The need to put young people back at the heart of the European project was one of the key messages of a first exchange of views on the planned European Year of Youth (EYoY) 2022, which took place on 11 October at the CULT Committee meeting.

DG EAC, represented by its Director-General, Ms Themis Christophidou, underlined that the Year should focus on the need to create greater opportunities for all young people. In particular, she outlined that an ambitious EYoY must tackle questions linked to the digital transition (in particular when talking about equal access to education). In the Commission’s view, a dedicated year should also focus on the personal and professional development of young people, taking particular care of those who are most in need – young people with fewer opportunities. Ms Christophidou expressed her ambition to engage with no less than 20 DGs in this ambitious endeavour and thus show the cross-cutting importance of youth issues throughout all EU policy fields from employment to climate change and from regional development to agriculture and rural development. Funding for the EYoY should be secured through multiple sources, thus avoiding budgetary pressure on Erasmus+ or the European Solidarity Corps.

The European Youth Forum (EYF), represented by Mr Simon Lindkaer, board member, and Ms Inge Brees, Director of policy, advocacy and external affairs, underlined the need to fully integrate and engage with young people during all phases, from design to implementation of the EYoY. Young people have indeed shown extraordinary commitment to the solidarity effort and paid a high price during the confinement, both economically and socially. The EYF therefore expressed the need, amongst other issues, to prioritise improving employment conditions for young people and ban unpaid internships, but also to improve the quality of education and of data collection measuring the social progress of young people. The idea to organise a series of festivals on “youth and democracy” was put forward – notably as a way of fostering the feeling of belonging through a shared European vision based on cultural events, music and debates.

During the question-and-answer session, Members of Parliament underlined the absolute need for the EYoY to deliver on its promises. Members also asked the Commission to be more
precise on the ways that the year is going to be financed. They also strongly advised the Commission to be very inclusive in its preparation and make sure that all the recommendations formulated by young people during the EU structured dialogue or the EYE Event are taken into account and will be promoted during the EYoY.

Second exchange of views on the Commission legislative proposal, 25 October

A second exchange of views on the topic took place on 26 October, following the publication of the Commission’s legislative proposal on 14 October. The proposal attracted a lot of interest from CULT Members, who were eager to learn more on the content and the implementation arrangements to make the EYoY a true success. In her introductory remarks, the CULT Chair– who also acts as Rapporteur for this file – confirmed the full commitment of CULT in making this Year a success, while emphasising the somewhat unfortunate timing of the Commission’s proposal, which leaves little time for a proper preparation of the Year both at European and national level. She also underlined the importance of a reinforced budget, and the need for new financial resources not coming from existing programmes. She also underlined her engagement with young people and the importance that youth is associated at all stages, from decision-making to implementation.

During the discussion, Members expressed their strong support for the Rapporteur’s position. They also outlined a number of thematic priorities (for example: access to quality jobs; the issue of unpaid traineeships; youth mental health; recognition of youth work and of informal training; climate change; young entrepreneurs; inclusion, etc.) that they would like to develop during the European Year of Youth.

During the debate, the Commission explained that the proposal is generic with a broad scope, and that its success will of course depend on how young people are involved in the Year. To that aim, a co-creative approach with all stakeholders, as well as an active involvement of the EP, is envisaged. It was also underlined that other programmes (apart from Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps) will contribute to the budget of the Year.

World Anti-Doping Agency
Exchange of views

The afternoon of 11 October was devoted to an exchange of views with Mr Witold Bańka, President of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), which was organised in the context of the CULT own-initiative report on "EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward" (Rapporteur: T. Frankowski, EPP). WADA was created in 1999 as the global body responsible for promoting, coordinating and monitoring the protection of clean sport, being also responsible for the anti-doping Code that harmonises anti-doping policies and rules around the world. The exchange of views was an opportunity for CULT Members to be briefed for the first time on WADA’s activities linked to prevention, education, investigation and about the existing network of accredited laboratories. A special focus was put on the ongoing cooperation with the EU institutions, including for example the pilot project to enhance investigative capacities in Europe, the dedicated funding from the Erasmus+ programme to anti-doping projects and on WADA’s participation in the European Week of Sport and on the “HealthyLifestyle4All” initiative. Mr Bańka also invited CULT Members to be promoters of anti-doping matters in their respective Member States and regions.
Exchange of views with the Commission on the annual work programmes 2022 of the Erasmus+ and Creative Europe programmes

On 25 October, the CULT Committee held an exchange of views with the Commission on the Erasmus+ and Creative Europe programmes. The objective was to assess ongoing implementation in 2021 and to give input on the draft 2022 annual work programmes. The Commission representatives (DG EAC and DG CNECT) recalled the effects of the pandemic on the Erasmus+ and the Creative Europe programmes, manifested, for example, in lower budget allocation. Their overall evaluation of the 2021 work programmes was nevertheless positive.

