

Selection of a European Capital of Culture 2015

Selection Panel

Final Selection Report

9 February 2010

Decision 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 24 October 2006 establishes a Community action for the European Capitals of Culture action for the years 2007-2019. In accordance with this Decision, a Belgian city is entitled to host the title in 2015. The Decision of 21 May 2008, instituted by article 31 of the ordinary law of institutional reforms of 9 August 1980, entrusted the French and Flemish Communities of Belgium with the joint management, of the selection procedure for a competition to designate the Belgian city to be "European Capital of Culture" in 2015. The specific procedure for implementing this decision in Belgium was set out in the call for bids, published in the Moniteur Belge of 10 September 2008.

The selection panel responsible for recommending a city for the European Capital of Culture title in 2015 after a pre-selection and then final selection stage was set up by the Decision of the Government of the French Community of Belgium of 14 May 2009 and of the Government of the Flemish Community of Belgium of 15 May 2009.

The pre-selection meeting was organised in Brussels on 2 June 2009.

At this meeting, in accordance with article 6 of the Decision of 24 October 2006, the panel appointed Sir Robert Scott as Chair for the entire procedure; it also appointed Georges Vercheval as Vice-Chair and Robert Jeukens, from the Ministry of Culture of the French Community of Belgium as draftsman for the report.

An application for the European Capital of Culture title was received from the city of Mons. No other cities applied.

At the end of the pre-selection procedure, the panel concluded that the city's application met the objectives of the event and the criteria defined in article 4 of Decision 1622/2006/EC.

The selection procedure

At the request of the panel, the final selection meeting was preceded by a one-day visit on 8 February 2010 by a delegation of the panel to the pre-selected city.

The delegation comprised four representatives: two from the 7 panel members designated by the European institutions and two from the panel members appointed by Belgium.

Further to the comments made by the panel at the pre-selection stage, the completed application file had been submitted by the city of Mons on 8 January 2010 and was sent to the panel members by the joint committee prior to the visit.

The joint committee organised a meeting of the selection panel in Brussels, at the Ministry of the French Community of Belgium, on 9 February 2010.

The final selection meeting began with a presentation of the city visit by the four members concerned to the rest of the panel members present in private. This was followed by an oral presentation by the city lasting one hour. A 45 minute discussion with the panel members then took place. The panel then deliberated in private.

The city was represented by its mayor, the head of the project and his assistants, the director of Lille 2004 who is associated with the preparation of the event, and various people involved in the economic and social life of the city. The presentation was supported by audiovisual material.

Special emphasis should be given to the fact, that although no other cities had chosen to bid for the title, , the city had prepared a high quality bid.

In drawing its conclusions:

- the panel paid close attention to the conditions under which the candidate city met the objectives of the event, as set out in article 3 of the Decision of 24 October 2006 and to the two categories of criteria in article 4 : "the European dimension" and "City and citizens";
- it also examined the degree to which the programme took account of the recommendations drawn up at the pre-selection meeting and in the pre-

selection report, regarding project content, project governance and respect for the criteria.

xxx

The project presented by Mons was judged to correspond well to the objectives of the event based on the criteria set out in the European decision and the panel's own recommendations.

The panel noted that answers to the questionnaire had been better developed in comparison with the pre-selection stage, with - among other things - a special emphasis on the multicultural dimension, the participation of socially disadvantaged groups, and the environmental impact.

The "hunger" to stage the event, which was already evident during the pre-selection stage, was felt even more strongly, particularly during the visit to the city, which had greatly impressed the delegation. The city regarded the event as an important means of improving its image internationally, while strengthening its identity internally by helping it to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Other positive elements included the following :

- a high quality cultural and artistic programme based on a very innovative concept ("Where technology meets culture"), led by a highly professional and motivated team;
- strong political commitment on the part of the mayor of the city and all the social, economic and cultural actors who feel very much involved, across a broad geographical area reaching beyond the city of Mons;
- very solid governmental financial support (federal, regional, community and provincial) with a carefully considered funding plan for which the governments mentioned above had expressed their commitment.

For this reason, it is the panel's unanimous recommendation that Mons be designated as European Capital of Culture 2015.

In accordance with article 7 of the Decision of 24 October 2006, the panel has issued the following recommendations to the selected city. The follow up given by Mons to these recommendations will be considered by the panel during the monitoring phase, subject to the formal designation of the city as European Capital of Culture 2015.

- project content :

The project presented to the selection panel is much improved. It is not only a concept or a simple series of themes : the project is structured with a well-defined content, around a very innovative central theme : culture and technology, technology and culture. Work has already been done within this framework via the permanent education centre. With time, this work will have to be more developed in the field of multimedia.

The dimension of culture and democracy should be maintained in schools even if the experience made is not mentioned in the programme.

The links with the local SHAPE community should be better developed.

The multicultural aspect, the participation of socially disadvantaged groups, and the environmental impact should continue to be emphasised.

The process of calls for artists should be as transparent as possible. All the artistic dimensions should be as visible as possible.

- project governance

Mons's bid enjoys very strong commitment from all political authorities. It also enjoys support from the local economic, social and cultural actors. The funding plan seems to be solid. This political commitment and financial support are fundamental guarantees for the success of the event. It is crucial that all partners involved maintain a strong political and financial commitment to the project throughout the entire period of preparation and during the year 2015 itself.

The panel has some interrogations, however, about the timing of the funding indicated in the bid, namely the proposal to spend only 10% of its budget each year until 2012. As the preparatory years for the event are so important, the panel recommended building up its spending earlier.

The autonomy of artistic choices should be guaranteed.

The mayor's clear indication that the political authorities were committed to respecting artistic independence was strongly welcomed by the panel, for whom this element would be very important throughout the preparation period.

- respect for the criteria

The European dimension of the programme should go beyond networking and be further developed on the basis of the themes put forward. The highlighting of Europe's cultural diversity should also be deepened. Contacts with other countries of the Union will have to be developed and lasting partnerships established.

Regarding the "city and citizens" criterion, the project of Mons seems exemplary due to the strong involvement of its inhabitants. It will be necessary to maintain and continue this fundamental element in order to ensure the success of the project.

The panel reached its decision on the obvious assumption that all financial commitments made would be met.

Sir Robert Scott, Chairman

Georges VERCHEVAL, Vice-chairman

Constantin CHIRIAC

Ann DEMEULEMEESTER

Stefaan DE RUYCK

Manfred GAULHOFER

Danuta GLONDYS

Robert JEUKENS, reporter

Philippe GROMBEER

Erna HENNICOT-SCHOEPGES

Marc JACOBS

Elisabeth VITOUCH

Andreas WIESAND

Frédéric FLAMAND has sent an apology.