

Newsletter

CULT Committee meetings on 24 and 25 May 2023

Exchange of views with Commissioner Breton



On 24 May, Thierry Breton, Commissioner for the Internal Market, addressed CULT as part of the structured dialogue between Parliament and the Commission. This exchange provided CULT Members with an update on the challenges facing the cultural, media and audiovisual sectors.

During his intervention, Commissioner Breton highlighted some of the key findings of the recently published "European Media Industry Outlook" report, which tackles several topics, among them the need to protect intellectual

property and to fight practices that weaken the position of European creators such as the so-called "buyout" contracts. In addition, Commissioner Breton referred to the decisive role of innovation and of the new technologies that have an impact on the creative sectors and announced the launch of a platform for exchanges on virtual and augmented reality and the deployment of a media data space (with a budget of EUR 8 million from the Digital Europe Programme).

He mentioned also other topics such as the upcoming virtual worlds communication, the results of the Creative Europe Programme in supporting films, the Medialinvest scheme, the financing expected from the European Recovery and Resilience Facility and the gigabit proposal.

Specifically on the implementation of the AVMS Directive, Commissioner Breton confirmed that Member States are imposing new financial obligations for the promotion of European works — through direct investment or new levies, while acknowledging that within video-on-demand services up to 30% of European works are British, often co-produced with the United States. Commissioner Breton alerted to the fact that it should be assessed if the application of the definition of "European works" as laid down in the AVMS Directive is in line with the promotion of cultural diversity objectives. In addition, Commissioner Breton stressed the special role of the news media (which represents nearly 44,000 companies in total) and that the Media Freedom Act is fully in line with the existing EU legal framework (such as the AVMS Directive and the Digital Services Act).

During the discussion that followed, CULT Members were particularly interested in issues related to the recently published recommendation on combating online piracy of live content, the challenges linked to Artificial Intelligence (AI), the contractual conditions of European creators and the availability and reliability of data provided by the Commission in several recently published reports. Members were also keen to discuss the reasons for delays regarding implementation of several EU legal acts.

The CULT Committee Chair concluded by stressing the importance of protecting media freedom and pluralism, which are fundamental rights going beyond internal market objectives. Ms Verheyen also urged Commissioner Breton to first address implementation issues linked to EU legislation before proposing new initiatives or changes to existing definitions such as the one on "European Works". Finally, the Chair and Mr Breton concluded that the dialogue between CULT and the Commissioner should be strengthened in the coming months.

High-level exchange of views with the Commission on the 2023 Annual Work Programmes (Erasmus+; European Solidarity Corps; Creative Europe; Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme)

In line with CULT's rolling programme of scrutiny activities, the Committee held an exchange of views with the European Commission (DG EAC, DG CNECT and DG JUST) on the key priorities of the adopted 2023 Annual Work Programmes of the Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, the Creative Europe and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programmes, and their current state of implementation.

Sophia Eriksson-Waterschoot, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+ (DG EAC) considered that, despite a difficult start, Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps had shown remarkable resilience in the first three years of their implementation. With EUR 4.43 billion, the highest annual envelope ever, Erasmus+ will, in 2023, contribute to building a European Education Area, support the EU Youth Strategy and the EU Strategy for Sport. Parliament was thanked for supporting the exceptional frontloading of EUR 100 million from 2027 to 2023 and for the additional EUR 20 million fresh money secured in the conciliation on the annual budget. While mobility is slowly returning to its pre-pandemic levels, the new challenge is ensuring that the increasing cost of living does not threaten the programme's mobility targets and inclusion objective. In response to high inflation, grants for Erasmus+ beneficiaries were



increased by 12.5% in autumn 2022, which has had a positive impact. Ensuring the legacy of the 2022 European Year of Youth was also high on the agenda, as was addressing flaws in the IT landscape of the programme.

As for the European Solidarity Corps, 2023 is the year for getting the numbers of volunteering mobility back on track, continuing solidarity with Ukraine and deploying the first humanitarian aid volunteers on the ground. Parliament managed to inject an extra EUR 3 million into the programme's 2023 envelope, allowing a boost of the number of actions.

Georg Häusler, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport (DG EAC), noted that the annual budget of Creative Europe's Culture strand (EUR 102.9 million) is 21% lower than in 2022 due to a frontloading of funds in 2021 and 2022 to boost post-pandemic recovery of the sectors, leading to

a lower success rate of applicants in 2023. Programming priorities are innovation, joint creation, exchange of practices and mobility of artists. Mentioned as particularly successful were the cooperation programme for literary translations, the new mobility scheme for artists 'Culture moves Europe' launched in autumn 2022, and PerformEurope, an EP-initiated project to promote sustainable touring.

