



EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE

**European Capital of Culture  
in 2024 in a city from an EFTA/EEA country, candidate  
country or potential candidate for EU membership**

**The Expert Panel's report  
Pre-Selection Stage**

**Brussels  
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## **Introduction**

This is the report of the expert panel (the “panel”) for the pre-selection phase of the competition for the European Capital of Culture 2024 title between cities in EFTA/EEA countries, candidate countries or potential candidates for EU membership.

The European Commission (the “Commission”) is the managing authority of the competition, which is governed by:

- Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 as amended by Decision (EU) 2017/1545 (the “Decision”)<sup>1</sup> and
- Rules of procedure – Competition of the European Capital of Culture in EFTA/EEA countries, candidate countries and potential candidates issued by the European Commission and posted on its website in October 2017.

A panel of 10 independent experts was established for the selection process in line with Article 2 of the Rules. The members were appointed by the European Union institutions and bodies (European Parliament, Council, Commission and the Committee of the Regions). One member of the panel (Sylvia Amann) could not attend the meeting due to another professional commitment while the member designated by the Committee of the Regions dismissed from the panel in September 2018 and could not be replaced in due time for the pre-selection meeting.

The competition takes place in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and selection. The Commission issued a call for applications in October 2017. Five applications were submitted by the closing date of 10 October 2018 by:

**Bodo, Banja Luka, Mostar, Srebrenica and Tirana.**

## **Panel meeting**

The panel met in Brussels on 21-22 November 2018. The panel elected Mr. Jiri Suchanek as its chair and Mrs. Suzana Žilič Fišer as its vice-chair. All panel members signed a declaration of no conflict of interest and confidentiality.

At the meeting, the panel discussed each application.

At the end of the meeting on 22 November 2018, the chair of the panel announced that the panel recommends the European Commission to invite the following cities to submit revised bids for final selection (in alphabetical order):

**Bodo, Banja Luka and Mostar.**

## **Next steps**

Based on this report, the Commission will invite these cities to submit revised applications.

The shortlisted cities should take into account the assessments and recommendations of the panel included in this report.

The Commission will communicate the deadline for the submission of revised applications to all three cities on the same day. The final selection meeting will take place in Brussels, most probably in the second half of September 2019.

At this stage of the competition between cities in Member States, there is a visit by two to four members of the panel to each shortlisted city, immediately before the final selection meeting. The call for submission of applications and the rules of procedure that the Commission published for the competition between cities in EFTA/EEA countries, candidate countries and potential candidates do not mention the possibility of such visits. However, the panel wishes visits to take place to Bodo, Banja Luka and Mostar, as it is the case in competition in Member States. The visits do not form part of the formal decision-making process of the panel but they do provide useful background information.

## **Thanks**

The panel members wish to thank all those involved in this pre-selection phase of the competition. In particular, the panel noted that the cities have used the opportunity of the bidding process to devise or reinforce cultural strategies as well as the role of culture in their overall socio-economic development. This is already a significant potential legacy of the

ECOC competition. The panel encourages all bidding cities to continue to develop and implement such strategies.

The panel thanks all five bidding cities and everyone who contributed to their bids. It also thanks the European Commission for its advice and administration of the competition.

### **Assessments of the candidates**

In its assessment of the candidates, the panel noted the general and specific objectives mentioned in Article 2 of the Decision and the requirement for the application to be based on a cultural programme with a strong European dimension and created specifically for the title (Article 4).

The panel assessed each bid against the six criteria described in Article 5:

- Contribution to the long-term strategy of the city
- Cultural and artistic content
- European dimension
- Outreach
- Management
- Capacity to deliver

The panel noted that not all the candidates had fully completed the formal approval of their cultural strategy at city council level. One of the most important features in the Decision for ECOCs from 2020 on is the requirement that cities have a formal and explicit cultural strategy, to ensure that the ECOC is grounded in a medium-term transformation of the city and its cultural life rather than a once-off festival.

