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DOCUMENT 1-558/80

Interim Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education,
Information and Sport

on the social situation of cultural workers

Rapporteur: Mrs M.-J. PRUVOT

By letter of 21 December 1979 the President of the European Parliament authorized the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport to draw up a report on the social situation of cultural workers.

On 29 January 1980 the committee appointed Mrs Pruvot rapporteur.

It considered the draft report at its meetings of 29 January, 23 April, 1 October and 27 October 1980.

At its meeting of 27 October 1980 the committee adopted the interim report by eleven votes to one.

Present: Mr Pedini, chairman; Mr Hahn, vice-chairman; Mrs Pruvot, rapporteur; Mr Coppieters, Mr Cottrell, Mr Henckens, Mr Hutton, Mr Papapietro, Mr Patterson, Mr Schall, Mr Schwencke and Mrs Viehoff.

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The Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the social situation of cultural workers

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Council 'Community action in the cultural sector'¹, in particular paragraphs 36 to 40,
- having regard to the Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee of 20 December 1978 on this communication², in particular paragraph 3.7.4,
- having regard to the resolution of 18 January 1979 embodying the European Parliament's opinion on that communication³, in particular paragraph 6,
- having regard to the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of October 1977 on the situation of writers in Europe (Doc. 4012),
- having regard to the interim report of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport (Doc. 1-558/80),
- having regard to the second paragraph of Article 122 of the EEC Treaty,
- Whereas in general the social situation of cultural workers, including organisers and both creative and performing artists, in the Community is extremely unsatisfactory and, moreover, varies considerably from one sector to another;
- Convinced that a precise knowledge of the details of the living conditions of cultural workers is essential;
- Noting the absence of quantified data at Community level and the inadequacy of such data in the Member States;
- Convinced of the need to promote improvement in the working and living conditions of this category of workers in accordance with Article 117 of the Treaty of Rome;

¹Doc. 497; Bulletin of the European Communities, Supplement 6/77.

²CES 1245/78

³OJ No. C 39, 12 February 1979.

1. EXPRESSES great regret that no action has yet been taken on the above-mentioned opinion and resolution in which the Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament respectively call upon the Commission to have the necessary work done by the Statistical Office of the European Communities;
2. REITERATES forcefully the request by the European Parliament referred to above;
3. BASES this repeated request on the second paragraph of Article 122 of the EEC Treaty, under which 'The Assembly may invite the Commission to draw up reports on any particular problems concerning social conditions.';
4. STRESSES that the unsatisfactory living conditions of most cultural workers, and the fact that the Community still does not have quantified data on the principal aspects of these conditions, constitute a 'particular problem concerning social conditions';
5. INVITES the Commission, therefore, to take immediately the steps needed to ensure that the Statistical Office can start drawing up as soon as possible the necessary statistics on the employment, remuneration and social security benefits of cultural workers in the countries of the Community;
6. INSTRUCTS its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission of the European Communities.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. THE SOCIAL SITUATION OF CULTURAL WORKERS

Artistic creativity plays a fundamental role in the development of mankind and society: it is the supreme cultural achievement; far from dividing Europeans, it may bring them together.

It appears, however, that we are not concerned enough about the situation of those without whom it would not exist; by this we mean the cultural workers.

The social situation of cultural workers merits attention by the Community, firstly for reasons of social justice and then because it determines to a great extent not only our cultural progress but also the mere preservation of culture. Culture cannot be dissociated from the men and women who create or propagate cultural works.

The generic term 'cultural workers' covers the creative artists (writers, composers, painters, sculptors, craftsmen...), and the performing artists: actors, singers, dancers, musicians...

Admittedly, as part of the Community action in the cultural sector¹, the Commission has already had several important studies carried out, for example on the structure of the employment or social security of cultural workers, but so far there are no statistical studies containing figures showing the precise level of unemployment remuneration or social security benefits.

¹ Doc. 497/77

Bulletin of the European Communities, Supplement 6/77

A. Unemployment (or under-employment) amongst cultural workers

In all the countries of the European Community the level of unemployment among cultural workers is always much higher than for other socio-professional groups.

The present figures for the cultural professions are staggering. In the course of a year many performers, in particular, are only offered short or very short engagements; they suffer from typical underemployment.

This underemployment situation is all the more serious since it affects not only the livelihood of the cultural worker but also his whole professional career - where he faces the risk of losing his skills.

The nature of the working conditions of cultural workers has a direct influence on the possible estimates of the level of unemployment which is a virtually permanent feature of their lives.

The statistical data published by the public employment services provide only fragmentary information, for several reasons:

1. Virtually permanent underemployment obliges a number of cultural workers to undertake other work as a side line; as a result they do not register at the employment offices;
2. If one looks at the French regulations, it can be seen that entitlement to unemployment benefits only comes into effect if the person concerned can prove that he has worked for 1,000 hours during the 12 months preceding the date when he stopped working - or 2,000 hours during the preceding 24 months - or 3,000 hours preceding the time when he became unemployed.

These conditions are difficult to satisfy because of the underemployment which affects most cultural workers.

B. Remuneration of cultural workers

The International Labour Organization whose authority on social problems is undisputed, describes it as follows: 'It is often less than the bare subsistence level'.

Although culture is thriving in the Community (there being many shining examples of it), the cultural workers themselves are not thriving.

Thus, in its opinion of 20 December 1978 on Community action in the cultural sector, the Economic and Social Committee says 'the majority of cultural professions are marked by the irregularity with which those who pursue them receive the income arising from this activity. There are many creative artists who are employed in other jobs in order to make a decent living'.

