

Newsletter

Committee meetings

11 January 2021
25 and 26 January 2021

Presentation of the priorities of the Portuguese Council Presidency

The focus of Portugal's Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) will revolve around the need to strengthen Europe's resilience and its citizens' confidence in the European social model. Portugal wants to promote a Union based on shared values of solidarity, convergence and cohesion – a Union capable of coordinated action to recover from the crisis. Remotely connected from Lisbon, three Ministers responsible for the CULT remit addressed the CULT Committee on 26 January 2021. The ministers highlighted in particular three major priorities for the next months:

- ✓ To promote Europe's recovery, leveraged by the climate and digital transitions;
- ✓ To implement the Social Pillar of the European Union as a key element for ensuring a fair and inclusive climate and digital transition;
- ✓ To strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy while keeping it open to the world.

More specifically, the following CULT issues were addressed: Graça Fonseca, Minister for Culture, briefly described the Presidency's strategy to boost the recovery of the cultural sector that has been particularly badly impacted by the pandemic. Ms Fonseca highlighted the need to insure the survival of Europe's cultural heritage, especially considering issues of funding. Dealing with this in relation to climate change and the digital transition was considered vital.

On another topic particularly cherished by CULT - arts and education - the Minister stressed the importance of the link between arts, culture and youth, with culture having a big impact on critical thinking capacities. As regards the media and the audiovisual sector, the Minister stressed the need to link these two areas by means of Council actions, for example: by tackling the economic and social challenges of the crisis through media, by addressing issues caused by AI and the digitalisation of the news industry; and by considering how the future of journalism is going to be impacted. Similarly, the need to fight fake news and disinformation was addressed. A strong emphasis was put on the existence of a free press for society and democracy. The importance of the Creative Europe programme was also underlined by the Minister as being essential for the recovery of the creative and cultural sectors as well as for



protecting, promoting and preserving cultural heritage.

Manuel Heitor, Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education, started his intervention stressing the importance of Erasmus+ as a very symbolic programme. Mr. Heitor called for increasing diversity and inclusion of access to higher education. In his view, education, research and innovation need to go together in the context of a green recovery. Science will also improve by means of academic mobility across Europe and by including many people of different ages and origins, benefitting the scientific community and Europe as a whole.

In his intervention, Tiago Brandão Rodrigues, Minister of Education, put the focus on the promotion of inclusion, digital education and the right of access to education for all throughout life. Moreover, he stressed the importance of the European Solidarity Corps in promoting European solidarity and the inclusion of young people in the decision making process. On that aspect, he recalled the importance of a well-structured European Youth Strategy to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on youth, especially in education, employment and mobility.

Mr. Rodrigues considered sport another important area, an area of innovation.

During the question and answer session, Members voiced their support for how the Ministers intend

to tackle the most pressing challenges triggered by the pandemic as well as for a more medium-term vision to pave the way to a strong and sustainable recovery.

Among the main concerns of the CULT Members was: ensuring that the European Education Area becomes a reality; strengthening efforts to make the recognition of VET comparable; promoting cultural cooperation as key to peace; and addressing the "Not in Education, Employment or Training" (NEET) phenomena aggravated by the pandemic.

Furthermore, the CULT Chair stressed the need to ensure that recovery funds from the EU are well used for the cultural and creative sectors. She argued that even from a purely economic perspective that would make sense, since culture represents an important part of the economy, let alone the role of culture as a constituent part of free and democratic societies.



Exchange of views with the European University Institute



In its last meeting, the CULT Committee held an exchange of views with the European University Institute (Florence), with which the EP has an institutional cooperation, and which also receives funding through the Erasmus+ Programme in acknowledgement of its European added value. At this occasion, the EUI was represented by Prof. Renaud Dehousse, President of the EUI, and Dr. Alexander Stubb, Director of the recently founded School of Transnational Governance.

In the debate following the brief presentation of the EUI and its activities, various CULT Members underlined the uniqueness of the EUI, both in terms of European cooperation in higher education and excellence in research. It was also emphasised that the EUI serves as a beacon not only for the envisaged creation of a "European Education Area" by 2025, but also as a symbol in itself of the European project. Across political groups, there was agreement that the existing ties between the EP, especially the CULT Committee, and the EUI should be further strengthened. To that aim, further exchanges of views were envisaged.

New European Bauhaus initiative

Exchange of views

Commissioner Gabriel announced the launch of the design phase of the New European Bauhaus. A new website has been launched to allow large stakeholder consultations in order to gather contributions from all parties involved aiming at further clarifying the concept of the Bauhaus initiative to identify the challenges to it. The Commissioner also announced the launch of prizes to award concrete illustrations of best practice.