In the following comments, the panel notes the main elements of its discussions. For the shortlisted cities, specific recommendations are added to support their preparation of the final bid-books. The report also has recommendations that applies to all shortlisted cities.

The panel emphasises that its assessments of the candidates are based on the proposed programme set out in the bid-books. A city's history, its recent and current policies, as well as its cultural offer may form a basis for a programme but play no part in the selection process.

### **Banja Luka**

Banja Luka prepared its bid under the motto and vision "Opposites Attract". This represents the wish to paint the spirit of their small communities where they are "united in diversity".

The city plans to involve the two largest cities in the region, Bihac and Jajce, which both have long-lasting bonds with Banja Luka. The bid is presented as a first step in the building of a coalition of cities across Bosnia and Herzegovina. The ECOC project is also described as the catalyst for a final reinvention of the city of Banja Luka. The bid is interestingly drafted with a good sense of humour and appealing metaphors (“teenagers to adulthood” and “opposite attracts”). In the bid, the panel notices relevant references to mental health and collaboration among various communities.

As far as the cultural strategy is concerned, the 2018-2028 Strategy of Cultural Development of the City of Banja Luka was adopted by the city in June 2018. It is highlighted as the first strategy of cultural development of Banja Luka, and a unique case in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The panel appreciates this as a very positive step, as well as the fact that the city has also already adopted new models of support for cultural activities as proposed in this strategy. However, the strategy needs further and more specific elaboration as well as a stronger relation to the ECOC project.

The backbone of the ECOC’s cultural and artistic content relies on the metaphor of two poles, connected through the idea that “Opposites attract”. Each pole is divided into two clusters summing up to four programme strands in total: Alternating Currents, Charge of Battery, Spark of the Future and New Energy. The themes addressed are: Unity in Diversity, Returning to Europe, Discovering new Narrative and City as a Workshop. The vision is promising. However, the programme needs further work on its distinctive features. The panel would like to see a clearer Banja Luka narrative throughout the cultural and artistic ambitions of the programme.

The geographic position of the city is favourable for EU and non-EU cooperation according to the bid-book. The panel notices a clear will to enlarge international connections and intensive cooperation with former and future ECOCs. In the bid-book, the cultural and ethnic diversity and how it will be projected through artistic means are not tackled with enough details, while this is a key element of the European dimension criterion. Beside it, more can be done in relation with the dramatic past of the region and its connected memories. The European dimension could also be more developed building on the promising cooperation in the region.

Moreover, the European dimension is not sufficiently elaborated within the city strategy and the artistic programme, even for this stage of the competition. Progress is therefore needed for the second part of the competition. European themes are too narrowly focused, missing opportunities to explore other European topics, particularly relevant for the future of the region.

Finally, the concept and strategy of how to attract European and international audiences is not very visible, while it is an important element of the European dimension criterion.

As far as the artistic vision is concerned, the performing arts field is strongly represented in the bid-book, whereas visual arts, film, architecture, design, children related activities and community activities could be more prominent. Equally, the educational elements should be more represented in the bid, as there is still a potential for youth and community engagement for projects. In the bid, the lack of educational goals is visible in the City Strategy, although mentioned as very important later in the document due to low cultural participation. Additionally, there is a lack of analysis of the sector's needs in terms of capacity building, though the panel appreciates the information that there are already some reasonable initial plans in this respect.

The panel notes the good starting point regarding the cultural and creative industries strategy, notably the proposal of an initial mapping. It advises to further explore the IT sector potential in the city to provoke the necessary collaborations.

The plan for evaluation that already started is promising and offers the baseline for further monitoring processes.

The proposed budget amounts to € 17 550 000 and relies largely on funding from the region. The bid-book introduces the idea of a contribution from the private sector to the cultural sector through a tax relief. The panel notes that this is an interesting but challenging step. It recalls however that a very clear and solid budget plan should be prepared and consider the idea that the private sector will contribute one million euro to the ECOC as ambitious.

