COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 17.11.2003
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2003/0274 (COD)

Proposal for a

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

amending Decision 1419/1999/EC establishing a Community action for the "European Capital of Culture" event for the years 2005 to 2019

(presented by the Commission)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

The European City of Culture was designed to bring European peoples closer and was launched on the initiative of Melina Mercouri by the Council of Ministers on 13 June 1985. This concept is based on two fundamental facts: firstly, Europe has been and remains a focal point for exceptionally rich and diverse artistic and cultural development, and secondly, the urban phenomenon has played a major role in the development and spread of the cultures of our continent.

The European Cities of Culture up to 2004 have been selected on an intergovernmental basis; the Member States unanimously selected cities worthy of hosting the event, and the European Commission awarded a grant each year to the city selected.

Decision 1419/1999/EC, of 25 May 1999[1], adopted on the basis of Article 151 of the EC treaty, amended the procedure for selecting the successful cities from 2005 onwards, to be known as "European Capitals of Culture". Henceforth, the European Capital of Culture will be decided each year by the Council on a Commission recommendation, which will take into account the view of a jury comprising seven prominent independent members, each of them experts in the culture sector. The selection will be based on criteria laid down in the above Decision.

Community action in support of the European Capital of Culture initiative established by Decision 1419/1999/EC is intended, according to Article 1, "to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens."

This action must pursue the following specific objectives:

– to highlight artistic movements and styles shared by Europeans which it has inspired or to which it has made a significant contribution;

– to promote events involving people active in culture from other cities in Member States and leading to lasting cultural cooperation, and to foster their movement within the European Union,

– to support and develop creative work;

– to ensure the mobilisation and participation of large sections of the population;

– to encourage the reception of citizens of the Union and the widest possible dissemination of the event;

– to promote dialogue between European cultures and those from other parts of the world;

– to exploit the historic heritage, urban architecture and quality of life in the city.

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[1] Decision 1419/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 1999 (OJ L 166, 1.7.1999).

Annex I of Decision 1419/199/EC contains a chronological list that determines for each year from 2005 to 2019 the Member State eligible to nominate a city to host the Cultural Capital event for that year, out of the current Member States.

Article 2 of this Decision states that this chronological order may be modified by mutual agreement between the Member States concerned. Such an agreement was reached by Greece and the Netherlands, who exchanged their positions (2006 now being the year during which a Greek city will be European Capital of Culture, and 2018 for the capital of the Netherlands) as the Culture/Audiovisual Council noted during its meeting on 28 May 1998.

In accordance with Article 6 of Decision 1419/1999/EC, the Commission may make proposals for revisions of the decision, specifically to adapt it to the enlargements of the European Union.

The accession treaty signed in Athens on 16 April 2003 provides for the Czech Republic, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Malta, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Slovenia and the Slovak Republic to become members of the European Union and party to the Treaties upon which the Union is founded, as amended or completed at the date of entry into force of this Treaty on 1 May 2004, provided that all of the instruments of ratification have been lodged before this date.

Given the symbolic importance and repercussions of the "European Capital of Culture" event and the interest expressed by the new Member States in this action, there would seem to be a need for them to be able to participate without having to wait for an update to Decision 1419/1999/EC establishing a new chronological order for the Member States from 2020 onwards.

Moreover, it is important that no changes be made to the existing order for nominations from Member States, because preparations for these nominations and then for the European Capitals of Culture projects can take several years. Under Article 2 of Decision 1419/1999/EC, States must submit these nominations no later than four years before the event in question is due to begin.

This proposal is thus intended to establish a new system appointing two Member States eligible to submit nominations each year, so that each one could host a European capital. Each year, two capitals could therefore be nominated within the European Union in accordance of Article 2 of Decision 1419/1999/EC, in addition, potentially, to a capital in a third European Country (Article 4 of the Decision). It should be noted that Article 5 of Decision 1419/1999/EC states that a linkage between the programmes of the designated cities of the same year should be made.

This proposed amendment was prepared with the full cooperation of the Member States and the accession countries, which were able to express their preferences during an informal consultation exercise launched by the Commission among the new States during 2003. The other European institutions concerned were also able to express their support for the principle of such an amendment.

