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3090th Council meeting

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

Brussels, 19 and 20 May 2011

Presidents

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Minister of State for Culture

Mr Miklós SOLTÉSZ
Minister of State for Social, Family and Youth Affairs

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Main results of the Council

Culture

*The Council reached political agreement on a decision establishing a **European Union action for the European heritage label**.*

*The Council designated Plzeň (Czech Republic) as **European Capital of Culture for 2015**.
The Council adopted conclusions on:*

- the contribution of culture to the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- mobility information services for artists and for culture professionals.

*Over lunch, audiovisual and culture ministers discussed the **future of the CULTURE and MEDIA programmes after 2013**.*

Youth

*The Council adopted two **resolutions on**:*

- encouraging new and effective forms of participation of all young people in democratic life in Europe;
- the structured dialogue with young people on youth employment.

*Ministers discussed the **voluntary activities of young people and their contribution to the development of local communities** in the context of "2011 - European Year of Voluntary Activities".*

Education

*The Council reached political agreement on two **recommendations**:*

- one on promoting the learning mobility of young people;
- the other on policies to reduce early school leaving.

*In this context, ministers also discussed, in public debate, **prevention policies to combat early school leaving aimed at the socio-economically disadvantaged, including the Roma**.*

*Furthermore, the Council adopted **conclusions on early childhood education and care**.*

Sport

*The Council adopted a **resolution on a European Union Work Plan for Sport (2011-2014)**.
Ministers also held a public debate concerning **sport-related aspects of on-line betting**.*

At lunchtime a high-level structured dialogue took place between ministers from the member states of the expanded troika and representatives of the sports movement.

CONTENTS¹

PARTICIPANTS.....	5
ITEMS DEBATED	
CULTURE	8
European Heritage Label	8
European Capital of Culture 2015	8
Contribution of culture to the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.....	9
Mobility information services.....	9
OTHER BUSINESS	11
YOUTH.....	13
Participation of young people in democratic life in Europe	13
Structured dialogue with young people on youth employment	13
Voluntary activities of young people	14
OTHER BUSINESS	15
EDUCATION	16
Early school leaving.....	16
Prevention policies to combat early school leaving.....	16
Learning mobility of young people.....	17
Early childhood education and care	18
OTHER BUSINESS	19

¹

- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

SPORT	20
Work Plan for Sport.....	20
Online betting.....	21
OTHER BUSINESS	22

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

- Meeting of the EEA Council	23
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Deputy Permanent Representative

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Minister for Culture
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Commission:

Ms Androulla VASSILIOU

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

CULTURE

European Heritage Label

In public deliberation, the Council reached political agreement, with the United Kingdom delegation abstaining, on a decision establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label ([9213/11](#) + [COR 1 REV 1](#)). This label is granted to sites which have a strong symbolic - and not only aesthetic - value in terms of European history and heritage (such as monuments, natural, underwater, archaeological, industrial or urban sites, cultural landscapes and objects) and which at the same time promote the democratic values and human rights underpinning European integration. The decision also aims at strengthening European citizens' sense of belonging to Europe, especially that of young people.

The European Heritage Label is also meant to contribute to the economic and sustainable development of regions, in particular through cultural tourism. It builds upon an intergovernmental initiative launched in 2006, under which 68 sites from 18 member states have already been labelled. In order to improve its quality and efficiency and ensure its long-term success, the initiative is being transformed into a formal action of the European Union. Under this new action, each member state will have the possibility to pre-select up to two sites every two years and a panel of independent experts will choose a maximum of one site per country to receive the label.

European Capital of Culture 2015

The Council adopted a decision officially designating Plzeň in the Czech Republic as European Capital of Culture for 2015 ([9050/11](#)).

Mons in Belgium - designated last year - is the other European Capital of Culture for 2015. Until 2019, cities from two member states will be designated each year as European Capitals of Culture.

Contribution of culture to the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy

The Council adopted conclusions on the contribution of culture to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy ([9057/11](#)).