The planned amount of investment in the cultural sector reaches € 28 506 371. The bid indicates that the City of Banja Luka established the ECOC Foundation in June 2018 and that the Foundation would continue to operate after 2024.

Overall, the panel considers that the bid is well developed and based on a pragmatic approach. The panel appreciates the state of preparation of the project for this stage of the procedure. However, a deeper, more coherent and more ambitious artistic vision should be developed in the next months. The process would benefit from involving a broader range of cultural operators and stakeholders to prepare an original and interesting ECOC that deals with European topics from the perspective of the particular context of Banja Luka.

**Bodo**

Bodo presented its application under the concept of ARCTICulation, which is related to the key words of Arctic, Articulation, Communication, Art, Cultivation and Community. Its overall goal is to be the first ever Arctic city to hold the title of ECOC. The vision of the application is to share Bodo's vision for a future Europe, expressed as sustainable and connected communities where solutions are built on rebalanced relations between economy and ecology.

The ECOC intends to include the whole region around Bodo.

The bid addresses clear goals that are related to the specific challenges of the city and the Nordland region, such as the decrease of its population, the ability to attract and assimilate new people into rural areas, the future of work, decentralised democracy and the ecological economy. These goals are reflected in the development strategy of the city.

The application is presented as a step towards the long-term vision for Bodo and Nordland. The example of some former ECOC inspired Bodo for the process and resulted in the two features of its Transition programme: more joined-up work across cultural organisations and with other sectors as well as a major capacity-building programme.

The Panel appreciates that two complementary cultural strategy documents - the Strategy of Nordland County Council and the Strategy of Bodo Council - were already adopted in 2018. It is good to see that the cultural strategy has children and young people as key target groups and that empowering them to becoming independent actors in culture and in society in the future is highlighted as an important objective. Moreover, the need to strengthen the cultural infrastructure at regional level is a key strategic goal. Bodo expresses the wish to use the ECOC bidding process and title as a bridge to achieve the Bodo and Nordland's long-term vision.

Regarding the programme and its European dimension, the panel believes Bodo should be more ambitious and daring. The crucial themes proposed such as climate change and geopolitics in the wider Arctic region could be artistically sharpened and integrated into the programme to raise wider European awareness and interest to visit Bodo. The cooperation with Nordic ECOCs is evident and appreciated by the panel. However, cooperation should step beyond the Arctic region, notably by engaging with relevant European cultural networks and operators. The panel also feels that the lists of contemporary artists with whom Bodo wishes to co-operate is to this date a mere wish list.

The artistic projects correspond to the strategy presented, and the artistic vision is connected with the pulse of nature. The three programme themes – The Art of Nature; Fish and Ships and Transition – offer a unique direction for the programme development. The panel notes several interesting projects, for example Wind in your hair trail, Port of Culture,



Midsummer Mythology, Up North, New Views, Messy Corners and Ecological Economy.

Imagination and openness, clarity and cohesion as well as designing the programme having in mind legacy for the city and the region are clearly visible. According to the multi-ethnic composition of the society, the panel would also expect that the elements of such cultural diversity would be more reflected in the project.

The panel appreciates the civic engagement for preparing the application, as explained in the bid. The set-up of a special “permanent consultation laboratory”, called ByLab (City Lab), as an open meeting room, is a promising approach for the involvement of citizens.

The structure of management, as part of an Intercommunal Company, is quite realistic and sound. However, as the regional involvement is important for the project, the inclusion of regional stakeholders should be reflected in the organisational structure as well. The proposed budget is € 31 578 900 where one third derives from commercial income, one third from the City and county and the rest from Government. The substantial contribution from private sector is an ambitious aim although realistic in this affluent country and panel would expect a clear plan for gathering the private contribution.

