Structured dialogue with Commissioner Thierry Breton
(15 June 2022)

As part of the regular annual scrutiny activities of the CULT Committee, a structured dialogue with Commissioner Breton took place on 15 June. Commissioner Breton presented several measures taken at Commission level, in particular the ongoing implementation of the media strand of the Creative Europe programme, including the actions in support to journalists in the context of the Russian war against Ukraine.

Additionally, the Commissioner highlighted the difficulties regarding the implementation of the Copyright Directive and the AVMS-Directive. In respect to the latter, the CULT Committee was informed that infringement procedures have recently been initiated against 5 Member States. The Commissioner also spoke about disinformation and media pluralism in the context of the war against Ukraine. The upcoming Media Freedom Act was also discussed with CULT Members. There are many expectations regarding the proposed Act and its future role in protecting editorial independence of the media and in strengthening the governance of public media and preventing media politicisation.

The debate with CULT Members covered a wide range of topics, including the fight against online piracy, the online protection of minors, the need to tackle fake news, the economic and cultural role of the European video game sector, the lack of funding for the cultural sector and the need to ensure a multilingual European audiovisual production.

In general, Members agreed that, now more than ever, accurate information and media freedom and pluralism are essential to democracy. CULT Members agreed with Commissioner Breton to continue the dialogue on these topics in the coming months, and especially once the Media Freedom Act proposal is published.
Exchange of views on solidarity with Ukraine - Arts, culture and cultural heritage (17 May 2022)

On 17 May the CULT Committee held an exchange of views entitled “Culture in times of crisis – cultural solidarity in support of Ukraine and beyond”. Leading civil society organisations active in the cultural sector (European Cultural Foundation, Europa Nostra and Culture Action Europe) gave an account of their activities relating to the war in Ukraine, which included supporting the cultural and creative sectors, and the protection of the country’s cultural heritage. During the first part, the speakers passionately outlined the urgent need to support culture in times of crisis and war as a way to protect our European common values and as a sign of solidarity with a view towards the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine. In this context, the EU’s role was emphasised as being vital in the support of artistic freedom and the conservation and reconstruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine. According to Europa Nostra, at this point time, already over 300 heritage sites have been destroyed or seriously damaged. Finally, the speakers appealed for a Cultural Deal for Europe call – an overarching strategy that aims at placing culture at the very centre of the European project and mainstreaming this valuable resource across all policy fields. According to the three organisations, the pooling of resources and expertise would help in building a strong and resilient cultural sector in the context of any future crisis.

The second part of the session was dedicated to concrete examples. Bjorn Geldhof, Director of Pinchuk Art Centre in Kyiv and Bart de Baere, Director of MuHKA, Antwerp, and curators of the art exhibition “Imagine Ukraine” (presented at three locations- M HKA, Antwerp, BOZAR, Brusselss, Parliamentarium, EP) explained the importance of art in times of crisis and beyond as strong vector of ideas and values and a crucial building element for any common future. Culture, they said, should be at the heart of the political agenda of the EU as a factor of resilience and intercultural dialogue. Ms Alona Karavai, Museum Crisis Center, connected from Ukraine to present her work in rescuing art works and supporting museums on the frontline. Finally, three representatives of the Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada, Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze and Inna Sovsun) gave an emotional account of the dramatic challenges that the Ukrainians are facing today with regards to Russian cultural and historical revisionism.

Members of the Committee confirmed their firm support to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people and reiterated their commitment to establish culture as absolute priority. Members also emphasised the importance of keeping open the possibility of establishing cultural bridges for a peaceful future in Europe.

CULT Committee Coordinators have decided to follow up on this point with an oral question to the Commission and a motion for a resolution in the second half of the year.

Exchange of views on the war against Ukraine - media freedom, fight against disinformation and the protection of journalists (16 June 2022)

Following on the series of agenda points dedicated to Ukraine, the CULT Committee held an exchange of views entitled “Media freedom, protection of journalists and fight against disinformation in the context of the war in Ukraine” in association with the LIBE and INGE Committees. The debate also highlighted the EU’s efforts to fight Russia’s campaign on disinformation and the wide spreading of fake news, and more generally, its war on free and independent sources of information.
After an introduction by both INGE and CULT Chairs, representatives of the leading organisations in the media field (Reporters Without Borders, International Press Institute and the European Federation of Journalists) presented the actual state of play of media freedom in the EU and beyond. They outlined the devastating situation in Ukraine, where 12 journalists have been killed and many more injured since the beginning of the war. They underlined the crucial importance of creating and safeguarding good conditions for journalists to be able to operate freely and escape from, what they call “capture of media”, where media outlets are instrumentalised and used for political propaganda needs.

