**Follow up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on effective measures to ‘green’ Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps**

1. **Rapporteur:** Laurence FARRENG (Renew Europe/ FR)
2. **Reference numbers:** 2019/2195 (INI) / A9-0141/2020 / P9\_TA-PROV(2020)0211
3. **Date of adoption of the resolution:** 15 September 2020
4. **Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)
5. **Brief analysis/assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution puts forward specific proposals to reduce the environmental impact of the three flagship programmes for education (Erasmus+), culture (Creative Europe) and volunteering (European Solidarity Corps) and to fully integrate the programmes into the European Green Deal.

The resolution recognises the fundamental role of education, training, youth, sport, volunteering and culture in the green transition as regards awareness-raising, learning, communication, the sharing of knowledge as well as their potential to develop innovative ways of tackling environmental challenges.

1. **Response to the requests and overview of the action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

The Commission welcomes the resolution of the European Parliament on Greening Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps and confirms that many measures suggested in the resolution are under preparation and will be implemented under the future programmes (2021-27).

In relation to the call on the Commission, the national agencies and the Creative Europe desks to provide support to participants so that they can resume their activities after the pandemic in a sustainable way (**paragraph 3**), the Commission is applying maximum flexibility to the management of programmes by allowing ongoing project beneficiaries to adapt their activities to the new circumstances without financial penalties, including the possibility to use alternative digital solutions to replace physical activities, such as a mix of virtual and physical mobility and virtual meetings. Programmes under Erasmus+, Creative Europe, and the European Solidarity Corps should be made accessible and should ensure the increase of cultural and educational participation across the Union, in particular with regard to persons with disabilities and persons from marginalized backgrounds.

The Erasmus+ programme will support two additional formats of Strategic Partnerships to respond to the educational challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The first call aims at equipping education and training systems to face the challenges presented by the sudden shift to online and distance learning, including supporting teachers to develop digital competences. The second call aims to enhance skills development and competences that reinforce creativity, as well as to boost quality, innovation and recognition of youth work that support the creative potential of youth, thus contributing to the recovery resilience of the cultural and creative sectors.

Concerning the call on the Commission to propose environmental, climate and sustainability indicators for the new generation of programmes (**paragraph 4**), the Commission recalls that indicators have been proposed to the co-legislators. Once established, regular reporting on these indicators will be ensured.

Regarding the call on the Commission to record and calculate participants’ individual transport-related carbon footprints and to make relevant data easily accessible to the public (**paragraph 5**), the Commission is planning to register in its IT tools for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps the main means of transport used by participants and the distance travelled. This will allow calculating individual transport-related carbon footprints and monitoring the evolution over the years. The Commission will analyse how best to make relevant results accessible to the public. In addition, the Commission will analyse the possibility of making a similar calculation tool available for journeys undertaken under the Creative Europe programme.

As for the call on the Commission to work with stakeholders in order to develop a list of recommendations based on the analysis of good practices, to improve communication and to set up a SALTO (Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities) platform for greening (**paragraphs 6, 7 and 24**), the Commission is considering to set up a support network with the national agencies to this effect. This network would gather and share good practices, build capacity for green practices within national agencies and elaborate ‘eco-tips’ for participants and organisations with a view to making their mobility and activities more sustainable. The Commission is also exploring the possibility of introducing an eco-label to give visibility to projects meeting certain sustainability standards.

Concerning the call on the Commission to provide guidance to national agencies and Creative Europe desks, and to support and foster dialogue with stakeholders to ensure that synergies are achieved in practice (**paragraph 20**), the Commission continues to cooperate with and provide guidance to national agencies and to facilitate the exchange of good practices between them.

In relation to the call on the Commission to encourage national agencies, Creative Europe desks and project developers to register with the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)[[1]](#footnote-1) and to coordinate their efforts to reduce their environmental footprint (**paragraph 10**), the Commission will foster the adoption of sustainable practices in the daily work of the national agencies and Creative Europe desks. Public recommendations provided by EMAS can be shared and practical examples offered when organising events and activities. The Commission has started this process earlier this year, with the organisation of a workshop for stakeholders and national agencies, in cooperation with EMAS, on how to organise more sustainable events.

