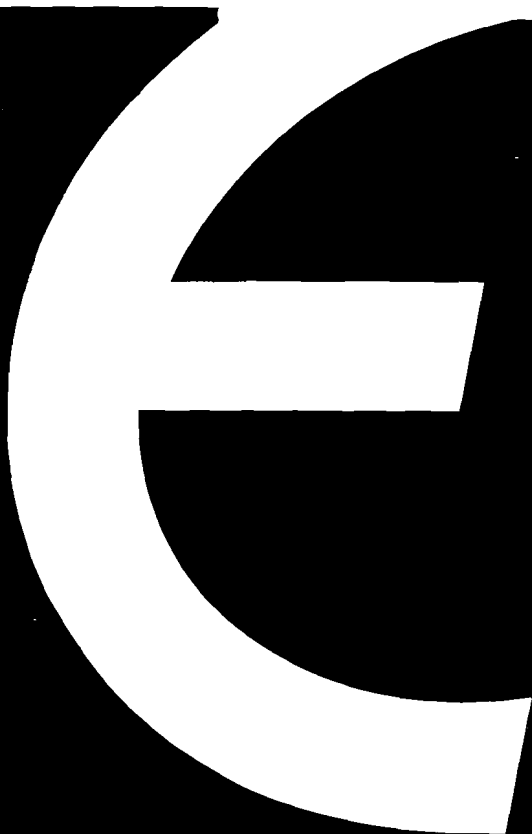


The European Community and culture



European File

Commission of the European Communities
Directorate-General for Information
Rue de la Loi 200 - B - 1049 Brussels

14/85
August-September 1985

A community of culture in Europe is already an undeniable fact. Beneath the surface diversity of languages, tastes and artistic styles, there is a likeness, a kinship, a European dimension or identity based on a common cultural heritage. The contributions of different individuals, ideas, styles and values have, over the centuries, created our common civilization.¹

Culture and the Community dimension

In dealing with a subject as complex as European culture and the jealously guarded individuality of its component parts, the European Community is careful to avoid any temptation to centralize policy or duplicate activities. It is conscious, in particular, of the role of the Council of Europe in coordinating the cultural, amongst other, activities of all free nations of the continent. The Community has, nevertheless, a role to play. It cannot completely ignore cultural life and its European dimension.

- The European treaties enjoin the Community to unite the peoples of Europe and promote their economic and social betterment. Cultural factors must be taken into account. Culture determines a people's way of life and sense of European identity. It can both contribute directly to economic and social development and be one of its goals. The final objective, after all, is to improve the quality of life and this is not simply a question of material improvements.
- Community rules on the free movement of goods and services must be applied to artistic works and performances. Creative artists and performers are just as entitled to Community support in the solution of their economic and social difficulties as any other group of workers. Community action to improve the unity of the internal market, freedom of competition, vocational training and social and regional development must apply in the cultural sector. At the same time, the special factors which influence the world of culture must be kept clearly in mind.

From 1969 up to their Stuttgart meeting in 1983, the Community Heads of State or Government have frequently stressed the importance of joint action in the field of culture. A number of European Parliament resolutions have urged a Community policy, the latest and most detailed being passed on 18 November 1983. The Parliament's Cultural Affairs Committee has identified a host of cultural problems and outlined possible solutions. The European Commission has responded to these pleas. In 1973 it set up a unit to deal with cultural issues. In 1977 and 1982 it published communications on possible Community action in this area. A modest financial outlay (two million ECU in 1984) has allowed some of the Commission's suggestions to be implemented.² The year 1982 also saw the first informal meeting of ministers responsible for culture in the Community. Formal meetings began in 1984.

¹ This file updates and replaces our No 5/83.

² 1 ECU (European currency unit) = about £0.58, Ir. £0.72 or US \$0.73 (at exchange rates current on 12 June 1985).

These still fledgling developments within the Community have been matched by an outward-looking departure. The Lomé Convention linking the Community to 66 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries includes clauses on cultural cooperation. Member States are also trying to strengthen cooperation with third countries in the promotion of European books and films.

The will therefore exists for a broadening of Community cultural activity, in close cooperation with the European Foundation set up by Member States in 1982. This Foundation, soon to open in Paris, is intended to deepen the mutual understanding of the people of the Community, to promote a better understanding of the European cultural heritage, in its diversity and common identity, and to encourage a clearer understanding of the progress being made towards European Union. Various projects are under consideration. They include publications, the organization of exchange visits, the promotion of language learning and the preservation and enhancement of the Community's cultural heritage.

