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New rules for the European Capitals of Culture from 2020 onwards

The permanent representatives of the member states endorsed on 29 January 2014 the informal agreement found between the Council and the European Parliament representatives on the decision establishing a **Union action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020-2033**. Today the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education also endorsed that agreement, which paves the way for the official adoption of the decision by the Council during the Greek Presidency.

The aim of the action is to promote greater mutual understanding between European citizens and to strengthen the feeling of European citizenship, simultaneously highlighting the richness of European cultures and both their diversity and their shared features. The initiative - which will be financed from the Creative Europe Programme - has proved to have a positive impact in terms of media response, local development, tourism and recognition by the inhabitants of the importance of their selected city.

The current rules for selecting European Capitals of Culture are laid down in decision 1622/2006¹, which will expire in 2019. In July 2012, the Commission submitted a proposal ([12558/12](#)) to continue this initiative beyond 2019.

The new decision retains the general structure of the current initiative, as well as a number of existing elements, such as the chronological order of the member states entitled to host a European Capital of Culture, a selection based on year-long cultural programs created specifically for the event, the eligibility of cities which may involve the surrounding region and a two-stage selection procedure.

¹ ([OJL 304, 3.11.2006](#)).

P R E S S

One important change concerns the designation procedure: from 2020 onwards the selected cities will be designated directly by the member state concerned. This means that a confirmation at EU level will no longer be necessary. The act of designation will be formalized by the publication of the name of the city in the Official Journal of the EU¹.

Other modifications include the partial opening of the action to candidate and potential candidate countries stricter and more specific selection criteria, stronger emphasis on the long-term impact of the action, and reinforcement of the European dimension. Member states' experts will also continue to be involved in the work of the European panel responsible for selection and monitoring of the cities with the same status as the European experts.

Background

The European Capitals of Culture initiative was launched in 1985 and over 40 cities have been designated since then. Initially an intergovernmental initiative, the European Capitals of Culture was transformed in 1999 into a Community action in order to improve the effectiveness of the action by establishing uniform criteria and selection procedure for all EU cities.

The Council reached its general approach on the proposal in May 2013, and the EP's Committee on Culture and Education voted on the Council's text also in May. Two trilogues - informal negotiations between the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission - took place, one in September and another in October, under the Lithuanian Presidency, which could not settle all the issues. Therefore the European Parliament decided to proceed with its vote in first reading on 12 December 2013. The Greek Presidency scheduled one more trilogue for the 22 January which allowed for a final compromise solution.

Following the Coreper's and the CULT Committee's endorsements, the Council will need to adopt its first reading position - which will reflect the agreement found with the European Parliament - by the beginning of March in order for the EP to adopt its second reading position - without amendments to the Council's text - before the end of its current term.

¹ Regarding the designation procedure for candidate and potential candidate countries, the Commission will designate their cities since, unlike in the case of member states, there is no involvement of those countries in the process.