The conclusions underline the fact that the cultural and creative sector has the potential to generate growth and quality jobs, and therefore has an important role to play in achieving the objectives of the strategy and its flagship initiatives, such as the Digital Agenda for Europe ([9981/1/10](#)) or Innovation Union ([14035/10](#)). In particular, the conclusions examine culture's specific input to the 2020 strategy's main goals: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Finally, the conclusions call on member states to use EU financial funds, such as Structural Funds, for cultural projects and on the Commission to incorporate culture in its future EU policy and financial instruments.

Mobility information services

In public debate, ministers discussed mobility information services for artists and culture professionals, on the basis of two questions prepared by the Presidency to structure the debate. The Council also adopted conclusions on this subject ([9058/11](#)), within the framework of the current Work Plan for Culture adopted in November 2010 ([OJ C 325, 2.12.2010](#)).

Transnational mobility - which is a specific objective of the Culture Programme 2007-2013 - facilitates access for artists and culture professionals to the European labour market, and thus creates new job opportunities and promotes employment in the culture sector and in the wider economy. Improved mobility can also contribute to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy.

In general, ministers underlined the added value of mobility for cultural diversity but most of them also acknowledge that there are several obstacles to the mobility of artists and culture professionals, such as lack of structures to tackle work and residence permit rules, copyright regulations, taxation, insurance, etc. Most member states have already launched or are upgrading and modernising their mobility information services either through internet portals and platforms or through specific services in the competent ministries.

Some ministers considered that cooperation between the different services and structures is extremely important and could in some cases be improved. A number of delegations suggested the creation of an EU multilingual portal or platform, possibly in the framework of the future CULTURE programme.

The Council conclusions suggest measures to establish an information system that would provide artists and culture professionals with comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date information on mobility-related issues within the EU. The Commission invited member states to appoint national experts to a working group which will assist the Commission in examining concrete proposals in this field.

OTHER BUSINESS

- E-books
- Manifesto on culture in Europe

The French minister invited his colleagues to reflect on issues relating to E-books. The French and Slovenian ministers also informed the Council about their intention to propose a manifesto on culture in Europe ([9621/11](#)). The manifesto should proclaim that culture must be at the heart of the European project and that cultural diversity demands and deserves an innovative and ambitious cultural policy. The incoming Polish Presidency declared itself willing to examine this initiative.

- Report by the 'Comité des Sages' (Reflection group) on bringing Europe's cultural heritage online (*Europeana*)

Commissioner Vassiliou presented the report, issued in January of this year and entitled "The New Renaissance", which is now available in all EU languages.

(http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/digital_libraries/doc/reflection_group/final-report-cdS3.pdf).

The report recommends improving and speeding up the digitisation process, in particular concerning *Europeana* (<http://www.europeana.eu/portal/>) - the European digital library - which should become the reference point for European online cultural content. In addition, it recommends that by 2016 all masterpieces of all member states should be available through *Europeana*.

- Council Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014

The Presidency informed ministers on the implementation of this programme ([OJC 325, 2.12.2010](#)), which sets out the following priorities for the Council in its medium-term cultural policy actions:

- (1) Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and accessible and inclusive culture;
- (2) Cultural and creative industries;

- (3) Skills and mobility;
- (4) Cultural heritage,
- (5) Culture in external relations; and
- (6) Culture statistics

The Hungarian Presidency has organised several events and conferences, in particular in the context of "Skills and mobility" and " Culture in external relations"

- Report on the informal meeting of culture ministers (Budapest, Gödöllő, 27 and 28 March 2011)

The Hungarian Presidency informed ministers about the outcome of this meeting which was dedicated to a discussion on the role of culture in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy (www.eu2011.hu).

- Work programme of the incoming Presidency

The Polish Presidency presented its work programme for culture, which includes the following priorities: cultural competences and the protection of cultural heritage, in particular films and audiovisual works.

YOUTH

Participation of young people in democratic life in Europe

The Council and the representatives of the governments of the member states adopted a resolution on encouraging new and effective forms of participation of all young people in democratic life in Europe ([8064/11](#)).