Jean Paul Marthoz, a media expert, journalist and rapporteur for the Council of Europe, underlined that the attacks on journalists have steadily increased during the last few years with organised crime and cyber-attacks threatening their integrity. He also underlined the rising problem of “information avoidance”, with a large part of the population in the EU simply refusing to be properly informed and increasing levels of mistrust in traditional news channels. The experts concluded that the forthcoming European Media Freedom Act, expected by the autumn, should become a pivotal element of EU’s media policy, both internally and vis-a-vis third countries, establishing safeguards for media pluralism and measures for the protection of media professionals.

In a poignant testimony, journalists in exile from online media Meduza and TV Dozd underlined that after the Russian invasion of Ukraine it has become impossible to work independently in the country. Recent legal provisions, adopted by the State Duma, threaten up to 15 years of imprisonment to anyone who refers to the “war” in Ukraine – has put an end to the freedom of expression in the country. However, the journalists outlined that there is a real demand from the Russian population for alternative information sources, and they therefore sent a plea to the EU to support the more than 700 media professionals who have fled the country.

Representatives of DG CNECT and the EEAS outlined the policy measures in place in support of media freedom and for the protection of journalism and also described efforts to counter Russia’s disinformation and propaganda machine.

During the subsequent debate, Members of the CULT, LIBE and INGE committees were keen to know more on what concretely the EU can do to counteract Russia’s flagrant disinformation campaign, not only in traditional media outlets, but also online and in entertainment programmes. They also expressed their wish to reinforce education on how to become impartially informed – this is particularly crucial for young people, who use the internet as sole source of information.

As a follow up, the CULT Committee will draw up an opinion to the AFET-DROI own-initiative report on "The protection of journalists around the world and the European Union’s policy on the matter".
European Schools: Study presentation and exchange of views (15 June)

The European Schools System (ESS) is an intergovernmental system of educational establishments – both traditional and accredited European Schools – that offers multicultural and multilingual education to children across EU Member States. The ESS educational system generally functions well. Nevertheless, it faces particular challenges in pedagogical quality assurance and language learning. A dedicated study commissioned by the CULT Committee examines the progress that the European Schools System has made during the past decade, overviews its state of affairs as of 2022, pinpoints the key challenges that the system currently faces and provides tailored recommendations on how to overcome them.

A presentation of the study, organised by the EP’s Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, was held on 15 June 2022 and focused on the following issues:

- Description of the ESS
- Previous assessments of the ESS
- Educational dimension, in particular questions related to teaching and learning
- Operational dimension, in particular as regards administrative and managerial sides of the system
- Policy recommendations

In preparation of a forthcoming CULT own-initiative report on the same topic, the study presentation was followed by a more general exchange of views on the European Schools System and its future prospects, involving also the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the European Schools as well as the European Commission.

Exchange of views with the Commission on combatting child sexual abuse (15 June)

In an exchange of views with the Commission on the latest developments on combatting child sexual abuse, Ms June LOWERY-KINGSTON, Head of Unit for Accessibility, Multilingualism, Safer Internet, DG CNECT, presented the Communication on “A Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids”, also known as BIK+. This strategy envisages age-appropriate digital services, which would not leave anyone behind, but also helping every child in Europe to be protected, empowered & respected online. It is based on three pillars: safe digital experiences to protect children, including with an age-appropriate digital environment; digital empowerment so that children acquire the necessary skills and competences for the online world; active participation, giving children a say in the digital environment, with more child-led activities to foster innovative and creative safe digital experiences.
Ms Cathrin BAUER-BULST, Head of Unit for Security in the Digital Age, DG HOME, presented the “Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse.” The proposal covers two purposes:

1) to introduce clear, uniform and balanced EU rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse, notably through a clarification of the role and responsibilities of online service providers; and
2) to establish the EU Centre on Child Sexual Abuse (EUCSA) as a decentralised agency.

The discussion covered several issues, including the link with the Digital Services Act, the need to act when prevention is not possible (including the detection of grooming), the transition period between the current and future rules, the right to be forgotten, rules applying to the metaverse, and the need for better awareness among adults, including teacher training opportunities.

