

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The European Capitals of Culture (2020-2033)’

(2013/C 17/15)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- strongly supports the continuation of the initiative, which brings the full diversity of Europe’s cultural richness to the fore and promotes the long-term development of a common European cultural area based on public participation;
- underlines the need for applicant cities to develop a specific cultural programme using local and regional resources and to give it a strong European dimension. The development of the programme should be based on a sustainable strategic vision and have a long-term positive impact on the cultural sector and the host city beyond the yearlong duration of the initiative;
- calls for all social, religious and ethnic or cultural groups of all ages to be actively involved both in preparing and implementing the cultural programme. Special attention should be given to young people in order to improve their chances of participating in cultural life;
- reiterates the need to involve the capital of culture’s surrounding areas and the wider region, in order to facilitate participation of geographical areas which have grown and which often extend beyond the borders of Member States;
- points to the benefits stemming from the important role played by the Committee of the Regions in this initiative. To this end, the appointment and participation of at least one selected member of the Committee of the Regions on the European panel would appear to be both useful and necessary.

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| Rapporteur | Elisabeth VITOUCH (AT/PES), Member of Vienna City Council |
| Reference document | Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Union action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033 |
| | COM(2012) 407 final |

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

General context

1. is committed to the European Capital of Culture initiative as one of the EU's most ambitious, far-reaching and effective measures in the cultural domain, giving expression to the richness, diversity and shared qualities of local, regional, national and European cultural development;

2. strongly supports the continuation of the initiative, which brings the full diversity of Europe's cultural richness to the fore and promotes the long-term development of a common European cultural area based on public participation;

3. points to the benefits stemming from the important role played by the Committee of the Regions in this initiative. To this end, the appointment and participation of at least one selected member of the Committee of the Regions on the European panel would appear to be both useful and necessary;

4. welcomes the European Commission proposal and notes with satisfaction that local and regional aspects, as these have been highlighted in the CoR own-initiative opinion on the "Future of the European Capital of Culture" ⁽¹⁾, have been given extensive consideration, which makes it easier for local and regional authorities to play an active role;

5. points out that, under Article 6 TFEU, the European Union shall have competence to carry out actions only to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States in the area of culture and that, under Article 3(3) TEU, it shall respect Europe's rich cultural and linguistic diversity and shall ensure that its cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced;

6. notes that the proposal is in accordance with the subsidiarity principle. The Committee of the Regions stresses, however, that this principle and the type of competence must also apply to the proposed procedure (e.g. membership of the European panel, designation, criteria), in order to reflect the spirit of the treaties;

General comments

7. underlines the need for applicant cities to develop a specific cultural programme using local and regional resources and to give it a strong European dimension. The development of the programme should be based on a sustainable strategic vision and have a long-term positive impact on the cultural sector and the host city beyond the yearlong duration of the initiative;

8. calls for all social, religious and ethnic or cultural groups of all ages to be actively involved both in preparing and implementing the cultural programme. Special attention should be given to young people in order to improve their chances of participating in cultural life;

9. reiterates its view that the concept of intercultural dialogue in particular, allied with social and territorial cohesion, can help instil the basic values of private, social and civic life, such as solidarity, responsibility, tolerance and respect ⁽²⁾. These priorities enable individuals as well as various social groups to communicate with one another and to live together on the basis of European values, despite having different cultural backgrounds;

10. believes that the initiative can provide effective long-term support for local and regional cultural and creative industries and at the same time stresses the intrinsic value of European artistic and cultural works as well as their promotion and reception;

11. underlines the need for a multiannual, in-depth preparation period and technical support (drafting of recommendations, evaluation and monitoring) as well as the need to maintain the yearlong approach to the initiative. In this connection, the Committee of the Regions welcomes the reform of the evaluation process, with the city in question carrying out an evaluation itself, which will however be supported at European level;

12. supports the current two-stage selection procedure, the first stage of which is based on a rotating system among EU Member States. This gives cities and regions in all EU Member States the same application opportunities and ensures geographical balance in the location of host cities within the EU;

⁽¹⁾ CdR 191/2011 fin.

⁽²⁾ CdR 191/2011 fin.

