Topic Preparation Kit

"Light through a prism: creating a European palette"

I. DELEGATES' PREPARATION KIT

a. Committee Topics

For your information you will find a list of all 10 Committee Topics. Always be aware of the work of the other Committees, since everybody will participate in the final discussions of the General Assembly.

b. Committee Topic Preparation

Overviews: The overviews are written by the Committee chairpersons to serve as background material. They aim to identify the key issues at stake while synthesizing the topic area. The objective is naturally to keep these overviews as balanced as possible, yet they may not receive unanimous consent. It should be noted that the EYP strongly encourages independent thinking so feel free to disagree!

Keywords: The non-exhaustive list of keywords intends to facilitate searching for information, may it be documents, news items or articles, at different types of search engines, news websites and encyclopedias.

Research Links: As regards the suggestions for research links, the list is by no means exhaustive. Rather than citing individual links, we have preferred indicating links to websites where several relevant documents and articles can be found. Please note that the EYP is not responsible for the contents on various websites; the texts reflect the opinions of their authors only.

We wish you successful preparation and interesting reading!

1. AFCO

The European Union: to be or not to be? With the current credit crisis, the rise of the Paris-Berlin axis as the primary decision-making mechanism in the Eurozone, and the sluggish and incoherent response which EU institutions have given to recent issues, does it still make sense to aim for one united Europe? Should we cut our losses and restore national sovereignty or are there still reasons to believe that unity makes strength?

2. AFET

Following the independence of South Sudan on 9th July 2011 and the recent signs of conflict between the two Sudans. How should the European External Action Service act in order to help make peace a reality in the war-torn region?

3. CULT I

United in diversity? With eleven Member States not having ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, how should the EU contribute to the cultural protection of ethnic minorities and their languages while ensuring cultural integration within national states?

4. CULT II

In the times of deep financial crisis, such areas of culture as dancing, music and other art receive less attention from the governments which shows up in the underfunding of the projects in these areas. What should the EU do to awaken the interest of the governments and/or private entities to these areas of life?

5. ENVI

Environmental awareness and green initiatives are not well-developed in all European Countries. How can the EU foster creative and sustainable solutions that strengthen "green living" in Europe while at the same time ensure that the European economy remains competitive?

6. EMPL

A lost generation? Looking at dramatically high youth unemployment rates with the eyes of the youth: what kind of short- and/or long-term reforms and programmes does the youth itself want to see implemented by the European governments?

7. FEMM

With the existence of a glass ceiling preventing woman from entering higher positions in companies and the limited progress of the self-regulatory measures as introduced by the EU Justice Commissioner one year ago. What should the EU do in order to break through the glass ceiling and provide equal career chances to both males and females?

8. IMCO

Facebook has over 900 million members and they collect data on every one of them. Facebook's European headquarters lies in Dublin, Ireland which makes them subject to European law. What should the EU do in order to safeguard individuals' privacy rights in the face of social media giants like Facebook?

9. LIBE I

Sexual Education, whilst recognised to be a vital part of well-being, remains diversely implemented in Europe. What principles and what method(s) should form the basis of a framework for consistent and effective sexual education for all young Europeans?

10. LIBE II

In the aftermath of the Hungarian Media Act and political abuse of the mass media in Italy: What measures should the EU take to guarantee the freedom of the press in all Member States?

AFCO - Committee on Constitutional Affairs

The European Union: to be or not to be? With the current credit crisis, the rise of the Paris-Berlin axis as the primary decision-making mechanism in the Eurozone, and the sluggish and incoherent response which EU institutions have given to recent issues, does it still make sense to aim for one united Europe? Should we cut our losses and restore national sovereignty or are there still reasons to believe that unity makes strength?

Overview

"We win together or we will be defeated together, what we need is a strong European team.[1]"

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

The European Union has been hard hit by the international economic crisis, which has developed into a crisis of sovereign debt within the Member States. In this time of tribulations, where the very bases of our political and economic system are being shaken, it is extremely important for us to have clear goals as young Europeans. Before we can start building a better future for ourselves, we must establish clear aims. The very question of the existence of the European Union is now more important than ever. Would a federalisation of the EU be a valid move to improve to ensure its continuity? How far should this federalisation go? If we are to choose the path of integration, how could this be dealt with?

If Europe is to become more integrated it will necessarily tend towards federalisation. One of the main steps in this integration is to create a financial and banking union in the EU. Some argue that a creation of an elected European government is necessary, such as Jacques Attali[2], French economist and former right-hand to François Mitterrand, who points out that a currency has never survived without the backing of a proper state. The European Central Bank (ECB) would have a central role in this transition, since it would have the power to lend money directly to European-wide banks.

Some see the election of Francois Hollande to the French presidency as a game changer with regard to the conditions for European integration. Hollande promotes a policy which is based on growth which is made to bring of all the Eurozone back into prosperity rather than simply applying the tough austerity measures which have been advocated by Angela Merkel´s conservative government.

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[1]http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/12/522&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

[2] http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2012/06/2012615122134208504.html

For William Hague, Britain's Foreign Secretary, the eurozone is a "burning house with no exits". Well, is this really quite true? The debt crisis is demonstrably a fire in full career, but water is our first order rescue plan; however, in the end what we really need to do is repair our house, once we extinguish the fire[3].

Finally we are brought to the issue of European dissolution. Recurrent remarks in the media point to the possibility of Greece leaving the Euro or even the EU all together, however the negative outcomes of this decision need to be considered. One of the EU's economic strengths is the fact that it consists of the biggest internal market in the world. If the Euro were to be dissolved, devaluation in weak economies and currency appreciation in the stronger ones would have a disastrous effect on internal trade. Though the dissolution of the Euro seems like an easy way out, it might have devastating consequences on the economies of Member States[4].

Another key question is how to integrate the wider European public into this political and financial transition. With the rise of Euroskeptical and xenophobic movements such as France's Marine Le Pen *National Front[5],* how will the EU convince its citizens that it needs to stay alive, and how will it communicate what exactly needs to be done in order for this to be realised? With the financial instability chipping away at relations between Member States, is it too late to believe that together we will in fact be stronger?

By Jorge Simelio (ES) and Valeriia Cherednichenko (UA)

Keywords

Eurobonds, European Central Bank (ECB), Federalization, European Sovereign Debt Crisis.