European Year of Youth 2022: state of play and legacy - exchange of views with the Commission (17 May)

Five months on into the launch of the European Year of Youth 2022, the CULT Committee held an exchange of views on the state of play of the implementation of the Year with representatives of DG EAC. Ms Sophia Eriksson, responsible Director for the EYY2022, underlined that the Year was now in full swing with almost 2700 events and activities on the interactive activities map with potential impact on 14 million young people.

Ms Eriksson reiterated that all stakeholders – EU level platforms, national coordinators and local youth organisations – were working together with young people at the heart of a genuine bottom-up co-creation process – the working method of this European Year. Ms Eriksson also presented the results of a recent Eurobarometer on young people in the EU, confirming the choices on the thematic focus of the Year. Two key events at EU level, taking place at the EP, have been mentioned – the Democracy Fest (28-29 October) and the closing event (6 December).

While recognising the good implementation pace, Members of the Committee underlined the need to improve the working methods of the Year in order to make it more popular and reach out in particular to those young people that are not familiar with the EU. Members also insisted on the need to promote European Year of Youth events that would not have happened without the Year and thus avoid simple re-branding of already scheduled events. Finally, Members accentuated on the need to ensure the legacy of the Year and establish links with the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe.
Consideration of draft reports

E-sport and video games (17 May)

CULT held a consideration of the draft INI-report on E-sport and video games (Rapporteur: Laurence Farreng, Renew, France). The draft report covers the economic and employment aspects of the video game industry, which employs approximately 87 000 people in Europe.

The Rapporteur calls for a European strategy regarding the video game sector through several actions including training, funding, discoverability and dissemination of video games created in Europe, etc. The draft report also tackles the e-sport phenomenon, its attractiveness, challenges and its role in the promotion of European history, identity, values and diversity through immersive experiences.

The Shadow Rapporteurs and Members of the Committee welcomed the draft report and highlighted further topics of relevance such as the need for continuous support to SMEs, intellectual property challenges, the need for harmonised data, the greening of the sector, inclusion measures as well as the importance of preventing toxic behaviour.

The vote is scheduled to take place on 29 September 2022.

The impact of COVID-19 closures of educational, cultural, youth and sports activities on children and young people in the EU (17 May)

CULT also held a presentation of the draft own-initiative report report entitled “The impact of COVID-19 closures of educational, cultural, youth, and sports activities on children and young people in the EU” (Hannes Heide, S&D, Austria). In his draft report, the Rapporteur takes account of the profound consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular on young people. It proposes concrete policy recommendations on how to overcome the adverse consequences of this crisis and promote the wellbeing of younger generations, with a special focus on mental health and those living in rural and remote areas.

Shadow Rapporteurs and Members of the Committee strongly supported the draft report and underlined that the pandemic has aggravated pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. They were of the opinion that the “all-digital” solutions should be avoided, in particular in education, where young people need to interact to acquire life skills, for example, through youth work. Members concluded that the right measures should be taken to increase young people’s adaptability and resilience. The vote in the CULT Committee has been provisionally scheduled for July 2022.

Draft Budget 2023: Presentation of the CULT Rapporteur’s approach to budgetary amendments (15 June)

The CULT Rapporteur for the 2023 Budget (Morten Løkkegaard, Renew, Denmark) highlighted his main priorities and approach for next year’s budget. His priorities include additional support to the cultural and creative sectors still affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to ensure that the European Year of Youth benefits from enough funding from the CULT programmes in 2023 in order to ensure a long-lasting legacy beyond 2022. In addition, Mr Løkkegaard highlighted the need to bolster the funding for important programmes such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe and to ensure adequate support for the New European Bauhaus initiative.

The aim of the Rapporteur is to reach a broad consensus with the Shadow Rapporteurs so that the vote on the budgetary amendments can take place on 13 July 2022.
Public hearing on The United Kingdom and Erasmus+ (15 June)

The hearing, which was organised in collaboration with the PETI Committee, opened with two petitioners who asked the European Parliament to support EU students who wish to study in the UK.

The aim of the hearing was to take stock of the consequences of the UK’s unilateral decision not to participate in the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027. The experts confirmed that EU students who wish to study in the UK now have to overcome several administrative hurdles and pay exorbitant fees.

