Newsletter

CULT Committee meetings on 3 October and 24-25 October 2022

European Year of Youth 2022 (EYY2022) – Structured dialogue with youth

On Tuesday, 25 October, CULT held its regular structured dialogue with youth. As 2022 is the European Year of Youth, the thematic focus of the dialogue was on mainstreaming of youth participation in decision and policy making processes – one of the goals of the Year.

Mr Simon Lindkaer, board member, European Youth Forum, provided an account of the Forum’s impressions of the EYY2022. He emphasised the EU’s major responsibility to address young people’s needs and aspirations, providing them with the opportunities and a seat at the decision-making table, as well as mainstreaming youth concerns across all policy fields. He therefore called on MEPs to supply the political will to achieve concrete results. Ms Sophie Hammer, policy officer at the Austrian National Youth Council, presented the “Jugendtest” – an impact assessment tool widely in use in Austria since 2013. This tool evaluates the impact of new legislation on children and young people. Ms Hammer argued that although the test is an excellent tool to raise awareness on youth concerns, it can become a mere “tick-the-box” exercise and it will not replace the active participation of young people. Ms Katrina Leitane, rapporteur of the “EU Youth Test” at the European and Economic Social Committee (EESC), outlined how the “EU Youth Test”, which received strong support from Commissioner Gabriel, is the result of a coordinated work between young researchers and various DGs. According to her, the EU Youth Test allows for better decisions by building on mutual trust and improved transparency. It also allows for strong engagement of young people. Mr Krystof Popp, advisor on the “EU Youth Test” report, insisted that if any negative aspects are detected during the impact assessment phase, a mitigation process is triggered and affected young people, especially the most vulnerable, are duly taken into account. The test, however, remains a recommendation and is not compulsory.

The EU Youth Coordinator, Ms Biliana Sirakova, reminded how fostering youth participation is a central pillar of the EU Youth Strategy. She outlined and reviewed a number of initiatives, such as the EU Youth Ambassadors, EU Youth Dialogue, the European Youth Week, and the Youth Talks to illustrate channels for youth consultation and engagement. She also pointed out that for the purpose of EYY2022, the
Commission has completed a mapping exercise of youth-related activities throughout the DGs. More than a 100 policy initiatives involving youth in 8 key policy fields have been identified, mobilising 128 million Euros. According to Commission figures, over 150 million young people have committed to take part in more than 5000 events in the context of the EYY2022 so far.

In the subsequent question-and-answers session, MEPs asked if the EU Youth Test has brought about real change in decision making in Austria and if there were many young people consulted who are not part of major youth organisations. Members also insisted that the Commission should ensure a lasting legacy of EYY2022 by providing tangible and measurable results. For example, it has been suggested to systematically apply the EU Youth Test to new legislative proposals and to assist and maintain networks of young people established during the Year. For the first time, young people present in the room took part asking questions during this exchange of views as part of EYY2022 activities.

Public hearing on the “Implementation of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)”

CULT held a Public Hearing on 25 October. The hearing aimed to contribute to the ongoing implementation report with the same title, which is currently being drafted by the Rapporteur, Petra Kammerevert (S&D).

The four experts, who had been invited to take part, had a very rich experience and provided their assessment on the state of implementation of the revised AVMSD from different points of view. They were: Maren Rolfes, representing the commercial broadcasting sector (RTL Deutschland and ACT), Tobias Schmid, representing a media authority (North Rhine-Westphalia), Sylvie Courbarien Le Gall, representing a public television broadcaster (France Télévisions), and Luis Chaby Vaz, who spoke on behalf of the European Association of National Film and Audiovisual Agencies (EFAD) and focused on the prominence and discoverability of the European works.

Overall, the speakers agreed on the importance of the AVMSD and the fact that it covers many areas, providing a better balance between linear and non-linear audiovisual media services, while at the same time allowing for Members States’ specificities. They pointed out, however, that the transposition and implementation delays make it difficult to draw conclusions.
During the interventions, special emphasis was given to the country-of-origin principle, the need to ensure an adequate level of investment in the European works and the implementation of the quotas by video-on-demand services (VODs). Quotas were welcomed as a good starting point, but they need to be effectively "calculated", implemented and monitored. In addition, from a regulatory authority perspective, questions linked to penalties, enforcement, supervision and coordination mechanisms provided by the AVMSD were mentioned as deserving some careful assessment. Examples provided were linked to the application of financial obligations to cross-border services (either levies or direct investment obligations) and to the application of Article 3 as regards media interference and broadcasting and distribution of programmes via satellite.

