

**FINAL REPORT
OF THE SELECTION PANEL
Following the final selection meeting
On 15 September 2009 in Riga**

In accordance with Article 8 - 4 of the Decision of 24 October 2006, the Panel has set out the following recommendations to Riga regarding progress to be made and works to be carried out in advance of 2014:

1) The Panel endorses the program elaborated by the authors of Riga application, and believes that good results might be achieved by further development of the program.

2) the Panel will wish to see more detail and more substance developed to meet the key criterion of "the European dimension". The Panel will expect Riga to set out in 2014 to offer European citizens a new European cultural perspective from its position as the biggest City in the Baltic region.

3) the Panel will be interested to see details of the 2014 programme being developed during the build-up years. Riga cannot simply sit back and present its usual annual cultural programme. The Panel will be particularly keen to see how the financial targets are being met to drive the special 2014 programme.

4) the Panel was impressed with the commitment of political leaders in the City, but they will expect to see this commitment and involvement spread through the whole population. The participation of the citizens as more than audience members must be strengthened. The Panel hopes that politicians will endorse the work of the artistic team.

5) the Panel believes that Riga will face an important challenge in communicating and marketing their Year to the rest of Europe. The Panel will be particularly keen to hear how the organisers will deal with this issue.

6) the Panel welcomes the involvement of the wider region but it will be keen to see that the City of Riga stays at the centre of the planning and programme for the Year. The Panel will be particularly keen to know that the national Government of Latvia is involved and supportive of the programme.

7) The Panel encourages the City of Riga to consider the possibility of involving in the project /programme 2014/ Cēsis and Liepāja as partners who have submitted excellent applications for the competition as well. Several ideas proposed by these cities might enrich the programme of Riga.

8) the Panel welcomes the fact that they were told that culture is at the heart of the city and region and will want to be reassured throughout the monitoring process that this will not change.

9) The Panel will wish to see that the events of 2014 should be made accessible to young people from other European countries. The organizers should undertake efforts to enable students and backpackers to participate in the cultural events and help with encouraging the main operators with cheap train tickets, cheap flights, budget accommodation etc.

10)The Panel was informed that one private sponsor – the airline airBaltic – has already been attracted to the project. The panel will wish to see that by 2014 the private sector will be more widely involved in the support.

The panel's comments to the Cēsis and Liepāja:

The Panel admired the efforts of the team from Cēsis. There was clearly great enthusiasm and energy behind the Bid from this beautiful City. The heritage, the rural beauty and the importance placed by the team on cultural regeneration impressed all members of the Panel. Also, the total support of the Mayor and his political colleagues both in the city of Cēsis and in the surrounding towns and villages was clear and impressive. However, the Jury considered that the City was, in reality, too small to be able to send a strong cultural message from Latvia to Europe. They also considered that it would be almost impossible for Cēsis to present a substantial programme in such a small city and with the global economic problems hitting all budgets.

Liepāja made an excellent impression on the Panel. This was a serious Bid from a city-port of size and reputation. It was clear to the Panel that culture was at the heart of the regeneration of both the waterfront and the old city. The team had presented a Bid with the full support of the Council, with a Deputy Mayor who was deeply committed, for both the new infrastructure projects which were planned and the imaginative programme which was presented. Liepāja has an extraordinary story to

tell when it was the major Baltic port during the Soviet years and there is a real belief that cultural activity and investment could give new uses and possibilities to some of the buildings standing idle since the ending of the military base in the 1990`s. This process has begun but only in a small way.

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Aira ANDRIKSONE

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