

Newsletter

CULT Committee meeting on 13 February 2024

Exchange of views on cultural diplomacy



CULT hosted a debate on 'An EU agenda for cultural diplomacy – the way ahead'.

Mr Stefano SANNINO, Secretary General, EEAS, presented on the importance of culture to fight polarisation in the current geopolitical context, including hybrid threats, disinformation, manipulation of information, etc. Culture can counter narratives and also create bridges and new ways of working together. He emphasised how cultural creations are an important component to support democracy, media pluralism and human

rights. A number of elements are already in place to make sure that EEAS and EC can implement concrete actions. These include an infrastructure supporting the networks of focal points in EU Delegations and the provision of training programmes. Additionally, a position of coordinator for international cultural relations has been established. Together with UNESCO, finance has been provided for the protection of cultural heritage projects. Mr Sannino encouraged the use of all instruments available in a 'Team Union' spirit. He outlined how a cultural relations platform will deliver a new training programme. He also alluded to the EU being a guest of honour at the Guadalajara International Book Fair in Mexico, in addition to preparatory work being undertaken for the EU's participation at the EXPO2025 in Osaka in Japan. Mr Sannino touched on the museum cooperation between Europe and Africa, which will see at least four Member States participating. He concluded on the need to develop further work within the framework of the EP pilot project on European Spaces of Culture.

Ms Pia AHRENKILDE HANSEN, Director General, DG EAC spoke about the importance of international cultural relations in bringing the EU into an international arena. Establishing a dialogue on equal footing with worldwide partners is essential to build trust and project EU values. She highlighted that the new model of enhanced cooperation (EU international cultural relations) entails working on a co-creation basis with Member States, in respect of their competence in this field. She highlighted the areas of achievement and progress. These include the EP aforementioned pilot project on European Spaces of

Culture, which has become a real innovation laboratory, supporting 33 initiatives. Ms Ahrenkilde Hansen mentioned how Ukraine is the focus at the moment particularly as regards to supporting the culture and creative sectors. This is seen as a critical element to strengthen social resilience and Ukrainian identity. She also alluded to the action plan against trafficking in cultural goods, which was adopted in December 2022; it addresses, amongst other things, the vulnerability of cultural goods to criminal harm in conflict and crisis regions.

In the ensuing debate, Ms Yenbou, Rapporteur for the report on the “Implementation of the New European Agenda for Culture and the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations”, highlighted that her recommendations on follow-up have been implemented. She asked for the exploration of the possibility of including culture in the Global Gateway as a means of funding culture. CULT praised the work carried out to protect the cultural heritage of Ukraine, without supporting Russo-phobic attitudes at the same time. There was also some discussion and support to the Creative Europe funding provided to Ukraine. Members stressed the need for a better agreement with delegations working on improving parliamentary democracy in the world and for the extension of support to the mobility of artists to countries outside the EU.

Dr Mafalda DAMASO, Researcher/PI NL REBOOT, Erasmus University Rotterdam; Visiting Fellow, European University Institute, gave a presentation on the main obstacles to International Cultural Relations. She referred to the geopolitical tipping point and the importance of the EU response of global ‘claims for justice’ in its relations with third countries. She mentioned the need for a dedicated funding stream in addition to the need to provide more opportunities to reinforce shared values and international cooperation with third countries at EU film festivals. She outlined the role of ICR and global/translational cultural governance and how the EU should show commitment to address increasing demands for restitution of cultural goods.