Other important points referred by the speakers, covered the importance of public media and the need to ensure appropriate prominence of audiovisual media services of general interest. The speakers also tackled the interlinkage between the AVMSD and other legislative texts such as the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the newly proposed European Media Freedom Act (EMFA). In this context, several areas were referred where there was a need for further clarification (e.g., DSA applicability in relation to the AVMSD; scope and definition of audiovisual media services of general interest; independence of media authorities; the role of ERGA; transparency of audience measurement systems; funding mechanisms, etc.). Finally, an appeal was made by some of the speakers for more investment to promote the discoverability and prominence of European works as they contribute to European cultural diversity.

The discussion was very lively and Members commented on the importance of the AVMSD transposition by Ireland, where many VOD platforms are based. Members were very concerned with the current delays of transposition and with possible regulatory discrepancies between linear and non-linear audiovisual media services and with the impossibility of having up-to-date data and a clear picture of how implementation works across Europe. Members also emphasised the need to guarantee the independence of national media supervisory bodies and noted the accessibility and youth protection provisions of the AVMSD, while still questioning the methodologies used to calculate the quotas and their impact on the European market.

The Commission, represented by Audrius Perkauskas (DG CNECT), informed Members about the transposition process and referred to the planned 2026 ex-post impact assessment, which will provide further input for any possible revisions of the Directive. The Commission agreed with the speakers on the importance of the quotas and on the need for the prominence of European works and clarified that the existing guidelines aim to ensure a certain proportionality, but that different calculations are possible. Furthermore, the Commission highlighted that the EMFA will address some issues of concern linked to the independence of regulators and the propaganda during war-time and announced the publication of the Media Outlook Report for early 2023.
Protection of students, researchers and academics under threat

On 24 October, CULT held an exchange of views on the protection of students and researchers at risk with representatives from civil society and the European Commission (DG EAC; DG NEAR; EEAS). This point came as a follow up to a discussion on assistance to students in Belarus held last year. It focused on possible avenues to students and researchers who are being denied rights in their home countries (such as Belarus or Afghanistan), as well as refugee students that had to flee from war in their home countries (such as Syria, Ukraine, Somalia).

The Secretary General of the German Academic exchange services (DAAD), Mr Kai Sicks, underlined that based on best practices, such as the response to the crises in Syria and Belarus, which included the higher-education sector (Madad Fund, EU4Belarus scholarships), the EU should reflect on a European scheme that would complement the many ongoing initiatives already taken by member or associated states. Presenting the idea of a well-coordinated mechanism at EU level, Mr Matteo Vespa, President, European Students’ Union (ESU), pointed out that such a scheme must be equipped with a fast lane to deal with emergencies and humanitarian crises. He gave the example of a scheme operating in Afghanistan, with multiple application periods, which is open to displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers through humanitarian corridors in collaboration with international and United Nations organisations such as the UNHCR.

Representatives of the Commission undertook an in-depth review of existing measures and instruments at EU level to assist and support students and researchers at risk. It was underlined that access to education is a human right and therefore included in the political dialogue with third countries. The situation, however, remains very difficult in post-conflict countries such as Syria and in particular Afghanistan, where girls can only attend education up to the sixth grade.

During the debate, CULT praised the engagement and efforts of the organisations and welcomed the idea of setting up an EU coordinating mechanism for assistance to students and researchers at risk. Members argued that most recently the war in Ukraine has again demonstrated the importance to take European action.

Presentation of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) working group report on Cultural Heritage and Climate Change – “Strengthening Cultural Heritage Resilience for Climate Change”

On 25 October, Ms Catherine Magnant, Head of Unit, Directorate General for Education and Culture, presented the report relating to the work of the expert working group, which was set up according to the EU’s Work Plan for Culture 2019 – 2022. The OMC group of 50 experts from 25 Member States and 3 associated countries met, discussed and exchanged information on the impact of climate change on cultural heritage. Their work also emphasised what can be learned from cultural heritage in addressing
the climate crisis. The final report, which was published recently, includes 10 recommendations and 83 best practices from 26 countries. Ms Magnant gave specific details relating to two best practices:

- Norway – illustrating the point that the cost of upgrading older buildings is lower and more sustainable than constructing new buildings
- Croatia – the art of dry stone walling, which prevents flooding and avalanches, and demonstrates the importance of passing on traditional skills to the next generation.

