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European gastronomic heritage: cultural and educational aspects

European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2014 on the European gastronomic heritage: cultural and educational aspects (2013/2181(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the report of its Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of food information to consumers (COM(2008)0040),
- having regard to the 2002 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) report on nutrition,
- having regard to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Report on Food and Nutrition Policy for Schools,
- having regard to the Commission White Paper of 30 May 2007 on ‘A Strategy for Europe on nutrition, overweight and obesity related health issues’ (COM(2007)0279),
- having regard to the conclusions of the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Nutrition and Non-communicable Diseases in the Context of Health 2020, held on 4 and 5 July 2013 in Vienna,
- having regard to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of 17 October 2003,
- having regard to the inclusion of the Mediterranean diet in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of 16 November 2010 and of 4 December 2013,
- having regard to the inclusion of the gastronomic meal of the French in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Decision 5.COM 6.14),
- having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A7-0127/2014),

Educational aspects

- A. whereas the present and future health and wellbeing of the population is determined by diet and the environment and hence by farming, fishing and livestock breeding methods;
- B. whereas the WHO’s Global School Health Initiative sees educational centres as important spaces for the acquisition of theoretical and practical knowledge about health, nutrition, food and gastronomy;
- C. whereas a poor diet may have disastrous consequences; whereas, at the WHO European

Ministerial Conference in July 2013, European health ministers called for coordinated action 'to tackle obesity and poor diets', which are the causes of an epidemic of non-communicable diseases, such as heart complaints, diabetes and cancer;

- D. whereas the stereotypical ideas about body image and food which are prevalent in society can cause serious eating and psychological disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia; whereas it is important to talk openly about these issues, in particular with adolescents;
- E. whereas, according to the European Food Information Council, in 2006 some 33 million people in Europe were at risk of malnutrition; whereas the situation has worsened since the start of the crisis;
- F. whereas childhood is a decisive period in terms of providing education in healthy behaviour, and knowledge leading to the adoption of a healthy lifestyle, and whereas school is an area in which effective action can be taken to shape healthy long-term behaviour in future generations;
- G. whereas educational centres offer spaces and instruments that can promote the knowledge and preparation of foodstuffs and help to establish dietary patterns which, together with the regular practice of moderate exercise, can create the basis for a healthy lifestyle;
- H. whereas information, education and awareness-raising form part of the EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol-related harm (COM(2006)0625), and whereas this strategy recognises appropriate consumption patterns; whereas the Council issued a recommendation on 5 June 2001 on the drinking of alcohol by young people, in particular children and adolescents, which envisaged fostering a multisectoral approach to education;
- I. whereas the need to include food in school curricula, in terms of both nutritional aspects and gastronomy, was recognised by the European Nutrition Foundations (ENF) network at its meeting on 'Nutrition in schools across Europe and the role of foundations', which unanimously agreed to convey this concern to bodies such as the European Parliament and the Commission;
- J. whereas different countries have, through various domestic bodies, pushed through recognition of the Mediterranean diet as part of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, resulting in the promotion and establishment of patterns of behaviour that ensure a healthy lifestyle thanks to a holistic approach that takes into account aspects relating to education, food, school, family life, nutrition, territory, landscape, etc.;
- K. whereas the Mediterranean diet offers a balanced and healthy combination of eating habits and lifestyle that is directly related to the prevention of chronic illnesses and to health promotion in both the school and the family environment;
- L. whereas European 'food at school' programmes seek to ensure that the food served in school canteens includes all the necessary elements of a high-quality, balanced diet; whereas education in the broadest sense of the term, including in the area of food, consolidates the concept of a healthy lifestyle based on a balanced diet among schoolchildren;
- M. whereas serious education in nutritional matters ensures public awareness of matters such as the correlation between foods, food sustainability and the health of the planet;

- N. whereas increases in the prices charged in school canteens and for food in general are denying many households, and in particular children, access to a balanced, high-quality diet;
- O. whereas media reporting and advertising have a bearing on consumption patterns;
- P. whereas if people are to have the chance to acquire a detailed knowledge of the products used and their intrinsic quality and taste, it is essential to develop suitable labelling schemes which provide all consumers with clear information about the composition and origin of products;
- Q. whereas the training given to gastronomy-sector workers contributes to the process of passing on knowledge about, raising the profile of, safeguarding and developing European gastronomy;