Overall, the panel feel that the bid is well structured and has clear ideas in terms of legacy, and is connected to the city and its regional context. The panel did not yet see, however, enough outstanding content in the outlined programme to make an impact at European level. The geopolitical position of the city is the opportunity to connect the Nordic region with the rest of Europe, and this could be elaborated further on the second phase of the competition. Some issues relevant for the city and region should be translated into the broader European context and Bodo 2024 should present itself as giving Europeans the opportunity to discover together new answers to common challenges. The coherent programme could be elaborated further with stronger artistic and cultural projects, engaging with the sector locally and European wide and making clear the added-value the ECOC will bring to the cultural life of Bodo and its region, which is already culturally vibrant.

## **Mostar**

The candidacy of Mostar is presented under the slogan “Everything is Bridgeable.” The application stresses that its ultimate aim is to promote integration through building joint cultural infrastructure.

Mostar is one of the two cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to have a cultural strategy, which was adopted in 2018. The strategy is based on a survey carried out among citizens and cultural operators, which helped to

prepare a clear mapping of the cultural sector in the city and to understand better its needs. The strategy is however still very generic and the connection with the ECOC project is not well visible.

The concept of bridging and connecting threads is reflected in the main topics of the programme: reurbanisation under the name of *Urban synapse*, migration (*Mostar in a suitcase*), multiculturalism and interculturalism (*The light of Herzegovina*) and creative innovation (*Quantum leap*). The vision of the programme – based on the idea of a bridge seen as a gift – comes as natural for the city of Mostar and as an opportunity to build missing links between the various communities of the region. The programme of the ECOC is meant to serve for the city as a tool for integration and community building and as an indicator on how to overcome past and present division. Through the ECOC, the plan is to keep highlighting the rich and diverse heritage and the ambition to explore it. Programme wise, the aim is to implement the overall artistic vision through various projects involving different art forms as well as new technologies.

The innovation and cultural and creative industries objectives are sound. It is now required to further detail the concept of the proposed Centre for the Study of Bridges and the strategy to promote the cross-sectorial links intended. A mapping and profiling of the sector would also be an asset.

Three Mostar identities are seen as the basis for the narratives about supranational connections and similarities with people, organisations and creators with whom Mostar shares cultural heritage and common sensitivity. The panel appreciates such general direction. Relationship with European partners from all three circles of Mostar's cultural identity is being established. Mostar sees its neighbourhood culture, i.e. of the interculturality, as a model that could be offered as a direction for Europe in its contemporary turmoil and dilemmas. The European dimension is perceived from the bid as consubstantial with the different European collaborations listed and the links established to other ECOC cities. The European dimension is also mentioned in the marketing aims, which is a positive approach.

The application includes preliminary ideas to create new opportunities for participation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups. It has a very sensitive and inclusive approach to audience engagement with a focus on youth and children with special needs, people with disabilities, children without parental care, senior citizens, ethnic minorities, people who suffer from mental disorders and LGBT populations. The panel appreciates and encourages further development of the idea of art workshops for PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder therapy. The proposed topics are relevant for contemporary Europe notably due to current migration challenges. The idea for audience development with indigent people is also very promising.

The bid presented the idea of Forum 2024 as a driving force behind the project and the panel sees it as a very positive step in the ECOC preparation and cultural development of the city. The Festival of new Mostar energy (FENOMEN) as well as surveys, open calls and workshops organised in the process of the preparation of the bid are promising elements for the success of the project and the ECOC long-term legacy.

The proposed budget for operating expenditure is € 11 229 550 with half coming from the City. The private sector is expected to generate one million Euro, which seems very ambitious. The plan for the development of cultural infrastructures is only partly visible, and it is not very clear how these new infrastructure projects are linked with the ECOC focus. The organisational structure of Mostar 2024 was not presented in the bid-book, and it is expected to be clearer in the next stage of the competition, especially in the context of a city described in the bid-book as the city of paralysed democracy. The panel would like to have a well-defined vision of the communication strategy and how Mostar 2024 intends to address international audiences. The panel welcome the unanimous support from 11 political parties active in the City.

