

Сиб 10.4 - 6020/03.10.14

М. Химширова
за преминаване до
кабинета на министъра
на културата
03.10.2014г.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Cabinet of Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou
Head of Cabinet

Brussels, -2. 10. 2014
Ares (2014) 325792e

Your Excellency,

Please find attached a letter from Mrs. Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner responsible for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, to H.E. PhD Martin Ivanov, Minister of Culture.

I would be grateful if you could forward this letter to the Minister at your best convenience.

Yours faithfully,

Yiannos ASIMAKIS

H.E. Mr. Dimitar TZANTCHEV
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Bulgaria to the EU
Square Marie-Louise 49
B-1000 Brussels

Brussels, -2 10. 2014
Ares (2014) 3257920

Dear Minister,

I thank you very much for informing me about some negative articles recently published in the national media in relation to the competition for the 2019 European Capital of Culture title in Bulgaria. I very much appreciate your efforts to clarify the situation and to ensure full transparency.

In accordance with Decision 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, your Ministry is responsible for organizing the competition in Bulgaria. Since 2012, the relevant departments of your Ministry and the European Commission have been working in very close cooperation through all stages of the procedure to guarantee its full compliance with the rules established by the Decision. During the press announcement on 5 September, the Commission had the opportunity to thank your Ministry for the excellent work.

In line with the rules of procedure adopted by your predecessor in May 2013, members of your Ministry and the European Commission attended the pre-selection and final selection meetings as observers. As observers, they didn't have the possibility to interfere in the discussions or the recommendation of the selection Panel.

The representatives of the European Commission can testify that the Panel's recommendation was only based on the written applications and hearings of the four pre-selected cities and results from the appraisal of their candidatures against the criteria specified in the Decision. The Commission didn't identify any irregularities at any stage of the procedure. The Panel has 21 working days from the announcement of its recommendation to finalise its report, in which it will substantiate its choice. On the basis of this report, your authorities will nominate the Bulgarian city to be the European Capital of Culture in 2019, and notify all relevant Institutions of the European Union.

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H.E. PhD Martin Ivanov
Minister of Culture
17 Al. Stamboliisky blvd
Sofia
Bulgaria

The Bulgarian experts that were part of the panel had been nominated by the then Bulgarian Culture Minister, Mr. Peter Stoyanovich, in consultation with the Commission, in accordance with Decision 1622/2006/EC. In order to make its choice, the Ministry based itself on the criteria laid down in Article 6 of the Decision stipulating that experts must have substantial experience and expertise in the cultural sector, in the cultural development of cities or in the organisation of a European Capital of Culture.

On the basis of the information you provided us on the alleged connection between a member of the Ministry staff and the winning city, and against the background described above, we don't see how this could constitute a conflict of interest as no staff of the Ministry intervened in the Panel's recommendation.

The competition for the European Capital of Culture title is indeed intense. However, as far as Bulgaria is concerned, I am convinced that all three short-listed cities which didn't succeed in getting the Panel's preference will accept the outcome of the competition. I also hope that they will build on the great efforts they invested in their candidatures to strengthen the role of culture in their development strategies and to stimulate and enrich their cultural life. In this way, they can turn what is legitimately felt as a disappointing result by their citizens and stakeholders into positive and constructive energy for the future.

I hope my answer addresses your concerns and I consent to the public dissemination of the contents of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Vassiliou', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Androulla VASSILIOU
Commissioner for Education, Culture,
Multilingualism and Youth