Cultural aspects

- R. whereas gastronomy is the combination of knowledge, experience, art and craft, which provides a healthy and pleasurable eating experience;
- S. whereas gastronomy forms part of our identity and is an essential component of the European cultural heritage and of the cultural heritage of the Member States;
- T. whereas the EU has encouraged the identification, defence and international protection of geographical indications, designations of origin and traditional specialities in respect of agri-food products;
- U. whereas gastronomy is not only an elite art form based on the careful preparation of food, but also reflects an acknowledgement of the value of the raw materials it uses, of their quality and of the need for excellence at all stages in the processing of foodstuffs, a concept which incorporates respect for animals and nature;
- V. whereas gastronomy is closely bound up with farming practices in European regions and with their local products;
- W. whereas it is important to preserve the rites and customs linked to local and regional gastronomy, for example, and to foster the development of European gastronomy;
- X. whereas gastronomy is one of the most important cultural expressions of human beings and the term should be understood as referring not only to what is known as 'haute cuisine', but to all culinary forms from the various regions and social strata, including those deriving from traditional local cuisine;
- Y. whereas the survival of typical cuisine forming part of our culinary and cultural heritage is very frequently jeopardised by the invasion of standardised foods;
- Z. whereas the quality, reputation and diversity of European gastronomy make it essential that sufficient food of sufficient quality be produced in Europe;
- AA. whereas gastronomy is identified with the various aspects of diet, and whereas its three primary pillars are health, eating habits and pleasure; whereas in many countries the culinary arts are an important aspect of social life and help to bring people together;

whereas experiencing different gastronomic cultures is one form of cultural exchange and sharing; whereas it also has a positive influence on social and family relations;

- AB. whereas UNESCO's recognition of the Mediterranean diet as an intangible cultural heritage is important because it considers this diet to comprise a set of knowledge, skills, practices, rituals, traditions and symbols that are related to agricultural crops, fisheries and livestock farming, and to methods of conserving, processing, cooking, sharing and eating food;
- AC. whereas the eating habits of the European peoples offer a rich sociocultural heritage which we have an obligation to hand down to future generations; whereas schools, together with family homes, are the ideal places in which to acquire this knowledge;
- AD. whereas gastronomy is becoming a leading element in attracting tourism and the interaction between tourism, gastronomy and nutrition is having an extremely positive effect in terms of promoting tourism;
- AE. whereas it is important to pass on to future generations an awareness of the gastronomic riches of their regions and of European gastronomy in general;
- AF. whereas gastronomy helps to promote the regional heritage;
- AG. whereas it is essential to promote local and regional products in order to preserve our gastronomic heritage, on the one hand, and guarantee fair remuneration for producers and the widest possible availability of the products in question, on the other;
- AH. whereas gastronomy is a source of both cultural and economic wealth for the regions which make up the EU;
- AI. whereas the European heritage is made up of a set of tangible and intangible elements and, in the case of gastronomy and food, is also formed by the locality and landscape from which the products for consumption originate;
- AJ. whereas the longevity, diversity and cultural richness of European gastronomy are founded on the availability of high-quality local produce;

Educational aspects

1. Asks the Member States to include the study and sensory experience of food, nutritional health and dietary habits, including historical, geographical, cultural and experiential aspects, in school education from early childhood as a means of improving the health and wellbeing of the population, the quality of food and respect for the environment; welcomes the gastronomic education programmes being conducted in schools in a number of Member States, some in cooperation with leading chefs; emphasises the importance of combining education in healthy eating habits with measures to combat the stereotypes which can cause serious eating and psychological disorders, such as anorexia or bulimia;
2. Stresses, by the same token, the importance of implementing the WHO's recommendations on tackling obesity and poor diets; expresses alarm at the ongoing problem of malnutrition in Europe and its increased prevalence since the start of the crisis, and urges the Member States to do everything they can to make a healthy diet a feasible option for everyone, for

example by ensuring that school or municipal canteens offer high-quality food and are open to the public;

