

Newsletter

CULT Committee meetings on 11 and 24 January 2024

Presentation of the priorities of the Belgian Presidency



On 11 January, Ministers from the Belgian Presidency of the Council, Mr Jan Jambon (Minister-President of the Government of Flanders) and Mr Benjamin Dalle (Flemish Minister for Brussels Affairs, Youth, Media and Poverty Reduction), presented their priorities in the areas of culture, media and youth.

Flemish Minister-President, Jan Jambon underlined that, in the area of culture, the Belgian Council Presidency focuses on strengthening the cultural and creative sectors hit hard by the protracted impact of

the COVID-19 crisis, by enhancing their resilience and supporting their ability to take advantage of the benefits of the ongoing digital transformation. In particular, the Belgian Presidency will focus on data-driven audience development and plans to support cross-border cooperation between cultural organisations between the Member States. Further, the Presidency will stimulate the debate on the impact of artificial intelligence on culture and on the value of cultural heritage in shaping a collective European identity.

With reference to **media**, Minister Benjamin Dalle expressed the Belgian Presidency's determination to finalise the European Media Freedom Act before the European elections, following the informal agreement reached under the Spanish Presidency. Further, the Presidency intends to initiate discussions on how to boost investments in the European audiovisual ecosystem and enhance the sector's adaptability, innovation and cooperation capacity by better knowledge sharing and introducing new financing mechanisms. Finally, the Belgian Presidency wants to focus on increasing the awareness of the important role influencers and online content creators play. The Presidency wants to encourage them to use their role more responsibly and wants to positively support their activities.

In the area of **youth**, the Belgian Presidency's focus is on youth participation and social inclusion, through support for the 10th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue, the activities of Ghent as the 2024 European Youth Capital and the adoption of Council conclusions on inclusive societies for young people. Strengthening youth work and youth policy is also a further priority, with an emphasis being placed on local level involvement. Finally, the importance of mobility and volunteering by young people will feature prominently in the upcoming Council conclusions on the evaluation of the impact

of the 2022 European Year of Youth, as well as the introduction of a “Youth Test” in EU policies. In all these Presidency proceedings, the recommendations from children and young people will be considered.

In the ensuing discussion, Members discussed ways to ensure greater involvement of young people in the upcoming European elections, not only as voters, but also as political candidates, and the contribution that EU and Member States' youth programmes can make to that end. In the area of media, Members raised the importance of financing European productions. Minister Dalle stated that financing should be strengthened as part of the upcoming AVMSD revision and that video sharing platforms should contribute financially to the production of European content. In the area of culture, Members raised the underfinancing of EU funded programmes such as Creative Europe, where many good projects cannot be financed due to a lack of funding under the general EU budget. Further issues discussed related to the challenges raised by the digital transformation of cultural production and the status and labour conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals, which the Belgian Presidency intends to keep on the policy agenda through an expert seminar.

On **24 January**, three Ministers of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, representing the Belgian Presidency of the Council, highlighted their priorities in the areas of education and sports.

Mr Pierre-Yves Jeholet (Minister-President) underlined that, in the area of **sports**, the Belgian Council Presidency plans to adopt the EU work plan 2024-2027 for sport and to discuss the role of non-organised sport and free physical activity within a European sports model, with a focus on the local level. The Belgian Presidency will also organise the next European Forum on sport in Liège.



With reference to **education**, Ms Françoise Bertieaux (Minister for Higher Education) mentioned mobility as a clear priority, with plans for a Council proposal entitled “Europe on the move” to remove barriers to learning mobility at all levels of education, especially for youth with fewer opportunities. A second priority is improving the participation rates of adults in training and life-long learning.

Ms Caroline Désir (Minister for Compulsory Education) emphasised the importance of inclusivity of compulsory education systems, with policy decisions based on reliable data. Other focal areas include digital education and addressing teacher shortages and teacher drop-out rates across the EU.

In the ensuing discussion, Members discussed ways to accelerate efforts to achieve the European Education Area by 2025 and the development of a true European Degree. Members asked the Presidency, amongst other things, to consider ways to support the teaching profession.

Link to the official Belgian Presidency programme:

https://belgian-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/media/3kajw1io/programme_en.pdf

Ghent European Youth Capital 2024



Ms Céline De Coninck, Project leader for Ghent European Youth Capital (EYC) 2024, presented the activities planned for the year. She highlighted, in particular, how the EYC activities fall under the EU youth dialogue activities, events reaching out to first-time voters by involving schools, the coaching of young people to set up youth exchanges and exchange of youth workers with Erasmus+ youth funding, and how participation is ensured by reaching

out young people in a holistic way. In the following debate, CULT stressed the importance of reaching out to young people who are not yet involved in political processes, those who are not in formal education and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Moreover, Members highlighted how the example of micro-granting is carried out by Ghent in the framework of the EYC activities could be replicated to simplify access to Erasmus+ funding. Finally, Members stressed the need to support EYCs with EU funding in order to set up a network of best practices among former and future EYCs. Funding opportunities like the Melina Mercouri Prize for European Capitals of Culture were highlighted – with PP-PA proposals being suggested in this regard.