Overall, the panel feel that the programme concept is future oriented, dynamic and ambitious therefore promising. Nevertheless, the panel would like to see further fine-tuning of its distinctive features in the next phase. The engagement of local communities is the strength of the project. The panel appreciates also the strong and multi-dimensional capacity-building programme. Yet further work is needed in presenting mutual collaboration with suggested international partners. Young people and the students' huge community should be also clearly involved. The feasibility of establishing a creative district with modern production centres in currently neglected buildings should be further detailed in the second round of the competition.

## **Srebrenica**

The city of Srebrenica presents its "City of Peace" application for the ECOC title with the intention to overcome the tragic past of the whole region and to build cultural bridges within the successor states of former Yugoslavia. The application involves the whole Drina region, an element that is perceived as positive by the panel.

It appears that work on the long-term cultural strategy of the City has not started yet. The bid-book indicates however that the City intends to have this strategy adopted in 2019, which is a very short timeline to carry out all the work needed, such as a mapping of the cultural and creative sectors, a thorough analysis of the local cultural community and its needs, collaborations with all relevant stakeholders, etc.

The vision of the Srebrenica 2024 programme builds on the following topics: *City of Peace* with commemorative culture, *Cultures of Ex-Yugoslavia* with Art Clusters, Literature Clusters, Yugopop Clusters, Balkan Film and Theater Clusters and *Culture of Mining and Water* with Mining Clusters and Health and Nature Clusters. These thematic focuses are per se interesting, but they further elaboration and more details about the various elements of the programme would have been needed. The concept of the programme presented via touristic destinations and past art projects and artists does not indicate a clear future orientated ECOC focus. The same applies to the idea that each month of the ECOC year a different city is assigned a theme related to the local or regional culture. The ECOC programme requires a more structured and integrated approach at both local and European level.

The bid-book explains that the intention of Srebrenica is to introduce Europe to the cultural heritage and traditions and the diversity of culture and art from this area of the continent, but it does not include details about how they intend to go from this overall intention to specific projects.

The bid indicates that the concept of the programme would be diverse and attractive for the widest possible circle of visitors, and that the intention is to put them in the position of active participants and to enable them to personalise their experience with their cognitive and emotional involvement. However, there are no detailed programme elements and projects to explain how Srebrenica 2024 intends to achieve this laudable objective. The panel recognises that topics connected with commemorative culture are potentially interesting and may have a strong European dimension. However, the intention announced in the bid-book should have been developed more thoroughly and resulted in cooperation projects with diverse European partners.

There is some interesting potential for the European Dimension criterion in the topics suggested, but the panel would have needed more developed plans to better understand and evaluate this potential, even at pre-selection stage.

The panel appreciates the statement that a significant part of cultural operators from the region was involved in the process of the city's ECOC candidacy. Equally, the involvement of citizens, associations, schools, business communities and NGOs in the frame of working groups all along the preparation process reflect the inclusive approach of Srebrenica 2024, which the panel also appreciates.

The panel notices sensibility towards audience development and the intention to prepare a programme accessible to people with disabilities.

The capacity to deliver the ECOC project is a vital part of the delivery process and the panel misses evidence of a strong and sustainable commitment from all relevant authorities for the ECOC implementation. Moreover, plans for capacity building are not drafted yet – while this is crucial for the city art scene and therefore an important weakness of the bid.

The proposed budget is not clear while the expectation to have the private sector contributing 40% of the overall budget is not realistic according to the experience of former ECOCs. Additionally, no breakdown of the income planned to cover capital expenditure connected to the title year was presented. The idea of a public-private partnership is promising per se but was not elaborated enough to give a clear plan connected to the ECOC related infrastructure. The panel did not get from the bid-book a straightforward idea about the organisational structure of the team that would be in charge of delivering the ECOC project.

The selection panel recognizes some positive elements in the application of Srebrenica 2024, particularly in terms of citizens' involvement in the process. However, the application fails to include a solid financial structure, a detailed programme vision and a strong organisational structure, which are key elements for a successful ECOC.

