

**Designation of
a European Capital of Culture
for 2014**

Selection Panel

Pre-selection report

January 2009

In accordance with decision no. 1622/2006/CE of the European Parliament and the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community action to further the “European Capitals of Culture” scheme for the years 2007-2019, and regulations no. 835 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 4 December 2007 “Regulations on selection competition of European Capital of Culture”, a competition has been established to designate the Latvian city responsible for organising the event entitled “European Capital of Culture” for the year 2014.

The following cities submitted an application for the title of European Capital of Culture for the year 2014:

Cēsis,
Jūrmala,
Liepāja,
Rīga

According to article 7 of the decision of 24 October 2006, a selection panel must examine the applications in accordance with the criteria set out in article 4 of the said decision, agree on a shortlist of cities to be examined in greater depth and produce a report on the application files and a list of recommendations for shortlisted cities.

The selection panel, whose members are listed in an appendix, was established by the orders of 12 December 2008.

The Ministry of Culture Republic of Latvia invited the panel to a pre-selection meeting, which was held in Riga on 15 and 16 December 2008. The application files had been submitted to panel members by the Ministry of Culture Republic of Latvia prior to this meeting.

In accordance with article 6 of the decision of 24 October 2006, the panel appointed Sir Robert Scott as Chair; it also appointed Juris Dambis as Vice-Chair.

The panel had an interview lasting one hour with each of the four candidate cities. The cities presented their projects for 30 minutes before answering questions from panel members. The cities were all represented at the highest level by their Mayor or Deputy Mayor. Most of the presentations were based around audiovisual materials.

Having conducted the interviews, the panel would like to note the quality of most of the files and of the oral presentations.

The panel recognised the great desire expressed by each city to host the event, the work most of them had already put into defining their projects and the work they were ready to undertake to become the European Capital of Culture.

The panel believes that the work already carried out by all candidate cities can be put to good use by each one, including those that are not short-listed, to give impetus to their cultural life.

To draw up the short-list of cities,

- the panel closely examined the extent to which the candidates met the event's objectives, as set out 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 based its considerations on the guide and questionnaire for candidate cities prepared by the European Commission;
- it considered what a Latvian European Capital of Culture should be, notably in terms of its impact at the national and European levels;
- lastly it felt that the shortlist should not include too many candidates in order to avoid several cities embarking on a long and costly process that would have no chance of success.

On the basis of an overall evaluation of the applications and considering the selection criteria mentioned in article 4 of Decision 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of the EU, the panel reached a consensus to recommend that Cesis, Liepaja and Riga be pre selected for the European Capital of Culture title. However, the panel would recommend these 3 cities to improve considerably their application to reach the requested quality for the European Capital of Culture event.

Following its deliberations, the panel submitted the shortlist of cities to the Ministry of Culture Republic of Latvia.

In accordance with article 7 of the decision of 24 October 2006, the panel made the following conclusions, including recommendations to shortlisted cities:

Conclusions

RIGA

Frankly the Panel was disappointed with Riga's presentation. There was very little detail about the proposed program, and the two main EC criteria of "a European dimension" and "the city, and its citizens" were not satisfactorily answered. However, the strength of the city's cultural infrastructure and the importance of the city to the Latvia and the Baltic region decided the Panel in allowing the city to go forward to the next round. The Panel, however, wished to make it very clear that Riga has a great deal of work to do before it can be considered a possible winner.

JURMALA

Jurmala did not convince the Panel that the city's bid was adequate for a European Capital of Culture. The cultural infrastructure was very weak, there had been little consultations with culture experts and the general public, and the paper presentation was very modest with no visual embellishment. Moreover the Panel did not have any confidence in the proposed budget. Finally, the main criteria were not satisfactory covered.

CESIS

The Panel was impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of the Cesis bid for the Vidzeme region. The bid contained several attractive ideas and there was no doubt that the Region was working hard to improve their cultural activities and image. The Panel was concerned that the concept of seven small towns working together was somewhat in conflict with the EU's requirement to appoint a Capital of the Culture and they want insist that Cesis should be the clear leader. The budget was confused and the governance structure needed clarity. Also there was too little evidence of innovation and "cutting edge" cultural aspiration, with too little evidence of a genuine European dimension. However, the Panel was enthusiastic about the Cesis concept and wished them well.

LIEPAJA

Liepaja made an excellent bid. The city feels somewhat isolated from the capital city and the surrounding towns but the bid team had turned this into an advantage by making strong bid with real local support. The bid team conveyed desire and passion and the fact that they had been working on the bid for three years meant that their answers were clear and properly considered. There were, however, weaknesses. The program needs more definition, the budget is uncertain and there was doubt whether the artistic director could also play the role of the general manager. There were also concerns expressed at the lack of involvement of the large minority groups of the city in the planning and organizational structure. However, the Panel admired both the bid book and the presentation and thought that Liepaja was an excellent candidate.

To obtain more complete information for the final selection process, the Chair of the panel would like to visit the shortlisted cities, accompanied by a delegation whose membership may vary.

Sir Robert SCOTT, chairman

Juris DAMBIS, vice-chairman

Aira ANDRIKSONE

Ints DĀLDERIS

Manfred GAULHOFER

Danuta GLONDYS

Imants LANCMANIS

Vita TIMERMANE-MOORA

Dace VILSONE

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