European Heritage Label

2010/0044(COD) - 18/11/2010

The presidency reported to the Council on **progress** with the establishment of a European heritage label.

The European heritage label has existed as a voluntary inter-governmental initiative, in which 17 EU member states and Switzerland participate. The designation has been awarded to 64 sites since 2006. In November 2008, the Council requested that this initiative be transformed into an EU action so as to improve its functioning.

Most of the main points of discussion raised in the Committee on Cultural Affairs have been resolved during the Belgian Presidency. **Two points, however, remain at issue**:

- where the funds allocated to the action for 2013 are to come from;
- which institution is to be competent to award, and if necessary withdraw, the label.

The questions resolved during the Belgian Presidency are the following:

(1) Third-country participation in the action (Article 4): the Commission proposed that the action be open to participation by Member States, on a voluntary basis. It said nothing about participation by third countries.

The Committee on Cultural Affairs takes the view that the action should not in principle be open to third countries. However, it is in favour of sites in third countries participating in the Cultural Programme being allowed, under certain conditions, to be part of transnational sites from the outset.

The Committee also considers that the geographical scope of the action could be one of the points considered in the first evaluation.

(2) How many sites and how often? (Article 10): the Commission proposes that each Member State be able to pre-select up to two sites each year, except for years when the monitoring procedure is taking place

(every four years). At EU level, not more than one site per Member State would be selected.

However, the Committee on Cultural Affairs wants selection (of national and transnational sites) to take place every two years, not once a year as proposed by the Commission. The Committee also thinks that one year in four could be solely for selection of transnational sites. Each Member State would be able to pre-select one transnational site, which might or might not be selected at EU level.

(3) Transnational sites and national thematic sites (Articles 12 and 12a): the Committee on Cultural Affairs agreed to tighten the eligibility criteria for transnational sites.