

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

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In adopting the report by Mr Philippe MONFILS (ELDR, B), the European Parliament approved the proposal to establish a Community initiative for the European City of Culture event, but with numerous amendments. These concerned four main aspects of the proposal: 1) selection of the City of Culture: the Selection Panel which delivers an opinion on the candidacies of the cities should meet annually. It should comprise seven personalities from the cultural sector, and membership of the Selection Panel should be incompatible with the exercise of any public elective office. On the basis of the Selection Panel's opinion, the city should be selected by means of the codecision procedure, involving the Council and Parliament. The cities themselves, rather than Member States, should put themselves forward as candidates. Parliament wishes the city to be selected from among cities in the Union, i.e. it should be located in one of the current 15 Member States. However, other European cities or regions (in the EEA, Eastern Europe, Cyprus or any other third country in Europe which has concluded a cooperation agreement) may be associated with the project, with the proviso that the city selected (within the Union) must lead the project throughout, and remains responsible for compliance with the rules governing the granting of subsidies; 2) selection criteria: social impact should be taken into account by mobilizing as many of the population as possible in support of the initiative. Maximum promotion and dissemination are to be sought for all events using all possible modes of communication (including the Internet). The extension of the action beyond the actual year in which the events take place will also be an important criterion. The project must promote dialogue in order to optimize the opening up to, and understanding of, others. Other aims include optimizing the historic heritage and urban design of the city selected and supporting creative work as part of the proposed cultural project; 3) funding: subject to the decisions of the budgetary authority and compliance with the Financial Perspective, a maximum reference amount of ECU 2 m is projected as the annual direct contribution by the European Union; 4) European Cultural Month: whereas the City of Culture initiative is of a strictly European Union nature (in the sense that the City must be located within the Union), Parliament upholds the idea of a European Cultural Month project, which would be open to participation by the countries of the European Economic Area, the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Cyprus and European third countries which have concluded cooperation agreements with the Community containing a cultural clause.