

3.6.12. In the Committee's view the above-mentioned factors call for measures which produce visible results in the medium and long term. For this reason

the necessary policies should be set in motion as soon as possible.

Done at Brussels, 22 October 1992.

*The Chairman
of the Economic and Social Committee*

Susanne TIEMANN

Opinion on the Communication from the Commission: New prospects for Community cultural action

(92/C 332/19)

On 7 May 1992 the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Article 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, on the Communication from the Commission: New prospects for Community cultural action.

The Section for Social, Family, Educational and Cultural Affairs, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its Opinion on 6 October 1992. The Rapporteur was Mr Burnel.

At its 300th Plenary Session (meeting of 22 October 1992), the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following Opinion by a large majority with 3 abstentions.

1. General Comments

1.1. The Economic and Social Committee endorses the thinking underlying the Commission Communication on 'New prospects for Community cultural action'.

1.1.1. This thinking is neatly summarized in the three aims the Commission sets for cultural action:

- to preserve awareness of European history;
- to generate an environment conducive to the development of culture in Europe;
- to help spread European cultural influence throughout the world.

1.2. The Committee notes that the Parliament has been active in this area since 1974. It congratulates the Parliament on this and encourages it to continue.

1.2.1. The Committee itself has issued several Opinions stressing the Community Institutions' responsibility for cultural issues and putting forward proposals in this connection.

1.3. The Committee would reiterate its request — even more forcefully today in view of the ambitions enshrined in the Treaty of European Union — that the aspirations set out in the Communication be backed up by firm political will, translated in practical terms by the robust level of resources needed to match the challenges involved. The tangible nature of the 'ventures' to be encouraged and fostered, is necessarily rooted in a philosophy and policy for promoting humanity, which is bound up with the democratic and humanistic values in which the Member States, the Community and our society are rooted.

1.3.1. For this reason the current Commission draft will have to be gradually expanded and backed by financial resources commensurate with the ambitions the Community has set itself and with actions which will have to be covered by other programmes.

1.4. In its previous Opinions, the Committee described culture as a component of personal life and universal values. Thus, there is no need to repeat these ideas on which there is already a consensus.

1.4.1. At a time when 'European citizenship' is becoming a key factor in the European Union, the Committee reiterates that the cultural dimension is crucial to understanding and harmony between people, and to ensuring cohesion between nations and the various levels and groups in society. This is an historic opportunity which we cannot afford to miss.

1.4.2. In fact over and above its many different forms of expression and appearance, culture reflects people's manner and behaviour in relationships with others and with the environment. Hence, as already underlined by the Committee, 'civilization, culture and society' are inextricably linked.

1.5. The political approach to culture has to be an all-embracing one.

1.6. It is consequently recommended that, in political terms, cultural action be part and parcel of all political, economic and social thinking and decisions. The cultural dimension of issues should be well to the forefront of all political debates, over and above debates on specifically cultural issues. For example, on audio-visual issues, there is a need for an overall policy embracing cultural aims, economic aspects and constraints, social obligations and technology.

1.6.1. If a theoretical and purely intellectual approach is adopted, a satisfactory conclusion can only be a chimera and — for all concerned including the person reaching that conclusion — there would be no concrete political impact.

1.6.2. Culture is embodied in our lives by a whole series of 'symbols'. This applies to monuments and literary, musical and plastic art — examples which come to mind spontaneously. In reality, the cultural dimension is vast. It can be diversified 'ad infinitum' since it covers everything which personifies mankind, allowing people to express their personality, forging civic and moral links with a group, territory, religion, philosophy and an era in which they feel at home and are recognized as being such, and also binding them to individual, social and family patterns of living and behaving vis-à-vis others.

1.7. Access for all men, women and children to culture is inseparable from their dignity as human beings. As such, culture is a basic human right enshrined in the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 27). If the universal right to culture is to make any headway it must be underpinned by a (ethical and aesthetic) philosophy and the political will to provide adequate means to implement these philosophical choices.

1.7.1. Culture has for too long been the prerogative of an intellectual and social elite, although it is a fundamental right and must be effectively opened to all. This legal obligation entails inter alia access to education and training, freedom, self-expression as well as fair, shared access to joint material and non-material resources and heritage.

1.8. Since it is an expression of life, both past and present, culture is affected by changes over time (history, fashions, etc.), by inter-personal and collective relationships (meetings, spontaneous or organized exchanges of knowledge and opinions, migration, etc.), by technology (new materials and resources), conservation procedures, communication systems, etc. Culture is a litmus test for philosophy and religion and sometimes for dominant political trends. Social structures, living conditions (work, home, resources, timetable and pace of life) exert an impact and constraint on capacity to access certain cultural resources. All sectors of society must therefore have full access to culture including, for instance, the economically and socially most vulnerable, not forgetting the sick, disabled and aged.

