

# Union action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033

2012/0199(COD) - 20/07/2012 - Legislative proposal

**PURPOSE:** to establish a new Union action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033.

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

**BACKGROUND:** the European Capitals of Culture were created in 1985 as an intergovernmental initiative. They were **transformed officially into a European Union action in 1999** in order to make the initiative more effective. New criteria and selection procedures were established, a chronological list of Member States was drawn up indicating the order in which they were entitled to host the title, and a European panel of independent experts was created to assess the applications ([Decision N° 1419/1999/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council).

The rules were renewed in 2006 in order to develop the effectiveness of the initiative further by stimulating competition between the cities and fostering the quality of the bids. These new rules also introduced various measures to accompany the cities in their preparation, including a monitoring process ([Decision N° 1622/2006/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council).

**Decision N° 1622/2006/EC will end in 2019.** The competition for the title is currently launched six years in advance in order to give the cities sufficient time for their preparation before the beginning of the year of the title. Therefore, the new legal base for the continuation of the European Capitals of Culture should be adopted in 2013 in order to ensure a smooth transition in 2020.

**IMPACT ASSESSMENT:** on the basis of the results of the evaluations and of the public consultation, three options were examined for the future of the European Capitals of Culture after 2019:

1. continuing the action with an identical legal base to the current Decision to which simply a new chronological list of Member States is annexed;
2. **stopping the action;**
3. **continuing the action with a new legal base** which addresses the problems encountered with the current Decision. For this third option, **two sub-options were examined:**
  1. **a new chronological list of Member States is annexed;**
  2. **the title is awarded on the basis of an open competition.**

The various cultural, economic, social and environmental impacts were examined for each option. The options were then assessed and ranked according to their effectiveness in terms of achieving the objectives of the European Capitals of Culture, their efficiency, their costs and administrative burden, their coherence with broader Union political objectives and their synergies and complementarities with other Union objectives, and their feasibility.

**The option with the most positive overall assessment is option 3a**, namely a new legal base with a chronological list of Member States. This option scored higher than all other options and was ranked as the preferred option.

**LEGAL BASIS:** Article 167 (5), first indent of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

CONTENT: the aim of this proposed Decision is to establish a Union action for the **European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033**.

The general objectives of the action shall be the following:

- to safeguard and promote the diversity of European cultures, and to highlight the common features they share;
- to foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities.

Moreover:

- the title will continue to be awarded on the basis of a **chronological list of Member States**: such a rotating system proved to be the only system which ensured an equal opportunity for each Member State to host the title and a geographical balance in the location of the European Capitals of Culture, and hence the opportunity for the Union to highlight the diversity of European cultures and for the public across Europe to experience the event close to home;
- the title will continue to be **reserved to cities**: cities will also continue to have the possibility to involve their surrounding region in order to reach a wider public and amplify the impacts, however past experience has shown that the clear leadership of one city is a key success factor;
- the attribution of the title will continue to be based on a **cultural programme created specifically for the year of the title** in order to foster a strong European dimension;
- **the two stage selection process** carried out by a European panel of independent experts has proven to be fair and transparent and will be kept. It enabled in particular cities to improve their applications between the pre-selection and the final selection phase on the basis of expert advice received from the panel;
- the title will continue to be awarded for a **full year** to keep it distinctive and ambitious.

**Amendments and proposed improvements:** at the same time, a number of improvements are proposed in order to address the problems encountered with the current Decision and to help all cities to make the most of the title. The main changes introduced by the new legal base are the following:

**(1) The criteria have been made more explicit** in order to give more guidance to the candidate cities and more measurable in order to help the panel of experts in the selection and monitoring of cities.

Special attention was paid to **optimise the potential leverage effect of the initiative on stimulating long-term local culture led development strategies**, to ensure the capacity of candidate cities to actually host the title, to boost the **European dimension** and visibility of the cultural programmes, to ensure the high quality of the cultural and artistic content, to foster a large participation of the local populations and to try to ensure the stability of the budgets and the independence of the artistic teams.

The criteria for the assessment of the applications are divided into six categories: "long-term strategy", "capacity to deliver", "cultural and artistic content", "European dimension", "outreach" and "management":

**(2) The conditionality of the Melina Mercouri Prize has been reinforced.** Furthermore, the Prize will no longer be paid three months before the beginning of the year of the title, but during the middle of the year itself in order to be certain that cities keep to their commitments regarding in particular funding, programming and Union visibility.

**(3) European Panel.** It is stated explicitly that the European panel is not obliged to give a positive recommendation if none of the bids fulfils the criteria.

**(4) The accompanying measures** which support the cities during the preparation period after winning the title have been strengthened in order to provide further support and guidance to the cities. An additional monitoring meeting has been introduced, visits to the cities by panel members will be more systematic and the **exchange of experience and best practices between past, present and future Capitals, as well as candidate cities will be reinforced.**

**(5) New evaluation obligations** were introduced for the cities themselves in order to have a more comprehensive view of the impacts of the title and to provide comparable data.

**(6) Finally, it is proposed to open the action again to the participation of candidate and potential candidate countries after 2019**, as was the case until 2010. The experience among others of Sibiu 2007 and Istanbul 2010 has shown that this can be beneficial both for these countries and the Union.

It should be noted that cities in candidate and potential candidate countries shall also have the possibility to apply for the European Capital of Culture title in the framework of an open competition organised every third year in parallel with the competitions in the two Member States, in accordance with the **calendar in the annex.**

**Designation:** the Commission shall, by means of **implementing acts**, officially designate the European Capitals of Culture, having due regard to the recommendations of the European Panel. The Commission shall inform the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions of its designation.

**BUDGETARY IMPLICATION:** the Commission's proposal has no direct budgetary implication. The period covered by the proposal will coincide with several multi annual financial frameworks. **For the 2014-2020 financial framework**, the financial aspects in relation to the European Capitals of Culture, including the Melina Mercouri Prize, the costs of the European panel of experts, the visibility of the action at European level and the human resources needed within the Commission to support the action, will be dealt with in the framework of the [Creative Europe](#) Programme.

For the years after 2020, the legal and financial aspects of the European Capitals of Culture will be directly linked to the provisions included in the future multi annual financial frameworks, and on this basis, they should also be dealt with in the framework of the respective Union programmes supporting culture.