The resolution aims at enhancing civic engagement and the democratic participation of young people by encouraging the acquisition and development of key competences and new skills as well as mobility, facilitating the improvement of young people's personal skills and motivating them to participate fully in the education system, in the labour market and in community life.

Ministers recalled in this context that the promotion of young people's active citizenship is one of the overall objectives of the recently adopted resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)¹ which also recognises all young people as a resource of society with the right to participate in the development of policies affecting them by means of a continuous structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations.

Structured dialogue with young people on youth employment

Ministers took note of a Presidency note on the state of play of the structured dialogue between young people and EU institutions on youth employment for the period between 1 January 2010 and 30 June 2011 ([9170/11](#)).

The Council and the representatives of the governments of the member states also adopted a resolution on the structured dialogue with young people on youth employment ([9048/11](#)), which evaluates and draws lessons from the past 18-month period and sets out policy priorities for the next Team Presidency (PL, DK and CY).

The first two work cycles of the structured dialogue will be evaluated by the Council in the context of the EU Youth Report to be presented by the Commission by the end of 2012.

The overall thematic priority for the next 18-month cycle (1 July 2011 to 31 December 2012) will be youth participation with a special emphasis on participation in democratic life in Europe.

¹ OJ C 311, 19.12.2009.

Voluntary activities of young people

In public debate, ministers discussed voluntary activities of young people and their contribution to the development of local communities ([9053/11](#)), on the basis of a Presidency note.

The year 2011 was designated as the "European Year of Voluntary Activities - promoting active citizenship", seeking to promote and improve conditions for volunteering in the EU and raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering. The Hungarian Presidency and the incoming Polish Presidency have planned a series of events in this context to take place during 2011.

In general, ministers considered that volunteering is an active expression of civic participation which strengthens common European values such as solidarity and social cohesion. It also provides important learning opportunities, because involvement in voluntary activities can provide people with new skills and competences and can even improve their employability.

A number of ministers also stressed that it is important for voluntary activities also to involve older people, thus contributing to bridging the generation gap and fostering the transmission of knowledge.

In addition, ministers recalled that most of the voluntary activities of the young take place at local level and also within non-governmental organisations, and that they should be supported at political level. Several delegations also called for a regular exchange of good practices.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Report on the interim evaluation of the "Youth in action" programme (2007-2013)

Commissioner Vassiliou briefed ministers on the outcome of the interim evaluation of this EU programme (http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc247_en.htm), which was carried out through national contributions and by an independent evaluation. Around 2000 projects were approved and the conclusions demonstrate that the programme has been effective in terms of employment and participation of young people, also reaching those with fewer opportunities. The Commission intends to apply the recommendations contained in the report.

- Work programme of the incoming Presidency

The Polish delegation indicated that the main theme of its programme in the youth field will be "Youth and the world", in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy and its flagship initiative "Youth on the move" .

EDUCATION

Early school leaving

- The Council reached political agreement - the United Kingdom voting against - on a recommendation regarding policies to reduce early school leaving ([9423/11](#)), which seeks to promote progress towards the Europe 2020 headline target of reducing school drop-out rates to less than 10% by 2020 (as compared with 14.4% in 2009).

Reducing early school leaving addresses the Europe 2020 aims of both 'smart growth' - by improving education and training levels - and of 'inclusive growth' - by tackling one of the major risk factors for unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Despite some significant progress over the last decade, rates of early school leaving in Europe - i.e. the number of 18-24 year olds with only lower secondary education or less, and no longer in education or training - are still too high and constitute an urgent and serious problem in many EU countries. In general, ministers considered that a successful approach in this area requires consistent, cross-sectoral and comprehensive policies. This is not just an education issue: it has implications across a range of social, youth, health and employment policies. Policies that focus on preventive rather than compensatory measures appear to be the most effective.

Several delegations underlined that support should be systematic from early years to adult life and address, in particular, the need to focus on all levels of the education and training system: structural aspects, school level factors and individual support.

Prevention policies to combat early school leaving

- As a follow-up, ministers debated in public, on the basis of a background paper prepared by the Presidency ([9043/11](#)), prevention policies to combat early school leaving, aimed in particular at the socio-economically disadvantaged, including the Roma.

