

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

2005/0102(COD) - 30/05/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to establish a Community action entitled "European Capital of Culture" for the years 2007-2019 in order to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens.

PROPOSED ACT : Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTEXT : the European City of Culture was launched by the Council of Ministers on 13 June 1985.

Until 2004, the European Cities of Culture had been selected on an intergovernmental basis whereby Member States unanimously selected cities worthy of hosting the event. Decision 1419/1999/EC amended the procedure for selecting the cities from 2005 onwards, known as "European Capitals of Culture" (ECOC). The ECOC is now decided by the Council on the basis of a Commission recommendation, which takes into account the view of a jury of seven independent members. The Decision includes a list of EUR-15 Member States setting out the chronological of entitlement from 2005 to 2019. The ten new Member States, which joined the EU on 1 May 2004, were not included in this list. The Commission, therefore, submitted a proposal to amend Decision 1419/1999/CE to enable the new Member States to propose an ECOC from 2009. This proposal was adopted on 13 April 2005. As a result, from 2009 onwards, there will be two European Capitals of Culture each year (one from the EUR-15, one from the new Member States).

CONTENT : the ECOC action is generally viewed very positively by the general public. Nevertheless, the implementation of the designation process, as laid down in Decision 1419/1999, revealed a number of weaknesses. This proposal deals with making amendments on the following issues:

- the competition between cities: the Commission has opted for a system which encourages Member States to organise competition at national level between interested cities.

- the role of the selection panel: The Commission proposes establishing a "mixed" selection panel consisting of 7 experts designated by the European Institutions, of which one taking the Chair, and 6 experts designated by the Member State concerned, in agreement with the Commission. The 7 experts should be appointed in turn for 3 years by the Council, the European Parliament, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions in accordance with the criteria laid down by this proposal. The overall composition of the panel should ensure adequate balance between local and national interests and guarantee the "European" dimension ahead of the national selection decision.

The Member State concerned should launch a call for submission of applications 6 years before the event is due to begin, and organise an information day for potential candidates.

The selection panel should meet 5 years before the event to agree on a short-list of candidates. It should prepare a report on the candidates' programmes and make recommendations to the candidates short-listed. The panel should meet 9 months after the first selection meeting in order to prepare a report on the programmes of the short-listed candidates, and, on that basis, recommend a city for nomination as ECOC.

On the question of monitoring, the Commission proposes establishing a "European monitoring panel" (EMP) for the period after the designation of the ECOC until the start of the event. It would focus on the

European dimension of the programme and contribute, wherever necessary, to ensuring the European added-value of the programme. This European monitoring panel will be composed of only the 7 members of the selection panel designated in turn by the European Institutions.

On the European dimension, the ECOC programme of activities should include events/actions which highlight the European dimension and offer European added value. The following aspects should be emphasized :

- a European dimension, which should foster multilateral cooperation between cultural operators at all levels, highlight the richness of cultural diversity and bring the common aspects of European cultures to the fore;
- a citizenship dimension, which should raise the interest of the citizens living in the city and from other countries and be an integral part of the long term cultural development of the city.
- the question of timing: The selection process should start six years before the event is due to begin (pre-selection / selection / nomination). The Council should be in a position to designate the ECOCs four years before the event;
- the participation of third countries: On the basis of the ECOC study, the Commission proposes a maximum of two ECOCs per year. This approach is in line with the March 2005 Decision which integrates the new Member States. More than two ECOCs per year would harm visibility of the event. Therefore, the reference to the nomination of an ECOC by third countries has been dropped.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS :

This proposal has no direct financial implications. The financial aspect in relation to the ECOCs is dealt with in the framework of the Culture 2000 and future Culture 2007 programmes. At this stage, the Commission's proposal for the Culture 2007 programme would allow up to a tripling of the Community contribution to each individual ECOC as compared to the current programme.

In accordance with the financial statement provided in the Culture 2007 programme proposal, Community interventions linked to the European Capital of Culture shall be financed under Strand 1 of the programme. This strand is divided into 3 sub-actions and the European Capital of Culture shall be financed under the last of these sub-actions entitled "special actions" which shall have a financial reference amount of EUR 69,36 from 2007-2013 in commitment appropriations (technical and administrative assistance and human resources excluded). It should be noted that this sub-heading will also finance other actions (and not just the interventions for the European Capital of Culture).