While UK universities were very disappointed by the decision to terminate participation in Erasmus+, they also welcomed the new “Turing” scheme as it is well funded and flexible. The US, China and Canada have become the top three destinations for students. There is currently a rise in the number of English students studying abroad, which was previously very low. Wales, too, has set up its own scheme and it dedicates a third of its funds to incoming students. Scotland is expected to follow suit.

The experts and the Commission pointed out that Erasmus+ is a very important programme as not only does it fund mobility for university students, but it also funds students in vocational education and training and staff members. It has the benefit that mobility is two-way so that all Member States benefit from incoming and outgoing students and staff members. Erasmus+ also supports small cooperation projects as well as university alliances, so it is seen as having a comprehensive approach. The main issue lies with the fact that many EU students look for courses taught in the English language and the offer on the continent does not yet fully match the demand. There is also the desire to maintain close contacts between UK and European universities.

It was generally acknowledged by experts and Members alike that a return of the UK into the Erasmus+ scheme is currently not in sight and that instead of setting-up a dedicated mobility scheme, the EU should rather keep the Erasmus+ door open for the UK.
Votes

Implementation of inclusion measures within Erasmus+ 2014-2020
(Laurence Farreng, Renew, France) (17 May)

The CULT Committee adopted a report on the "Implementation of inclusion measures within Erasmus+ 2014-2020" by a large majority (26/2/2). The report identified obstacles for inclusive mobility linked with the grants system and some issues with the IT tools. It also remarked the difficulty of evaluating and assessing the efficacy of inclusion measures given the lack of published data. Finally, the report called for more support to teachers, accompanying persons and staff of project associations to improve the inclusion and accessibility of learning mobility.

Procedure file

Towards equal rights for people with disabilities
(Sabine Verheyen, EPP, Germany) (17 May)

The opinion in the form of a letter on “Towards equal rights for people with disabilities” was adopted unanimously (29/0/1) and will contribute to the future LIBE own-initiative report on the matter. The opinion highlights the most important opportunities and challenges faced by people with disabilities in the fields of culture, education, media and sports. Furthermore, the adopted text insists on the need to prioritise early prevention measures and on the need for tailor-made policies and strategies for further inclusion of people with disabilities in the society.

Procedure file

Harmonised rules on Artificial Intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and amending certain Union Legislative Acts
(Marcel Kolaja, Greens/EFA, Czech Republic) (15 June)

The opinion was adopted unanimously (24/0/0) and asks for the AI systems used to monitor and detect student’s behaviour during tests (so-called e-proctoring systems) to be considered a) high-risk systems, and b) as technologies used for determining the areas of study a student should follow. In addition, the opinion also requests increased transparency obligations for those AI technologies which are used to create or disseminate machine-generated news, as well as for those used to recommend cultural and creative content. Finally, the opinion proposes new provisions to oblige the EU and Member States to promote the development of a sufficient level of AI literacy through education and training, skilling and reskilling programmes.

Procedure file
Policy Department Research

Recently finished projects

Concomitant expertise for CULT reports:
INI report on E-sport and videogames:
- Background analysis on Esports, May 2022;

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, October 2021;
- Briefing on The role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism – policy recommendations, November 2021.

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, May 2021;
- Thematic briefing on Media Action Plan: key challenges related to media pluralism, media freedom and democracy, May 2021;
- Briefing on Media Action Plan: policy recommendations, May 2021;

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, March 2021;
- Policy Recommendations Briefing on The situation of artists and cultural workers and the post-COVID cultural recovery in the European Union policy, May 2021;

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, February 2021;
- Study on Towards a European Education – Critical Perspectives on Challenges Ahead, October 2020;
- Briefing on Approaches of the Council and the Commission to the European Education Area: strategic priorities and quantiative objectives, April 2021;
- 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), March 2021;
- Briefing on The European Education Area: bibliographical review (internal), April 2021;

Other studies:
- The European Schools System: state of play, challenges and perspectives, June 2022
- EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward, June 2021;
- Cultural and Creative Sectors in post-COVID-19 Europe – Crisis effects and policy recommendations, February 2021;
- Education and Youth in post-COVID-19 Europe – Crisis effects and policy recommendations, May 2021.
Selection of forthcoming projects

Studies:
- *The European Union’s approach to multilingualism in its own communications policy* (expected July 2022).
- The European Universities Initiative: first lessons, main challenges and perspectives (expected November 2022).

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

Next CULT Committee meeting: 13 July 2022

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

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