Research links

1. Introductory material

The International Economic Crisis: The end of political autonomy in Europe? Barcelona Centre for International Affairs
http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/notes_internacionals/n1_59/the_international_economi c_crisis_the_end_last_of_political_autonomy_in_europe

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[3] http://businesslawblog.eu/2011/12/12/european-union-to-be-or-not-to-be-that-is-the-question-how-the-european-union-sovering-debt-crisis-may-impact-the-future-of-european-union-and-the-euro/
[4] http://www.economist.com/node/21555916
[5] http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2132611/French-elections-2012-Marine-Le-Pen-responsible-vote-France.html

Stronger after the crisis, Strategic choices for Europe's way ahead, Strategy Paper on the 'State of the Union', European Policy Center
http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_1300_strategy_paper.pdf

2. Official links

European Commission, Crisis Management
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/bank/crisis_management/index_en.htm

European Commission, EU Response to the economic and financial crisis
http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/focuson/crisis/index_en.htm

3. Other

BBC News, Eurozone's long reform wishlist
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-18560234

To be or not to be in Europe . . . it really is that simple
http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2158372/David-Cameron-To-Europe--Its-simple.html

To Be or not to Be: The State of the Euro in 2012
http://www.social-europe.eu/2012/01/to-be-or-not-to-be-the-state-of-the-euro-in-2012/

Spiegel Online, Euro Crisis
http://www.spiegel.de/international/topic/euro_crisis/

4. Video material

Europe: To Be or Not To Be, Empire programme on Al-Jazeera Network
http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2012/06/2012615122134208504.html

AFET - Committee on Foreign Affairs

Following the independence of South Sudan on 9th July 2011 and the recent signs of conflict between the two Sudans. How should the European External Action Service act in order to help make peace a reality in the war-torn region?

Overview

After decades of fighting for independence, southern part of Sudan seceded on July 9, 2011, becoming the Republic of South Sudan. In January 2011, nearly 99% of the region's voters had approved a split from northern Sudan in an internationally backed referendum. Following the secession, the country was admitted to the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU). However, while the way towards independence of South Sudan proved to be both lengthy and bloody at the same time, there are still issues that remain to be tackled and resolved.

Sudan shook off its colonial yoke in 1956, soon after, in the 1960s the southern struggle for independence became a full-fledged rebellion. In 1972 a peace agreement was made, introducing measures of autonomy for the South Sudan. However, in 1983 a rebellion rose again, led by Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), as a response to the termination of the autonomy arrangements that the Sudanese government had enforced. It is thought that the number of casualties rose to at least 1.5 million people[6]. The conflict finally ended with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), under which the south was granted regional autonomy along with guaranteed representation in a national power-sharing government. The agreement also provided for a referendum in the south on independence in 2011, in which 99% of southern Sudanese voted to split from Sudan.

Tensions between North and South are high due to great number of reasons, among which historical, cultural and religious differences[7]. However, the main sources of instability are unresolved border issues and the share of oil profits (The conundrum of the two Sudans is that while most of the oil is in the south, the pipeline runs through the north.)[8].

South Sudan's declaration of independence didn't end the fighting in the region. A rebellion has risen in the Nuba Mountains, which lie just across the border in Sudan. The Nuban fighters has presumably been close allies of the southern rebels, and there seems to be convincing evidence that South Sudan's new government was covertly supplying the Nubans with money, tanks and militia fighters[9]. At the same time, the Sudanese government seemed to be covertly arming ethnic militias in the south.

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[6] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14069082
[7] http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/south-sudan/index.html
[8] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/11/world/africa/sudan-and-south-sudan-edge-closer-to-brink-in-oil-dispute.html?pagewanted=all
[9] http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/south-sudan/index.html

The UN Security Council intervened, passing a resolution on 2nd of May that threatened the two sides with sanctions if they did not stop fighting. In May 2012, the two sides were discussing a seven-point security "road map" that required pulling back from contested border areas, setting up a joint monitoring mechanism and ending covert support for proxy militias.

Territorial disputes and quarrel over oil-rich areas are closely related to one another as the border area is where most of the oil lies. Both sides need oil to run their governments, feed their people and stamp out spreading rebellions. It is believed that it was South Sudanese oil that drove Sudan's economic boom of the past decade, hence making the repression by Sudan's Islamist government tolerable to many Sudanese[10]. The difficult economic situation has resulted in one of the deepest crisis that the Sudanese government has been confronted with in the previous couple of decades. At the same time, South Sudan is facing both a major food crisis and heavily armed ethnically based militias that are sweeping parts of the countryside, killing hundreds of people.

In 2005 an EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Sudan was appointed to reinforce the EU's diplomatic links with Sudan and the EU's presence at international level, as well as improving overall coordination with key external actors and in Brussels. The role of the EUSR has become more and more important in the EU's conduct of foreign affairs in recent years. In November 2010 because of the range of issues involved, and concerns over regional stability, the EU High Representative established a Sudan task force under the chairmanship of the EUSR to strengthen coordination among EU actors dealing with Sudan[11]. In Brussels, the European External Action Service (EEAS) was introduced in December 2010, as part of the Lisbon Treaty. It implements the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and is made up of staff from the European Commission, the Council of the EU and seconded personnel from EU Member States.

It is now crucial for EEAS to work together with other key factors-UN and AU in ensuring that both Sudan and South Sudan fully commit themselves to the peace process, thus resolving their differences in a peaceful manner. Achieving this would also provide a good base for the political stability and economic growth.

Attached bellow, there are links to research material, including newspapers articles and research studies that may provide more comprehensive information essential for a better insight.

It is now a key question what can the EU do to push both sides into peaceful negotiations, and whether a compromise related to the pressing issues such are the border disputes and oil

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[10] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/11/world/africa/sudan-and-south-sudan-edge-closer-to-brink-in-oil-dispute.html?pagewanted=all
[11] http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/092011IfPEWSudan_0.pdf

crisis can be reached. Even more importantly, what can the international community do to stop the devastating death toll that has been rising in the region for more than half a century!

By Nemanja Predojević (RS)

Keywords

Sudan, South Sudan, EUSR for Sudan, EEAS, Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), border demarcation line.