In the discussion that followed the presentation, the Members emphasised the European Year of Skills 2023 as an opportunity to highlight and promote traditional skills and crafts. They also called for the wider promotion of funding opportunities for culture, such as the CulturEU interactive funding guide.

Consideration of draft reports/opinions

Implementation of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive

Petra Kammerevert (S&D)

CULT held a first exchange of views on the Implementation report on the “Audiovisual Media Services Directive” (Rapporteur: Petra Kammerevert, S&D) on 3 October. The Rapporteur outlined briefly the main objectives of the report and informed CULT Members about the work being carried out and the next steps and timeline. Overall, the Rapporteur plans to tackle several questions linked to the country-of-origin principle and to the application of Article 13 on the share of European works available in the catalogues. Furthermore, film financing and support to European productions and audiovisual professionals are also points of concern to the Rapporteur. On 12 October, the Rapporteur held a Stakeholders’ meeting with the participation of the Shadow Rapporteurs, and on 25 October a public hearing took place in CULT in order to continue the work on the Report.
Implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations

Salima Yenbou (Renew)

On 3 October, CULT considered the draft implementation report on “the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations” (Rapporteur: Salima Yenbou, Renew). In her presentation, the Rapporteur emphasised the timeliness of the report as the Council is currently preparing its next Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026. Overall, she assessed the implementation of the NEAC and the Communication on international cultural relations (ICR) as satisfactory. She stressed, however, that greater focus should be put on inclusion and diversity, enhancing the accessibility of culture and simplifying access to EU funding, especially for smaller entities. In relation to ICR, she called for more coordination with the parties concerned as well as for a real strategy.

In the debate, Members mentioned the need to focus on instruments that make the creative sectors more resilient by strengthening their adaptability to possible crises, to develop a European status for workers in the cultural sector availing of the best practices from Member States, and to look at the cultural dimension of sustainability. Others referred to the need to reduce red tape for applicants to EU funding and to facilitate the access to funding for smaller entities. Further, Members stated the importance of arts and culture in wellbeing, particularly in the context of the pandemic and the Russian war against Ukraine. In relation to ICR, Members underlined the importance of the restitution of cultural goods, the need to fight disinformation in third countries as well as foreign interference in the EU, and to go beyond a crisis approach and develop a more long-term sustainable approach.

Votes

Esports and video games

Laurence Farreng (Renew)

CULT unanimously adopted (26/0/0) the INI report on “Esports and video games” (Rapporteur: Laurence Farreng, Renew Group) on 3 October.

The endorsed report focuses on the importance of video games and esports in Europe, both from an economic and cultural perspectives. The report highlights many of the challenges linked to esports and video games such as funding, skills shortage, working conditions and stigmatisation. Furthermore, it highlights the key role of intellectual property (IP) in relation to the adequate remuneration of game developers and artists and to the fact that video games and esports can be valuable teaching tools in order to promote positive values and skills such as fair-play, non-discrimination, teamwork, leadership, gender equality, etc. Finally, the report calls for a visa for esports personnel, for the development of a Charter to promote European values in esports competitions and for the creation of a European Video Game Observatory.

The report is planned to be adopted by the Plenary in November.
General budget of the European Union for the financial year 2023 - all sections
Morten Løkkegaard (Renew)

On 3 October, CULT adopted, by a large majority (24/1/1), the opinion to the resolution on the 2023 budget (Rapporteur: Morten Løkkegaard (Renew), Lead Committee BUDG). The outcome of the vote confirms the political priorities highlighted in the budgetary amendments adopted in July and calls for an increase of the Erasmus+ budget by EUR 200 million, an increase to the Creative Europe Programme by EUR 40 million and an increase to the European Solidary Corps by EUR 10 million. In addition, CULT requested the financing of the New European Bauhaus initiative through appropriations made available within Horizon Europe budgetary lines. Overall, the budgetary increases adopted by CULT would aim to support students' mobility, skills development, the achievement of the European Education Area, the European Universities initiative, not-for-profit sport events and projects addressing the consequences of the war in Ukraine. Furthermore, CULT insisted on the fact that the culture and creative sectors have not yet recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic and that the news media sector should be supported in order to be able to counter disinformation. Finally, CULT recalled through its amendments the importance of contributing to a long-lasting legacy of EYY2022.