C. Social protection of cultural workers

Cultural workers are generally not well protected by the social security system. Many of them work for indeterminate employers or several employers, so that in both cases it is difficult to recover employers' contributions and the workers do not make adequate contributions towards the appropriate benefits.

II. CONFIRMATION OF THE SITUATION

Effective Community action to benefit cultural workers cannot be devised in the abstract. Precise and quantified information must be provided on the social situation of cultural workers in the Community. A study must be made of the structure of the employment or the social security situation and figures must be collected showing the respective levels of employment (i.e. unemployment...) remuneration and social security benefits.

It can be seen that the employment, remuneration and social security benefits of cultural workers are a 'statistical desert'.

For instance, unemployment amongst French actors is known to be about 80% and amongst British actors is even more serious, but precise data are not available.

It is not enough to know that in the Community less than 10% of writers can live from their pen alone. Details must be obtained.

This absence of quantified data at European level derives from various causes:

A. - Different reference systems

Some statistical data on the employment of cultural workers have been collected in five countries of the European Community: Belgium, France, Germany, UK and the Netherlands.

As Marie-Madeleine Krust notes in the remarkable study she made at the request of the Commission ('The right to work and the employment problems of cultural workers in the theatre and the musical world throughout the European Economic Community'), an important preliminary comment has to be made:

'no valid comparison can be made between the various data for two reasons:

1. The information collected was not gathered on the same date;
2. The names of professions used for the statistics are different.'

In Belgium, for instance, the statistics published by the National Employment Office in regard to cultural workers are grouped under the heading 'artistic professions' and therefore do not allow an assessment to be made by speciality of the number of unemployed seeking work.

In France, the artistic and theatrical jobs category, which is used as a basis for statistical data in this sector, comprises not only all cultural workers in the theatre and musicians, but also other professions such as the sporting professions - which produces a regrettable statistical bias in the information being sought.

In the United Kingdom, the information published by the Ministry of Employment enables an assessment to be made of the market in workers pursuing an artistic profession, but it is not possible, because of the nomenclature used, to distinguish between actors and musicians.

B. - The sensitivity of the cultural worker

Very often this prevents such workers revealing their own situation. The cultural worker considers that his poor circumstances (unemployment, low pay...) constitute a slur on his professional honour and out of shame he remains silent.

Community action is therefore obviously essential. As Mr Brunner, the Commissioner responsible for the cultural sector, said during the sitting of 18 January 1979:

'It cannot be said that in Europe artists enjoy a satisfactory social standing and income. We must improve our statistics in this area'.

III. PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

Only the Statistical Office of the European Communities - because of its experience and facilities - is in a position to gather, analyse, present and distribute the regularly updated statistical information which we need.

In December 1978 and January 1979, in their opinions on the communication from the Commission to the Council on Community action in the cultural sector¹, the Economic and Social Committee (in paragraph 3.7.4), and the European Parliament (in paragraph 6) each called upon the Commission to instruct its Statistical Office to undertake for cultural

¹ CES 1245/78 en. OJ No. C 39, 12 February 1979

workers the same operations it had been carrying out for some time for workers in industry and agriculture: the collection, updating and publication of statistics on employment, remuneration and social security.

In the opinion delivered by the Economic and Social Committee we read:

'more precise knowledge is needed of the level of unemployment among employed cultural workers and of the numbers and resources of cultural workers both employed and self-employed. Without such knowledge it will be impossible to put into effect the tentative proposals - which the Committee fully endorses - set out in the Commission communication's 'Social aspects' section. The numerical data which are required on the socio-economic situation of cultural workers before the urgently needed social measures at national and Community level can be planned could be collected by the Statistical Office of the European Communities. The Committee proposes that the Commission ask the Statistical Office to do so, and to give it the requisite funds and staff. The gravity of the social problems, in particular unemployment, in the cultural professions warrants the undertaking of this work by the Statistical Office. The fact that cultural workers only represent a small proportion of the total labour force is no excuse for continuing to omit them from the Community's statistical surveys.'

For its part, the European Parliament expressed its view in the following terms:

'(The European Parliament)...is of the opinion that, for the better performance of the various activities constituting Community action in this field, comparative information should be obtained on the social situation of cultural workers and requests the Commission to instruct its Statistical Office to undertake the necessary work'.

Without under-estimating the difficulties encountered by the Commission and the Statistical Office (in particular, because the member countries very often themselves do not have full or up-to-date information), it has to be recognized that no action has yet been taken on a request made by the European Parliament in a resolution which - it should be remembered - was adopted unanimously.

Considering that the standard of living of most cultural workers is extremely unsatisfactory, and that it is no longer tolerable for them to remain the 'forgotten ones' of the Community, your rapporteur believes that the elected Parliament should now reiterate in due and proper form the request addressed to the Commission by the nominated Parliament, and should do so by referring, this time, to the second paragraph of Article 122 of the EEC Treaty: 'The Assembly may invite the Commission to draw up reports on any particular problems concerning social conditions'.

The inadequate standard of living of most cultural workers and the lack of reliable statistics on this subject do in fact constitute a 'particular problem concerning social conditions' and justify recourse to the second paragraph of Article 122 of the Treaty. It is merely a question of applying the Treaty.

Clearly, the Statistical Office will need a good deal of time to carry out this work, which is a long-term task, and in particular to establish effective cooperation between statistical offices in the Member States. This is a further reason for starting as soon as possible. Moreover, the interim or provisional results obtained will be extremely useful in themselves.

Finally, the committee wishes to stress the fact that it is essential for the Community to have full, accurate and constantly updated information on the social situation of cultural workers if it is to take the specific measures which are needed and which have been delayed all too long) to improve this situation.

If no statistical data are produced, there will be no 'social aspect' to the Community's action in the cultural sector.