European gastronomic heritage: cultural and educational aspects

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The European Parliament adopted by 530 votes to 74, with 14 abstentions, a resolution on the European gastronomic heritage: cultural and educational aspects.

Educational aspects: Parliament stressed that the present and future health and wellbeing of the population is determined by diet and the environment and hence by farming, fishing and livestock breeding methods. It stated that according to the European Food Information Council, in 2006 some 33 million people in Europe were at risk of malnutrition. The situation has worsened since the start of the crisis. It is for this reason that Parliament asked the Member States to **include the study and sensory experience of food**, nutritional health and dietary habits, including historical, geographical, cultural and experiential aspects, **in school education from early childhood** as a means of improving the health and wellbeing of the population, the quality of food and respect for the environment.

The Commission and the Member States are called upon to:

- encourage projects which involve exchanges of information and practices in the area of nutrition, food and gastronomies, for example as part of the Comenius (school education) strand of the Erasmus+ programme;
- promote intercultural exchange in sectors related to catering, food and gastronomy, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme for high-quality training, mobility and apprenticeships for learners and professionals;
- **consider stricter control of content and advertising dealing with food products**, especially in terms of nutrition;
- make sure that all advertising and sponsorship of junk food is banned in schools
- stress the importance of training for gastronomy professionals highlighting ‘homemade’, local and varied produce;
- exchange knowledge and best practices concerning gastronomy-related activities in education;
- ensure that teachers are properly trained, in collaboration with nutritionists and doctors, to teach food sciences correctly in schools and universities (pointing out that nutrition and the environment are co-dependent).

The Commission and the Council are called upon to study programmes for training gastronomy professionals and Member States are encouraged to promote such training. Parliament stressed the importance of this training covering local and European gastronomy, the diversity of products, and processes for the preparation, production, conservation and distribution of food.

Cultural aspects: gastronomy is the combination of knowledge, experience, art and craft, which provides a healthy and pleasurable eating experience. It forms part of the EU identity and is an essential component of the European cultural heritage and of the cultural heritage of the Member States. It is also one of the most important cultural expressions of human beings and the term should be understood as referring not only to what is known as ‘haute cuisine’, but to all culinary forms from the various regions and social strata.

Against this background, Parliament welcomed initiatives to promote Europe's gastronomic heritage, such as local and regional gastronomic fairs and festivals as well as the three EU schemes relating to geographical indications and traditional specialities, known as protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), and traditional specialities guaranteed (TSG).

The Commission and the Member States are urged to:

- develop the cultural aspects of gastronomy and to foster eating habits which maintain consumer health, further the exchange and sharing of cultures and promote the regions, while at the same time retaining the pleasure associated with eating, conviviality and sociability;
- support initiatives related to agri-tourism that foster knowledge of the cultural and landscape heritage, offer regional support and promote rural development;
- make the importance of supporting **sustainable and varied European food production of high quality and in sufficient quantity** an integral part of their deliberations on food policy, with a view to sustaining European culinary diversity;
- strengthen measures for the **recognition and labelling of European food production**;
- study the impact of the laws they adopt on the capacity, diversity and quality of food production in the EU and to take measures to combat the counterfeiting of products;
- preserve the European gastronomy-related heritage, such as protection of the architectural heritage of traditional food markets, wineries or other facilities, and of artefacts and machinery related to food and gastronomy.

Lastly, Parliament encouraged European cities to apply for the title of **UNESCO City of Gastronomy**, promoted by the organisation's Creative Cities Network.