Commissioner Reding made a short intervention on this subject, recalling the recently issued Commission communication "An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020" ([8727/11](#)) and the important conclusions adopted on 19 May by the EPSCO Council, which is the leading Council configuration on this matter. She recalled that early school leaving creates and perpetuates socio-economic inequality: currently less than half of Roma children benefit from primary education, compared to almost 95% of other European children, and their educational attainment often remains below the average.

Although the situation of the Roma varies from member state to member state, it was generally agreed that the majority of Roma people living in the EU suffer from social exclusion, discrimination, segregation and deep poverty and many of them live in territories with limited access to quality services, including in the field of education.

The economic and social integration of Roma is one of the priorities of the Hungarian Presidency which, as do a large number of member states, considers it crucial for the present and the future of the European Union's competitiveness and the well-being of its citizens.

Most member states have already put in place preventive measures and programmes to tackle this problem, going from special schools and learning support programmes to specific training for teachers, appointment of education counsellors, and targeted interventions. Several ministers underlined the importance of involving families, in particular mothers, in these efforts.

Effective policies for integrating Roma must be based on four pillars: education, employment, health and housing, whilst acknowledging member states' primary responsibility in this regard.

Most ministers called for the establishment of a European platform/data base for the exchange of information and best practices on Roma issues.

A summary of this debate, together with the conclusions of the EPSCO Council will be forwarded - via the General Affairs Council - to the June European Council.

Learning mobility of young people

The Council reached political agreement on a recommendation concerning the promotion of learning mobility among young people ([9036/11](#)), which forms part of the flagship initiative *Youth on the Move*. The recommendation encourages member states to take appropriate steps in order to remove administrative and institutional obstacles which amongst others are impeding progress in this area. At the same time, it fully respects member states' competences and responsibilities under national and European legislation.

As part of the freedom of movement of persons, learning mobility, i.e. transnational mobility for the purpose of acquiring new skills, is one of the fundamental ways in which individuals, particularly young people, can strengthen their future employability as well as their personal development. It also contributes to improving European cohesion.

The EU has for quite some time supported young people through various initiatives and programmes (LEONARDO, COMENIUS, ERASMUS). In addition, a number of European tools have been developed in recent years which make it easier for young people to go abroad for learning purposes. However, most ministers recognised that not all instruments and tools are used to their full extent and many obstacles remain. Most member states are already seeking to improve their current schemes on this issue.

Early childhood education and care

For the first time ever at EU level, the Council adopted conclusions on early childhood education and care ([9424/11](#)), which focus on the long-term benefits for both individuals and society at large which the provision of generalised access to high-quality early childhood education and care can bring.

High quality early childhood education and care is acknowledged to be beneficial for all children, but particularly for those with a socio-economically disadvantaged, migrant or Roma background, or with special educational needs. Furthermore, it reduces the risk of early school leaving later on.

In May 2009, education ministers established a target that by 2020 at least 95% of children between 4 years old and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education¹.

While member states have made good overall progress in recent years in improving the availability of early childhood education and care, further efforts are needed.

Cooperation at European level, together with the efficient use of EU programmes, can contribute to the development of quality education and training by supporting and complementing measures taken at national level and helping member states to address common challenges.

¹ "ET 2020": strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (OJ C 119, 28.5.2009).

OTHER BUSINESS

- Informal meeting of education ministers (Budapest, 28 and 29 March 2011)
- Presidency events and conferences in the field of education and training

The Presidency briefed ministers on the outcome of the informal meeting whose main subject was "Active Citizenship", in the context of the 2011 European Year of Volunteer Activities. The Hungarian Presidency also recalled the most important events that have already taken place during their term and mentioned those scheduled over coming weeks (www.eu2011.hu).

- Report on the interim evaluation of the Lifelong Learning programme (2007-2013)

The Commission will send a written report to the Council on this interim evaluation. The programme supports a range of actions including exchanges, study visits and networking activities and has a budget of nearly €7 billion. Projects are intended not only for individual students and learners, but also for teachers, trainers and all others involved in education and training.