## **Tirana**

The application of Tirana 2024 is under the motto of "Diversity, City of Colours". It celebrates the rich cultural potential in the city and its citizens, and the wish to offer it to the rest of Europe.

The concept of the proposed ECOC is presented as a yearlong process where citizens, cultural operators and many stakeholders have been involved, reflecting the bid's strong focus on inclusion.

The Strategy for the Development of Culture 2018-2027 – to be adopted in the coming months – is based on a research of the cultural and creative sectors and their needs, and different stakeholders have contributed. According to the bid-book, the ECOC is connected to this overall strategy. However, the panel did not get enough details about this connection, in particular as far as the long-term planning and legacy of the ECOC project for the city are concerned. The objectives regarding cultural diversity, the creative economy, cultural capacities and public spaces are sound. The plan for decentralisation of infrastructure is perceived as a positive development for the long-term development of the city and region. Yet the bid does not explain convincingly how the ECOC project will contribute to these ambitious goals. Regarding monitoring and evaluation, the bid-book presents different stages and relevant parameters.

The programme concept of colours is represented by key themes: Cultural heritage and hospitality (Yellow), Nurturing diversity (Blue), Creative economy and young people (Red) and Building cultural capacities and public spaces (Green). As for as the selection of the logo for the concept of Diversity, the city plans to turn it into a platform to engage local audiences and local artists. The proposed programme topics are promising, but the panel expected a more detailed, outstanding and coherent content even at this pre-selection stage. The promising goal to present Tirana through its energetic, ambitious and creative young population was not visible, as the programme is dominated by lectures, educational and sport activities, as well as events organised by official institutions.

The bid-book says that cultural diversity in Europe, intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens are the key components of Tirana 2024. However, it fails in including a sufficient number of cooperation intentions with partners from the rest of Europe and beyond. Furthermore, the bid-book does not explain the type of cooperation envisaged with former and future ECOCs.

The engagement of the diaspora in the ECOC project is a welcomed idea, as it can be a powerful way to connect with countries where this diaspora lives. However, it is not clear from the bid-book how the Albanian diaspora would be included in the programme of Tirana 2024 and act as ambassador of the year. Equally, the bid-book is not clear on how the local population and stakeholders would be involved in the preparation and the implementation of the ECOC project.

Tirana 2024's proposed budget is € 25 555 100, with 40 percent coming from the City budget. It is unclear for the panel if this amount would or would not cause reduction in the regular budget for culture in the city. The expected involvement of the private sector (i.e. 22,2 percent of the overall budget) is very ambitious compared with the corresponding figures in the budgets of former ECOCs. The suggested plan for financing activities connected with the year after 2024 is very promising in terms of developing a legacy of the ECOC project. The panel feels that the bid-book does not present clearly the organisational structure of the company that would be in charge of delivering the ECOC.

Overall, the panel is sure that enthusiasm has driven the development of the Tirana 2024's application. Such enthusiasm is however not reflected in the bid-book, nor the high potential of Tirana in terms of cultural vibrancy in the proposed vision for the ECOC cultural and artistic programme with due international links and cooperation. The strategy for decentralisation is very promising and the panel supports the suggested plans for cultural development of the region.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations apply to the three shortlisted candidates.

The panel considers that all shortlisted cities need to develop their bids for the final selection in order to reach the required level of quality for such a demanding project as being a European Capital of Culture. There is a considerable step-change between proposals at pre-selection stage and those at final selection. The panel will expect significant changes in the final bid-books to reflect these recommendations.

The shortlisted candidates are advised to continue studying carefully the **six criteria in the Decision** and the comments to all three candidates in the assessments above.

A study of the evaluations of recent (since 2013) ECOCs and monitoring reports of recently designated ECOCs may also be of value. These are available on the European Commission's ECOC pages.

## General

The bid-book at final selection becomes *de facto* contract for the designated city; it sets out the artistic vision and the key objectives, projects, directions, financing and management of the programme. Close comparison with the bid-book is a factor when the monitoring panel will recommend the payment of the Melina Mercouri prize.