Regarding the call on the Commission, the national agencies and the Creative Europe desks to establish criteria so that environmental aspects of projects can be factored into project evaluation (**paragraphs 11**), the Commission will continue to include a horizontal priority on environment and climate for the selection of projects.

As for the call on the Commission to encourage the use of virtual formats as a complement to physical mobility (**paragraph 12**), the Commission, while considering that physical mobility can never be replaced by virtual formats, is planning to expand the menu of learning formats. In particular, the Commission is looking at solutions, which would allow more virtual formats of learning and cooperation to complement physical mobility.

Concerning the request to the Commission to encourage participants to choose the least polluting means of transport and to fully reimburse additional costs and journey times in this regard (**paragraphs 13 and 14**), the Commission will introduce incentives to facilitate the use of low-carbon means of transport, including financial incentives and additional travel days when needed. The programmes will continue to ensure coverage of exceptional travel costs for participants coming from the outermost regions and remote areas.

In relation to the call on the Commission to enter into partnerships with European rail operators (**paragraph 15**), the Commission is exploring several possibilities in this regard. In this context, since June 2018, the DiscoverEU initiative[[2]](#footnote-2) has been cooperating with European rail companies to give young people the opportunity to discover and learn about Europe travelling predominantly by rail.

Regarding the call on the Commission to take account of the digital environmental impact of the three programmes (**paragraph 18**), the Commission will follow the general measures proposed by the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme.

As for the fact that many beneficiaries are small and struggling with administrative requirements, and regarding the call on the Commission to provide guidance to national agencies and Creative Europe desks (**paragraph 20**) in this respect, the Commission confirms that micro and small organisations represent more than 70% of Creative Europe beneficiaries. The Commission intends to further facilitate access to Creative Europe cooperation projects through simplification. It intends to increase co-financing rates and to guide Creative Europe desks so that they can help applicants build transnational partnerships.

Concerning the call on the Commission to include respect for the environment, sound environmental practices and environmental protection among the principles set out in the Erasmus+ Higher Education Charter (ECHE)[[3]](#footnote-3) (**paragraph 21**), the Commission has reviewed the principles of the 2021-2027 ECHE, and included a new provision requesting the higher education institutions to “promote environmentally friendly practices in all activities related to the Programme.” In addition, one of the selection criteria for awarding the ECHE 2021-2027 is an explicit commitment to this principle, where higher education institutions need to indicate how they will promote environmentally friendly practices in the context of Erasmus. Several of the 41 European Universities have already committed to mainstreaming teaching and training on environmental and sustainable development issues. This will serve as inspiration and good practice for the broad higher education community in Europe.

Regarding the call on the Commission to make every effort to expedite the roll-out of the European Student Card Initiative[[4]](#footnote-4) (**paragraph 23**), the Commission agrees that this initiative will make the management of mobility easier, more efficient and greener for higher education institutions. The Commission will start the gradual rollout of these services starting in 2021, with the aim to reach all mobile students in Europe by 2025 at the latest.

In relation to the value of the ‘eTwinning’ network[[5]](#footnote-5), particularly its annual theme for 2020 on sustainability and climate change, and in relation to the calls on the Commission to disseminate as widely as possible the annual report on this priority as well as the toolkit for teachers (**paragraph 25**), the Commission will continue using the ‘eTwinning’ network to promote more sustainable practices and activities among teachers.

As for the call on the Commission to take measures to support the development of school programmes on climate change and sustainability (**paragraphs 26 and 28**), the future Erasmus programme will support the development of education programmes, awareness raising and enhancement of knowledge in the field of climate change, the environment and sustainability. As announced in its recent Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025[[6]](#footnote-6), the Commission will launch an Education for Climate Coalition to mobilise expertise, provide resources for networking and support creative approaches with teachers, pupils and students.

Concerning the call on the Commission to explore which programme actions can be developed in depopulated rural areas (**paragraph 31**), the future Erasmus programme will aim to increase the number of mobility opportunities in green forward-looking fields. For example, study periods abroad, traineeships, youth or classrooms exchanges, which foster the development of competences, enhance career prospects and engage participants in subject areas which are strategic for sustainable growth, including rural development (sustainable farming, management of natural resources, soil protection, bio agriculture), will be encouraged.