13. highlights the importance of a capital of culture having a long-term strategy. Its success is, among other things, dependent on political support from all levels, good governance in all relevant areas, the appointment of artistically independent directors and the reliable provision of funds on a multiannual basis;

14. recommends that a special effort be made to encourage a broad range of cities and regions to apply within the framework of the selection procedure, on the basis of appropriate measures;

15. is in favour of raising the profile of the programme as an EU initiative. This should be a mandatory element of the communication strategy of the designated capital of culture;

16. reiterates the need to involve the capital of culture's surrounding areas and the wider region, in order to facilitate participation of geographical areas which have grown and which often extend beyond the borders of Member States;

17. would like to see the European Commission encouraging use of the experiences with the European capitals of culture in their transnational and cross-border dimensions, given that firstly these capitals of culture form transnational pairs and secondly that more and more cultural capital concepts have an essential cross-border element;

18. views the initiative as a potential contribution to the European Neighbourhood Policy as well as to relations with other European countries, since not only does it help strengthen cultural cooperation within the EU, it also helps develop even closer ties between the EU and its eastern and southern neighbouring countries, with the aim of promoting prosperity, stability and security on the EU's external borders. Accordingly, participation in the initiative should be open not only to cities from candidate countries and potential candidate countries, but also European Neighbourhood Policy countries as well as EFTA countries;

19. recommends that synergies be used as effectively as possible, with a view to making optimal use of all available financial resources. In this connection, the Committee calls for the development of a reliable mechanism, providing the initiative with interlinked support on the basis of the various EU development programmes;

20. welcomes the possibility that in the absence of adequately qualified candidates no city will be designated European capital of culture;

Comments on individual articles

Article 5 - Criteria

21. supports the development of explicit, transparent and clear selection criteria which give potential applicants greater

certainty when preparing long-term strategies and, through improved goal orientation, when pursuing them as well;

22. underlines the importance of creating new, long-term measures enabling various social groups to attend and participate in cultural activities, in particular young people, the marginalised and disadvantaged or minorities. Particular attention should also be paid to the accessibility of programme activities for people with disabilities and older people;

23. stresses that the criteria should not give rise to any influence by the European Union on cultural content, even if it is only indirect;

Article 6 on the European panel and Article 11 on designation

24. stresses the importance for this initiative of the European panel and is critical of the European Commission's proposed reforms to the appointment of panel members. In particular, it rejects the pre-selection of panel members as well as the complete loss of members from the relevant Member State;

25. stresses in particular that introducing a new form of designation by the European Commission, which is also proposed in the draft decision, instead of continuing with the current system of designation by the Council runs the risk of adversely affecting Member States' symbolic and material identification with this initiative and their acceptance of it;

26. proposes therefore that the current procedure for selecting members of the European panel should be maintained in a modified form. Furthermore, the Council should continue to designate the capital of culture;

Article 10 - provisions for non-EU countries

27. is in favour of opening up the initiative to other European countries (EFTA countries) and European Neighbourhood Policy countries, in addition to applications from cities in candidate countries and potential candidate countries;

28. believes that, alongside the Melina Mercouri Prize, which constitutes the EU's financial contribution to each Capital of Culture, complementarities with other EU funds and recourse to innovative financing, including through the European Investment Bank (EIB), should be further explored;

29. for reasons of equity with the cities in Member States, requests that every city takes part in only one competition for candidate countries, potential candidate countries, European Neighbourhood Policy countries and EFTA countries in the period from 2020 to 2033.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1

Article 3(3)

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|--|--|
| <p>Cities in candidate and potential candidate countries shall also have the possibility to apply for the European Capital of Culture title in the framework of an open competition organised every third year in parallel with the competitions in the two Member States, in accordance with the calendar in the annex.</p> | <p>Cities in candidate countries, and potential candidate countries, European Neighbourhood Policy countries and EFTA countries shall also have the possibility to apply for the European Capital of Culture title in the framework of an open competition organised every third year in parallel with the competitions in the two Member States, in accordance with the calendar in the annex.</p> |
| <p>The specific provisions for cities in candidate and potential candidate countries are laid down in Article 10.</p> | <p>The specific provisions for these cities in candidate and potential candidate countries are laid down in Article 10.</p> |

Reason

Having different groups of participants according to the relevant development programme or initiative does not seem wise. The Committee therefore proposes broadening the range of participating countries.