Members' questions concerned mostly the financing, stressing that funding needs to come from different sources and in any case, money must not be diverted from Creative Europe.

Members also raised the issue of the potentially elitist nature of the project. Many of them asked the Commission how to ensure that the project will reach smaller countries and that experts from those countries will also be represented in the Roundtable announced by the Commissioner.

The involvement of the Parliament in the project was discussed as well. Members also requested further detail on many areas that are slightly unclear at this stage, such as the: structure of the project; inclusion of stakeholders; links with the Creative Europe Programme; as well as the question how the projects will be chosen. Commissioner Gabriel committed to inform the EP regularly.



Votes

Erasmus+: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport (2021-2027)

Vote on provisional agreement resulting from inter-institutional negotiations
(Milan ZVER, PPE)



The provisional agreement reached on Erasmus+ by the EP and Council negotiators in December 2021 after two and a half years of work and, at times, challenging negotiations was presented and endorsed unanimously by the CULT Committee on 11 January 2021. According to many members, this agreement can be described as a considerable achievement.

While the EP's original budgetary ambitions for one of the EU's flagship programmes could unfortunately not be met in full given the difficult overall context, the new Erasmus+ programme will be substantially reinforced with a real-terms increase of around 60% compared to the previous 2014-2020 programme (total budget 2021-2027: more than 26 billion EUR in current prices). Overall, the programme's scope will be broader, offering more opportunities to more people.

This corresponds with the new programme generation containing also some important innovations: the new programme will fund European Universities, Discover EU and Centres of Vocational Excellence, and there will be important simplification measures, a number of which the European Parliament introduced and secured.

Other important changes that were brought about include a considerably more robust monitoring and evaluation framework and a consistent set of indicators to accompany the programme's implementation. Among the most significant additions to the existing programme is the set of specific, targeted measures that were introduced to make the programme more inclusive. This is aimed at reaching people Erasmus+ has not traditionally managed to reach, and intended to help make the next generation of Erasmus+ an even greater success.

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Creative Europe programme (2021 to 2027)

Vote on provisional agreement resulting from inter-institutional negotiations
(Massimiliano Smeriglio, S&D)



The provisional agreement on the Creative Europe programme reached at the trilogue on 14 December 2021 was unanimously (29-0-0) adopted by the Committee on 11 January 2021. The programme will benefit from a budget of 2,2 bn EUR, which will allow for more projects to be financed than in the past. The programme will also be more inclusive, and special attention will be paid to aspects related to gender.

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European Solidarity Corps programme (2021-2027)

Vote on provisional agreement resulting from inter-institutional negotiations
(Michaela Sojdrová, PPE)



On 11 January 2021, the CULT Committee confirmed unanimously the outcome of the inter-institutional negotiations on the Regulation establishing the European Solidarity Corps. The agreement will strengthen the engagement of young people and organizations in accessible and high-quality solidarity activities through volunteering. The outcome of the negotiations ensures an ambitious youth-focused volunteering programme. In essence, the programme aims at strengthening cohesion, solidarity and democracy in Europe and abroad through addressing societal and humanitarian challenges on the ground, with a particular focus on promoting social inclusion. The co-legislators secured a strong dedicated budget for volunteering, with a focus on people with fewer opportunities. Amongst its new features, the Solidarity Corps 2021-2027 will include an external strand, providing for the possibility of volunteering in humanitarian aid. This will create synergies with the EU external action services and confirm the EU's engagement in solidarity with third countries.

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2019 discharges: General budget of the EU-European Commission and Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union

Adoption of draft opinion
(Morten Lokkegaard, Renew)



With a large majority, the CULT Committee adopted a draft opinion related to the discharge procedure for the year 2019 with regard to the Commission accounts related to the implementation of CULT programmes. The opinion points out that the implementation of the CULT programmes has been largely successful overall, highlighting only few specific aspects, where there is room for improvement. It furthermore acknowledges that DG EAC's financial management for 2019 was satisfactory according to the European Court of Auditor's assessment. Finally, the opinion calls on the Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) to reduce bureaucratic burden by simplifying application processes in order to improve the accessibility of the programmes under their management.

A separate opinion relating to the discharge procedure was adopted covering the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union (CdT). The opinion stresses the important contribution of the translation centre to preserving and promoting multilingualism in the EU Institutions. It welcomes the result of the report of the European Court of Auditors on the annual accounts of the Translation Centre, which confirms the legality and regularity of revenues and payments of underlying accounts. The opinion also encourages the translation centre to continue implementing reforms with a view to further improving its operations.

