European capitals of culture 2020-2033

2020/0179(COD) - 18/08/2020 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to prolong the European Capitals of Culture 2020 to 2021.

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

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: the attainment of the objectives of the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) action provided for in Decision No 445/2014/EU is seriously jeopardised by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had serious implications on the delivery and preparation of current and upcoming ECOC.

As a direct consequence of lock-down measures taken across Europe, cultural venues have been closed down and cultural events have been cancelled or postponed for an undetermined period of time.

Both had to postpone or cancel all events since March 2020 without any clarity when the situation will come back to normality. In practice, they are prevented from implementing their ECOC year and capitalising on the huge investment made.

In the three ECOC 2021, the pandemic results in a very high a level of uncertainty in nearly all areas associated with their preparation: insecure financing perspectives, unknown future safety regulations and travel restrictions, etc. In addition, there is a high level of uncertainty in the three European Capitals of Culture 2021.

In order to remedy this exceptional situation, cities holding the title of European Capital of Culture that are most severely affected by the pandemic should be allowed to implement their programmes in a way that allows the delivery of the objectives of the action.

CONTENT: The Commission proposes to amend Decision No 445/2014/EU to:

- allow more than two Member States to be included, for the year 2023, in the calendar set out in the Annex to the Decision;

- give Rijeka (Croatia) and Galway (Ireland) the possibility to extend their European Capital of Culture 2020 year until 30 April 2021, without changing the year of designation;

- postpone from 2021 to 2023 the year in which Timisoara (Romania) and Elefsina (Greece) shall be entitled to host the European Capital of Culture event;

- postpone from 2021 to 2022 the year in which a candidate or potential candidate country may apply to host the European Capital of Culture event.

Following the UK’s withdrawal from the Union, only one city is scheduled to hold the ECOC title in 2023. Postponing two of the three ECOC 2021 to 2023 would be more balanced: there would be three ECOC in 2022 and three ECOC in 2023.

The proposal has no direct budgetary implication. The pecuniary Melina Mercouri Prize paid to each designated city by the end of March of the year of the title under conditions specified in Article 14 of the

Decision and the costs associated with the work of those members of the expert panel designated by Union institutions and bodies are covered by the existing resources of the Creative Europe programme for the 2014-2020 financial framework, or shall be covered by the subsequent Union programmes supporting culture for the years after 2020.