Lucia Recalde, Head of Unit for Media Policy (DG CNECT) presented key priorities of Creative Europe's Media and Cross-sectoral strands in 2023. The Media strand (EUR 180 million), at cruising speed, focuses on continuing the implementation of 'greening' incentives and inclusion/diversity measures. Other actions highlighted were a new 'mini-slate development' measure, targeting specifically countries with lower capacity; actions to foster co-productions and cross-border collaboration, including calls targeting festivals; 'Films on the move' to promote movie distribution across borders; and measures in support of cinemas, which have been hardest hit by the pandemic. The participation of third countries in this strand, such as countries in the Western Balkans, Tunisia and Ukraine, was provisionally granted until the end of 2022 to those who had participated in the 2014-2020 programme. The Commission has extended the deadline to 30 June 2023 for meeting conditions linked to the implementation of the AVMSD and is working closely with those who have not yet demonstrated compliance, in order to facilitate their continued participation in the programme.

In the cross-sectoral strand (EUR 27 million), there has been an overwhelming response to the new call in support of news media and media literacy. Support for the Media Pluralism Monitor continued to be a very important action, as well as the equity mechanism MediaInvest, for which an agreement will be signed soon with the EIF.

Regarding the Strand "Citizens' engagement and participation" of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (with a EUR 32 million budget in 2023), Valeria Setti, Deputy Head of Unit in charge of Budget, Programmes and Financial

Management (DG JUST), informed the Committee that, after two difficult implementation years, there is now a very good response to calls. The annual call on 'Citizens engagement and participation' (EUR 6 million) was financing concrete actions to encourage citizens' debate, directly linked to the 2024 European elections. While uptake of the calls on town twinning and networks of towns was slow at the start of the MFF, applications in 2023 had reached record numbers. The novel mechanism of 'cascading grants', which allows re-granting by intermediary organisations through a simplified mechanism, is positively received by beneficiaries as it encourages capacity building of grassroots organisations. A number of Ukraine-focussed actions on child protection and support for victims of gender-based violence were continuing.

All programmes were maintaining a special focus on supporting Ukraine in 2023. Preparatory work has started for delivering mid-term evaluations of all programmes by the end of 2024, in order to draw lessons for the design of the next generation of programmes.

In the debate, Members focused their questions on Erasmus+. Many Members raised their concerns with the persisting problems with the performance of the IT environment of the programme. They insisted that, although some progress could be noted since December 2022, addressing the issues encountered by applicants and beneficiaries (including its new eTwinning platform) should continue to be a top priority. Members also discussed measures to promote inclusion, expressed concern about the impact of the rising cost of living on beneficiaries and questioned the adequacy of the recent grant increases. Finally, Members discussed the Commission's new policies on visibility and programme branding, which eliminated the EU flag from the logo, making it more difficult to identify Erasmus+ as an EU programme.

The scrutiny debate on the European Solidarity Corps, Creative Europe and CERV programmes was postponed to a subsequent CULT meeting.

High-level exchange of views on sexual and other forms of harassment in the cultural and creative sectors



Mr Georg Häusler, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport at the Commission's DG EAC, presented the most important issues concerning the cultural and creative sectors. He first presented national and EU data on the involvement of women in the culture and creative sectors, and how discrepancies in the number of women active in creating, visual and performing arts bring on challenges concerning sexual and other forms of harassment. EU Member States have recognised these problems, and addressing gender inequalities has been included as one of the key priorities in the sector. He then

presented the study [*Towards gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors – Recommendations of the OMC \(open method of coordination\) working group of Member States' experts*](#), highlighting the constraints that women face in the arts and cultural sector, particularly linked to the nature of employment, the influence of physical appearance in performing arts and other difficulties faced by women in these fields. Despite the fact that a lot of improvement is still needed, he raised examples of continuing work to improve working conditions and data collection in these areas, as well as the inclusion and diversity obligations and measures in place against discrimination and sexual harassment embedded in EU programmes.

Ms Ilse Ghekiere, artist and initiator at Engagement Arts BE, then presented the *Engagement Arts* campaign and its vision for an inclusive and harassment-free arts sector. She mentioned, among other things, how the role of helplines could be enhanced to provide minimum legal advice and concrete information on how to address the situation, and the need for further awareness campaigns, qualitative research and training. She suggested that the EU could provide funding for grassroots initiatives to support projects that distribute knowledge, and support congresses and symposia to exchange best practices.

