rules on removal of existing content, to protect editorial independence in the media sector as well as to increase transparency measures.

Members of the Committee highlighted the importance of safeguarding the independence of national authorities, taking into account cultural and education aspects. The question of the responsibility of online platforms regarding copyright and IPRs and hosting of illegal content was also raised.

[Procedure file](#)



## Votes

### Budget 2022

*Vote on adoption of budgetary amendments.*

(Romeo FRANZ, Verts/ALE)



CULT Members adopted a number of budgetary amendments on the 2022 budget, notably on budget lines in the Committee's remit. They increased the operational expenditure of the Erasmus+ programme by EUR 20 million, the European Solidarity Corps by EUR 5 million and the Rights and Values programme by EUR 10 million. Furthermore, the CULT Committee increased the Culture strand of the Creative Europe programme by EUR 10 million to support artists and organisations in the performing arts, particularly the music sector, in their post-pandemic recovery. At the same time, the Committee made it clear that the New European Bauhaus initiative should not be financed with the already thinly spread funds of the Creative Europe Programme, in line with Commissioner Gabriel's earlier commitments to this effect.

Regarding Multimedia Actions, the Committee signalled its strong disagreement with the Commission's recent decision to discontinue the current direct grant to Euranet+, a radio network covering EU affairs. It did so by 1) splitting the existing budget line into four new lines, which should allow closer budgetary scrutiny on financing for beneficiaries such as Euronews and Euranet+, 2) doubling the funding for radio networks and 3) creating a reserve of EUR 5 million.

As in previous years, Members also gave the CULT budget rapporteur, Mr Franz (Greens), a horizontal mandate to restore any potential cuts by the Council to relevant budget lines left untouched by the CULT Committee, given that the official Council position will only be adopted in August.

Finally, the CULT Committee adopted a package of 9 (mostly A or B graded) Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions, with a total value of EUR 25 million.

## Policy Department Research

### Recently finished projects

#### Concomitant expertise for CULT reports:

INI report on *Europe's Media in the Digital Decade: An Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation*:

- ) Background analysis on [Europe's media in the digital decade: an action plan to support recovery and transformation in the news media sector](#);
- ) Thematic briefing on [Media Action Plan: key challenges related to media pluralism, media freedom and democracy](#);
- ) Briefing on [Media Action Plan: policy recommendations](#).

INI report on [The situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU](#).

- ) Background analysis on [The situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU](#)
- ) Policy Recommendations Briefing on [The situation of artists and cultural workers and the post-COVID cultural recovery in the European Union policy](#).

INI report on *The European Education Area: a shared holistic approach to education, skills and competences:*

- ) Study on [Making the European Education Area a reality: state of affairs, challenges and prospects](#);
- ) Study on [Towards a European Education – Critical Perspectives on Challenges Ahead](#);
- ) Briefing on [Approaches of the Council and the Commission to the European Education Area: strategic priorities and quantitative objectives](#);
- ) Briefing on The European Education Area seen by the Member States of the European Union - Synthesis of a survey conducted amongst Member States' representatives (internal);
- ) Briefing on The European Education Area: bibliographical review (internal).

INI report on *Shaping Digital Education policy:*

- ) In-depth analysis on [Shaping digital education policy](#).

INI report on *Artificial intelligence in education, culture and the audiovisual sector:*

- ) Introductory briefing on [The use of artificial intelligence in the cultural and creative sectors](#);
- ) In-depth analysis on [The use of artificial intelligence in the audiovisual sector](#);
- ) Introductory briefing on [The use of artificial intelligence in education](#).

INI report on *Effective measures to 'green' Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps programmes:*

- ) Introductory briefing on [Effective measures to 'green' Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps programmes](#);
- ) Briefing on [Virtual formats versus physical mobility](#).

**Other studies:**

[EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward](#).

[Cultural and Creative Sectors in post-COVID-19 Europe – Crisis effects and policy recommendations](#).

[Education and Youth in post-COVID-19 Europe – Crisis effects and policy recommendations](#).

**Selection of forthcoming projects**

**Concomitant expertise for CULT reports:**

INI report on [The role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism](#):

- ) Background analysis (expected October 2021);
- ) Policy Recommendations Briefing (expected October 2021).

**Other studies:**

- ) [The European Union's approach to multilingualism in its own communications policy](#) (expected April 2022);
- ) [The European Schools system: state of play, challenges and perspectives](#) (expected March 2022).

**Useful links and contacts:**

- [Research for CULT Committee](#)
- [Supporting analysis for CULT Committee](#)
- <https://twitter.com/PolicyCULT>
- [poldep-cohesion@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:poldep-cohesion@europarl.europa.eu)



**The next committee meeting: 31 August 2021**

### Useful links

- ) [CULT Committee website](#)
- ) [Meeting documents](#)
- ) [Calendar of meetings](#)

- ) [Policy Department Publications in the EP](#)
- ) [European Parliament - Think Thank](#)
- ) [The German Presidency of the Council](#)

### About the editor

European Parliament  
Directorate General for Internal Policies of the Union  
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