Community action in the cultural field is now concentrated in four main areas: free trade in cultural goods; the improvement of conditions for artists; widening the audience for culture; and the conservation of the Community's architectural heritage.

Coping with frontiers: the free movement of cultural goods

The public at large and workers in the cultural field are entitled to see the common market in action and enjoy all its benefits.

- The proliferation of satellites and cables will soon mean that television programmes can be broadcast throughout Europe. Liberty of access to visual broadcasting must be guaranteed, as it already is for radio programmes. As the European Commission has pointed out in a series of communications, joint action is needed to harmonize technical standards and legal requirements which, in areas such as advertising and copyright, could otherwise bar the way to a free market in television broadcasts. This free market must also be used to enlarge European programme production capacity. The demand for cinematic material could reach 125 000 hours a year in a few years' time. At present no Member State produces more than 5 000 hours a year. Both the European Parliament and the Commission would like to encourage the creation of a powerful European cinema and television production industry, which would generate jobs and help Europe to protect its cultural identity and its hopes of economic expansion in the face of American and Japanese competition. Community ministers have already exhorted television networks to reserve an adequate amount of time for European-made programmes. They are now studying the possibility of setting up a financial support system for the production industry, aimed particularly at co-productions by European companies. The Commission would also like to ease the exchange of television material and support the training of journalists and producers for future multilingual Euro-

pean television services. It has supported the European Parliament in its call for one or two channels devoted specifically to European programmes.¹

- Frontiers within the Community often block the free movement of works of art of the tools of an artist's trade. The Community has created a special log-book to ease the temporary, tax-free exportation of goods needed to carry out a profession, including artistic professions (musical instruments, cameras, for instance). Museums can benefit from complete tax exemption for permanently imported artistic items. Ministers are studying ways of encouraging artistic exchanges. Going a step further, the Commission would like to see free movement of works of art, even between individual and private company purchasers. The Treaty of Rome, it is true, allows Member States, under certain circumstances, to restrict the exportation of national art treasures. But other interests are at stake. Creative artists should be protected and national cultures should be accessible abroad. The Community must therefore define the criteria – whether of age or rarity – for legitimate restrictions on exports. The easing of controls must not, however, provide a charter for smugglers. The Commission is drawing up a European model record card for works of art. Owners will be given free access to this system. If a work is stolen, a European information centre will circulate its description. This should make it far more difficult to dispose of stolen items.

- The free movement of books is a separate problem. The European Court of Justice recently reaffirmed that there must be no barrier to trade in books. It ruled, however, that the fixing of prices at national level is permissible. Common criteria must be established however and this will be the aim of a proposal which is under preparation. Another idea to help readers and libraries alike is to create a computer network linking the principal libraries of the Community to facilitate access to rare works.

Coping with unemployment and poverty: the improvement of living and working conditions for cultural workers

The Community must ensure that the rights enshrined in the European Treaties are enjoyed by workers in the cultural field. This should apply especially to rights of freedom of movement and settlement and the granting of social security benefits equal to those given to citizens of the host State. The need for increased efforts in this area is revealed by Commission studies covering the economic and social conditions of cultural workers, social security benefits for artists and the protection of copyright. Together with statistical analyses on, for example, employment, wages, social benefits, these studies, listed on page 10, represent the first attempt to describe the socio-economic landscape of cultural activity in Europe. They demonstrate that action is needed at Community level in a number of areas.

¹ See *European File* No 19/84: 'Towards a Community television policy'.