MEPs raised issues such as: awareness campaigns (particularly targeted towards men and aiming to protect children), the need to address the specificities of this industry (including the cinema sector) and a focus on the working conditions in the cultural sector, and the number of female students in art schools and academies. Finally, Members discussed how the #metoo movement has opened new dynamics in the arts and performing arts sectors, and whether there have been negative consequences – or even a backlash – as a results of measures taken.

Consideration of draft reports/opinions

Cultural diversity and the conditions for authors in the European music streaming market

Ibán García Del Blanco (S&D)



CULT held a first exchange of views on the INI report on '*Cultural diversity and the conditions for authors in the European music streaming market*'. The Rapporteur shared his preliminary remarks on the topic, stressing in particular that the music market has been drastically affected by digitisation to the detriment of songwriters.

The Rapporteur underlined several key structural problems in the music streaming market that do not ensure fair remuneration for artists, potentially threatening cultural diversity. He stressed that it was time to adapt the current streaming model to a system that better reflected the immense cultural value of EU artists.

He also raised the issue of the transparency of algorithms and personal recommendations that favour certain songs to the detriment of the vast majority of lesser-known artists, recalling that streaming platforms thus played a crucial role in controlling what people listened to. The Rapporteur called for more transparency from streaming platforms, in particular data on the distribution of streaming revenues.

Finally, he mentioned the need to ensure the correct identification of content through metadata on streaming services and to develop a new strategy to ensure the prominence and discoverability of EU songs.

The draft report will be presented to CULT on 17/18 July.

[Procedure file](#)

Virtual worlds – opportunities, risks and policy implications for the single market

Laurence Farreng (Renew)



The Rapporteur was replaced by Ms Ilana Cicurel, who presented the CULT draft opinion to the IMCO own-initiative report. She emphasised that it is important to take into account the developments of virtual worlds in the education and cultural sectors. An operational rather than an exhaustive definition is needed. Virtual worlds can bring new opportunities for culture, provided that they are open, diverse, and accessible to all. She emphasised that metaverses can bring new opportunities in education and research, as they change the way we acquire knowledge and improve the way we learn and educate. The EU needs an overall strategy to maintain sovereignty, especially concerning video games and immersive worlds. Finally, she highlighted that intellectual property is a key factor to keep into account.

In the ensuing debate, CULT Shadow Rapporteurs and Members agreed on the importance and impact of virtual worlds and metaverses, including virtual and augmented reality, on arts, education, training and youth. They stressed the need for an IP regime to be established in virtual worlds to protect actors and cultural heritage, and discussed to what extent EU funding, including from Creative Europe programme, should cover these new developments. Finally, Members raised issues related to equal access and equality, even from disadvantaged and marginalised groups. The IMCO Rapporteur, Pablo ARIAS ECHEVERRIA, stressed the need to build clear foundations for further legislation in the future to address the impact of the digital revolution.

The deadline for amendments 1 June at 17:00.

[Procedure file](#)

Implementation of the 2018 Geo-blocking Regulation in the digital single market

Sabine Verheyen (PPE)



The Committee held an exchange of views on the draft opinion on the 'Implementation of the 2018 Geo-blocking Regulation in the digital single market.

The Rapporteur presented the main points of her draft opinion.

She first recalled the importance of the film and audiovisual sector for the EU at both economic and cultural level, stressing it is vital sector for safeguarding the EU's cultural and linguistic diversity as well as media pluralism.

She then reiterated the fact that the current system of exclusive territorial licensing ensures the sustainable financing of films and audiovisual content, whilst being crucial to ensuring both content diversity to the benefit of EU consumers.

The Rapporteur therefore welcomed the Commission's first short-term review of the Geo-blocking Regulation, which upholds the continued exclusion of audiovisual services from the scope of the regulation. She considered that the inclusion of audiovisual services in the scope of the Regulation would result in a significant loss of revenue, putting investment in new content at risk, while eroding contractual freedom and reducing cultural diversity in both content production and distribution.

In the ensuing debate, whilst most Members supported the exclusion of the audiovisual sector from the scope of the Regulation, some considered that such an exclusion was an obstacle to the completion of the digital single market to the detriment of the EU citizens.

The deadline for amendments is 30 May 2023, 12.00 p.m.

[Procedure file](#)

The future of the European book sector

Tomasz Frankowski (PPE)



CULT held an exchange of views on the INI report on 'The future of the European book sector'. The Rapporteur presented the main points of his draft report.

The Rapporteur first underlined the social importance of access to books, recalling that the priority of the European book sector should be to improve accessibility for disabled, blind and partially sighted people, while calling for the transposition of the European Accessibility Act in all Member States.