Amendment 2

Article 4(1)

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---|--|
| <p>The competition for the European Capital of Culture title shall only be open to cities. Candidate cities may involve their surrounding regions. However, the applications shall be made under the name of the leading city and, if selected, the title will be awarded to this city.</p> | <p>The competition for the European Capital of Culture title shall only be open to cities. Candidate cities may involve their surrounding regions areas or the wider region. However, the applications shall be made under the name of the leading city and, if selected, the title will be awarded to this city.</p> |

Reason

In addition to the immediate surrounding areas, it should also be possible to involve the "wider" region.

Amendment 3

Article 5(5)(b)

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|--|--|
| <p>the creation of new and sustainable opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural activities, in particular young people and the marginalised and disadvantaged, including minorities. Special attention shall also be given, wherever possible, to the accessibility of these activities to persons with disabilities and the elderly;</p> | <p>the creation of new and sustainable opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural activities, in particular young people and the marginalised and disadvantaged, including minorities. Special attention shall also be given, wherever possible, to the accessibility of these activities to persons with disabilities and the elderly;</p> |

Reason

Access by people with disabilities and older people should not be limited from the outset.

Amendment 4

Article 6(1-3)

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---|---|
| <p>1. A European panel of independent experts ("European panel") shall be established to carry out the selection and monitoring procedures.</p> <p>2. The European panel shall consist of 10 members. They shall be citizens of the Union. They shall be independent experts with substantial experience and expertise in the cultural sector, in the cultural development of cities or in the organisation of a European Capital of Culture. They shall also be able to devote an appropriate number of working days per year to the European panel.</p> <p>The Commission shall pre-select a pool of potential panel members following the organisation of a call for expression of interest. The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission shall subsequently select three experts each from this pool and appoint them in accordance with their respective procedures. The Committee of the Regions shall select one expert and appoint him/her in accordance with its procedures.</p> <p>Each institution and body shall seek to ensure that the competences of the experts it appoints are as complementary as possible, and that those experts are drawn from a balanced geographical spectrum.</p> <p>The European panel shall designate its chairperson.</p> <p>3. The members of the European panel shall be appointed for a period of three years. However, by way of derogation as regards the first panel to be established under the present Decision, the European Parliament shall appoint its three experts for three years, the Council for one year, the Commission for two years and the Committee of the Regions shall appoint its expert for one year in order to enable a staggered replacement of panel members and thus to avoid the loss of experience and know-how which would result if all members were replaced simultaneously.</p> | <p>1. An independent European panel of independent experts ("European panel") shall be established to carry out the selection and monitoring procedures.</p> <p>2. The European panel shall consist of 10 <u>11</u> members. They shall be citizens of the Union. They shall be independent experts with substantial <u>have</u> experience and expertise in the cultural sector, in <u>the</u> cultural development <u>at local, regional or urban level of cities</u> or in the organisation of a European Capital of Culture. They shall also be able to devote an appropriate number of working days per year <u>sufficient time</u> to the European panel.</p> <p>The Commission shall pre-select a pool of potential panel members following the organisation of a call for expression of interest. The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission shall subsequently select three experts <u>members</u> each from this pool and appoint them in accordance with their respective procedures. The Committee of the Regions shall select one expert <u>member</u> and appoint him/her in accordance with its procedures. <u>One member shall be appointed by the Member State concerned in consultation with the Commission. In the case of applications by countries under Article 10, this member shall be replaced by another member, appointed by the Commission.</u></p> <p>Each institution and body shall seek to ensure that the competences of the experts <u>members</u> it appoints are as complementary as possible, and that those experts <u>members</u> are drawn from a balanced geographical spectrum.</p> <p>The European panel shall designate its chairperson.</p> <p>3. The <u>members of the European panel appointed by the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions</u> The members of the European panel shall be appointed for a period of three <u>four</u> years. However, by way of derogation as regards the first panel to be established under the present Decision, the European Parliament shall appoint its three experts for three years, the Council shall appoint its members for one two years, and the Commission shall appoint its experts for two three years and the Committee of the Regions shall appoint its expert for one year in order to enable a staggered replacement of panel members and thus to avoid the loss of experience and know-how which would result if all members were replaced simultaneously.</p> |

Reason

The CoR is critical of the pre-selection of panel members by the Commission. In essence, the Committee proposes that the current system be maintained in a slightly modified form. In particular, the representation of the relevant Member State on the selection panel has proved to be worthwhile.