This decision is subject to further amendments.

The Commission thus hopes to explore other areas for future improvements to the procedure of the European Capitals of Culture action, by launching a discussion exercise with the Parliament and the Council on the method used to select European capitals. In fact, the European dimension of the projects submitted by cities selected in the past was sometimes considered to be relatively small; it is important to work together to find means of improving the European added-value of activities carried out in this context. The study recently launched by the Commission on European Capitals and Cities of Culture from 1995-2004 should provide very useful information in this respect.

The above discussion exercise should, nonetheless, be kept separate from this proposed decision, in order not to slow down its examination in view of the upcoming accession of the new Member States.

Finally, in line with Article 6 of Decision 1419/1999/EC, a new draft amendment to this decision will have to be prepared so that Bulgaria and Rumania can be incorporated into the list in Annex I during the next enlargement of the European Union.

The Commission therefore proposes:

– to amend Article 2(1) and Annex I of Decision 1419/1999/EC in order to complete the chronological order and establish a system whereby two cities in Member States can be designated European Capitals of Culture each year.

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THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 151 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission[2],

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions[3],

Acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 251 of the Treaty[4],

Whereas:

(1) Decision 1419/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 1999 establishing a Community action for the "European Capital of Culture" event for the years 2005 to 2019[5] is geared towards highlighting the wealth, diversity and shared characteristics of European cultures and towards contributing to improving European citizens' mutual knowledge;

(2) Annex I of Decision 1419/1999/EC sets out the chronological order according to which the Member States can submit nominations for this event. The said Annex is limited to the Member States of the European Union at the time the Decision was adopted on 25 May 1999;

(3) Article 6 of Decision 1419/1999/EC states that this decision may be revised, in particular with a view to the future enlargement of the European Union;

(4) In the light of the forthcoming enlargement, it is important to make it possible for the future Member States as well to submit nominations for cities in the context of the "European Capital of Culture" event within a short period of time, without changing the order for the existing Member States so that, from 2009 onwards and until the end of the current Community action, two capitals may be selected each year in the Member States;

(5) Decision 1419/1999/EC should therefore be amended,

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2 OJ C[...], [...], p. [...].
3 OJ C[...], [...], p. [...].
4 OJ C[...], [...], p. [...].
5 OJ L166, 1.7.1999, p. 1.

HAVE DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

Decision 1419/1999/EC is hereby amended as follows:

(1) Article 2(1) is replaced by:

"1. Cities in Member States shall be designated as "European Capital of Culture", in turn, as set out in the list appearing in Annex I. Up until 2008 inclusive the designation shall apply to one city of the Member State appearing on the list. From 2009 onwards, the designation shall apply to one city of each of the Member States appearing on the list. The chronological order set out in Annex I may be altered by mutual agreement between the Member States concerned. Each Member State involved shall submit, in turn, its nomination of one or more cities to the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions. This nomination shall be submitted no later than four years before the event in question is due to begin and may be accompanied by a recommendation from the Member State concerned."

(2) Annex I is replaced by the text in the annex to this decision.

Article 2

This Decision shall enter into force on the 20th day following its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union.*

It shall apply from the entry into force of the accession treaty of 2003.

Done at Brussels, […]

For the European Parliament	*For the Council*
The President	*The President*

Annex I

Order of entitlement to nominate a "European Capital of Culture"

2005	Ireland	
2006	Greece[6]	
2007	Luxembourg	
2008	United Kingdom	
2009	Austria	**Lithuania**
2010	Germany	**Hungary**
2011	Finland	**Estonia**
2012	Portugal	**Slovenia**
2013	France	**Slovakia**
2014	Sweden	**Latvia**
2015	Belgium	**Czech Republic**
2016	Spain	**Poland**
2017	Denmark	**Cyprus**
2018	Netherlands[6]	**Malta**
2019	Italy	

[6] The Culture/Audiovisual Council, at its meeting of 28 May 1998, noted the exchange of positions between Greece and the Netherlands in accordance with Article 2(1) of Decision 1419/1999/EC.