Research links

1. **Introductory material**

The New York Times, South Sudan
http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/south-sudan/index.html

Insight on Conflict, Sudan, Conflict Profile
http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/sudan/

South Sudan: Why Things Fall Apart
http://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/12/south-sudan-why-things-fall-apart/

The New York Times, Sudans' Oil Feud Risks Shattering a Fragile Peace
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/11/world/africa/sudan-and-south-sudan-edge-closer-to-brink-in-oil-dispute.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

2. **Official links**

European Union External Action, EU relations with Sudan
http://eeas.europa.eu/sudan/index_en.htm

3. **Other**

Evaluating the EU's role and challenges in Sudan and South Sudan, Sudan and South Sudan Case Study
http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/092011IfPEWSudan_0.pdf

Aljazeera, Arab League to discuss Sudan conflict
http://www.aljazeera.com/video/africa/2012/04/201242055948747237.html

CULT I -   Committee on Culture and Education I

United in diversity? With eleven Member States not having ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, how should the EU contribute to the cultural protection of ethnic minorities and their languages while ensuring cultural integration within national states?

Overview

Article 22 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights states: "The Union respects cultural, religious and linguistic diversity"[12].

Language is a produce of national identity. It preserves heritage, reflects social beliefs, values and expresses a cultural spirit. The loss of a language directly means a loss of cultural heritage including history, tradition and identity thus justifying exclusion or isolation of ethnic minorities which may cause parallel socieites.

The current international human rights regime however does not recognise an individual's right to language choice; instead, it promises freedom from linguistic discrimination. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) adopted by the Council of Europe in 1992 aiming to protect local languages[13] that do not qualify as official languages (e.g. Catalan in Spain) was not ratified by eleven Member States because of strict assimilation policy of their government. It is not meant to encourage linguistic isolation in recent immigrant communities. For instance, it protects the historic Hungarian minority in Slovakia, but does not provide for the Russian community in Latvia. Therefore, even though the EU itself supports several linguistic recognitions, language policy is ultimately implemented by each state.

The lack of a European Union body to guarantee linguistic tolerance is frightening for minority communities across Europe as it threatens national identity. Without linguistic freedoms, individuals may be deprived of other human rights, such as access to education, and freedom of expression. States have an obligation to take action on behalf of speakers of minority languages.[14] These include education, communication with authorities, public services, media, culture, economic and social life.

The European Commission provided support to the ADUM project (2004-05) which informs people and organisations working to support regional or minority languages about European funding opportunities. Other recent projects include CRAMLAP (Celtic, Regional and Minority Languages Abroad Project), the Network to Promote LInguistic Diversity (NPLD) and the Network of European Language Planning Boards, established to promote

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[12] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf
[13] http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/Treaties/Html/148.htm
[14] http://stefanwolff.com/sample-chapters/minlang-ch1.pdf

cooperation between minority language planning boards in Europe.[15] In 2009 the European Commission launched the Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism which published a report[16] with recommendation on topics such as language learning support for immigrants, the role of translation in making European literary heritage widely accessible.

Despite improvements in some European states, the relationship between democracy and language policies aimed at accommodating linguistic diversity in multilingual countries remains complex. The future for Europe's linguistic minorities remains ambiguous, but if the EU truly wants to emerge as a model of multilingual diversity, it must adopt a more authoritative role in preserving these nations' souls.

How can the EU ensure cultural integration within nations while protecting the language of minorities? How can the EU guarantee that Member States which are set on preserving their national identity and culture guarantee to follow the vision of Europe's multilingualism and unity?

By Maria Pashi (CY)

Keywords

Language diversity, Social Inclusion, multilingualism, unity, diversity,

Research links

1. **Introductory material**

Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism http://ec.europa.eu/languages/pdf/doc5088_en.pdf

Report of the current debate for minority languages in Europe
http://stefanwolff.com/sample-chapters/minlang-ch1.pdf

2. **Official Links**

The European Commission's support of regional and minority languages
http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-of-europe/regional-and-minority-languages_en.htm

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[15] http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-of-europe/regional-and-minority-languages_en.htm
[16] http://www.poliglotti4.eu/php/media-centre/index.php?doc_id=146&lg=en

3. Other

Website of Celtic, Regional and Minority Languages Abroad Project
http://www.cramlap.org/

Websire of the Poliglotti4.eu project
http://www.poliglotti4.eu/php/index.php

Policy recommendations for the promotion of mulitlinguilism in the EU
http://ec.europa.eu/languages/news/20110707-civil-society-report_en.htm

CULT II - Committee on Culture and Education II

In the times of deep financial crisis, such areas of culture as dancing, music and other art receive less attention from the governments which shows up in the underfunding of the projects in these areas. What should the EU do to awaken the interest of the governments and/or private entities to these areas of life?

Overview

"When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity."

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

2009 was the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. However, since the start of the financial crisis in 2008, Europe's culture and arts have suffered deep cuts. Severe financial issues endanger not only small and medium-sized cultural entities but bring about disastrous effects everywhere: Italy and Greece find their long-established and priceless patrimony in grave danger and Portugal has simply abolished its Ministry of Culture altogether.[17] Nevertheless, culture should be a support in these dark times in which everyone makes sacrifices in their daily lives. How can the EU revive the interest and belief in the importance of the arts?

The EU's Culture Programme is a tremendously important step in saving the arts from the financial crisis. It's the largest cultural funding programme in the world that has ever been proposed: the EU will allocate 1.8 billion Euros to visual and performing arts, film, music, literature and architecture in the period between 2014 and 2020. [18] The programme has three main objectives: cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; culture as a catalyst for creativity; and culture as a key component in international relations, which are to be realised through new methods and partnerships supported and promoted by the EU, such as the stimulation of cross-border mobility of cultural producers and artists.[19]

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[17] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/world/europe/the-euro-crisis-is-hurting-cultural-groups.html?pagewanted=all
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/03/world/europe/03iht-letter03.html?pagewanted=all

[18] http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/European-Union-proposes-worlds-largest-ever-cultural-funding-programme/25318

[19] http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-policy-development/european-agenda-for-culture_en.htm