(http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc78_en.htm)

- European Schools

The Commission informed ministers on the state of play regarding the European Schools whose financing was recently under discussion. The Commission representative recalled the importance and European added value of these high quality schools which have a population of almost 24 000 pupils in schools across several European countries. He called on the member states to respect their obligations under the European Schools Convention, in particular regarding the secondment of teachers.

- Work programme of the incoming Presidency

The Polish delegation indicated that the main subjects of its future Presidency would be education for mobility and modernisation of universities. It is also planning to pursue in particular work on lifelong learning and adult education and to strengthen cooperation in the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

SPORT

Work Plan for Sport

The Council adopted a resolution on a European Union Work Plan for Sport (2011-2014) ([9509/1/11](#)). Ministers warmly welcomed this first EU Work Plan in a new area of competence introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, which gives the EU a new supporting, coordinating and supplementing competence for sport, while respecting both the autonomy of national sport governing structures and the competences of the member states.

The Work Plan acknowledges the important contribution of sport to the overall goals of the Europe 2020 strategy, given the sector's strong potential to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and new jobs and considering its positive effects on social inclusion, education and training, as well as on public health and active ageing. It sets out the following priority areas:

- integrity, in particular the fight against doping and match-fixing and the promotion of good governance;
- social values, in particular health, social inclusion, education and volunteering;
- economic aspects, in particular sustainable financing and evidence-based policy making.

In order to address these priorities, the member states and the Commission agreed to establish several expert groups for the next three years. In addition to these groups, other working methods may include Presidency conferences, informal meetings of sports directors and ministers, Commission studies and conferences.

In the first half of 2014, the Council will evaluate the implementation of the Work Plan, on the basis of a report prepared by the Commission by the end of 2013¹.

¹ See also: Commission communication : "Developing the European Dimension in Sport" ([5597/11](#)).

Online betting

In public debate, Ministers discussed sport-related aspects of online betting, on the basis of a background paper prepared by the Presidency ([9059/11](#))¹.

Sport-related betting activities now represent 32 % of gambling services and it has been estimated that the illegal betting industry - which is expanding - is worth around € 148 billion a year, with no return to sport whatsoever. Irregular and illegal betting is closely linked to issues of match-fixing and money-laundering and consequently it poses a major threat to sport and society.

Most ministers acknowledged that this is a very serious problem and due to its complexity, the way different member states regulate it also differs significantly. Ministers underlined the importance of preserving the integrity of sport and ensuring its sustainable financing.

A large number of ministers considered that before taking specific measures at European level, further consultations and cooperation are required between member states, sport structures and organisations, as well as betting operators.

¹ See also: Commission Green Paper on on-line gambling in the internal market ([8313/11](#)).

OTHER BUSINESS

- Informal meeting of sport ministers (Budapest, 22-23 February 2011)

The Presidency briefed ministers on the outcome of this informal meeting which discussed the role and funding of European sports and the fight against doping. The meeting took place in parallel with the EU Sport Forum organised by the Commission. (www.eu2011.hu)

- Meeting of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Foundation Board (Montreal, 15 May 2011)

The Presidency informed ministers about this meeting in which the European Union was represented by the "troika". The main items on the agenda were the WADA budget, the future revision of the WADA code and the next congress in 2013.

- EU Structured Dialogue with the sport movement (20 May 2011, at lunch)

The Presidency presented a brief account of the high-level structured dialogue between the EU (represented by the extended troika (BE, HU, PL, DK) and by representatives of the Commission and the European Parliament) and national public authorities and representatives of sports movements (such as the International Olympic Committee, European Olympic Committee, UEFA, FIBA (basketball), and European Lotteries), which preceded the formal Council session.

- Work programme of the incoming Presidency

The Polish delegation presented its priorities for the next six months: the fight against doping and match-fixing, the social dimension of sport (linked to voluntary work) and financing aspects.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

Meeting of the EEA Council

The Council took note of preparations for the 35th meeting of the European Economic Area (EEA) Council, to be held in Brussels on 23 May.
