

Draft 18-month programme of French, Czech and Swedish Presidencies of the Council

Culture

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The three Presidencies will focus on implementing the European Agenda for Culture and the Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010 within the framework of the open method of coordination. Particular attention will be given to how to improve access to culture, especially for children and young people, and develop synergies between culture and education. The promotion of cultural diversity, notably in the context of implementing the UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions and dialogue with the cultural sector will remain on the agenda. Intercultural dialogue will also be promoted notably in the context of the implementation and follow-up of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008.

The importance of the cultural and creative sectors' contribution to growth and employment and sustainable development will be further highlighted by the Presidencies. Eurostat's efforts in developing the production of cultural statistics will support work in this area. The forthcoming Commission study on the environment conducive to the development of creative and cultural industries will be duly considered. The presidencies will also address the issue of improving the internal market for cultural goods and services as well as creating better conditions for professionals within the cultural and creative sectors, and improving the mobility of artists and of art collections.

A European Cultural season in 2008 will demonstrate the wealth and diversity of artistic creation in Europe. A reflection will also start on the role of architecture in sustainable development. The Presidencies will underline their commitment to enhancing and protecting the European cultural heritage in the framework of European concrete projects, the protection of cultural assets and fighting illicit traffic in art and archives. Digitalisation of cultural content is of significant importance to preserve cultural heritage as a source of European cultural and linguistic diversity and increase its accessibility. The Presidencies will support on-going processes within this area through initiatives such as the European digital library.

Audiovisual issues

The Presidencies will work actively to follow up the initiatives of the Commission to develop European creative content-on-line and to promote cultural creation in the digital era. In order to strengthen the creative sector in Europe and create true cultural diversity while contributing to the targets of the Lisbon strategy, this work should take full account

of international principles and European legislation on intellectual property rights. The Presidencies will also contribute to the implementation of the Protocol on the system of public broadcasting in the Member States, ensuring that companies in the public audiovisual sector are able to develop their activities and services in the digital environment.

Multilingualism

On the basis of the forthcoming Commission Communication on "Promoting Multilingualism: a shared Commitment", the Presidencies will continue to promote multilingualism in the Member States, by using the open method of coordination and making better use of existing European programmes and initiatives. Key areas will be language teaching, including encouraging the study of two foreign languages early on at school, in accordance with the objective set in 2002 by the Barcelona European Council, and promoting language teaching at university and during vocational training, raising awareness of the importance of language learning for intercultural skills and European competitiveness, circulation of cultural productions and promotion of translation and of subtitled films and performances.

Intellectual property rights

The Presidencies will continue the work towards increased integration in the area of intellectual property law and a more efficient enforcement of intellectual property rights both in the EU and worldwide. In particular, the Presidencies stress the necessity for the EU to find solutions for a patent litigation system and a Community patent. To this end, the Presidencies will continue to seek to make progress towards the introduction of a cost efficient, legally secure and high quality Community patent and an integrated and specialised litigation system for patents. The Presidencies will work on further improving the protection of intellectual property rights and on reinforcing the fight against counterfeiting, in particular by better coordinating measures taken by Member States and by reinforcing cooperation with third countries. To this end the Presidencies will prepare a new action plan for the fight against counterfeiting (2009-2012).). It will include all modes of distribution of counterfeited goods and all types of counterfeiting inter alia dangerous goods which threaten the security and health of consumers as well as the environment. Other related issues which will be addressed are the reinforcement of copyright and neighbouring rights as well as facilitating the optimal exploitation of intellectual property rights resulting from activities of public research institutes.