Although the Programme seems plausible on paper, it has so far received a mixed response. Questions are raised with regard to the receivers of these EU-issued grants and the bureaucracy inherent to EU programmes. Some fear that the wish for social cohesion through intercultural dialogue in the EU will lead to mostly subsidies for visible targets such as classical music, a summit of European culture but very dependent of financial support. Others point out that it has proven difficult in the past for the EU to reach small and medium-sized enterprises, let alone individuals. Moreover, the paperwork will be costly and frustrating for applicants.[20]

Nevertheless, projects such as the Culture Programme are vital to the survival of culture. In its turn, European culture is necessary for European integration and mutual understanding. Take a look at Belgium: the Flemish and Walloon communities are always at arms due to a lack of cultural exchange. What is more, the economy of culture is incredibly productive: it represents 3% of Europe's GDP (which is more than car manufacturing) and supports 6 million jobs, a number which is still growing even in these times of crisis. Cultural institutions and creative environments make European cities more attractive, which has more profound effects than simply stimulate tourism. But in order to create competitiveness in the economy and industry, the arts need a mix of public and private investments and regulations to support them first.[21]

And this is where the problem is situated. If the governments cut their public subsidies, culture entities will need to start looking for private investments more actively in order to sustain themselves. However, people either see culture as very important, or they don't see it at all. Plenty of investors think of the cuts as inevitable: as a part of the world, culture needs to share the current pain. The existent private investments often go to larger institutions while small and medium-sized organisations can barely afford their own existence. Many of these try to attract extra income through education and community workshops, but when the subsidies come to an end, the actors and the effective plays are the ones who suffer, whereas the workshops continue without creating sufficient profit. In other words, the investments the entities do receive are often misused.[22]

The returns of the now small investments in culture are already massive. The cuts will not save tremendous amounts of state money but will cause a severe downfall of the contribution of culture to the European GDP. Small organisations will be hit the hardest, but exactly these are the starting point for many of today's greatest artists and the source of the most admired, experimental and innovative sides of cultural life. It is feared that cutting the

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[20] http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/European-Union-proposes-worlds-largest-ever-cultural-funding-programme/25318
[21] http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/files/83/en/KEA-Arts_cuts_en.pdf

[22] http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jul/25/arts-funding-cuts-theatre-galleries

budget of the arts will lead to the "theatrical equivalent of the microwave dinner" because of the financial pressure on a young artist who will no longer receive any support.[23]

How can the public and private investors be incited to invest in culture? How can the cultural entities learn to attract these investors? What is the most efficient organisation of spending the investments? How can we support the young and small artist in these times of crisis? How can the EU top itself and improve its Culture programme?

By Marijke Saenen (BE)

<u>Keywords</u>

Culture Programme, European art, private investment, public investment, small and medium-sized cultural organisation, effects of the crisis, budget cuts

<u>Research links</u>

1. **Introductory material**
Culture Programme Guide 2007 – 2013
http://ec.europa.eu/culture/calls-for-proposals/culture-programme-guide_en.htm

LabForCulture: online report of the financial crisis and its effects on culture
http://www.labforculture.org/en/culture-news/documents/financial-crisis-online-report

CultureWatchEurope
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/cwe/default_en.asp

2. **Official sources**

Studies of the European Commission
http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-policy-development/policy-documents/studies_en.htm

3. **Other**
Overview of the effects of the economic crisis on the culture of different EU countries
http://www.sica.nl/sites/default/files/en_crisis_and_prospects_for_art_and_culture_in_europe_oct2010.pdf

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[23] http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2011/mar/13/theatre-funding-cuts-actors

The effects of the economic crisis on culture, by Péter Inkei

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/cwe/Effects_Inkei_EN.pdf

IFACCA: global financial crisis and recession: impact on the arts

http://www.ifacca.org/topic/global-financial-crisis/

ENVI - Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Environmental awareness and green initiatives are not well-developed in all European Countries. How can the EU foster creative and sustainable solutions that strengthen "green living" in Europe while at the same time ensure that the European economy remains competitive?

Overview

A recent Eurobarometer states that 95% [24]of citizens consider protecting the environment to be important to them personally. Yet, the OECD estimates that, by 2020 we could be generating 45%[25] more waste than we did in 1995.

Nowadays, it can seem implausible that citizens are not environmentally aware, but in fact a 2011 Eurobarometer by the European Commission on the attitudes of European citizens towards the environment states that only 60% [26] of the respondents said that they felt well-informed about environmental issues. European citizens' environmental awareness directly affects their behaviour.

Green initiatives and industries, as well as green technology have lately been challenged by the recent debt crisis roaming throughout Europe. The committee will have to balance the need to change behaviour with creative solutions while recognising that any green solutions will have to be economically viable to be realistic and effective in a crisis-stricken Europe.

There are many different levels of environmental awareness in Europe, and not every country has developed or is ready to develop important environmentally-friendly policies. Taking into account all the cultural differences, while bearing in mind the importance of getting all European citizens involved in creating a "greener" Europe, how can the EU make sure that green initiatives expand effectively throughout Europe?

The Directorate-General (DG) for the Environment is the main and most relevant EU institution for this topic. However, for the sake of the best possible resolution the committee should also explore the duties and responsibilities of the DG for Education and Culture, DG for Transport and Innovation and the DG for Enterprise and Industry as well.

For some reason, the best informed citizens are likely to live in well-developed countries with a highly educated population. However, best informed doesn't necessarily mean more environmentally friendly, and as such this issue poses the most difficult question for the committee to answer. How do you ensure that the best informed actually act upon their information and knowledge in a green way?

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[24] EB75.2 - http://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/EB_PresentationEB752.pdf
[25] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/index.htm
[26] EB75.2 - http://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/EB_PresentationEB752.pdf

The key questions the committee will have to answer in their resolution are:

1. What new approaches on raising environmental awareness and spreading green initiatives are available to policymakers?
2. How do you enhance "green living" in a crisis-ridden economy?
3. How do you ensure that well-informed citizen actually change to an environmentally-friendly behaviour?