Members reaffirmed the Committee’s priorities of making Erasmus+ more inclusive and greener.

The main issues raised by the Members concerned existing problems in the IT infrastructure, the current support for national agencies, and the funding of European Universities. Members also suggested ways to better use the new DiscoverEU strand of the programme. Concerning Creative Europe, Members primarily asked for a more concrete assessment of the 2021 annual work programme and for concrete objectives for 2022. Festivals, the music, audio-visual and media industry were mostly targeted as industries in need of support.

The implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme will be on the agenda of the CULT Committee meeting on 15 November.

Gender Equality Week – Promotion of gender equality in the EU funding programmes Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps

Exchange of views with the Commission

At the occasion of the second edition of the Gender Equality Week organised by the EP, the CULT Committee held an exchange of views with Viviane Hoffmann, Deputy Director-General in DG EAC of the European Commission, on the promotion of gender equality in the EU funding programmes Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps.

Ms Hoffmann outlined the variety of initiatives, programmes, awards, working groups and other activities in place, and reiterated that these programmes are tools to change mentalities. Members raised a number of priority points to keep in mind, notably addressing the lack of data regarding gender equality in the field of culture and the existing gender gaps in a number of sectors such as sport. Further, Members emphasised that a clear gender perspective and gender budgeting should be put in place in all programmes. The Commission assured the Committee that it is aware of these shortcomings and that they shared similar concerns.
Inclusion measures within the Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020

Public Hearing

A public hearing was held on 25 October 2021 as part of the expertise-gathering exercise that will inform the drawing up of an implementation report on Inclusion measures within the Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020. The hearing met with considerable interest from Members and was organised in two panels. In the first panel, Mr. Michal Šľachta, responsible for youth work in Roma communities within the Slovakian Government, spoke about the participation of marginalised young Roma in the Erasmus+ Programme. The second speaker, Mr Rubén Ávila Rodríguez, Policy & Research Manager in The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO), spoke about ways to involve LGBTQI young people in Erasmus+. In the second panel, Ms Giuseppina Tucci, president of the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLP), discussed inclusion in Erasmus+ from a lifelong learning perspective. Finally, Mr Andrei Popescu, from the Romanian Erasmus+ National Agency and a European Solidarity Corps Coordinator, spoke about the practicalities of implementing inclusion in a way that renders it a meaningful experience.

In the discussion, Members emphasised the responsibility of Member States to tackle discrimination and exclusion of marginalised groups in education. Members reiterated that Erasmus+ is a tool which can only work in collaboration with national policies, and that existing disparities in Europe made common inclusive measures more difficult. Furthermore, questions to the experts focused on ways to identify young individuals who are hard to reach, and Members suggested clearer and simpler communication to reach the most marginalised groups. Besides a lack of communication, Members – including from the EMPL Committee – also raised the issue of lack of data, which hinders the identification of concrete solutions. Experts suggested a couple of initiatives to strengthen inclusion measures such as more targeted data collection and the co-creation of projects with Member States, civil society organisations and directly with youngsters. They emphasised grassroots initiatives and investment in people and time as key to tackle discrimination.

State of media freedom

Exchange of views with Vice-President Jourová

On 26 October, and in view of the increasingly alarming situation of media freedom in the EU, CULT held an exchange of views with Ms Věra Jourová, Commission Vice-President for Values and Transparency, on the state of media freedom in the European Union and on the actions and regulatory initiatives foreseen in the upcoming months at EU level. On this occasion, Ms Jourová briefed Members about the upcoming Media Freedom Act, which will aim to protect media from political influence, economic pressure and provide clarity on the role of independent bodies and national regulators. The debate was very lively and several issues were discussed, such as the ongoing implementation of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the situation of journalists in the Union, and the funding and ownership of the media sector, together with the urgency to move forward with the Digital Services and Markets Acts. CULT Members expressed their satisfaction with Ms Jourová’s replies and openness and vowed to closely follow the further development of media freedom.
Votes