1.8.1. There are many examples of the reciprocal nature of inter-cultural influences and the complementary nature of different cultures. Cultures described as 'dead' survive in undreamt of or poorly understood forms, when they are not deliberately ignored.

1.8.2. There are no minor cultures or cultural expressions compared with others, which are supposedly more noble just because today they are more widespread or identified with a specific sociological category or class or race.

1.8.3. All cultures reflect and express the ups and downs in the history of mankind with their differences, contradictions and complementary aspects.

1.9. The wealth of European heritage is a legitimate source of pride which must not be arrogant or chauvinistic. We must recognize the conviction and talent of those who created this heritage and must prove our

own worth by being faithful to their memory, by preserving it and enriching it.

1.9.1. Some components of cultural heritage reflect the universal dimension of human genius. These must be recognized, respected and dealt with as such in law and in practice.

1.10. Culture necessarily includes the concept of communication, dialogue and sharing, because it is the antithesis of introversion and of selfish appropriation of knowledge and talents. Culture is the soul of every community.

2. Comments on the Commission Communication

2.1. The Committee has always stressed the need to respect specific national, regional and local characteristics. Thus it fully endorses the Commission recommendation. To reject or ignore cultural realities can only lead to cultural degeneration, while adding new, different values enriches a community. Cultural alignment on an imposed, dominant uniform model would go against the grain of culture, since it would ignore or reject freedom and would not respect the diversity of identities and the right to be different. While different cultures in the Community generally have common bases, this is not an argument for merging them or ignoring the diversity of cultures within Europe.

2.2. The Committee broadly endorses the Commission proposals on THE FLOWERING OF CULTURE IN THE EUROPE WITHOUT FRONTIERS. However, some of these proposals need to be fleshed out.

2.2.1. The Committee views with interest the Commission's wish to move towards global policies incorporating the cultural dimension. This stance is fundamental and should be encouraged.

2.2.1.1. To be effective, this realistic approach entails on the one hand instilling a cultural, political reflex in all decision-makers, and on the other, moves to facilitate constructive relations between everyone involved in cultural issues, despite the individualism, ignorance and discouraging climate of competition which prevail in some quarters.

2.2.2. For a long time education was dominated by the classics, Latin and Greek. Curricula were largely geared to the literary disciplines. Gradually, it was realized that scientific disciplines, both in terms of a) the logic on which they were based and b) their content

and their objectives, had a role to play in cultural initiation and development. The same applies to technical and vocational education.

For this reason the Economic and Social Committee urges the Council of Education Ministers to reflect on ways and means of developing the cultural aspects of all levels of education from primary school onwards. Language teaching is also an overriding necessity; if it is to be successful a concerted study of means and methods is required to ensure maximum effectiveness.

Schools should also teach children to respect others in all their differences, particularly cultural ones and to give due consideration to cultural heritage and its environment.

Recognizing the importance of exchanges for young people and teachers, the Committee urges that these be developed.

2.3. THE COMMISSION REFERS TO THE NEED TO BRING THE COMMON CULTURAL HERITAGE TO THE FORE BY PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC AREAS: it acknowledges that the financial resources earmarked for this are modest in relation to a) the dimension of the problems to be dealt with and b) the urgency of certain measures.

Cultural heritage is affected by time and this often works to its detriment. Man's excesses and sometimes his stupidity compound the ravages of the years and the damage caused by all forms of pollution; hence the importance of education and information.

2.3.1. The choice of action programmes and the stringency with which they are implemented are all the more important since financial resources are limited, and there is often considerable urgency.

2.3.1.1. The Commission states that Community aid will be channelled so as to provide incentives for Member States to participate. The Committee recommends that cultural treasures located where local financial resources are scarce should receive special attention.

2.3.1.2. In addition to well-known works of art, less prestigious forms of culture should not be neglected for they also bear witness to mankind's civilization and talent.

2.3.2. Like the Commission, the Committee has often stressed the importance of translation; it therefore endorses the relevant proposals in the Communication. It would add the need to urge Member States to encourage the study of languages and the history of nations,

peoples and traditions. Without constant progress in these areas, relations between peoples will come up against many difficulties along the way, along with a lack of understanding and other obstacles.

2.3.2.1. Lesser-used languages should not be neglected.

2.3.3. The Committee has carried out significant work on audiovisual matters, particularly television; one point to stress is the need for audiovisual professions to pool their skills and resources, especially since costs are heavy and international competition is stiff.