3. Points to the need also to enhance the school curriculum with information about gastronomic culture (in particular at local level), food preparation, production, conservation and distribution processes, the social and cultural influence of foodstuffs, and consumer rights; urges the Member States to incorporate into their school curricula workshops on the development of the senses, in particular taste, which combine instruction on the nutritional benefits of foodstuffs with the provision of information on the regional and national gastronomic heritage;
4. Recalls that in some countries nutrition is already included in school curricula, while in others it is not compulsory per se but is taught by various means, such as programmes offered by local authorities or private bodies;
5. Reiterates the need for education in schools about nutrition and a good, healthy and enjoyable diet;
6. Points out that sport and physical exercise should be stepped up in primary and secondary schools throughout the EU;
7. Recalls that good nutrition enhances children's wellbeing and improves their capacity to learn, as well as making them more resistant to disease and helping them to develop healthily;
8. Points out that dietary habits acquired in childhood can influence food preferences and choices – and methods of cooking and eating foods – in adulthood, that childhood is therefore the best time to educate a person's taste and that school offers an ideal opportunity to introduce pupils to the diversity of products and gastronomies;
9. Considers that programmes should be offered with a view to providing education about, and raising awareness of, the consequences of inappropriate alcohol consumption, and encouraging proper and intelligent consumption patterns thanks to an understanding of the special characteristics of wines, their geographical indications (GIs), grape varieties, production processes and the meaning of traditional terms;
10. Asks the Commission to encourage projects which involve exchanges of information and practices in the area of nutrition, food and gastronomies, for example as part of the Comenius (school education) strand of the Erasmus+ programme; calls for the EU and its Member States, furthermore, to promote intercultural exchange in sectors related to catering, food and gastronomy, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme for high-quality training, mobility and apprenticeships for learners and professionals;
11. Points out that education in nutrition and gastronomy, including respect for nature and the environment, should include the participation of families, teachers, the educational community, information channels and all education professionals;
12. Highlights the usefulness of information and communication technologies (ICT) as an educational tool to assist learning; encourages the creation of interactive platforms to facilitate access to, and dissemination of, the European, national and regional gastronomic

heritage in order to promote the preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge among professionals, artisans and citizens;

13. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to consider stricter control of content and advertising dealing with food products, especially in terms of nutrition;
14. Reminds the Member States to make sure that all advertising and sponsorship of junk food is banned in schools;
15. Calls on the Member States to ensure that teachers are properly trained, in collaboration with nutritionists and doctors, to teach food sciences correctly in schools and universities; points out that nutrition and the environment are co-dependent and also calls, therefore, for the updating of knowledge about the natural environment;
16. Calls on the Commission and the Council to study programmes for training gastronomy professionals; encourages the Member States to promote such training; stresses the importance of this training covering local and European gastronomy, the diversity of products, and processes for the preparation, production, conservation and distribution of food;
17. Stresses the importance of training for gastronomy professionals highlighting ‘homemade’, local and varied produce;
18. Calls on the Member States to exchange knowledge and best practices concerning gastronomy-related activities in education and to promote gastronomic awareness in the various regions; calls also for an exchange of best practices or for thought to be given to shortening the food chain by focusing on local seasonal produce;
19. Points to the need to make use of funding programmes under the common agricultural policy for 2014-2020 with a view to promoting healthy eating in schools;
20. Recalls that the boost given by recognition of the Mediterranean diet and the gastronomic meal of the French as part of UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has led to the creation of institutions and bodies promoting knowledge, practice and education in relation to the values and habits of a healthy and balanced diet;

Cultural aspects

21. Emphasises the need to create awareness of the diversity and quality of the regions, landscapes and products that are the basis of Europe’s gastronomy, which forms part of our cultural heritage and also constitutes a unique and internationally recognised lifestyle; stresses that this sometimes requires respect for local habits;
22. Points out that gastronomy is an instrument which can be used to develop growth and jobs in a wide range of economic sectors, such as the restaurant, tourism, agri-food and research industries; notes that gastronomy can also develop a keen sense for the protection of nature and the environment, which ensures that food has a more authentic taste and is less processed with additives or preservatives;
23. Stresses the importance of gastronomy in promoting the hospitality sector across Europe and vice versa;