By Marius Aure (NO) and Silvia Susach (ES)

Keywords

Environmental awareness, green initiatives, "green living", waste reduction policies, Sixth Environment Action Programme

Research links

1. Introductory material

Eurobarometer of 2011 – A collection of statistics on the on the attitudes of European citizens towards the environment

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/EB_PresentationEB752.pdf

European Commission – An introduction to the Green Cars Initiative in a Europe in crisis

http://ec.europa.eu/research/transport/road/green_cars/index_en.htm

European Commission – An introduction to the EU's approach to waste

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/index.htm

2. Official links

European Commission, DG Environment - A website for further research, includes many rewarding links

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/environment/index_en.htm

Council of Europe – Environmental initiatives country by country

http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/platform/observatory/pracdevdur_EN.asp

Publications by the European Environmental Agency (EEA) – A very useful site with easy-to-use search features

http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications#c9=all&c14=&c12=&c7=en&c11=5&b_start=0

3. Other

A US blog on green technology trends – Check for the most up-to-date green trends and creative green solutions out there.
http://usgreentechnology.com/us-green-stories/top-five-green-trends-in-2012/

European Week of Waste Reduction – An initiative to among other things reduce waste and increase awareness
http://www.ewwr.eu/waste-reduction

The New York Times – A news article on the challenges facing Europe's green efforts globally
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/23/business/energy-environment/trade-battles-buffet-eus-green-efforts.html?_r=1

EMPL - Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
A lost generation? Looking at dramatically high youth unemployment rates with the eyes of the youth: what kind of short and/or long-term reforms and programmes does the youth itself want to see implemented by the European governments?

Overview

"Without decisive action at EU and national level" we will create a "lost generation".[27]

László Andor, the EU's Employment Commissioner

The world is facing a youth unemployment crisis: young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults and over 75 million youth worldwide are looking for work. The the International Labour Organization (ILO) has warned of a "scarred" generation of young workers facing a dangerous mix of high unemployment, increased inactivity and precarious work, as well as persistently high working poverty. [28]

According to latest figures released by ILO, youth unemployment in the EU and other developed countries soared 26.5% from 2008 to 2011, the steepest increase in all the world regions ranked by the ILO.[29] One out of five young Europeans are looking for work and the unemployment figures are estimated to be not likely to improve until 2016. [30]

A fifth of young people in the EU are not in employment, education or training – a measure tagged with the ungainly acronym 'NEET'. The problem is not confined to the usual suspects, like Spain (49 per cent) or Italy (29 per cent). Nearly a quarter of people under 25 are jobless or not in education in France, Sweden and the UK.

There is no doubt that prospects look bleak for Europe's youth. They have fewer marketable skills than older workers on average, and hence find it hardest to get work in periods of high unemployment. Not the least because redundant workers with more skills 'trade down' to lower paid jobs. As Europe's economic stagnation continues – it is already into its fourth year with no end in sight – more people will join the ranks of the long-term unemployed. The longer someone is out of work, the harder it is to get them back in: they lose motivation; they lose the skills they have through lack of use; and they are more likely to succumb to mental illness, alcoholism and drugs, and crime.

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[27] http://centreforeuropeanreform.blogspot.com/2012/03/tackling-scourge-of-youth-unemployment.html

[28] http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/lang--en/index.htm

[29] www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/.../wcms_180976.pdf

[30] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics

"The youth unemployment crisis can be beaten but only if job creation for young people becomes a key priority in policymaking and private sector investment picks up significantly," said Jose Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, executive director of the ILO's employment sector.[31]

One way to tackle youth unemployment in a slump is to invest in people's skills. Investment in skills does two helpful things: it removes some young people from the labour market, making it easier for others to get jobs, and it improves the stock of skills the economy can draw on once demand recovers, which can help boost growth. Participation rates in vocational training and university education among 18 to 24 year olds are low in many of the European countries struggling with youth unemployment. Improving young people's skills will also help Europe's economy to be more productive in the longer term, and reduce structural unemployment. The returns on investment in human capital are very large, on average, which shows that training leads to more productive workers and thus higher wages and more employment.[32]

The European Commission has recently launched an initiative to help give young people access to the job market. The pilot project, dubbed "Your first EURES job", aims to help young people find a job in another EU country and is a part of the Employment Package – the EU executive's proposal to boost employment in the EU. But the European Youth Forum, a platform of national youth councils and non-governmental youth organisations in Europe, claims that all the actions must be more broad-based. The unprecedented high youth unemployment rates require policies that should not target and reach only first job seekers or recent school-leavers and graduates, but all NEET young people. The Employment Package takes stock of the implementation of the Youth Opportunities Initiative, but it hardly shows any new commitments or progress and it rather just outlines already existing initiatives and repeats already taken efforts.[33]

Europe faces a choice. It can continue to fiddle with small-scale, ineffective labour market policies for young people. Or it can invest in their human capital. What programmes, strategies and reforms does the youth want to be implemented by the European governments? How can the EU tackle youth unemployment while bearing in mind the opinion of the young? The gravitas of this issue must be fully understood by all parties involved in order to combat the problem of youth unemployment and come to a common solution.

By Oksana Korchak (UA)

Keywords

Youth unemployment, Annual Growth Survey 2012, EURES, labour market, the employment package

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[31] http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/apr/16/european-youth-unemployment-soars
[32] http://centreforeuropeanreform.blogspot.com/2012/03/tackling-scourge-of-youth-unemployment.html
[33] http://www.youthforum.org/

Research links

1.   Introductory material

A Quick Guide to Europe's Deteriorating Youth Unemployment Nightmare, March 2012
http://www.businessinsider.com/europe-youth-unemployment-2012-3?op=1#ixzz1zpld1R3D

Youth employment
http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/lang--en/index.htm#a3

Global Job Crisis Observatory:
http://www.ilo.org/dyn/jobcrisis/f?p=11105:1:2074765382818520

Global Employment trends 2012
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_171571.pdf

2.   Official links
Annual Growth Survey 2012
http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/ags2012_en.pdf

The European Job Mobility Portal
http://ec.europa.eu/eures/home.jsp

ILO: Youth unemployment to remain high until 2016
http://www.euractiv.com/socialeurope/ilo-youth-unemployment-remain-hi-news-512886

3.   Other

Invest in youth or lose a generation
http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/news/WCMS_183360/lang--en/index.htm

ILO warns of youth unemployment 'crisis'
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18155938

Europe's Austerity Push Breaks Mother's Promise of Social Model
http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-03-27/europe-s-austerity-push-breaks-mother-s-promise-of-social-model.html

Unemployment Among Europe's Most Educated
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyJ-U-CmJ98

FEMM - Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

With the existence of a glass ceiling preventing women from entering top positions in companies and the limited progress of the self-regulatory measures as introduced by the EU Justice Commissioner one year ago. What should the EU do in order to break through the glass ceiling and provide equal career chances to both males and females?

