DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2020, Section III – Commission and executive agencies (2021/2106(DEC))

Rapporteur for opinion: Petra Kammerevert
PA_NonLeg
SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Recalls that in 2020 the total available budget for the Union programmes and actions under the portfolio of Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) amounted to EUR 6,043 million in commitment appropriations (some 7% more than in 2019); notes that, despite the unavoidable cancellation of some activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic and thanks to the measures taken under the ‘force majeure’ clause, DG EAC achieved most targets in 2020 and executed commitments fully and payments virtually fully, as did Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT) for relevant expenditure;

2. Acknowledges DG EAC’s efforts to prevent under-implementation of programmes due to the COVID-19 pandemic; welcomes the measures taken to mitigate the effects of the crisis on applicants and beneficiaries;

3. Notes that DG EAC’s overall risk at payment (estimated at EUR 26,83 million out of EUR 2,287 million relevant expenditure) and overall error rate (estimated between 0,5% and 1%) remain relatively low in 2020;

4. Notes that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fewer on the spot visits were possible in 2020, leading DG EAC to adapt its supervision and auditing approach and to provide specific guidance on COVID-19 for the reporting by National Agencies and Independent Audit Bodies;

5. Welcomes the 2020 update of DG EAC’s Anti-Fraud Strategy and the measures taken to prevent the risk of COVID-19-related fraud, including in the design of the next generation of programmes;

6. Urges DG EAC, DG CONNECT and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) to take without delay all appropriate measures to improve the protection of personal data wherever needed, to minimise the risks linked to third country data transfers, in order to enable the continuation of international operations in 2021 in full compliance with EU data protection law, and to strengthen staff awareness and knowledge of data protection rules.