24. Recognises the role played by our skilled and talented chefs in preserving and exporting our gastronomic heritage, and the importance of maintaining our culinary expertise as a key factor adding value in both educational and economic terms;
25. Welcomes initiatives to promote Europe's gastronomic heritage, such as local and regional gastronomic fairs and festivals that reinforce the concept of proximity as an element in respect for the environment and our surroundings and guarantee greater consumer confidence; encourages the inclusion of a European dimension in these initiatives;
26. Welcomes the three EU schemes relating to geographical indications and traditional specialities, known as protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), and traditional specialities guaranteed (TSG), which enhance the value of European agricultural products at EU and international level; calls on the Member States and their regions to develop PDO labels, especially common PDO labels for products of the same kind emanating from cross-border geographical areas;
27. Welcomes initiatives such as the 'slow food' movement, which helps to engender general public appreciation of the social and cultural importance of food, and the 'Wine in Moderation' initiative, which promotes a lifestyle and a level of alcohol consumption associated with moderation;
28. Emphasises also the role played by the Academies of Gastronomy, the European Federation of Nutrition Foundations and the Paris-based International Academy of Gastronomy in the study and dissemination of the gastronomic heritage;
29. Calls on the Member States to draw up and implement policies to qualitatively and quantitatively improve the gastronomic industry, both intrinsically and in terms of its contribution to tourism, within the framework of the cultural and economic development of the regions;
30. Stresses that gastronomy is a strong cultural export for the EU and for individual Member States;
31. Calls on the Member States to support initiatives related to agri-tourism that foster knowledge of the cultural and landscape heritage, offer regional support and promote rural development;
32. Urges the Member States and the Commission to develop the cultural aspects of gastronomy and to foster eating habits which maintain consumer health, further the exchange and sharing of cultures and promote the regions, while at the same time retaining the pleasure associated with eating, conviviality and sociability;
33. Invites the Member States to collaborate with each other and support initiatives to maintain the high quality, diversity, heterogeneity and singularity of local, regional and national traditional products in order to combat homogenisation, which in the long term will diminish Europe's gastronomic heritage;
34. Encourages the Commission, the Council and the Member States to make the importance of supporting sustainable and varied European food production of high quality and in sufficient quantity an integral part of their deliberations on food policy, with a view to sustaining European culinary diversity;

35. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen measures for the recognition and labelling of European food production in order to enhance the value of those products, provide better information to consumers and protect the diversity of European gastronomy;
 36. Points out that it is important to recognise and enhance the value of high-quality gastronomic produce; urges the Commission, the Council and the Member States to consider the introduction of consumer information from caterers on dishes prepared on the spot from raw products;
 37. Encourages the Commission, the Council and the Member States to study the impact of the laws they adopt on the capacity, diversity and quality of food production in the EU and to take measures to combat the counterfeiting of products;
 38. Supports such initiatives as may be developed by Member States and their regions to promote and preserve all the territories, landscapes and products that make up their local gastronomic heritage; urges the regions to promote local and dietetic gastronomy in schools and collective catering in association with local producers in order to preserve and enhance the regional gastronomic heritage, stimulate local agriculture and shorten supply chains;
 39. Calls on the Member States to take measures to preserve the European gastronomy-related heritage, such as protection of the architectural heritage of traditional food markets, wineries or other facilities, and of artefacts and machinery related to food and gastronomy;
 40. Highlights the importance of identifying, cataloguing, transmitting and disseminating the cultural richness of European gastronomy; advocates the establishment of a European observatory for gastronomy;
 41. Recommends to the Commission that it include European gastronomy in its cultural initiatives and programmes;
 42. Welcomes the inclusion in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of the gastronomic meal of the French, the Mediterranean diet, the Croatian gingerbread craft and traditional Mexican cuisine, and encourages the Member States to request the inclusion of their gastronomic traditions and practices in the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, in order to help preserve them;
 43. Encourages European cities to apply for the title of UNESCO City of Gastronomy, promoted by the organisation's Creative Cities Network;
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44. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.