He then emphasised the need to support and promote better circulation of European books, recognising the strategic role of translators, libraries and local bookshops in this respect.

Another key issue is the promotion of reading. Given the dramatic increase in daily screen time, especially by the younger generations, the Rapporteur stressed that the promotion of reading from an early age is becoming even more important. He highlighted in particular some initiatives such as the "First Book" programme implemented in some Member States, while encouraging the introduction of a "cultural pass" to facilitate the purchase of and access to books.

Finally, the Rapporteur mentioned the various challenges the sector faces in a wide range of areas, such as environmental sustainability, interoperability of e-books, AI, and made a number of recommendations in this respect.

The deadline for amendments is 1 June, 3.00 p.m.

[Procedure file](#)

Votes

CULT own-initiative report on “The System of European Schools: State of play, Challenges and Perspectives”

Ilana Cicurel (Renew)



On 25 May, the CULT own-initiative report on “The System of European Schools: State of play, Challenges and Perspectives” (Rapporteur: Ilana Cicurel, Renew) was adopted unanimously by the Committee (22/0/1).

This report takes stock of the European Schools System (ESS) and outlines perspectives for future development. To that aim, the report is structured as follows:

1. State of affairs of the ESS and vision;
2. Governance, management and legal issues;
3. Resources, infrastructure and staff;
4. Educational and pedagogical quality; and
5. Outlook.

In its providing high-quality multilingual education with a strong European dimension and pedagogical innovations, and with the European Baccalaureate being recognised in all EU Member States, the ESS is recognised as a distinct model for educational reform in Europe. This goes especially with regard to the creation of a European Education Area (EEA), representing one of CULT’s political priorities in the current legislative term. With this in mind, the report highlights the undeniable strengths and the unique character of the European Schools, but also acknowledges the need for substantial reform in several areas, including the governance of the ESS.

[Procedure file](#)

Protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings (“Strategic lawsuits against public participation”)

Stelios Kouloglou (The Left)



During the vote on the CULT Committee legislative opinion, all the 37 compromise amendments proposed by the rapporteur were adopted. The final vote on the opinion was endorsed with a huge majority (22 in favour/2 against/0 abstentions).

The adopted opinion to the JURI Committee report strengthens in the level of protection for persons and entities active on public participation, such as journalists, NGOs, human rights defenders and various civil society organisations. It proposes that ongoing SLAAPs cases are covered. CULT asked for an immediate dismissal in proven SLAAPs cases with appropriate

compensation system for victims. The committee also asks for an reinforcement of the cross-border dimension in the fight against SLAAPs.

JURI Committee is set to vote on its legislative resolution in June.

[Procedure file](#)

Policy Department Research

Recently finished projects

Concomitant expertise for CULT reports:



Legislative report on the *European Media Freedom Act* :

- Background analysis on [European Media Freedom Act](#), April 2023
- Policy recommendations briefing [European Media Freedom Act](#), May 2023

Implementation report on *The revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive*:

- Background analysis on [Implementation of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#), November 2022;
- Policy recommendations briefing on [The Implementation and Future of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#), November 2022.

INI report on *Esports and video games*:

- Background analysis on [Esports](#), May 2022;
- Briefing on [Esports - Policy Recommendations](#), 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:

- [*Protecting cultural heritage from armed conflicts in Ukraine and beyond*](#), March 2023
- [*The influence of social media on the development of children and young people*](#), February 2023
- [*The European Universities Initiative: first lessons, main challenges and perspectives*](#), January 2023;
- [*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.

Workshop:

- [*Workshop on the influence of social media on the development of children and young people*](#), held on 01/03/2023.

Selection of forthcoming projects

Concomitant expertise for CULT reports:

Implementation reports on MFF programmes

- *The EU funding programmes for 2021-2027 in Culture, Media, Education, Youth and Sport: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives: Erasmus +;*
- *The EU funding programmes for 2021-2027 in Culture, Media, Education, Youth and Sport: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives: Creative Europe;*
- *The EU funding programmes for 2021-2027 in Culture, Media, Education, Youth and Sport: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives: European Solidarity Corps;*

- *The EU funding programmes for 2021-2027 in Culture, Media, Education, Youth and Sport: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives: Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme - Strand 3 "Citizens' engagement and participation".*

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: 28-29 June 2023

Useful links

- [CULT Committee website](#)
- [Meeting documents](#)
- [Calendar of meetings](#)
- [Policy Department Publications in the EP](#)
- [European Parliament - Think Thank](#)
- [The Swedish Presidency of the Council](#)

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