Procedure file

Upscaling the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework: a resilient EU budget fit for new challenges
Victor Negrescu (S&D)

On 3 October, CULT adopted its opinion on the BUDG own-initiative report on upscaling the 2021-2027 MFF by a very large majority (24/1/1). The report aims to communicate Parliament’s political priorities to the Commission, which is called upon to prepare a fully-fledged revision of the current financial framework in the face of unforeseen events since 2021.

The Committee recalls that EU policies on education, youth, culture, media and sports are structurally underfunded and that this situation has been made worse by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has hit these sectors particularly hard. As a consequence of the Russian war against Ukraine, many actions in support of Ukrainian teachers, students, artists, journalists and others affected by the war have been funded from Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps and Creative Europe, putting additional pressure on their budgets.

Also, new political priorities that have emerged since 2021, such as the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative, have not been accompanied by adequate, fresh financial resources, creating additional risk of underfunding already agreed policy priorities and actions under the Erasmus+ programme, the European Solidarity Corps and Creative Europe. Therefore, the Commission and the Member States should prepare a revision of the MFF that adds significant funding for these programmes to face the
pressures they are under and creates a separate NEB mission under Horizon Europe with a budget of EUR 500 million.

Procedure file

Proposals of the European Parliament for the amendment of the Treaties
Laurence Farreng (Renew)

By a large majority (19/3/4), on 3 October CULT adopted its opinion on the AFCO Committee’s report “Suggestions on proposals of the European Parliament for the amendment of the Treaties”, which is intended as a follow-up to the recommendations of the Conference on the Future of Europe. In its opinion, CULT expresses special support for those recommendations of the Conference aimed at fostering culture, education, youth and solidarity, audiovisual media and sport policies, and highlights the fundamental role of these policies in strengthening a European sense of belonging. More particularly, the opinion requests amending Articles 4 and 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) to introduce shared competences in the field of education, especially in citizenship education, and stresses the need for common minimum standards in education across Europe. In addition, the opinion asks for the protection of and respect for artistic freedom, academic freedom, including institutional autonomy, as well as freedom of speech and of the media to be clearly enshrined in the Treaties.

Procedure file

Cultural solidarity with Ukraine and for a joint emergency response mechanism for cultural recovery in Europe
Sabine Verheyen (EPP)

On 3 October, CULT adopted a motion for a resolution on “Cultural solidarity with Ukraine and for a joint emergency response mechanism for cultural recovery in Europe” (endorsed by the EP at its October II Plenary). In its resolution, CULT called on the Commission to explore the possibility of establishing or acting as a partner in a European emergency response and recovery mechanism dedicated specifically to the cultural, cultural heritage and creative ecosystems and to support these sectors hit hard by conflicts, as is currently the case in Ukraine.

The resolution also defines Russia’s war on Ukraine as an attempt to destroy the identity and culture of a sovereign nation with targeted acts of destruction of cultural heritage. The adopted text stresses the urgency of supporting Ukraine in documenting thoroughly all attacks on cultural heritage, especially those that constitute potential war crimes and which are committed against cultural heritage protected by international conventions. The resolution proposes that the EU should physically protect monuments and artefacts and strengthen its support for the digitisation of Ukraine’s cultural heritage.

Procedure file
Transparency and targeting of political advertising

Sabine Verheyen (EPP)

On 25 October, CULT adopted, by a large majority (21/3/3), its opinion to the proposal on the transparency and targeting of political advertising (Rapporteur: Sabine Verheyen, EPP), which will contribute to the ongoing Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) report on the matter. The opinion focuses on a set of suggestions linked to the definition of political advertising and political advertising service in addition to the need to safeguard the freedom of expression and editorial content. Furthermore, the opinion seeks to enhance the transparency requirements for each political advertisement and to expand the provisions on the political advertisement repositories. Finally, the opinion calls for a clearer involvement of the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA).

Procedure file

Policy Department Research

Recently finished projects

Concomitant expertise for CULT reports:
INI report on Esports 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 quantitative 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 Union’s approach to multilingualism in its own communications policy, October 2022;
- 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 Universities Initiative: first lessons, main challenges and perspectives (expected January 2023);
- Protection of cultural heritage in war zones, with a special focus on Ukraine (expected March 2023).

Concomitant expertise for CULT reports:
Implementation report on The revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive:
- Background analysis on ‘Implementation of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive’ policy (expected November 2022);

Workshop:
Influence of social media on the development of children and young people (expected March 2023).

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: 14 November 2022

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

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