In the final selection bid-books, candidates must cover all the questions in the selection questionnaire included in Annex 1 of the call for applications. For such final stage of the competition, the panel expects a considerably more developed section on the proposed artistic vision, the programme and the European Dimension.

The selection panel (and the subsequent monitoring panel) has a responsibility to protect the long-term brand of the European Capital of Culture programme. Candidates should be aware that with the level of international attention now being given to ECOCs, policy decisions over a wide area (not just cultural) may affect the reputation of the city, and in turn the ECOC image. The panel would expect to see candidates being aware of this and taking steps to minimise international and national negative images of their city through policy changes rather than marketing/PR.

## **ECOC and Cultural Strategy**

The panel expects a tighter focus in the bid-books of the final round. In their final bid-books, cities should indicate the priorities of their cultural strategy, their target outcomes and how resources will be changed over the next few years. A city's cultural strategy is normally be wider in scope than the objectives of an ECOC. Bid-books should indicate more clearly which priorities of the broader cultural strategy the ECOC is seeking to contribute to. The expected legacy of the ECOC should also be envisaged.

An ECOC is a transformational opportunity for a city. The pre-selection bid-books set out in general terms the objectives of why a city is seeking the title. The panel expects a more focused (and shorter) explanation that can connect the programme vision, themes, activities, and through evaluation, to the outcomes in the subsequent legacy. There is considerable literature and research available for cities to see the range of cultural, economic and social benefits of an ECOC.

The evaluation sections of the bid-books should also be developed and the panel expects to receive ECOC indicators of success. The monitoring and evaluation should however not be overwhelmed with (just) statistics and data gathering though. The final bid-book should focus on the **priority** objectives of the ECOC, rather than those of the entire cultural strategy). One of the priority areas should refer to how the ECOC will meet the various elements of the European Dimension criterion. Shortlisted cities may wish to involve management consultancies in addition to the more academic approach currently proposed.

## **Cultural and Artistic programme**

The focus of the final selection is the **operating programme** between end 2019, when the ECOC will be formally designated and the ECOC year of 2024.

A city's previous cultural history and heritage and its recent and current cultural offer may form a basis for this programme but plays no part in the decision. Many ECOCs in recent years have used the opportunity provided by an ECOC to address difficult issues from their 20<sup>th</sup> century past that still resonate today. The panel suggests to candidates to re-consider their approach to the appropriate topics from 20th century in their respective countries and use the opportunity to prepare for the future.

The panel expects to see more details on the programme, their projects and partners. The cities should set out more clearly their artistic vision, the programme and projects; differentiating between partners who have indicated firm interest and those who are still only potential or possible partners. ECOC programmes normally cover a wide range of art forms and



include the increasing development of creative interventions in social issues. An approximate budget should be shown for each major project enabling the panel to understand the relative balance of projects in the programme.

The panel recommends a more focused and detailed approach to digital cultural content (not just social media promotions and inter-actions) as integral parts of the programme. This was under-developed in the bid-books.

The cultural and creative industries (CCI) should be understood as transversal topic of the cultural and artistic programme and must be linked to a related mapping as well as a needs analysis of the sector. Capacity building should therefore also encompass the CCI.

Information on urban development and infrastructure programmes, cultural heritage restoration projects and new cultural premises is useful as background and context at pre-selection. The final selection will focus on **the key projects that directly influence the ECOC programme activities** (e.g. a new cultural centre in a restored building that becomes a focal point for community arts projects contained in the programme). A timeline for these projects and the realistic estimate of completion should be given.

### **European Dimension**

The panel feel this criterion is promising but considerably under-developed. At this stage, the proposals are too much looking on the surface of the challenges. The panel would wish to see a greater deepening and widening of programmes to ensure a more relevant **European dimension**. That a city has (or can have) a vibrant cultural offer and will market itself in Europe is not in itself a strong interpretation of the European dimension. An ECOC enables a city to promote itself internationally but that is only half the story. The European dimension although not being in daily politics links to wider debates. Selected cities must be able to handle those debates in a professional manner as they gain more visibility.