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Challenges of sport events' organisers in the digital environment

Adoption of draft opinion
(Tomas Frankowski, PPE)



The CULT Committee adopted an opinion on the legislative initiative report by the JURI Committee on “Challenges for sports events organisers in the digital environment”. The opinion emphasises the importance of revenues from the licensing of media rights not only for professional sport, but also as a basis for solidarity payments to grassroots sport and for financing the development of young talents. The COVID-19 pandemic and its dramatic consequences for ticket sales have further increased the dependence of sports organisations on such licensing revenues.

The opinion points out that the problem of unauthorised exploitation of sporting content has increased in recent years and caused significant financial losses. It therefore calls on the Commission to present without delay a comprehensive legislative proposal to address the problem. Such legislation should clarify the responsibility of the platforms hosting illegal broadcasts, including an obligation to remove, at the latest within 30 minutes from the receipt of notification from rights holders, infringing live sport broadcasts.

In addition, the opinion calls on online video streaming services to take additional voluntary measures to remove or block access to infringing live sport broadcasts and suggests that flagging and reporting systems as well as complaint and redress mechanisms be established to prevent abuses or unfair competition practices.

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A European strategy for data

Adoption of draft opinion
(Radka Maxová, Renew)



This adopted opinion relates to last year's Commission Communication on “establishing a European strategy for data”. It highlights the importance of improving people's digital literacy and calls on the Commission to provide substantial support to the Member States, inter alia through the Recovery and Resilience Facility and by including it among the priorities for cohesion policy. Furthermore, the opinion underlines the necessity to address the digital skills gap by implementing clear strategies and dedicated policies both at national and EU levels.

The opinion stresses that strong data protection should be at the core of the EU's data strategy and seeks to remind that this is a particularly important issue in schools, stressing that pupils' data should only be used for educational and never for commercial purposes.

Moreover, the Commission is invited to explore the potential merits and scope of creating a common European data space for the cultural and creative sectors and industries. The opinion refers in particular to the digitalisation of cultural heritage, which could contribute to its promotion and protection. It also emphasises that the use of data is increasingly important for European cultural and creative sectors and industries. Furthermore, the opinion notes that secure data sharing is essential to enable open access to cultural content.

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The role of the EU's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance in addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

Adoption of draft opinion
(Christine ANDERSON, ID)

The opinion was rejected by a broad majority of Committee Members.



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European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021

Adoption of draft opinion
(Sabine VERHEYEN, PPE)



The opinion on the “European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021” was adopted by a large majority (24/0/4). It underlines the crucial role and impact of structural reforms and macro-economic policies in the context of culture, education and youth policies. The opinion takes stock of the grim reality students, young people and artists are facing in the context of the current pandemic. The CULT Committee is therefore asking for a strong earmarking of 25% of the Recovery and Resilience Fund to be spent on social investments. The idea is to step up the pace of essential reforms and modernise the education systems in order to allow each and every one to have access to quality education. To support the cultural sectors – amongst the most hardly hit by the lockdown – MEPs ask for at least 2% of the Recovery and Resilience Fund to be spent on the cultural and creative sectors.

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The impact of Covid-19 on youth and on sport

Adoption of a draft motion for a resolution.
(Sabine VERHEYEN, PPE)



As far as youth is concerned, the adopted motion for a resolution evaluates the manifold damages caused by the current pandemic on Europe's youth in terms of access to education, youth activities and young people's participation in social and economic life. The resolution puts forward a number of measures to counter the disastrous effects of the pandemic. In particular, CULT Members ask for stronger financial support for those most at risk and to increase the flexibility of education systems across the EU. An accent is put on the need to mainstream all forms of education and professional training and learning tools. Members call on the Commission and the Member States to mobilise all available EU programmes and funding to deliver on the digital transition and modernisation of education systems, but also to accompany young people in their social and professional integration during these challenging times.

The second part of the resolution deals with the devastating consequences the pandemic continues to have on both professional and grassroots sports. The resolution recalls the numerous benefits of sport for society in terms of public health, social inclusion, integration and cohesion. In order to avoid a possible lasting damage to the sector, the resolution demands substantial support and calls on the

Commission and Member States to use available EU programmes and furthermore ensure full access of sport to the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Policy funds, the European Social Fund Plus and EU4Health.

Moreover, the adopted text calls for a thorough assessment of the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a European approach to cope with the medium- and long-term challenges. This should include a structured and systematic exchange of best practices between Member States and a reinforced dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders. The Commission is asked to coordinate all measures taken to address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on sport in a dedicated EU Action Plan.

Decision on the conclusion of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom

Adoption of draft opinion

(Sabine VERHEYEN, PPE)



In this opinion (adopted with a very broad majority), the CULT Committee expressed, above all, its disappointment about the UK's decision to discontinue its participation in the Erasmus+ programme and underlined that the decision would result in a lose-lose outcome, depriving people and organisations in the Union and in the UK of life-changing opportunities. Furthermore, the CULT Committee stressed that this could also negatively affect EU/UK cooperation through the Horizon Europe programme. The Committee urged the UK government to use the 'cooling-off' period provided for under the Joint Declaration on Participation in Union Programmes to reconsider its position.

