

PRESS RELEASE - 24 June 2010

Fadila LAANAN presents the "Culture and Audiovisual" programme for the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2010

This Thursday, Fadila LAANAN, minister for Culture, Audiovisual, Health and Equal Opportunities for the French Speaking Community of Belgium, presented the programme for the Culture and Audiovisual sectors under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union to the press.

During the second half of 2010, within the framework of the alternation between federated entities of the country, it is the turn of the French Speaking Community to have the honour of presiding, on behalf of Belgium, the "Culture" section of the "Education, Youth, Culture" Council of the European Union. This will involve minister Fadila LAANAN leading debates in the areas of culture and audiovisual sectors.

A propitious climate for a pro-active Presidency

Minister Fadila LAANAN immediately highlighted *"the excellent collaboration which has prevailed between the federated entities and the Federal State in organising this Presidency, in terms of my personal remit. I am delighted with this constructive climate, which is always present when it is necessary to set out the Belgian position at European level in these sectors"*. According to Fadila LAANAN, this will enable the Presidency to be undertaken in a calm and effective manner. Minister Fadila LAANAN continued: *"Whilst part of Europe keeps one eye on Belgium with a certain degree of concern, I would like to issue reassurance in terms of the culture and audiovisual sectors. These areas fall under the exclusive remit of the French, Flemish and German-speaking Communities in Belgium and the forthcoming federal elections shall have no impact whatsoever on these matters. More widely, although negotiations with a view to forming a new federal government are underway, we are all implementing the necessary measures, and at all levels of responsibility, so as the Belgian Presidency meets expectations"*.

Minister Fadila LAANAN, additionally, explained that she is *"approaching this Presidency with modesty but enthusiasm; with modesty because my own sectors are not in the public eye, particularly at a time when much focus is on the best response to the economic crisis. What is more, leading this Presidency involves the construction of agreements between 27 Member States, more so than defending national or community positions, or even personal positions. I am approaching this Presidency with conviction, however, because I always put my heart into everything I undertake. In terms of the carriages launched along the tracks of the "rolling agenda" (the issues tabled prior to the beginning of this Presidency by the Commission or those tabled by a previous Presidency), I shall wholeheartedly push these carriages as far as possible along their way, by continuing with the work*

undertaken by my Spanish predecessors and with a view to handing over to my Hungarian successors in the best possible conditions. I intend to follow the rules of the European institutions with absolute conviction, notably within the logic of the Trio which we are inaugurating along with Spain and Hungary. I am additionally approaching this Presidency with conviction because it presents a privileged opportunity to champion certain ideas, even though I didn't wait for this opportunity to promote, for example, the public aid to support the diversity of European cinema".

Priorities defined following consultation

Minister Fadila LAANAN presented the priorities of the Presidency which she is leading on behalf of Belgium, clarifying that these were defined in consultation with the Belgian federal and federated entities, as well as the European Commission and the partners of the Trio, Spain and Hungary.

In the sector of Culture, the Belgian Presidency shall develop four priorities.

1. Within the framework of the EU 2020 Strategy, it shall endeavour to promote the potential of cultural and creative industries and the relations between culture and innovation, within a context of both economic and social development. This shall, for example, involve better integration of culture within research, technological development, competitiveness and innovation programmes.
2. As 2010 is the "European year for combating poverty and social exclusion", the Presidency shall underline the role which Culture can play in this area in addition to the need to integrate the cultural dimension into national and European policies for combating poverty and social exclusion. In this respect, the Presidency shall submit to the Cultural Affairs Committee in mid-July, a draft document of conclusions issued by the Council. Minister Fadila LAANAN noted: *"This is an initiative instigated by the Belgian Presidency, and one which we hold dear. We hope to strike a balance between the three major dimensions of culture: economy, citizens and social cohesion"*.
3. In the framework of the strategic objectives of the European Agenda for Culture, the Presidency shall oversee the completion of the evaluation of the Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010 and the adoption of a new Work Plan post-2010.
4. The Belgian Presidency shall continue with discussions initiated by the Spanish Presidency with a view to adoption, by the European Parliament and by the Council, of the draft decision of the Commission aimed at creating a "European Heritage Label". The French Presidency had originally asked that the Council adopt the conclusions which made provision for the creation of such a label by the European Union.

In the Audiovisual sector, the Belgian Presidency will have three areas of focus.

1. The Presidency shall initiate reflection into European cinema support mechanisms. Minister Fadila LAANAN noted: *"This is where the stakes of cultural diversity are located. European cinema is indeed one of the best reflections of this diversity. However, this cannot be guaranteed without large-scale public support and effective promotion"*. This will be the theme of the official inaugural event of this Presidency in the French Speaking Community which shall be a seminar organised in Mons at the beginning of July.

2. The Presidency shall focus on the conservation and safeguarding of audiovisual and cinematographic heritage as well as the means to be implemented, both at national and European levels, to support cinemas wanting to procure digital projection equipment.

3. The development perspectives of digital libraries and Europeana will also form a focus of this Presidency, in addition, more widely, to the challenge of long-term conservation of European cultural and audiovisual digital heritage.

Official programme and cultural agenda

Minister Fadila LAANAN has additionally presented to the press the brochure including the official programme of official events planned under this Belgian Presidency for the culture and audiovisual sectors. All of the events, including many others to be led in other sectors, are presented on the official website of the Belgian Presidency at www.eutrio.be, of which the Chancellery has announced the imminent launch. The Minister also handed to the media all of the contact details for those responsible for press relations for each of these events, which are also available at www.eutrio.be. In conclusion, minister Fadila LAANAN has unveiled an initiative which is particular to the French Speaking Community of Belgium and which is intended, on the one hand, to tighten the bond between Europe and its citizens and, on the other hand, to offer a showcase for its cultural actors. The short practical cultural agenda entitled "Focus Europe 2010" presents some 80 events organised between 1 July and 31 December 2010. This will be published in 120,000 copies (European meetings, cultural centres, museums, etc.) and shall be available on the culture portal of the French Speaking Community in Belgium at: www.culture.be.

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