Legacy of the European Year of Youth

The CULT Committee held an exchange of views with Ms Sophia ERIKSSON WATERSCHOOT, DG EAC's Director responsible for youth issues, to discuss new Commission initiatives as part of the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022 (EYY2022).

The Chair, Ms Verheyen, opened the exchange of views underlining the importance of EU policies for young people and the need to take them closer to policy- and decision-making processes in Brussels. The Chair underlined the important role of the EU's institutions in this regard. She also recalled that, in its resolution on the Legacy of the EYY2022, the European Parliament asked for a full engagement with young people on all levels and in particular through an EU Youth Test. In her presentation, Ms Eriksson presented the main elements of the Commission's Communication on the legacy of the EYY2022. She underlined the will of the Commission's services to give a stronger voice to young people. She announced a new "modus operandi" –giving young people a stronger voice – through 14 actions and in particular through the introduction of new "Youth checks", checking the youth relevance of proposals in all policy fields and through stronger policy dialogue between EU policy makers and young people. In addition, the Commission intends to mainstream youth concerns throughout the full spectrum of EU policies through some 46 initiatives covering 5 key policy fields – health and mental health, environment and climate change, education and training and external dimension.

During the debate, MEPs brought a critical perspective to the Commission's plans and in particular asked for clear criteria to be put into place for the Youth Test and to also reach out to young people who have fewer opportunities. Members also asked for better visibility of the new actions and asked for a clear list of key actions to be put forward. A high-level conference on youth policies and engagement with young people was also suggested. It was agreed that the next Parliament should continue the work on this important dimension.



Exchange of views on educational mobility post-Brexit



Mr Angus Robertson, Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture in the Scottish Government, underlined that Scotland, as a European nation, wanted to preserve its connection with European neighbours and build upon its many shared interests. The Windsor Framework, reached in February 2023, had generated positive energy, emanating in the UK's re-association to Horizon Europe and Copernicus. However, educational mobility and the mobility of creative professionals remained hampered.

Non-participation in Erasmus+ had resulted in an average 20% drop of university students from the top-10 EU partner countries, with the UK Government's Turing scheme not adequately providing for inward student mobility and staff mobility; it is much less funded than Erasmus+. The Minister emphasised that Scotland joining the EU in its own right remained the primary goal, with full participation in Erasmus+ and Creative Europe through its EU membership. In the meantime, the Scottish Government was focused on restoring opportunities wherever possible. A Scottish Educational Exchange Test and Learn project was being developed, with the aim to replicate the Erasmus+ approach and address key gaps between Turing and Erasmus+.

Mr Derek Vaughan, Welsh Government Representative on Europe and former MEP (2009-2019), underscored that Wales was also very pro-European. An active participant in Erasmus+ pre-Brexit, Wales was very disappointed at the UK's decision to discontinue its participation in EU programmes such as Erasmus+ or the DiscoverEU initiative. The Welsh "Taith" programme, funded by some EUR 75 million (dependent on a block grant from the UK Government), was launched in 2021; it is managed by the Welsh universities as a two-way scheme. "Taith" not only covers higher education, but also includes vocational education and education providers. In the two first years of its existence, 12 000 mobility opportunities have been created, but practical problems in areas under the UK Government's competence, such as visa issuance, still exist. Despite being considered a success, "Taith" was still suboptimal in comparison to participation in Erasmus+. However, it was very valuable as a means to stay connected and nourish Wales' relationships with its EU partners.

Members discussed the loss of opportunities on all sides, not only in the field of higher education but also in school cooperation, youth dialogue, foreign language learning and sports exchanges. They identified a clear mutual interest in building bridges and finding practical solutions for those affected by the consequences of Brexit. They also discussed the possibilities for future cooperation between the EU, the UK and its regions in addition to the role that MEPs can play in this regard.

Mr Filip Van Depoele (DG EAC) regretted the current obstacles to EU students' educational mobility to the UK. He mentioned that some opportunities remain open to UK universities under the current Erasmus+ programme, through Erasmus Mundus, Jean Monnet and the European University Alliances. While Turing is not considered an adequate alternative to Erasmus+, Taith was praised as a very impressive feat. In conclusion, Mr Van Depoele called post-Brexit mobility a clear example of a lose-lose situation and underlined that the EU was looking forward to UK re-association to Erasmus+.

Consideration of draft reports/opinions

Establishing an EU talent pool

João Albuquerque (S&D, Portugal)



Massimiliano Smeriglio (S&D), on behalf of the Rapporteur, highlighted the proposal as a good initiative in the context of the European Year of Skills. It addresses skills shortages that cannot be met even if all the potential opportunities within the EU were completely exhausted. At the same time, it changes the narrative on migration, as it provides the basis for a legitimate route.