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Consideration of drafts opinions

Shaping the digital future of Europe: removing barriers to the functioning of the digital single market and improving the use of AI for European consumers

Consideration of draft opinion

(Sabine VERHEYEN, PPE)



The Rapporteur presented the main points of her draft opinion on "Shaping the digital future of Europe: removing barriers to the functioning of the digital single market and improving the use of AI for European consumers". She stressed that AI should be developed and used in accordance with Union values and principles, in particular human rights and freedom of expression as well as media pluralism and cultural diversity. She also underlined in that regard the need for a clear legal framework that would prioritise culture. Whilst recalling that AI could be an effective tool to detect illegal content or fake news through automated content filtering, she stressed that it could only be done with due respect to fundamental rights, in line with the applicable regulatory framework, such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD). In the subsequent discussion, Members welcomed the draft opinion. They

stressed that improving digital skills was an essential prerequisite to the use of AI, whilst underlining the crucial importance to set up a strong legal framework that would ensure the development and the use of AI in an ethical, human-centered and non-discriminatory manner. The opinion will be put to a vote on 16 March 2021.

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Citizens' dialogues and Citizens' participation in the EU decision-making

Consideration of draft opinion

(Irena JOVEVA, Renew)



On 25 January, the CULT Committee considered a draft opinion on Citizens' dialogues and Citizens' participation in EU decision-making, drafted by Ms Irena Joveva (Renew). The opinion will form the CULT Committees' message in view of the preparation of the Conference on the Future of Europe. In her draft opinion, the Rapporteur underlines the crucial role of the citizens' participation in the policy-making process, as an important tool for fostering civic engagement and therefore reinforcing democracy in our societies. The draft opinion also recommends making better use of established citizens' participation channels and promoting a bottom-up approach.

The Rapporteur and CULT Committee Members expressed their will to make citizens' voices heard and increase the transparency of the EU institutions and the decision-making process, thus bridging the gap between different levels of government and bringing the institutions closer to the citizens while increasing their trust. The CULT Committee will vote on the draft opinion in March 2021.

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Guidelines for the 2022 Budget-Section III

Consideration of draft opinion

(Romeo FRANZ, Verts/ALE)



On 25 January, the CULT Committee considered a draft opinion on the "Guidelines for the 2022 Budget - Section III". The Rapporteur (Romeo Franz, Verts/ALE) underlined the need for funding for EU activities to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and the cultural and creative industries, to promote inclusion, and to implement the European Solidarity Corps and the Green Deal. In the ensuing discussion, Members welcomed the draft opinion and concurred on the need to increase EU funding for researchers and teachers. They also rallied behind the targets of allocating at least 10% of national recovery and resilience plans to investments in education and at least 2% to the cultural and creative sectors. The opinion will be put to a vote on 24-25 February 2021.

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Policy Department Research

Recently finished projects

Concomitant expertise for INI reports:

-)] INI report on Shaping Digital Education policy:
 - In-depth analysis on Shaping digital education policy.

-)] INI report on Artificial intelligence in education, culture and the audiovisual sector:
 - Introductory briefing on The use of artificial intelligence in the cultural and creative sectors;
 - In-depth analysis on The use of artificial intelligence in the audiovisual sector;
 - Introductory briefing on The use of artificial intelligence in education.

-)] INI report on Effective measures to 'green' Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps programmes:
 - Introductory briefing on Effective measures to 'green' Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps programmes;
 - Briefing on Virtual formats versus physical mobility.

Selection of forthcoming projects

Concomitant expertise for INI reports:

-)] 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 (expected February 2021);
 - Study on Towards a European Education – Critical Perspectives on Challenges Ahead (expected February 2021).

-)] INI report on The situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU:
 - Introductory briefing on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU (expected March 2021);
 - Policy Recommendations Briefing on The situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU (expected March 2021).

Other studies:

-)] Cultural and Creative Sectors in post-COVID-19 Europe – Crisis effects and policy recommendations (expected February 2021).
-)] EU sports policy: assessment and possible ways forward (expected March 2021);
-)] Education and Youth in post-COVID-19 Europe – Crisis effects and policy recommendations (expected March 2021);

Useful links and contacts:

- [Research for CULT Committee](#)
- [Supporting analysis for CULT Committee](#)
- <https://twitter.com/PolicyCULT>
- poldep-cohesion@europarl.europa.eu

The next committee meeting: 24-25 February 2021

Useful links

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

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