Amendment 5

Article 10(1), (2) and (3)

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---|--|
| <p>Provisions concerning candidate and potential candidate countries</p> <p>1. The Commission shall be responsible for the organisation of the competition between cities in candidate and potential candidate countries.</p> <p>2. The Commission shall publish in the Official Journal of the European Union a call for submission of applications six years before the beginning of the year of the title. This call shall be open to cities in all candidate and potential candidate countries, provided that these countries participate in the Creative Europe Programme or in the subsequent Union programmes supporting culture at the date of the publication of the call.</p> <p>However, for reasons of equity with the cities in the Member States, every city shall only be allowed to participate in one competition for cities in candidate and potential candidate countries during the period from 2020 to 2033, and it shall not be possible for a city which participated in such a competition to participate in any subsequent competition in a new Member State under the rules laid down in Article 3(2) during that same period.</p> <p>Furthermore, also for reasons of equity with Member States, each candidate country or potential candidate country shall only be allowed to host the title once during the period from 2020 to 2033. Therefore, cities from countries which were already awarded the title shall not be allowed to participate in the subsequent competitions during that same period.</p> <p>3. The conditions laid down in Article 4 and the criteria laid down in Article 5 shall apply for candidate and potential candidate countries.</p> | <p>Provisions concerning candidate and potential candidate <u>other</u> countries</p> <p>1. The Commission shall be responsible for the organisation of the competition between cities in candidate <u>countries</u>, and potential candidate countries, <u>European Neighbourhood Policy countries and EFTA countries</u>.</p> <p>2. The Commission shall publish in the Official Journal of the European Union a call for submission of applications six years before the beginning of the year of the title. This call shall be open to cities in all candidate and potential candidate countries, provided that these countries participate in the Creative Europe Programme or in the subsequent Union programmes supporting culture at the date of the publication of the call.</p> <p>However, for reasons of equity with the cities in the Member States, every city shall only be allowed to participate in one competition for cities in candidate <u>countries</u>, and potential candidate countries, <u>European Neighbourhood Policy countries and EFTA countries</u> during the period from 2020 to 2033, and it shall not be possible for a city which participated in such a competition to participate in any subsequent competition in a new Member State under the rules laid down in Article 3(2) during that same period.</p> <p>Furthermore, also for reasons of equity with Member States, each of these countries candidate country or potential candidate country shall only be allowed to host the title once during the period from 2020 to 2033. Therefore, cities from countries which were already awarded the title shall not be allowed to participate in the subsequent competitions during that same period.</p> <p>3. The conditions laid down in Article 4 and the criteria laid down in Article 5 shall apply for candidate and potential candidate <u>these countries</u>.</p> |

Reason

Having different groups of participants according to the relevant development programme or initiative does not seem wise. The Committee therefore proposes broadening the range of participating countries. Tailor-made solutions should be found in order to avoid excessive financial costs.

Amendment 6

Article 11

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|--|---|
| <p>The Commission shall, by means of implementing acts, officially designate the European Capitals of Culture, having due regard to the recommendations of the European panel. The Commission shall inform the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions of its designation.</p> | <p>The Commission shall, by means of implementing acts, officially designate the European Capitals of Culture, having due regard to the recommendations of the European panel. The Commission shall inform the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions of its designation.</p> <p>1. <u>In agreement with the relevant Member States, the Commission shall nominate a city to be designated European Capital of Culture. The Commission shall inform the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions of this no later than four years before the relevant event is due to begin.</u></p> <p><u>The notification must be accompanied by a justification for the nomination based on the reports of the European panel.</u></p> <p><u>The nomination shall take into account the recommendations issued by the European panel.</u></p> <p>2. <u>The European Parliament may forward an opinion to the Commission no later than three months after receipt of the nominations.</u></p> <p>3. <u>The Council, acting on a recommendation from the Commission drawn up in the light of the opinion of the European Parliament and the justifications based on the reports of the European panel, shall officially designate the cities in question as European Capitals of Culture for the year for which they have been nominated.</u></p> |

Reason

Designation by the Council is justified given the importance of selecting a capital of culture. Article 291(2) TFEU provides explicitly for the possibility of conferring implementing powers on the Council in justified cases.

Brussels, 30 November 2012.

*The President
of the Committee of the Regions*
Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO