

III

(Preparatory acts)

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

85th PLENARY SESSION HELD ON 9 AND 10 JUNE 2010

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the 'European Heritage Label'

(2010/C 267/11)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- warmly welcomes the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council by which the European Union would establish a European Heritage Label distinct from the UNESCO World Heritage List and the Council of Europe's European Cultural Routes.
- finds that the European Commission's proposal respects the subsidiarity principle. Stresses, however, the importance of respecting the competences of regional and local authorities when countries are choosing their candidates and when the final selection is being made at European level.
- believes that once an initial appraisal of the scheme has been performed, it should then be opened up to third countries in Europe – for example, as part of enlargement and neighbourhood policies – in order to lay the foundation of values, beyond economic and geostrategic interests, needed for uniting Europe.
- calls for the Committee of the Regions – given the deep involvement of local and regional authorities in the management and enhancement of heritage – to be involved in the final selection process at Union level through the appointment of a European panel member, as in the case of the European Capitals of Culture.
- suggests a maximum of three candidate sites per Member State in order to leave the European panel enough discretion and to encourage countries to compete with one another

Rapporteur:	Mireille Lacombe (FR/PES), Member of Puy-de-Dôme General Council
Reference document:	Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label COM(2010) 76 final

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Principles and general remarks

1. warmly welcomes the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council by which the European Union would establish a European Heritage Label distinct from the UNESCO World Heritage List and the Council of Europe's European Cultural Routes;
2. finds that the European Commission's proposal respects the subsidiarity principle. Stresses, however, the importance of respecting the competences of regional and local authorities when countries are choosing their candidates and when the final selection is being made at European level. The success of the initiative requires the willingness of Europe as a whole and therefore local and regional authorities must be involved in the choice of sites and the implementation, monitoring and assessment of events;
3. stresses that the purpose of the label is to highlight the shared cultural heritage of the Member States while respecting national and regional diversity, to recognise the cultural diversity of regions in order to bring Europe closer to its people, and to make the most of local and regional sites and know-how to strengthen a sense of belonging to the European Union;
4. stresses that this initiative is important both for bolstering local and regional identity and for fostering European integration;
5. regrets that the initiative is only open to the Union's Member States, whereas the original government initiative behind the label included Switzerland and the European Capitals of Culture scheme was open to accession candidates. Moreover, the process of creating a united Europe is not confined to the borders of the European Union, but involves third countries on the continent;
6. notes that the label must make a connection between the sites and the history of European unification while respecting the values enshrined in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights;
7. is pleased that the label has the potential to make Europe's towns and regions more attractive and so encourage growth and employment at local and regional level;
8. insists on the need for good practices to be passed on by networking the sites that are awarded the label and calls on the European Union to make the human and financial investment that will attract local and regional interest;
9. points out that the label is particularly well suited to cross-border sites that loom large in Europe's memory. The management of this kind of site could be included in the remit of existing bodies such as the European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).

Relevance at local and regional level

10. notes that in most of the Member States it is local and regional authorities that are responsible for the kind of sites that could be awarded the label;
11. regrets that local and regional authorities are not more involved in the selection process in the context of multi-level governance;
12. thinks that local and regional authorities should be involved in designating crossborder sites;
13. notes that local and regional authorities will often be the main operators and funders of potential label sites and will therefore have to bear the extra costs involved in obtaining the label and operating the sites;
14. notes that European identity – based on the universal values of the inviolable rights of the individual, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law – must be built on the diversity of the constituent elements of the European Union and the European label should make this diversity more visible and tangible to all citizens.

Improving the document

15. believes that once an initial appraisal of the scheme has been performed, it should then be opened up to third countries in Europe – for example, as part of enlargement and neighbourhood policies – in order to lay the foundation of values, beyond economic and geostrategic interests, needed for uniting Europe;
16. calls for the Committee of the Regions – given the deep involvement of local and regional authorities in the management and enhancement of heritage – to be involved in the final selection process at Union level through the appointment of a European panel member, as in the case of the European Capitals of Culture;

17. recommends that monuments, archaeological, crossborder and intangible sites be classified for the purposes of the new label to establish the diverse kinds of sites eligible to receive it;

18. would like the European Commission to inform the Committee of the Regions from this point on about progress in implementing the labelling process and monitoring sites, including the guidelines for selection procedures. Also wishes to be kept informed about the external and independent assessment of the European Heritage Label initiative, which the European Commission will arrange;

19. suggests a maximum of three candidate sites per Member State in order to leave the European panel enough discretion and to encourage countries to compete with one another;

20. welcomes the fact that the European panel is made up of independent experts, appointed and periodically replaced by the European institutions, to help with technical specifications and the final selection of sites and winners;

21. underscores the importance of promoting the general idea of sustainable development through conservation, management of cultural assets and making the access to sites by all a natural part of the life of society.

II. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1

Article 4

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
The action shall be open to the participation of the Member States of the European Union. This participation shall be on a voluntary basis.	The action shall be open to the participation of the Member States of the European Union. This participation shall be on a voluntary basis. <u>The possibility of extending the initiative to third countries in Europe shall be examined when the European Heritage Label is first evaluated.</u>

Reason

Extending participation to third countries in Europe – candidate countries, potential candidate countries and EU neighbours – would strengthen the general aims of this cultural initiative and the preservation of heritage in particular at European level.

Amendment 2

Article 5

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
The Commission and the Member States shall ensure the complementarity of the European Heritage Label with other initiatives in the field of cultural heritage such as the UNESCO World Heritage List and the Council of Europe's 'European Cultural Routes'.	The Commission and the Member States shall ensure the complementarity of the European Heritage Label with other initiatives in the field of cultural heritage such as the UNESCO World Heritage List and the Council of Europe's 'European Cultural Routes'. <u>With this in mind, they shall encourage the candidacies of sites not taking part in other cultural initiatives, especially that of UNESCO.</u>

Reason

The Commission and the Member States should discourage overlapping that detracts from the initiative's added value.

Amendment 3

Article 7(1), 1st sentence

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Candidates for the label shall have a symbolic European value and shall have played a key role in the history and the building of the European Union.	Candidates for the label shall have a symbolic European value and shall have played a key role in the history <u>and or</u> the building of <u>Europe the European Union</u> .

Reason

This amendment is in the same spirit as the previous one and shifts the focus away from the European Union and more towards the values of building Europe as such.

*Amendment 4***Article 8(2)**

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
The European panel shall consist of 12 members. Four of the members shall be nominated by the European Parliament, four by the Council and four by the Commission. The panel shall designate its chairman.	The European panel shall consist of <u>13</u> 12 members. Four of the members shall be nominated by the European Parliament, four by the Council, and four by the Commission <u>and one by the Committee of the Regions</u> . The panel shall designate its chairman.

Reason

As with the jury for the European Capital of Culture, the makeup of the panel should reflect the acknowledgement in the treaties of the local and regional dimension of cultural policy in general and the preservation of heritage in particular. Another benefit of including the CoR in the panel would be that it would result in an uneven number of members.

*Amendment 5***Article 8(4)**

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
The European panel members shall be nominated for three years. By way of derogation, in the first year during which this Decision is in force, four experts shall be nominated by the Commission for one year, four by the European Parliament for two years and four by the Council for three years.	The European panel members shall be nominated for three years. By way of derogation, in the first year during which this Decision is in force, four experts shall be nominated by the Commission for one year, four by the European Parliament <u>and one by the Committee of the Regions</u> for two years and four by the Council for three years.

Reason

Follows from Amendment 4.

*Amendment 6***Article 10(2)**

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Each Member State shall have the possibility to pre-select up to a maximum of two sites per annum in accordance with the calendar in the Annex. No selection procedure shall take place in the years reserved for the monitoring procedure.	Each Member State shall have the possibility to pre-select <u>a maximum of three</u> sites per annum in accordance with the calendar in the Annex. No selection procedure shall take place in the years reserved for the monitoring procedure.

Reason

Increasing the number of sites that a Member State can pre-select fits perfectly with the spirit of 'competition' which the European Commission seeks to foster between sites at Union level, but which the envisaged selection arrangements contradict.

*Amendment 7***Article 11(2)**

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
The European panel shall evaluate the applications of the pre-selected sites and shall select a maximum of one site per Member State. If necessary, further information may be requested and visits to the sites may be organised.	The European panel shall evaluate the applications of the pre-selected sites and shall select a maximum of <u>two</u> one sites per Member State. If necessary, further information may be requested and visits to the sites may be organised.

Reason

Follows from Amendment 6.

*Amendment 8***Article 13(1)**

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
The Commission shall officially designate the sites to be awarded the European Heritage Label during the year following the selection procedure, in the light of the recommendation of the European panel. The Commission shall inform the European Parliament and the Council.	The Commission shall officially designate the sites to be awarded the European Heritage Label during the year following the selection procedure, in the light of the recommendation of the European panel. The Commission shall inform the European Parliament, and the Council <u>and the Committee of the Regions</u> .

Reason

The requirement to inform the CoR has a clear added value for the label's promotion and for the Union's regional and local authorities.

*Amendment 9***Article 17(2)**

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
The Commission shall present a report on these evaluations to the European Parliament and the Council within six months of the finalisation of the evaluations.	The Commission shall present a report on these evaluations to the European Parliament, and the Council <u>and the Committee of the Regions</u> within six months of the finalisation of the evaluations.

Reason

As for the previous amendment.

Brussels, 9 June 2010

*The President
of the Committee of the Regions*
Mercedes BRESSO