- In the first place, many cultural workers earn less than they need to live. They are forced to take a second job or abandon their art. The Commission would like to help them in a number of ways. These are set out in a green paper on the harmonization of national laws governing copyright for creative artists and performers. Differences between existing laws create serious problems. Laws affecting television and the development of copying technology must also be updated. Community ministers have agreed to tighten-up laws against audio-visual piracy, which is damaging the record and cassette industry. New measures are expected in this area. Two European directives are envisaged. One will deal with the fact that playwrights and composers share box-office earnings but not the public subsidies which form an increasingly large share of the revenue of theatres and concert halls. Logic demands that the benefit of subsidies should be divided between the organizers, the author and the public. The second directive seeks to harmonize the length of time over which a creative artist can claim royalties. Six different periods, ranging from 50 to 80 years, in the 12-country Community from 1986 is somewhat excessive in a common market! Other measures are needed to improve the lot of craft-workers, photographers, sculptors and painters. In all member countries artists should be given resale rights which would guarantee them a percentage of the proceeds every time their works are sold. The principle of a 'public domain' for works whose royalty period has expired should also be extended throughout the Community. In most Member States producers and editors currently have free access to works on which royalties no longer have to be paid to the authors or their heirs. In future royalties could be paid to societies of authors who would use the cash to boost their welfare payments or arts sponsorship.
- Specific social and tax improvements are also needed. The Commission wants all freelance cultural workers to be covered by decent social security conditions. It has also published a draft directive which seeks to reduce VAT payments on arts sales (with direct sales by artists completely exempted). Similar arrangements would apply to performances organized by bodies recognized by the national authorities. At the same time the Commission is trying to encourage all Member States to make special tax arrangements which would take into account the irregularity of artists' earnings. The Commission suggests that artists should be allowed to spread taxable income from a particularly good year over a number of annual tax returns. It also wants to see tax laws changed to favour cultural foundations, arts sponsorship, bequests in lieu of death duties and, more generally, all forms of cultural services and goods and investment in culture as a generator of employment and economic progress.
- Unemployment is especially severe in the cultural field. The causes are varied: dwindling audiences, poor training opportunities, and the absence of even the small investments needed in this sector. In several Member States up to 80% of actors are out of work. And yet jobs for artists and performers could be created quite easily. Ministers responsible for culture have stressed the urgency of action in this field. The European Social Fund can already finance national programmes for the training of cultural workers and the creation of jobs,

especially in areas where trained people are in short supply, orchestra musicians and creative craftsmen. The Commission also invests the limited funds it has available in schemes to widen the audience for culture and improve the training of artists. Community grants to young artists include assistance for young musicians in Siena and Dublin, violin-makers in Cremona, composers at the University of Surrey and dancers in Brussels. Since the career of a dancer is short, new Community grants should be made available to retrain ballet dancers as instructors. The organization of a European sculpture competition is also foreseen.

- The skills of cultural workers can be enhanced by personal contact with colleagues. Since 1981 the Community has financed European tours by young Italian, Danish and British acting troupes, as well as exchange visits for 100 artists from Greece and other Member States. The Community also funds training periods for young cultural workers in other Member States, both classical and jazz European youth orchestras and the Wiltz Festival in Luxembourg involving actors, singers, musicians and dancers from five Member States.
- Special efforts should also be made to support those cultural workers who are determined to resist the flight to the big cities. Despite poor sales and performance opportunities, and consequently low earnings, these artists and performers are dedicated to preserving and portraying regional and minority cultures and languages. The European Regional Fund can channel Community aid into the training of cultural workers in the regions and the creation of local cultural employment. Pilot programmes have been launched in connection with annual Welsh and Scottish language and culture festivals. Efforts could also be made to aid traditional dance and song.

Coping with new media technologies: widening the audience

The development of radio, television and new techniques for sound and vision has considerably increased the individual and family audience for works of art. But support must be given to reading, the cinema and 'live' art forms such as concerts or plays, which establish a direct rapport between performers and audience. This is the heart of our culture and does the most to encourage creativity, develop young artists and promote jobs. Efforts to encourage live art must be directed increasingly towards the young, both in the schoolroom and outside. Young people should be brought into contact with artists who can explain their techniques and encourage self-expression through new forms of art which appeal particularly to the young.

- To widen the audience for culture and strengthen international links and help to improve conditions for cultural workers, the Community places a great emphasis on exchange visits. It relies heavily on the help of professional organizations in its Member States and the counsellors and cultural foundations they maintain in one another's capitals. At the same time, the Community has

given financial support since 1982 for the translation of 20 great works of contemporary literature, mainly from lesser spoken languages such as Danish, Greek and Dutch. Similar action to promote poetry is planned. The Community also sponsors the European Theatre which hosts touring companies in Milan and Paris. In 1980 it financed a 'four cities' musical concert, which provided a testing ground for advanced forms of cultural exchange. In 1985 it jointly sponsored with the Council of Europe the events of 'European Music Year' which aimed to enlarge the audience for music in three ways: to encourage a new interest in music amongst young and old alike, to promote young musicians and to encourage contemporary composers. Finally the Community is to designate a different city each year as European culture city: Athens in 1985, Florence in 1986, Amsterdam in 1987, Berlin in 1988, etc. The aim is to attract wide public interest to a range of cultural activities, sponsored by the Community and representative of its common identity and that of its Member States. There are also plans to develop transnational 'cultural trails' to help European tourists discover their common roots.

