

DESIGNATION OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2015

SELECTION PANEL

PRE-SELECTION REPORT

2 JUNE 2009

In compliance with Decision 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019 and the Decision of 21 May 2008 of the Conciliation Committee established by Article 31 of the ordinary law on institutional reforms of 9 August 1980, which entrusted the French Community and the Flemish Community with the joint administrative management, on behalf of Belgium, of the designation process of the Belgian European Capital of Culture 2015, a competition was organised for the designation of the Belgian city that will be in charge of the European Capital of Culture event for the year 2015. The terms of implementation of this decision for Belgium were stipulated in the call for submission of applications, as published in the Belgian Official Gazette of 10 September 2008.

Only the City of Mons submitted an application for European Capital of Culture for the year 2015.

Pursuant to Article 7 of the Decision of 24 October 2006, a selection panel shall examine the applications in compliance with criteria laid down in Article 4 of said decision, agree on a limited list of candidate cities to be examined in depth and draw up a report on the applications as well as recommendations for the shortlisted cities.

The selection panel, whose composition is provided in the appendix, was set up by the Decision of the Government of the French Community of 14 May 2009 as well as that of the Government of the Flemish Community of 15 May 2009.

The Joint Committee convened the panel to a pre-selection meeting, which was held in Brussels on 2 June 2009. The application was communicated to the members of the panel by the Joint Committee before the meeting.

In compliance with Article 6 of the Decision of 24 October 2006, the panel appointed Sir Robert Scott as Chair; it furthermore appointed Georges Vercheval as Vice Chair and Robert Jeukens as reporter.

The candidate city subsequently presented its project for a half hour, alternatively in French and English, backed by visual aids. It was represented at the highest level by its mayor.

At the end of this presentation, the delegation participated in a questions and answers session.

Firstly, the panel insisted on stressing the quality of the application as well as that of the oral presentation. It showed itself sensitive to the strong desire expressed by the candidate city to host the event, to the work it has already completed to define its project and to that which it is prepared to carry out to become the European Capital of Culture.

In order to draw its conclusions,

- the panel carefully examined the conditions under which the candidate city meets the event's goals, as laid down in Article 3 of the Decision of 24 October 2006 and the two categories of criteria defined in Article 4: "the European dimension" and "City and Citizens";
- it relied for this purpose on the guide and questionnaire prepared by the European Commission for candidate cities;
- it deliberated on what a Belgian city should be as European Capital of Culture, notably in terms of national and European impact.

After an intensive debate, the panel judged that the quality of the Mons application was strong enough on the basis of the criteria of "the European dimension" and "cities and citizens" and then decided to pre select it.

In compliance with Article 7 of the Decision of 24 October 2006, the panel issued the following recommendations for the shortlisted city:

- Project content:

The project presented to the selection panel should be expertly put together. It should not merely consist of a concept or a simple series of themes, it will have to be a structured project with a well-defined content. In the next phase, more than just general ideas, true projects will be needed and more concrete plans.

The programme itself must be consistent and structured around selected themes. It will have to reflect the project's overall unity. It cannot only amount to a simple compilation of isolated events. The links between events and themes must appear clearly.

The answers to the questionnaire must be expanded and further developed, notably the multicultural aspect, the participation of vulnerable groups, the social issue, the environment.

- Project management:

It must be ascertained in the budget that the 10% planned for sponsoring is credible and prudent in these times of crisis.

It must be specified how the external organisation responsible for evaluation will be in charge of the quality assessment, not only after 2015, but also before and during 2015.

The autonomy of artistic choices must be guaranteed.

- Compliance with criteria:

The European, citizen and environmental dimensions must be more distinct.

The promotion of European culture, the city's visibility from a European point of view, the project's multicultural and multilingual dimensions and the European challenge are critical aspects that should be further developed. It is imperative that the project meet these key criteria. The project should bring something unique. European partnerships and the development of European networks will be underlined.

The project's durability and its impact on the city's medium- and long-term development must be specified. More attention has to be paid to what will have changed in the city and what will remain after 2015.

- Formal presentation of the project:

For the final selection, the application submitted to the panel as well as the oral presentation will provide an overall picture, insisting on the realisation of the recommendations as suggested above.

With a view to gleaning further information with the prospect of the final selection, the Chair would like that a delegation of the panel travel to Mons in the course of January 2010.

Composition of the panel

Sir Robert SCOTT, Chair signed

Georges VERCHEVAL, Vice Chair signed

Ann DEMEULEMEESTER signed

Danuta GLONDYS signed

Mary McCARTHY signed

Mary MICHAÏLIDOU signed

Stefaan DE RUYCK signed

Frédéric FLAMAND signed

Manfred GAULHOFER signed

Philippe GROMBEER signed

Marc JACOBS signed

Jyrki MYLLYVIRTA signed

Andreas WIESAND signed

Reporter: Robert JEUKENS (Joint Committee)