Overview

"One year ago, I asked companies to voluntarily increase women's presence on corporate boards. However, I regret to see that despite our calls, self-regulation so far has not brought about satisfactory results"

Viviane Reding, EU's Justice Commissioner and Vice President of Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship

With several young domestic economies on the rise such as in Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC countries) competitive pressures in the world economy are increasing day by day. This continues to make it harder for the European Union (EU) and its corporations to keep up with the pace of growth and even jeopardises achieving growth targets as set by the 2020 strategy[34]. However, in order to improve the EU's competitive edge, much potential can be found in employing females in top positions in European companies. For example, research conducted by several consultants from McKinsey and Ernst & Young indicate that gender-balanced companies improve operating profits with 56% and that a female member on a company board increases earnings per share. Interestingly, only 13.7% of Europe's top firms have a female holding a top position, and according to the growth figures it would take at least 40 more years to reach anything close to a gender-balanced company. All in all, this growing evidence supports the view that there lies much potential in having females on board.[35]

One year ago Viviane Reding, the EU's Justice Commissioner, released a call asking leading European firms to voluntarily sign the "Women on the Board pledge for Europe"[36] which would commit the firm to adopt policies that increase female participation in top positions. However, this has only led to a slight increase of 1.9%, which is far from the impressive results hoped for. This has lead Member States such as Spain, the Netherlands and France to independently adopt legislative measures to break the glass ceiling (primarily through setting quotas). As a result, companies operating across borders are faced with different national legislation, which complicates business operations. Significant differences in females

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[34] http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm
[35] http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/12/213&language=en
[36] http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/124

in top positions among EU countries such as Finland, with a rate of 27% of females on company boards, compared to Cyprus with 4%, furthers the need of creating one consistent European policy.

In recent years the European Commission has started to craft gender equality strategies and adopt frameworks such as the European Commission Work Programme for 2012[37], the Gender Equality Strategy[38] adopted in 2010[39] and the European Women's Charter[40]. Although marginal improvements have been made, females remain largely unrepresented at the top of the corporate pyramid.

Finally, as figures indicate, females continue to be a majority in the current university class rooms with young women accounting for 60% of the total number of new graduates. This makes the topic of breaking through the glass ceiling even more relevant as an increasing number of females will be confronted with this invisible barrier, while European firms keep on failing to acknowledge the potential of this competitive advantage.

By Ben Brown (UK) & Charif van Zetten (NL)

<u>Keywords</u>

Woman on the Board pledge, glass ceiling, company board, female participation grade, European Commission Work Programme 2012, Gender Equality Strategy, European Women's Charter

<u>Research links</u>

1. Introductory material

Women on the Board Pledge for Europe issued by the EU Justice Commissioner
http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/124

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[37] http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index_en.htm
[38] http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1149&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en
[39] http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/10/430&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en
[40] http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/10/430&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

Women's Charter set up by the European Commission to guide EU decision making for achieving gender equality
http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/237&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

2. Official links

Report on eliminating Gender Stereotypes in the EU by the European Parliament
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fNONSGML%2bCOMPARL%2bPE-491.091%2b01%2bDOC%2bPDF%2bV0%2f%2fEN

Homepage of the EU Justice Commissioner on Gender Equality
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/index_en.htm

3. Other

Economic growth potential of employing females in top positions and pursuing a general gender balance on the work floor
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/gender-equality/news/20120416_en.htm

IMCO - Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection

Facebook has over 900 million members and they collect data on every one of them. Facebook's European headquarters lies in Dublin, Ireland, which makes them subject to European law. What should the EU do in order to safeguard individuals' privacy rights in the face of social media giants like Facebook?

Overview

The media landscape that our parents and older siblings used to know has changed radically: "The Internet is the first medium in history that has native support for groups and conversation at the same time. Whereas the phone gave us the one-to-one pattern, and television, radio, magazines, books, gave us the one-to-many pattern, the Internet gives us the many-to-many pattern."[41]

The term social media covers all parts of the Internet, which consist of web or mobile-based applications for interactive dialogue and exchange of content. Not only are social contacts and international communication by now heavily dependent on social media. They also serve as a promoter for cultural convergence and spread democratic values. People can follow politicians/celebrities or friends on Twitter, can organise demonstrations on Facebook that could lead to system changing revolts (e.g. Arab Spring) or simply shop on Amazon, talk via Skype and look for jobs on LinkedIn).

Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, Google+ or Yahoo are only a few of the nowadays most powerful social media giants in the world. Most of them belong to a company worth several billion Dollars. Facebook even was once rated $100 billion and is therefore a few times more worth than all the other IT companies such as Amazon, Apple or Microsoft combined.[42] They all have access to private personal and contact data or consumer behaviour collecting millions of data every day, often for selling to other companies. Once you google a music band Amazon and Ebay promote the whole album collection via E-mail and Facebook shows corresponding ads next to your timeline that shows your relations and data back to the date when you joined Facebook.

The areas of data protection and Internet Security lie within the Shared Competences of the EU affecting the internal market, consumer protection and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.[43] Most of the existing rules in the EU concerning data protection were adopted in the early 1990s when the coining of the term Web 2.0 was still 10 years away. Since then the legal situation in Europe is very heterogeneous and lacks uniform guidelines due to different laws in the Member States. In 2010, the European Commission introduced the Digital Agenda for

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[41] http://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_how_cellphones_twitter_facebook_can_make_history.html
[42] http://www.forbes.com/sites/greatspeculations/2012/05/16/facebooks-coming-at-100-billion-should-be-closer-to-82/
[43] Art 2 (2), Art 4 TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union)

Europe[44] which includes also the part Trust and Security[45] and addresses issues such as cybercrime, the right to privacy and data protection. At the same time the Safer Internet Day on 7th February and the Safer Internet Programme[46] were complemented by a new campaign[47] *"Think before you post"* that focuses on the dangers children and young adults are facing online. With technology and the use of the Internet so rapidly changing the EU is nowadays facing big challenges to keep up with the legislation. That is why the Commission convinced some of Europe´s major social networks to voluntarily commit to certain principles.[48] In addition it published a package[49] for new data protection rules at the beginning of 2012 trying to finally set a coherent framework for Europe. Still, many details remain unclear as to how the EU should control the implementation of these rules and how terms such as privacy and personal data should be defined.

