

European capital of culture: Community action, years 2005 to 2019

1997/0290(COD) - 24/07/1998 - Council position

The Council's common position radically changes the approach taken by the Commission in its initial proposal. The text adopted by the Council is the result of a unanimously reached compromise which is a long way removed from the Community procedure for the designation of the European cities of culture. More precisely, the common position confines itself to a pre-defined list of countries based on the rotation of the Council presidency, from which the Council will select the 'European Capital of Culture' to be elected. Consequently, this list significantly alters the Commission proposal in that it eliminates the jury of independent high personalities called upon to judge the cultural content of the dossier presented by the candidate city. In addition, the common position considerably weakens the role of the European Parliament in that selection of the city remains entirely down to the Council. Notably, this common position also changes the reference period for the selection of the European city as the new selection system does not cover the years 2001 to 2004, for which the current status quo is maintained (intergovernmental selection). As regards the European Parliament's amendments, virtually none of the proposals made by the Assembly has been adopted by the Council, except by very indirect means (e.g. 'cities may choose to open their programme to participation by their region' instead of 'the project may involve several European cities, of which one would remain in charge of operations'). More specifically, the common position is structured as follows: 1) Member States propose the candidacy of a 'European Capital of Culture' (and not 'City?'), in turn and in the order set out in the Annex from 2005 to 2019 (these candidacies are presented 4 years before the final selection to the Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions); 2) the Council officially selects each capital for the year set out in the Annex (N.B. the chronological order of proposed countries may be amended by common agreement, hence Holland and Greece have already exchanged their positions on the list); 3) the action is open to European third countries who can propose the candidacy of one of their own cities. The Council will decide unanimously on the admissibility of such a candidacy (in other words, the Council foresees the participation of two cities per year: one in a Member State and one in a third European country); 4) the selected capitals propose a year-long programme (or possibly shorter) of cultural events involving cultural actors from other European countries. They can also involve their regions in the proposed programme; 5) the capitals must ensure that their programme has a cultural value (an Annex specifies the programming and evaluation criteria to be taken into account by the candidate cities in their programme proposals) and outline the programme to the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions six months before the beginning of the event. In this respect, the Commission will set up an advisory committee made up of personalities known in cultural circles and appointed by the Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions. This committee may help the Council in choosing between candidate cities.