- Television makes use of work created originally for the cinema, theatre and other traditional art forms, often to their detriment. The Community should consider ways of supporting these art forms financially. It is vital to preserve the network of public cinemas. Ministers responsible for culture have called for a better method of distributing cinematic work between the different audio-visual media. The Community has also considered ways of improving dubbing and subtitling techniques. In the continuing absence of a European distribution network strong enough to rival American competition, the Community is subsidizing the general release of films from the European Film Festival (held in Munich in 1984 and Lille in 1985).

Coping with the ravages of time: conserving our architectural heritage

As the European Parliament has pointed out, there are sound economic reasons, as well as aesthetic and cultural reasons, for preserving our heritage. Preserved monuments attract tourists and aid regional development. Conservation work creates jobs.

- The European Investment Bank provides loans for conservation work on monuments of Community-wide importance or buildings in under-developed regions whose restoration will bring economic benefits, especially through tourism. The European Commission also helps through interest-rate subsidies and capital grants. Beneficiaries since 1982 have included: the Milos Museum in Greece, the Doges' Palace in Venice, the Parthenon in Athens, whose restoration has been financed partly by the Community since 1983, and a dozen other monuments in all Member States, selected in 1984 as part of a pilot programme, which will be extended in 1985. The Commission also examines case by case the possibility of providing financial aid from other Community

funds, such as the European Regional Development Fund. It would also like to follow up a suggestion by the European Regional Development Fund. It would also like to follow up a suggestion by the European Parliament that major annual conservation campaigns should be organized to help restore, for instance, gothic cathedrals or ancient Greek and Roman amphitheatres, whose restoration could form part of Community programmes intended to boost the economy, including tourism, of Mediterranean regions. Community as well as national and local aids would be facilitated by a European 'cost-benefit' analysis which would assess the likely social and economic advantages. A certain amount of conservation work is undertaken by private individuals. The Commission would like Member States to ease the tax burden on owners of historic houses, especially when they are open to the public.

- Further measures have been taken as part of the Community's environmental protection programme. The Community recently agreed a directive which establishes the principle of 'impact studies', in other words the prior evaluation of the likely impact on the environment, and especially the architectural heritage, of major public or private developments. The Commission and the European Investment Bank already carry out such studies before granting finance to infrastructure or other projects. At the same time, there are already a number of European directives which aim to reduce atmospheric pollution and the acid rain which threatens old buildings. The Community is financing research on pollution caused by petroleum products.
- The Community gives 50 annual grants to training centres for restoration and conservation workers at York, Louvain, Munich, Rome and Venice. The grants are made to architects, town-planners, specialized craftsmen, gardeners and students of the preservation of our heritage. The Community also supports holiday visits by young people to voluntary restoration sites and architectural digs. It is examining the possibility of creating a European restoration school and is expected to increase its support for the development of new conservation techniques, such as the experiments undertaken at the nuclear study centre in Grenoble.



As the European Parliament has rightly pointed out, the Community should seek to encourage rather than influence cultural activity. The European Commission has no intention of interfering with the contents of artistic activity, nor of duplicating the work of others responsible for cultural affairs. Stronger Community action in this field is mainly directed towards improving the social and economic conditions which affect cultural activities and to aid those involved to enjoy more fully the advantages of the Community. Ultimately this should benefit not only the world of culture but the social and economic development of the Community as a whole ■

Annex: Studies and publications on Community action in the cultural sector*

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- CHATELAIN, J.: Means of combating the theft and illegal traffic in works of art in the nine countries of the EEC, 1976.
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- DUQUESNE, J.: The system of trade in cultural goods in the nine Member States of the EEC, 1975.

3. The improvement of living and working conditions for cultural workers

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- POLET, C.: The legal, economic and social position of the literary translator in the EEC, 1979.
- SCHULTE, B.: The social security problems of cultural workers in the European Community, 1980.

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- FENN, C.J.: Evaluation of the 'Norfolk in Europe' exhibition, 1981.
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* For further information contact the secretariat of the 'Cultural problems' division of the Commission of the European Communities, Tel. Brussels 235 7457 or 235 2725.

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