

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

On the designation of the European Capital of Culture 2006

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Decision no 1419/1999/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of the 25th May 1999 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2005 to 2019 lays down the procedure of designation of the European Capital of Cultural from 2005 and onwards. The decision was applied for the first time to designate the European Capital of Culture in Ireland in 2005. For each of the years 2005 to 2019, and following the order set in the annex I of decision 1419, one of the Member States has the possibility of nominating candidate(s) for the European Capital of Culture event. According to Article 2 of the decision 1419, the procedure follows these steps:

1) The Member State in question notifies the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of Regions of their nomination(s) at least four years before the event;

2) A selection panel composed of independent experts writes a report on the nomination(s) judged against the criteria for the action and submits it to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission;

3) After the receipt of the report, the European Parliament may give an opinion on the nomination(s) within a deadline of three months;

4) The Commission presents a recommendation to the Council. The recommendation takes the report of the selection panel and the opinion of the European Parliament into consideration;

5) The Council officially designates the European Capital of Culture.

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As foreseen, Greece notified the European institutions by the end of 2001 of their nomination of the city of Patras. The selection panel submitted its evaluation report in September 2002. The European Parliament did not present an opinion before the deadline at the 1st January 2003.

The Selection Panel concluded that it was not in a position to make a firm recommendation of Patras for the European Capital of Culture 2006. The selection panel stressed that if Patras is to be designated, it should be subject to certain conditions.

The Greek authorities gave an updated presentation on Patras' bid to the European Parliament on the 20th January 2003. This presentation was forwarded to the Commission by Mr Rocard, chairman of the Committee of Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport, who requested an expert evaluation of the documents. After a meeting with the Greek authorities in February 2003, the Selection Panel delivered an evaluation of Patras' updated bid to the Commission on the 11th March 2003. The evaluation was forwarded by the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions on the 18th March 2003.

In the evaluation of the updated bid, the selection panel maintains its original point of view. In addition, the Panel suggests that if designated, Patras should be subject to a monitoring organised by the Commission. Given this, the Commission would have no procedural objections to the designation of Patras as the European Capital of Culture 2006.

The Commission endorses the Panel's proposal of a monitoring group, and is willing to prepare the necessary procedures if the Council designates the city of Patras as the European Capital of Culture 2006. The monitoring should take place on a regular basis and involve some or all of the independent experts of the Selection Panel. Following the Selection Panel's advice, the monitoring group should evaluate the progress of the preparations of Patras, in particular the implementation of the objectives and the criteria of Decision no 1419/1999. The group should meet regularly with the responsible Greek authorities, who will be asked to assist the group by providing all necessary information. A detailed assessment report on the results of the monitoring should be presented by the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions at least once a year.