The European Education Area: a shared holistic approach
(Michaela Šojdrová, EPP)

On 11 October, the CULT Committee unanimously adopted (24/0/4) its draft report on *The European Education Area: a shared holistic approach* (Rapporteur: Michaela Šojdrová, EPP, Czech Republic; Opinion-Giving Committee: EMPL), which is among the key political priorities of the Committee for the current legislature. The report stresses the importance of fostering a European Education Area (EEA) not just from an educational point of view, to provide more and better opportunities for European citizens to study, train and work abroad, but indeed as a central means to provide a new impetus for the European Project as such by fostering a sense of European belonging. In line with this overall objective, the report focuses on the following elements:

- The reasoning for building an EEA;
- How to effectively bridge institutional and stakeholder approaches;
- Turning vision into reality by defining common strategic priorities and EU-level targets;
- Devising tailored sector-specific measures;
- Establishing an adequate enabling framework and governance structure for the EEA;
- Means to ensure a greater European dimension in education.

The vote in Plenary is scheduled for November I.

EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward
(Tomasz Frankowski, EPP)

On 26 October, the CULT Committee unanimously adopted (29/1/1) its draft report on *EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward* (Rapporteur: Tomasz Frankowski, EPP, Poland).

The report calls for several novelties as regards the sports sector, such as the need to discuss the EU competences as regards this policy area, the establishment of the EU Sports Coordinator, the creation of a Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) and the establishment of a network of ambassadors for sport. The report also expresses clear opposition to the setting up of a European Super League and highlights the need for a European values-based sports model with strong financial solidarity between professional and grassroots sport, and highlights the importance of stepping up efforts towards inclusion of persons with disabilities and the urgent need to address challenges such as corruption and doping. The vote in Plenary is scheduled for November II.
Exchange of views

The role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism
Salima YEMBOU (Verts/ALE)

A first exchange of views on the upcoming CULT own-initiative report *The role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism* (Rapporteur: Salima Yenbou, Greens/ALE, France) was organised on 25 October. This exchange was preceded by a presentation of a study by PolDepB on the subject, provided in the context of the concomitant expertise approach.

The study suggests that, despite limited steering and monitoring within the EU programmes, there is a significant range of projects that are addressing topics related to racism. A focus should therefore be put on fostering an exchange of and building on existing best practices.

The Rapporteur outlined that her draft report – which will be presented in December, with a committee vote expected in January – will aim to present a holistic approach, analysing systemic racism in education, culture and sports. Her intention is to provide recommendations for the reinforcement of EU programmes and instruments in the fight against racism.

Procedure file

Implementation of inclusion measures within the Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020
Laurence FARRENG (Renew)

Following directly after the public hearing of 26 October on the same topic, the Rapporteur of the forthcoming CULT implementation report on *Inclusion measures within the Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020*, Ms Laurence Farreng, (Renew, France), informed Committee Members on the advancement of her implementation report and recalled a recently published EPRS study, which will serve as one of the sources from which report will draw evidence. She acknowledged a variety of actors that have helped implement inclusion measures for the Erasmus+ programme at different levels, emphasising especially the role of youth organisations. Shadow Rapporteurs expressed their support for the report and suggested several points of consideration, including data collection, obstacles for individuals with disabilities, and the need to improve overall programme access and simplify administrative processes.

Procedure file
Policy Department Research

Recently finished projects

Concomitant expertise for CULT reports:
INI report on The role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism:
- Background analysis on The role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism.

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.

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).

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:
- Policy Recommendations Briefing (expected November 2021).
Other studies:
- The system of European Schools: state of play, challenges and perspectives (expected March 2022),
- The European Union’s approach to multilingualism in its own communications policy (expected April 2022).

Useful links and contacts:
- Research for CULT Committee
- Supporting analysis for CULT Committee
- https://twitter.com/PolicyCULT
- poldep-cohesion@europarl.europa.eu

Next CULT Committee meeting: 15 November 2021

Useful links
- CULT Committee website
- Meeting documents
- Calendar of meetings
- Policy Department Publications in the EP
- European Parliament - Think Thank
- The Slovenian Presidency of the Council

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