The European dimension has a two-way direction. An equal focus is on seeking to broaden the understanding and awareness of the city's own citizens on the diversity of cultures in Europe and linking through cultural and other projects with citizens in other countries. It is this focus on other cultures that primarily differentiates an ECOC from a national city of culture. An ECOC offers the opportunity for a city and its citizens to learn from others in an open way. One important legacy area is the creation of new and sustained partnerships between a city's cultural players and those from other countries.

The panel expects to see a significantly increased focus on European partnerships: co-productions, co-curations, conferences, networking as well as visiting artists/performers. Most recent ECOCs have included European and international partners in well over half their projects. Cities should encourage their cultural operators to be active participants in European cultural networks.

One of the elements of the artistic criterion for the ECOC title is the ability to attract **visitors from the rest of Europe**. This programme has to have its attraction and that is why it is something else than the usual tourist offers of the city and region. The panel would expect to see these attracting programme ideas in the bids for ECOC 2024. The panel advises to think thoroughly over building a strategic communication plan for the ECOC project as well as to make a connection between the programme and international marketing vision.

## **Outreach**

The **audience development** strategy and programme are expected to be much further developed in the final bid-books including online and offline measures and channels for all identified target groups.

The panel would expect to learn about the audience development policies of the main cultural organisations including independent operators and NGOs. The role and contribution of universities (except evaluation work) was underplayed in the pre-selection bid-books.

Special focus should be dedicated to those audiences that are more difficult to reach but being crucial for a new "cultural climate" in an ECOC city (e.g. minorities, the elderly, disabled, and people temporarily in the city). These are under-represented in the bid-books at pre-selection. The bid-books should cover the participation of schools, youth groups, (international) students, volunteers etc. and the capacity building of the creative art sector to approach audience development from the long-term and strategic perspective.

## **Management**

The **membership of and independence from city administrations of governing boards** should be explained, with post holders (or positions) and the method of appointment. The decision-making role of the board should be explained. Clear relationship between different bodies and advisory boards is expected to be outlined.

The **General and Artistic/Cultural Directors** play a key role in all ECOCs. The selection, preferably through an open international call, of

these posts before the candidates' appearance at the final selection meeting, will be to their advantage. This is especially important for the Artistic Director as, unlike many such appointments, the artistic vision is already set out in the bid-book. The same applies if a candidate proposes a collective artistic leadership. It is acknowledged that the appointments may be conditional on the outcome of the competition.

The planned staffing arrangements from 2019 to 2024 should be outlined including secondments, interns and volunteers.

### **Capacity to deliver**

Candidates should re-confirm that their bid-book, including the programme and the financial commitments have the formal approval of the mayor, the city (and county if appropriate) council and all political parties.

Shortlisted cities have not sufficiently explained their capacity to manage large cultural events. Candidates are reminded that the criterion for an ECOC requires a special programme for the year in addition to the normal cultural offer. The panel expects more information on the managerial capacity in the city/region to manage the depth and range of an ECOC. The cities should also plan strong capacity building programmes as ECOC's scope goes beyond current local capacities. If projects are planned to be funded from competitive EU programmes (e.g. Creative Europe) this should be indicated.

The final bid-books should clearly indicate how potential **capital investments crucial for the ECOC** would be managed (management structures, state-of-play related to their funding, time line and public procurement). The capital investment crucial for ECOC should be presented with overall budgets and timeframes.

The hotels' capacities should be re-examined and alternative plans should be developed.

The panel would like to see concrete local, regional and European legacy aspirations.

### **Signed**

Jiri Suchanek (Chair)  
Suzana Žilič Fišer (Co-Chair, Rapporteur)  
Sylvia Amann (excused)  
Cristina Farinha  
Ulrich Fuchs  
Beatriz Garcia

Aiva Rozenberga  
Pauli Sivonen  
Agnieszka Wlazel