

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

ASSESSMENT OF FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Context

Purpose of this document: This document must be established for all interim and ex-post evaluations in the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) to provide an objective overall assessment of the evaluation and the validity of its results, as well as a general description of how the evaluation results will be used by DG EAC.

The document shall be published together with the Evaluation Report on Europa:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/index_en.htm

Definitions: Evaluation in the Commission is defined as a “judgement of interventions according to their results, impacts and the needs they aim to satisfy”. It is an information tool that supports the preparation and implementation of public interventions, and reports on the corresponding results to the public and stakeholders. Information about the evaluation framework of the European Commission can be obtained at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/evaluation/index_en.htm

Organisation of the evaluation process: In DG EAC evaluations must be independent and shall be led and carried out by external resources. The operational management of the EAC policy areas is responsible for the identification of evaluation subjects, the organisation of evaluations, and the follow-up of evaluation results. A central Evaluation Cell, detached from the operational activities evaluated, has as a major role in ensuring quality, objectivity and an element of independence to the process, by having a close involvement in all steps of the evaluation. An evaluation Steering Group is appointed to prepare the evaluation, supervise the execution, and support the evaluator on the basis of the members' specific knowledge and expertise of the evaluation subject.

Basic data about the specific evaluation

Evaluation: Ex-post evaluation of 2011 European Capitals of Culture

Purpose of the evaluation: legal base requirement: Article 12 of Decision n° 1622/2006/EC¹

Evaluator: Ecorys

Budget of the evaluation: € 75 000

Time period of execution: 15.10.2011 – 30.08.2012

Assessment

Carried out by: The Evaluation Cell of DG EAC (Unit R2)

Date: 30.08.2012

¹ OJ L304 of 3 November 2006

1. Evaluations subject

The general objectives of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) are to: "highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens".²

The current evaluation covers two European Capitals of Culture in 2011: Tallinn and Turku.

2. The scope of evaluations

The evaluation looked at the ECoC discretely and considered how they performed against i) the requirements of the Decision; and ii) their own objectives. It also considered the ECoC Action as a whole, e.g. programme mechanisms operated by the European Commission.

3. Methodology applied for the evaluations

The methodology, combining a review of secondary data supplied by the ECoC as well as the collation of primary data (e.g. through interviews, site visits and project survey), allowed the evaluation to achieve the requested results.

Having not gathered data or observed activities before the title year (and only to a limited extent during the title year), the evaluator was reliant on data supplied by the ECoC themselves, rather than being able to gather data independently. Moreover, quantitative time-series data (where available) tended not to allow firm conclusions to be drawn relating to the broader impact on the city. However, the evaluator was able to gather adequate data to complete the evaluation satisfactorily.

4. Results of the evaluations

The 2011 ECoC both succeeded in implementing cultural programmes that were more extensive, innovative and international (e.g. in terms of themes, artists/performers and audiences) than the usual cultural offering in each city. They explored new themes, highlighted the richness and diversity of each city's cultural offering and used new or unusual venues. At the same time, it must be highlighted that the cultural programme of Turku was much larger in scope and scale than that of Tallinn; indeed, Tallinn 2011 was one of the least-extensive ECoC of recent years.

Whilst both cities presented very strong local narratives, those narratives can be seen as containing common themes that are essentially European in nature.

The European dimension of the cultural programme of both ECoC mostly related to the efforts to support transnational cultural co-operation (especially through the focus on co-operation with the Baltic Sea region for Turku) and to internationalise the cities' cultural sectors. Whilst European themes were present in both ECoC, these tended to relate to specific projects rather than permeating the entire cultural programme.

Both ECoC strongly supported citizens' active participation and targeted people who traditionally tend to participate less in cultural activities. However, the experience of both ECoC highlights the fact that very different (typically more intensive) approaches are required to widening the participation of citizens as creators or performers, as opposed to merely widening their participation as audiences.

At European level, the ECoC Action continues to be very cost-effective. However, the share of the Melina Mercouri Prize within the overall budget of the ECoC programme varied widely between the two cities and thus also its significance. In neither city were the benefits of the Prize made particularly visible to cultural actors and audiences.

² Decision No 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2109.

5. Follow-up of the evaluations' results

Experience gained from the evaluation will be applied for the implementation of future studies and evaluations for the Commission. The ex-ante evaluation for ECOCs post 2019 took into account the preliminary findings of the current evaluation.

6. Conclusions of the assessment of the Evaluation Report

The evaluation provides a true and complete picture of the 2011 ECoC as far as was possible within the budget and to the extent that data was available. Whilst the evaluator was effective in gathering data, such data was necessarily limited by the fact that it was not possible for the evaluator to gather data or observe activities before or during the title years to any great extent. The final report provides full and explicit coverage of the evaluation questions set out in the terms of reference for the evaluation. Robust conclusions are drawn and underpinned by sound evidence drawn. Recommendations follow logically from the conclusions and will be of value to the future operation of the action, albeit within the limits set by commitments made to date (such as the designation of titles for 2013, 2014, etc. and the order of entitlement to 2019). The budget was appropriate to the scale and scope of the evaluation.