Critics complain that despite harmonisation of the law new bureaucratic requirements were implemented and companies fear a loss of jobs and capacity for innovation. Furthermore it is not clear how the EU will deal with third country service providers and their offers in the World Wide Web.[50]

Despite Article 8[51] of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union that states the protection of personal data, especially in light of increasing importance of social media giants, is not yet implemented as promised. Many people use the Internet several times a day on different devices but hardly think about how they use it and what traces they leave in cyberspace. This is partly because there are very contrasting understandings of privacy, which is often a matter of age and peer groups.

What is private? What should people reveal in front of the world? Some people enjoy the existence of social networks but fear a lack of transparency in the account and privacy settings. Even social networks and society use different semantics with the words visibility and privacy.[52] However, Facebook doesn´t force people to share, people want to share, too. Some people want to be visible, stay in contact with their friends as often as possible, share pictures, music and habits because they do not see it as a bad thing.

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[44] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0245:FIN:EN:PDF

[45]http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/pillar.cfm?pillar_id=45&pillar=Trust%20and%20Security

[46] http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/index_en.htm

[47]http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=AGENDA/10/5&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

[48] http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/social_networking/eu_action/selfreg/index_en.htm

[49] http://www.euractiv.com/infosociety/reding-unveils-new-eu-data-prote-news-510381

[50] http://www.euractiv.com/infosociety/reding-unveils-new-eu-data-prote-news-510381

[51] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

[52] http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/26/for-facebook-visibility-is-not-privacy-while-others-disagree/

Are the legal frameworks so far adjusted to all target groups - children, young adults, adults and old people? How can the EU guarantee both a right to privacy and secure a transparent and safe use of social media. Do social media giants and their platforms need to be constrained in order to safe personal data? Are there possible ways to set guidelines for companies that do not have their main residence in a European Member State?

By Kerstin Eckart (DE)

Keywords

Privacy, terms of use, right to be forgotten, cultural convergence, transparency, digital revolution

Research links

1. **Introductory material**

Q&A provided by the European Data Protection Supervisor
http://www.edps.europa.eu/EDPSWEB/edps/cache/off/EDPS/Dataprotection/QA

2. **Official links**

European Commission – Justice – Data Protection
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/index_en.htm

Data protection directive, 1995
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31995L0046:EN:HTML

European Union – Policy Areas – Consumers
http://europa.eu/pol/cons/index_en.htm

European Union – Policy Areas – Information Technology
http://europa.eu/pol/infso/index_en.htm
http://www.conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/108.htm

3. Other

Facebook.com (Take a look at the terms of use, registration data, security and account options)
www.facebook.com

New York Times Topics
http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/facebook_inc/index.html?ref=topics

Viviane Reding (European Commissioner for Justice) presents new rules for data security, Euractiv.com
http://www.euractiv.com/infosociety/reding-unveils-new-eu-data-prote-news-510381

TED Talks on the relevance of Internet
http://www.ted.com/talks/alexis_ohanian_how_to_make_a_splash_in_social_media.html
http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/christopher_m00t_poole_the_case_for_anonymity_online.html

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LIBE I - Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs I

Sexual Education, whilst recognised to be a vital part of well-being, remains diversely implemented in Europe. What principles and what methods should form the basis of a framework for consistent and effective sexual education for all young Europeans?

Overview

It's important to understand that sexual education is not only about having a subject at school, but a whole understanding of issues including medical treatment. The Dictionary provides us with the following explanation for Sex education: " It is instruction on issues relating to human sexuality, including human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexual intercourse, reproductive health, emotional relations, reproductive rights and responsibilities, abstinence, birth control, and other aspects of human sexual behaviour."

European society lacks a clear vision on sexual education. It varies from country to country. There are, however, similarities in the way many governments approach sex education, and the challenges they face in implementing these policies. For instance in Poland sexual education is pretty poor, when in Sweden, Germany and France sexual education is a compulsory subject. Poviding comprehensive sex education in diverse cultural, social and political settings is something which a European society should strive for.

Young people need accurate information, skills and access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services if they are to make healthy, informed choices. Comprehensive sex education is one of the most important tools we have to ensure that young people have the information they need.

Sex education may be both formal and informal, though sometimes informal education may lead to a misunderstanding and misinterpretation as to what sexual education is. Dana Berkowitz, assistant professor in sociology and women's and gender studies, believes being surrounded by sexual messages plays a part in teenage fascination with porn. "Some people can talk to their parents, but not everyone has parents that want to view them as active sexual beings," Berkowitz said[53]. According to the studies, only 60 percent of teenagers have received some sort of sexual health education, and 68 percent of teens never speak to their parents about birth control.

World Health Organisation (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Reproductive and Sexual Health draws attention to the problem which such ignorance might cause. For example, in countries such as the Netherlands, where sexual education is introduced at the age of 10, there is a focus on both the biological and psychological aspects of sexuality and relationships. Such information has been a legislated part of the curriculum since 1993, and consequently there is a significantly lower rate of teenage pregnancy.

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[53] http://www.lsureveille.com/mobile/entertainment/study-more-teenagers-get-sexual-education-from-porn-1.2542251

This shift in focus coincides with the change in societal perceptions of sexuality and morality across Europe, and the rise of health concerns regarding higher teenage pregnancy and abortion rates and the spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). While sexual education seems the ideal way to facilitate ideas of safety and health.

