Action in the field of culture: Culture 2007 programme (2007-2013)

2004/0150(COD) - 18/07/2006 - Council position

The Council notes that its Common Position on the Culture 2007 programme is largely in line with that of the Commission's. Whilst stressing the importance of Europe's cultural heritage the Council has tried carefully to maintain the open and non-sectoral character of the programme. The Council also notes that the budget of EUR 354 million at 2004 prices (equivalent to EUR 400 million at current prices) was agreed to by the three institutions in the context of the inter-institutional agreement on the Financial Framework for 2007-2013.

New elements

A number of new elements have been introduced by the Council. In summary, they are:

Firstly, the Council, with the agreement of the Commission and European Parliament, has transferred support for the preservation of memorials to the "Citizens for Europe" programme.

Secondly, in a bid to facilitate small-operator access to the Programme, the Council has lowered the minimum community support from EUR 60 000 to EUR 50 000 and has reduced the minimum number of operators from 4 to 3 for co-operation measures.

Thirdly, the Council has decided to change the indicative breakdown of the budget by devoting more resources to "Co-operation Measures", which typically involve smaller scale projects, and less to "Multi-annual co-operation projects", which are typically defined by large-scale projects. In line with this assessment the Council proposes a new re-balancing of the funds so that 32% of the budget is devoted to "multi-annual co-operation projects" and 29% for "co-operation measures". This, the Council considers, is a fair balance between the Commission's original proposal and Parliament's opinion expressed at first reading. To recap the proposed new breakdown of the annual budget for the programme is as follows:

- Strand 1: support for cultural actions: 77% (approx.)
- - multi-annual co-operation projects: 32% (approx.)
- - co-operation measures: 29% (approx.)
- - special actions: 16 % (approx.)
- Strand 2: Support for bodies active at a European level in the field of culture: 10% (approx.)
- Strand 3: Support for analysis, collection and dissemination of information: 5% (approx.)
- Total operational expenditure: 92 % (approx.)
- Programme management: 5% (approx.)

Fourthly, greater flexibility has been introduced regarding both multi-annual cooperation projects (3 to 5 years) and co-operation measures (1 to 2 years).

Lastly, the Council has introduced a management committee procedure for projects with a total Community contribution exceeding EUR 200 000.

Amendments not accepted

As seen above, the Council was unable to accept the indicative budget breakdown proposed by Parliament. The Council considers that devoting 14% of the budget to Strand 2 (support of cultural bodies) would be excessive given that one action from Strand 2 (memorials) has already been transferred to another programme. The amendments have also, partly, been rejected in view of the inter-institutional agreement on the Financial Framework.

On the proposed lowering of the minimum budget for co-operation measures to EUR 30 000, the Council also considered this to be an excessive measure since the threshold has already been set at EUR 50 000 in the current programme. In order to meet the Parliament part of the way Council has decided to reduce the threshold from EUR 60 000 to EUR 50 000.

In order to maintain the multilateral character of the projects, the Council has also decided to reject Parliamentary proposals to reduce the minimum number of operators from different countries involved in the multi-annual co-operation projects from 6 to 4.

All amendments introducing sectoral priorities or which emphasise support for specific sectors/bodies have been rejected in order not to detract from the open character of the programme. Increasing the share of Community support from 50% to 70% was considered excessive and, as a result, rejected by the Council. Further, the Council decided that the Unesco Convention on cultural diversity fell outside the Decision’s scope and was, therefore, also not included by the Council in its Common Position.

To conclude, the Council considers that its Common Position offers a balanced text, providing a good basis for the Culture 2007 programme.