The speaker however, pointed out that the proposal needs to be strengthened in its provisions relating to the recognition of skills developed in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, to gender balance in STEM areas and to the offer of training modules.

During the discussion, Members highlighted the importance of the EU Talent Pool for the European Year of Skills. They referred in particular to the issue of skills shortages in certain sectors and that education is often overlooked as one such sector. The need to involve all competent centres in the recognition of knowledge and diplomas was also pointed out. As was the need for a strong gender dimension in the regulation. Members acknowledged that there are shortages and that migration is a useful way of addressing the issue.

[Procedure file](#)

Votes

Establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market (European Media Freedom Act) and amending Directive 2010/13/EU

Sabine Verheyen (EPP, Germany)



The provisional agreement on the European Media Freedom Act was adopted by a large majority (23/4/2).

According to the Rapporteur, the European Media Freedom Act is a historical and fundamental piece of legislation when it comes to media freedom and democracy in the European Union. Before the vote, the Rapporteur highlighted the need to make concessions at one point or another but all in all, the CULT Committee can be more than satisfied with the outcome.

Some of the major achievements of the negotiations and its core elements relate to the fact that the future regulation safeguards the protection of the right to have access to independent media content.

Additionally, it states that Member States shall protect journalistic sources and confidential communications and shall not use unduly surveillance software. The European Media Freedom Act safeguards the full independence of public service media providers and the fact that funding procedures shall ensure sustainable and predictable financial resources.

Regarding the ownership structures of the media service providers, there has been the reinforcement of several transparency requirements, so that editorial decisions can be taken freely within the editorial line of the media service provider. The future European Board for Media Services (“the Board”) will be fully independent when performing its tasks or exercising its powers. Even though the secretariat of the Board will be part of the Commission, special attention will be paid to the qualifications and the profile of the people to be hired as requested by the Parliament. In addition, a consultation mechanism requested by the Parliament will assist the Board in several topics beyond the audiovisual media sector.

Furthermore, in the final text, the Parliament has addressed the imbalance between media service providers and the very large online platforms, without interfering with the DSA Regulation. Certain safeguards have been introduced together with the so-called “24 hours’ stay-up”. On the Articles linked directly to media market concentration issues, the Parliament managed to add certain clarifications, notably on the involvement of national regulatory authorities or bodies and the Board. Last but not least, following the Parliament’s demands, transparency in the allocation of public funds to media service providers has been enhanced and an important review clause has been introduced into the text to allow for a thorough follow-up of the implementation of the regulation and of any related changes linked to the resilience and digital transformation of the media sector.

The Plenary endorsement of the provisional agreement is scheduled to take place in March 2024.

[Procedure file](#)

2022 discharge: General budget of the EU - Commission

Romeo Franz (Greens, Germany)



The CULT opinion was adopted by an overwhelming majority (18/1/0). In the final text, the Committee highlights the challenging budgetary context in 2022 created by the long-lasting effects of the pandemic, the impact of rising inflation and energy prices on beneficiaries and the war in Ukraine. It welcomes the Commission’s and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency’s (EACEA) efforts to adapt Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and Creative Europe to this changing reality. Nonetheless, more resources are needed for financing these underfinanced EU programmes. The Committee encourages DG EAC and DG CNECT to fully implement their Anti-Fraud Strategies; it requests OLAF to carry out a thorough investigation on the possible misuse of EU funds by networks of associations that submit false projects to Erasmus+ and ESC calls. Finally, it strongly urges the Commission and EACEA to address the continuing challenges from 2022 with the e-Grant tools for beneficiaries of calls and solve these IT issues once and for all in order to reduce the risk of errors in addition to simplifying application procedures.

[Procedure file](#)

Guidelines for the 2025 Budget - Section III

Sabine Verheyen (EPP, Germany)



The CULT Committee adopted this opinion by a large majority (24/0/6). The opinion focuses on a set of suggestions linked to improving the Erasmus+, Creative Europe, European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programmes and the third strand of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programmes, and calls to increase their budgets, flexibility and inclusivity. Moreover, the opinion calls for the support of the European schools system and of the secretariat of the future European Board for Media Services; it also reiterates the call for a permanent EU editorial and news media fund. Finally, the opinion calls for stronger support to CULT proposals for pilot projects and preparatory actions.

[Procedure file](#)

Policy Department Research

Recently finished projects

Concomitant expertise for CULT reports:



Implementation reports on MFF programmes

- Study on [The EU funding programmes for 2021-2027 in Culture, Media, Education, Youth and Sport: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives: Erasmus +](#); September 2023;
- Study on [The EU funding programmes for 2021-2027 in Culture, Media, Education, Youth and Sport: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives: Creative Europe](#); September 2023;
- Study on [The EU funding programmes for 2021-2027 in Culture, Media, Education, Youth and Sport: first lessons, challenges and future perspectives: European Solidarity Corps](#); September 2023;
- Study on [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"](#); September 2023

Legislative report on the European Media Freedom Act:

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

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: 13 February 2024

Useful links

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

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