By Anna Suprunenko (UA)

Keywords

Sexual education, Sexually Transmitted Infections, World Health Organisation, cultural and religious differences across Europe, European teenage

Research links

1. **Studies**

The SAFE Project, supported by the European Commission Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection
http://www2.huberlin.de/sexology/BIB/SexEd/SexEd.html

Guttmacher Institute Report on Teenage Sexual and Reproductive Behaviour on Developed Countries (specifically Chapters 6 & 8 of the report)
www.guttmacher.org/pubs/eurosynth_rpt.pdf

Abstinence vs. Comprehensive Sex Education, The American perspective
http://ari.ucsf.edu/science/reports/abstinence.pdf

2. **Articles**

Abstract for study on impact of abstinence education
http://www.doctorslounge.com/index.php/news/pb/9697

British teen pregnancy and the Dutch model (pages 17 – 20)
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001201/120152e.pdf

Discussion of media exposure to sexual content influencing sexual behaviour
http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/117/4/1018.full?linkType=FULL&journalCode=pediatrics&resid=117/4/1018

3. **Other Sources**

Discussing the merits of the Swiss system
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/05/15/AR2006051500809.html

Problems with sexual education within the UK
http://www.independent.co.uk/extras/big-question/the-big-question-why-are teenagepregnancy-rates-so-high-and-what-can-be-done-about-it-1623828.html

World Health Organisation guidelines
http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-publish/information-forthemedia/sections/latestpress-releases/new-european-guidelines-on-sexuality-education-experts-say-sexualityeducation-should-start-from-birth

Country papers on Youth Sexuality Education in Europe
http://english.forschung.sexualaufklaerung.de/3029.html

LIBE II- Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs II

In the aftermath of the Hungarian Media Act and political abuse of the mass media in Italy: What measures should the EU take to guarantee the freedom of the press in all Member States?

Overview

Freedom of the press and media in general is specifically conducted by each Member State itself, however there are three fundamental documents guaranteeing the freedom of the press within the European Union (EU). Consequently media legislation is traditionally taken as a national issue, nevertheless the Member States are bound by EU legislation in general. The fundamental binding documents adopted by the European Union are the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, European Convention on Human Rights and UN Declaration of Human Rights. Despite some tendencies heading towards the common EU standard in connection with freedom of media such as the European Charter on Freedom of the Press[54], the real power still remains in the hands of Member States themselves. Furthermore, based on the report comparing the laws concerning the media regulations, the politicisation of media regulatory bodies appears to be a common issue in a majority of analysed countries[55]. Disparity in media regulations within Europe, as well as a number of key deficiencies in some European systems might increase the possibility of abuse of media power or the violation of freedom of expression, such as in case of the Hungarian Media Act or abuse of the mass media in Italy.

The Hungarian Media Act was adopted despite strong criticism throughout the EU at the end of December 2010 and has been in force since the beginning of January 2011. The act establishes in the country a new body for media control, the National Media and Communications Authority, for monitoring the contents of all media, including the internet.

Among other authorities it has the right to impose a heavy fine on the media in question or even suspend its activity. It may also oblige the media to reveal their source of information. Set in the context of the political situation in Hungary, the Act may be seen as expanding the power of the nationalistic centrist-rightwing party Fidesz, which occupies 2/3 of the parliamentary seats and is the only party in the government[56]. The Hungarian government was thus in connection with the Media Act accused of violation of basic democratic values related to freedom of media, however it was not penalised by any specific sanctions.

Political abuse of mass media in Italy is connected with the problematic ownership of the television network owned by Silvio Berlusconi, former prime minister at present. Consequently, the other major network is state-owned and is under government control[57]. Thus in the case of Italy, the major issue is no doubt the media's ideological bias for electoral motives (in a competitive environment) and, consequently, manipulating the media content in government's favour and against the opposition.

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[54] http://www.pressfreedom.eu/en/index.php

[55] http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Insult%20Law%20Report.pdf

[56] http://ifla.org/en/publications/the-new-press-and-media-act-in-hungary

[57] http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.187.1583&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Nevertheless, at least small steps have been taken to resolve some of these issues. In 2009, May 25th, 48 editors-in-chief and leading journalists from 19 countries adopted and signed the "European Charter on Freedom of the Press" in Hamburg[58]. The Charter outlines basic principles that governments must respect when dealing with journalists, such as prohibition of censorship, free access to national and foreign media sources and freedom to gather and disseminate information. Despite the support from the European Commission, the charter has not been signed by the all Member State major press representatives.

Consequently, further steps have been taken towards ensuring the freedom of press as was seen with the meeting of the High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism[59]. However, until now no binding regulation in form of a legislative act on the European level has been adopted.

To summarize the major problems, there appears to be no uniform model of media regulation for safeguarding rights such as freedom of expression and press at the domestic level. However, since the media legislation is regulated by the national laws of Member states themselves, how can the European Union ensure the full independence and freedom of the press? Subsequently, while having in mind that all individuals have the right to "freedom of opinion and expression, which includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers" what sort of tools should the EU adopt in order to guarantee such freedoms? Last but not least, should the EU aim at unification of the measures concerning the press and media in general or should such authority remain in hands of each Member State?

By Ema Šťastná(CZ)

Keywords
Hungarian Media Act, political abuse of media, freedom of press, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, European Convention on Human Rights, media regulations

Research Links

1. **Introductory materials**

The New Press and Media in Hungary - detailed description of the Hungarian Media Act and the process of confirmation
http://ifla.org/en/publications/the-new-press-and-media-act-in-hungary

Centre for Media and Communication Studies - Hungarian Media Act – fact sheet
http://cmcs.ceu.hu/resources-new-media-laws-in-hungary-0

Hungarian Media Laws in Europe - It analyses the consistency of Hungary's new media laws with European practises and norms

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[58] http://www.pressfreedom.eu/en/index.php

[59] http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media_taskforce/pluralism/index_en.htm

https://cmcs.ceu.hu/sites/default/files/field_attachment/news/node-27293/Hungarian_Media_Laws_in_Europe_0.pdf

2. Official sources

European Charter on Freedom of the Press - The charter signed in 2009 in Hamburg by 48 editors-in-chief and noted journalist from 19 countries
http://www.pressfreedom.eu/en/index.php

Freedom and Pluralism of the Media - actions taken by European Commission in order to guarantee the freedom of press
http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media_taskforce/pluralism/index_en.htm

3. Media Coverage

The European Union and the Freedom of the press - Hungarian Media Act adoption in the broader interpretation
http://www.wsws.org/articles/2011/jan2011/pers-j06.shtml

The press in Europe: Freedom and Pluralism in risk - major threats related to weak guaranty of the freedom of press in the European Union
http://www.euractiv.com/pa/press-europe-freedom-pluralism-r-linksdossier-507125

Insult Laws: Insulting to Press Freedom: A guide to Evolution of Insult Laws in 2010 - main laws in particular countries concerning the media and press freedom and punishments
http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Insult%20Law%20Report.pdf