Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the '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'

(2004/C 121/04)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

Having regard to the 'Proposal from the European Commission 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' (COM(2003) 700 final — 2003/0274 (COD));

Having regard to the decision of the Council of 3 December 2003 to consult it on this subject under the fifth paragraph of Article 151 of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

Having regard to the decision of its President of 6 November 2004 to instruct its Commission for Culture and Education to draw up an opinion on this subject;

Having regard to the draft Report of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport on COM(2003) 700 final;

Having regard to 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;

Having regard to its opinion on the Proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision establishing a Community initiative for The European Capital of Culture event (CdR 448/97 fin) [1];

Having regard to its draft opinion (CdR 393/2003 rev. 1) adopted on 19 February 2004 by its Commission for Culture and Education (Rapporteur: Mrs Annette McNamara, Member of Cork County Council and the South West Regional Authority (IE/EA);

unanimously adopted the following Opinion at its 54th Plenary Session of 21-22 April 2004 (meeting of 21 April).

1. **The Committee of the Regions' views**

On the European Capital of Culture

The Committee of the Regions

1.1 considers that the European Capitals of Culture event is an ideal platform to showcase, support, enrich and experience the wider cultural perspective that will come with the enlargement of the Union;

1.2 highlights the huge benefits, not just cultural benefits, and the legacy which cities experience on being designated the Capital of Culture.

On the European Commission's amending proposal

The Committee of the Regions

1.3 welcomes the intention of the European Commission's amending proposal to allow the new Member States to participate in the European Capital of Culture event at the earliest possible opportunity, to avoid having to wait until 2020 to update a new chronological order for their involvement;

1.4 also recognises that this proposal is the result of a process of consultation with the existing and new Member States;

1.5 however, in welcoming the intention of the proposal, the Committee strongly emphasises that all Member States, regardless of the date of their accession to the Union, are treated as equal and that the proposed changes to Decision 1419/1999 should not be seen as an attempt, or be used, to distinguish between the Member States;

1.6 nonetheless, considers that the European Commission should have also given greater consideration to the selection process and its implementation in making amendments to Decision 1419/1999/EC;

1.7 is aware that designating two Capitals of Culture per year from 2009 may be seen as diminishing the status of the European Capital of Culture but on reflection considers that such a proposal is the most favourable solution for involving cities from the new Member States at the earliest opportunity and maintaining the agreed chronological list of nominating Member States (Annex I of Decision 1419/1999/EC), some of whose cities may currently be making preparations with a view to being a nominated city;

[1] OJ C 180, 11.6.1998, p. 70.

1.8 further considers that designating two Capitals of Culture may better reflect the wealth and diversity of Europe's cultures, especially following enlargement of the Union;

1.9 is concerned that the amended Annex of nominating Member States makes no provision for further enlargements of the Union and asks the European Commission to clarify the situation for the current Candidate and Applicant States;

1.10 feels that placing an emphasis on creating synergies between the cultural programmes and events of the two Capitals of Culture will be a valuable means of quickening integration, fostering understanding and developing the European identity, as well as promoting a greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens (as per Article 1 Decision 1419/1999/EC). Furthermore, the Committee feels that having two Capitals of Culture introduces an element of competition which should provide some inspiration for raising the quality and artistic production in the cities' cultural programmes. The Committee therefore calls for the need to develop synergies between the cities to be included as a criterion in the selection process;

1.11 considers that designating two European Capitals of Culture per year requires that the Capital of Culture event will require additional budgetary resources to ensure that the standard and quality of the cultural programmes and events of the two cities is not diminished because of a reduction in financial support for the designated cities.

On the selection procedure

The Committee of the Regions

1.12 considers that with the proposed changes to Decision 1419/1999/EC it is appropriate to make a number of comments on the selection process for the European Capital of Culture;

1.13 continues to believe that the selection procedure and structure established under Decision 1419/1999 is, in principle, a good one, in that it allows for an independent selection panel to assess nominations and make recommendations based on transparent criteria, interviews with representatives of, and visits to, the nominated cities;

1.14 is however, concerned about the use of this selection process and in particular the approach that a number of Member States have taken in making nominations;

1.15 would like to underline the importance of the European dimension of the Capital of Culture event. This, it feels, may not always be the strongest aspect of nominated cities, as national considerations may come more into play when Member States make their nominations. The Committee therefore feels it is important that selection better corresponds to the objectives and characteristics of the European Capital of Culture;

1.16 requests all Member States (both existing and new) in making nominations for the European Capital of Culture event, to submit, where possible, more than one nomination to allow the selection process established under Decision 1419/1999/EC to finalise the most suitable candidate based on the established criteria. The Committee considers that failure to do so renders this selection process, with its representative selection panel, effectively redundant and potentially undermines the European dimension of the event;

1.17 is pleased to be a member of the selection panel but is disappointed with how this panel has been under-used heretofore. The Committee would however, like to emphasise the appropriateness of its involvement and its desire to continue to have meaningful involvement in the selection process in the future.

2. **The Committee of the Regions' recommendations**

The Committee of the Regions

2.1 strongly requests that it be actively involved in the discussion exercise, which the European Commission intends to launch, on the procedures and methods used to select the European Capital of Culture and calls on the European Commission to launch this exercise as a matter of urgency;

2.2 requests all Member States (both existing and new) in making nominations for the European Capital of Culture event, to submit, where possible, more than one nomination.

Article 2 (1)

COM(2003) 700 final

Text proposed by the Commission Article 2(1) COM(2003) 700 final	CoR amendment
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.	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, at least two nominations of cities ~~its nomination of one or more cities~~ to the European parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions. These~~is~~ nominations 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.

2.3 calls for a criterion to be included in the selection process with the intention of creating synergies between the cultural programmes and events of the two Capitals of Culture;

Article 2 (2)

(Decision 1419/1999/EC)

Text proposed by the Commission Article 2 (2) (Decision 1419/1999/EC)	CoR amendment
The Commission shall each year form a selection panel which shall issue a report on the nomination or nominations judged against the objectives and characteristics of this action. The selection panel shall be composed of seven leading independent figures who are experts on the cultural sector, of whom two shall be appointed by the European Parliament, two by the Council, two by the Commission and one by the Committee of the Regions. The selection panel shall submit its report to the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council.	The Commission shall each year form a selection panel which shall issue a report on the ~~nomination or~~ nominations judged against the objectives and characteristics of this action, with recommendations on how the two designated cities may develop synergies between their respective cultural programmes. The selection panel shall be composed of seven leading independent figures who are experts on the cultural sector, of whom two shall be appointed by the European Parliament, two by the Council, two by the Commission and one by the Committee of the Regions. The selection panel shall submit its report to the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council.

Brussels, 21 April 2004

The President

of the Committee of the Regions

Peter STRAUB