Mr Damien HELLY, Cultural Advisor, co-founder and Chair of “Culture Solutions” and visiting professor at the College of Europe in Bruges, presented on EU cultural diplomacy. He highlighted the risk of the deteriorating EU image in the Global South, and how culture is at the very core of global affairs. The EU is dramatically under-investing because there is no strong strategic steering and policy framework. There should be a shift from ‘resilience’ to ‘resisting’, working with culture and creative professionals to resist illiberal threats to fundamental freedoms. He suggested more EU competences in the field of culture and external cultural affairs should be provided. He felt that QMV procedures for EU external cultural action should be introduced, to allow the EU to act as a cultural block in global affairs. In this regard, the Global Gateway budget could be used as a possible avenue for funding. For the next Multiannual Financial Framework, he outlined the need for a political decision on a dedicated and commensurate budget line in Global Europe funding. He also suggested the EU should consider creating an agency dedicated to external cultural relations, with a certain degree of autonomy. He concluded with a recommendation that each EU commissioner should receive an external cultural relations action mandate in their mission letter. This would mean the European Parliament could question the next candidate for the European Commission's Presidency on EU external action.

In the ensuing debate, CULT raised the importance of protecting LGBTQI+ culture, overcoming the role of colonialism, how to change the image of EU at film festivals, how to improve the role of cultural diplomacy in external relations (especially ahead of EU elections) and how to mainstream cultural actions in other policy areas.

Exchange of views on the European Schools system

On 13 February 2024, CULT held the first formalised exchange of views on the European Schools system following the adoption of its own-initiative report on the “System of European Schools: State of Play, Challenges and Perspectives” in 2023. CULT invited a number of institutional representatives as well as stakeholders to discuss the follow-up of the EP report reform proposals as well as present challenges of the European Schools.



Mr **Andreas Beckmann**, Secretary-General of the European Schools, highlighted the work already conducted in the wake of the CULT (Rapporteur: Ilana Cicurel) that contains around 40 concrete recommendations to increase the overall quality of the European Schools and to make them fit for the future. The Secretary General reported that based on the findings of the report, an action plan including 20 actions within three identified areas had been adopted. He acknowledged that while research would show that pupils and students of the European Schools are performing exceptionally well in terms of academic achievements, there are still challenges that need to be addressed. Teacher shortages, an inclusive enrolment policy and tuition fees, as well as salary gaps between primary and secondary school teachers are amongst the current matters of concern. The Secretary General also emphasised his commitment to report to Parliament at least once a year to follow up on the progress of the action plan.

Mr **Christian Roques**, Deputy Director-General of DG HR of the European Commission and as such responsible for the European Schools, underlined the unique character of the European Schools. While he pointed out the impressive speed of the work that has been done in the follow up of the report, Roques also acknowledged that there remain certain limitations when it comes to the reform of the system, in particular its governance structures. In order to create inclusive schools beyond category 1 students, the need to be inventive was more urgent than ever, and a new system would be tested to that aim in Brussels with the aim to make the European Schools more accessible. Mr Roques finally emphasised the importance of reforming the European Schools for them to become a true role model for the European Education Area.

Following the presentations by the Secretary General and the Commission, several key stakeholders addressed the CULT Members, highlighting the priorities and concerns from their respective points of view. Mr **Antonio Cenini**, President of the Board of Governors of the European Schools, presented the priorities of the Italian Presidency of the European Schools system. Among other things, Cenini announced that under the Italian Presidency, an event with 250 teachers across schools will be held to debate pedagogical best practices and challenges. Ms **Helen Valentine**, President of InterParents, welcomed the proposed action plan of the Secretary General, but called for additional action to address remaining challenges. The parents' representative pointed out in particular that the plan does not touch upon any deep restructuring of the governance of the European Schools. In addition, the independence of the review process of the action plan was mentioned as a key concern for a number of stakeholders, who called for the guidance of external experts in this procedure. Mr **José Mas Marco**, Co-President of the Inter-School Teacher Committee, raised concern regarding the lack of psychological support as well as the overcrowding of the schools, resulting in a decrease of the overall quality of education. Mr Mas Marco argued for the need of an overall fair employment package that above all would provide fair

salaries for teachers at all levels. Mr **Byron Springer**, President of the Conseil Supérieur des Élèves des Écoles Européennes, echoed the issues brought forward by the representatives of teachers and parents and added the need for a couple of actions that would have to be tackled at local level. The safety concerns as a result of overcrowding as well as the creation of suitable spaces for students at school to spend breaks at were amongst the issues explicitly mentioned.