2.3.3.1. Is there not a risk — in both production and some technological areas of broadcasting and reception — that competitors will squeeze out home-grown productions, to the detriment of our domestic cultures? In view of its impact on the public, in particular children and young people, and because of its simplifying and promotional functions, television can considerably influence our behaviour and judgement by progressively dulling our powers of judgement. Reading requires an effort; television in the home is absorbed without any reciprocal effort. This does not mean that television should be rejected — that would be absurd — our comments are intended to encourage both audiovisual professionals and the public since television is a very powerful channel for information, discovery and entertainment and, as such, a powerful cultural agent in general.

2.3.3.2. The role of radio should not be forgotten. It reaches a wide audience, is able to react quickly to events and is highly diversified.

2.4. THE COMMITTEE ENDORSES THE PROPOSAL TO INCREASE COOPERATION WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, IN PARTICULAR, THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE.

2.4.1. Because cultural identities are often powerful and extremely valuable, inter-cultural cooperation should be fostered actively. All cultures, above and beyond their own roots, are the culmination of a myriad of confrontations and exchanges.

2.4.2. The contribution made by the Council of Europe is clearly important. The Committee shares the Commission's view on the complementary, non-competitive role of the Community institutions, other international organizations and UNESCO. The essential objective is to share effort out in line with responsibility.

To supplement the above comments, the Committee would add the following:

1. It recommends strongly that, in keeping with its overall assessment of cultural problems and how they are handled, the Commission should take stock of those actions which have been carried out and those currently under way, indicating the outlay involved. Community cultural action goes beyond specific individual actions. European policy makers should be aware of actual circumstances.

This assessment will make it easier to evaluate previous measures and assess what remains to be done and what policies are to be followed.

2. In addition to protection for monuments and buildings per se, attention should also be drawn to their immediate environment. Some structures, urban buildings and billboards may be unsightly and can cause serious aesthetic damage. Hence the importance of ensuring that both the competent authorities and the public are educated and informed properly in order to avoid the imposition of restrictive rules and regulations.

3. In television, steps should be taken forthwith to encourage the establishment of one or several European cultural channels. These must be cultural vectors and powerful instruments dedicated to education purposes and the promotion of knowledge and understanding of other peoples. To achieve this, programmes must be carefully studied and eschew any false elitist intellectualism.

4. European cultural patronage ought to be encouraged. An effort should be made, for instance, to align taxation with regard to sponsorship.

5. ESC members, personify the wishes and interests of citizens in their capacity as representatives of socioeconomic interest groups, consumers, users and parents' associations. In their own Member States, they will urge governments and all those involved in cultural activity to incorporate the European cultural dimension into everyday thinking and practices.

6. Education plays a major role in developing cultural creativity, over and above the production of major works of art. Everyone has a part to play in preserving our cultural heritage, since culture is part of life.

The ESC urges that action be carried out in schools to encourage cultural discovery amongst children, to boost respect for and sensible use of cultural heritage, and encourage sensible attitudes towards using resources. For example, the uses and abuses of television should

be part of school curricula, on the same footing as reading and writing.

7. Many minority ethnic groups and their families are citizens of our Member States. We will be able to

understand them better if we learn about their history and culture, and appreciate the elements they have in common with ours and so encourage dialogue, exchange and mutual enrichment.

Done at Brussels, 22 October 1992.

*The Chairman
of the Economic and Social Committee*

Susanne TIEMANN

Opinion on the proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 71/305/EEC concerning the co-ordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts⁽¹⁾

(92/C 332/20)

On 19 August 1992, the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Article 100a of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, on the abovementioned proposal.

The Section for Industry, Commerce, Crafts and Services was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject. The Economic and Social Committee decided to appoint Mr Kaaris to act as Rapporteur-General.

At its 300th Plenary Session (meeting of 22 October 1992), the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following Opinion unanimously.

1. Introduction

1.1. A Common Position was adopted by the Council on 18 June 1992 on a consolidated text of the Council Directive concerning the co-ordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts.

1.2. The Common Position, which has not yet resulted in the final adoption of a consolidated text, reflects the wish expressed by the Committee in its Opinion CES 357/92⁽²⁾ that the list of bodies governed by public law and subject to the Directive should be subject to

constant revision to ensure that it permanently reflects the situation in Member States.

1.3. Article 35 of the Common Position specifies that amendments to this list — Annex I —, shall be made by the Commission after consulting the Advisory Committee for Public Contracts, and can thus be undertaken without recourse to formal Council decision.

2. General Comments

With the present Proposal the Commission seeks to extend the same procedure to amendments of Annex II to incorporate further changes in the nomenclature used to classify works covered by the Directive.

⁽¹⁾ OJ No C 225, 1. 9. 1992, p. 11.

⁽²⁾ OJ No C 106, 27. 4. 1992, p. 11.