Regarding the call to step up thematic projects, promoting the environmental, climate and sustainability dimension of the European Solidarity Corps by increasing the visibility of these projects in the Placement Administration and Support platform (PASS)[[7]](#footnote-7) (**paragraph 35**), the Commission has already taken steps to promote projects on this topic, through publications and photo competitions on the European Solidarity Corps portal and European Youth social media channels. The Commission will consider ways to increase visibility of these projects on the PASS platform and continue their promotion.

In relation to the call on the European Solidarity Corps National Agencies to support organisations responsible for sending and receiving Solidarity Corps participants (**paragraph 36**), the national agencies will continue providing guidance, counselling and advice to the beneficiaries throughout the whole project lifecycle. They can organise networking activities that can take the form of trainings, seminars or thematic activities to raise awareness and exchange practices linked to the objectives, target groups and themes of the programme, including ‘green’ topics. As regards ensuring that volunteers are aware of sound environmental practices in their daily lives, on-arrival trainings for volunteers organised by the national agencies could be a good occasion to transmit a set of ‘eco-tips’ and examples of good practices, in addition to host organisations mainstreaming environmentally-conscious behaviour. As regards digital tools to facilitate the dissemination and exchange of good practices among participants, the Commission could envisage to develop the online features of the European Solidarity Corps Portal[[8]](#footnote-8) further with a view to engaging with participants.

As for the promotion of the European Solidarity Corps projects in less popular destinations to stimulate the development of the local economy and sustainability (**paragraph 37**), the national agencies are required to attract new organisations to the European Solidarity Corps to cover all regions, including remote ones. The Commission could envisage stepping up the promotion of such projects.

Concerning the call on the Commission to consult stakeholders from the cultural and creative sectors and to collect information on existing charters in the various fields of artistic activity (**paragraph 39**), the Commission will use relevant working groups for this purpose. These groups are composed of Member States’ experts set up to implement the Council’s Work Plan for Culture[[9]](#footnote-9), which includes “Sustainability in cultural heritage” and “Culture as a driver for sustainable development” among its six priorities. Three expert groups focus on green and/ or climate-related aspects in line with their mandates. Moreover, the Commission will soon launch a new Voices of Culture dialogue with representatives from the cultural and creative sectors on the topic of culture and sustainable development.

Regarding the call to undertake comprehensive research and consult with stakeholders to develop a sector-specific strategy and a ‘good environmental practice’ guide covering audiovisual and cultural production, dissemination and event organisation (**paragraph 40**), the Commission will encourage European professional networks (including those supported by the programme) and representatives of the different sectors to play an active role in the collection and dissemination of good practices at European level. The cultural and audiovisual sectors clearly show its increasing concern for climate change and environmental sustainability and for the role they can play in raising awareness on those issues.

In relation to the call on the Commission to lay down common green public procurement criteria for the cultural sector and to use the MEDIA strand of Creative Europe to promote best practices in the audiovisual sector, with respect to sustainability, energy efficiency and the protection of the environment (**paragraph 41**), the Commission will take a gradual approach. This will aim at raising awareness, highlighting best practices, and encouraging beneficiaries to start to implement greening measures, which will result in concrete economic savings and more effectiveness in the implementation of the future projects.

As for the call to include sustainability and respect for the environment in the selection and the evaluation criteria for the European Capitals of Culture[[10]](#footnote-10) (**paragraph 42**), the criteria for this action are explicitly specified in Article 5 of Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council. New criteria can only be added through an amendment to this decision. The Commission underlines that, as indicated in Article 2 of the decision, one of the general objectives of the European Capitals of Culture is to foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities. Therefore, upcoming European Capitals of Culture do include environmental considerations in the planning and implementation of their title-years. Indeed, ecology becomes very often a strong focus of such years, such as in Bad Ischl (Austria), Tartu (Estonia) or Bodo (Norway in 2024).

Concerning the call on the Commission to authorise the establishment of a European network of environmental, climate and sustainability consultants to advise project developers and Creative Europe desks (**paragraph 43**), the Commission will explore with the desks how such a network of consultants could be put in place in a transparent and efficient way. In this regard, the Commission will take into account the diversity of the sectors covered by the programme.

1. <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://europa.eu/youth/discovereu_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/applicants/higher-education-charter_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-student-card-initiative_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/eea-communication-sept2020_en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/pass_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/strategic-framework-eus-cultural-policy> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)