In the **ensuing debate**, Members echoed the issues raised by the stakeholders and asked the Secretary General as well as the Commission to consider encompassing reforms to make the European Schools fit for the future. CULT emphasised the unique nature of the European Schools system and its potential role model, not least for the creation of a European Education Area, and expressed their overall satisfaction with the work that has started to implement the CULT report. At the same time, however, they also highlighted existing challenges faced by the system and expressed their wish for more ambitious action to be taken, especially on reforming the governance structures of the European Schools that are widely considered as being inadequate for the 21st century.

Exchange of views - Antisemitism in the educational sphere



Against the background of rising antisemitism in Europe, CULT held an exchange of views on “Antisemitism in the educational sphere” on 13 February 2024.

Ms **Joanna Goodey**, Head of Unit for Justice, Digital and Migration of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), first presented the activities of the Vienna-based Agency against antisemitism, with a particular focus on the data collected on the subject by FRA. This includes its 2023 survey on

antisemitism, the publication of the final report of which is due by the end of 2024.

Ms **Pascale Falek**, Policy Officer, Office of the EC Coordinator on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, then reported on the Commission’s initiatives in fighting antisemitism and raising awareness for its roots.

She focused in particular on EU actions in the field following the adoption on 6 December 2023 of the Communication “No place for hate: a Europe united against hatred”. Among other things, she highlighted the need for increased EU funding to combat antisemitism, hate speech, and ensuring Holocaust education through the CERV and Erasmus+ programmes.

These introductory presentations were complemented by input from two renowned experts.

Ms **Nonna Mayer**, Research professor emerita at the Centre for European studies and comparative politics (CEE) of Sciences Po/CNRS, gave a presentation on antisemitism in Western Europe today, focusing on France, with the largest Jewish population in the EU (half a million). She outlined that traditional stereotypes, typically held by older people at the right or far-right of the political spectrum and with lower levels of education and income, coexist with new forms of antisemitism linked to critical attitudes towards Israel, the latter held by younger people at the left or far-left of the political spectrum and with medium to high levels of education and income. While antisemitism is higher among French

Muslims, the bulk of anti-Semitic opinions continue to be held among French citizens without migrant background.

Ms **Anna Makówka-Kwapisiewicz**, Researcher at the European Network Countering Antisemitism through Education (ENCATE), gave a presentation on “Trends, Good Practices, Challenges – Lessons Learned from the Visegrad Region”, focusing on data relating to antisemitism in the four analysed countries. Antisemitism was portrayed as being linked to authoritarian tendencies becoming the cultural code rejecting bourgeois liberalism and modern democratic society. She underlined that any educational activities on Holocaust remembrance should aim to raise empathy with the victims, including Jews, and also Sinti and Roma people and people belonging to the LGBTQI+ community. In this context, teachers had a central role to play and should favour a human-rights agenda in the curricula. In parallel, cooperation between education institutions, policy makers and civil society should be enhanced.

In the ensuing debate, CULT Members underlined the need to ensure that antisemitism does not increase and is tackled at all levels of education. To this end, they advocated, among other things, enhancing knowledge of the Holocaust through the education system, with visits to commemorative locations and sites of memory to be organised as part of history curricula. They also addressed the issue of antisemitism in the media, which often sends out subtle antisemitic messages, and stressed the importance of ensuring that Erasmus+ and other EU funds are clearly linked to EU values. They underlined the need to address all forms of antisemitism in society, both on the political left and right, and to condemn all forms of racism as key to ensure that marginalised minorities can feel safe in our societies.

Exchange of views with Ms Athena Michaelidou, Minister of Education, Sport and Youth of the Republic of Cyprus

The discussion concerned the challenges faced by the Greek language schools in the occupied territories of the Republic of Cyprus and the difficulties faced by the Cypriot authorities on educational matters in that area.

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: 11 March 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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