

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 European Capitals of Culture 2012

Purpose of the evaluation: Required by the legal basis

Evaluator: Ecorys UK Limited

Budget of the evaluation: €71.875

Time period of execution: 11 October 2012 – 19 July 2013

Assessment

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

Date: 19 July 2013

1. Evaluation 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.

The current evaluation covers two European Capitals of Culture in 201: Maribor and Guimarães.

2. Scope of evaluation

The evaluation assessed how ECoCs performed against the requirements of the Decision on one hand and their own objectives on the other. The evaluation also considered the effectiveness of the support given by the European Commissions to ECoCs before and during the implementation year. The action was evaluated against the objectives that are proposed by the Commission for the ECoC post-2019. Although the 2012 ECoC are not bound by the Commission proposal, the proposed new legal basis for the ECoC offers revised objectives for the initiative, which better reflect the EU's current policy intentions for ECoC, as well as contemporary trends in cultural policy more generally.

3. Methodology applied for the evaluation

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 evaluation

ECoC remains of key importance remains complementary to other EU initiatives, especially the Culture and MEDIA Programmes, to the European Agenda for Culture and to other fields, such as youth, citizenship, education and training and regional development.

The experience of 2012 shows that hosting a national competition does not (certainly not alone) guarantee a more successful ECoC, other factors such as strong local leadership, effective partnerships and continuity of funding in the development phase are likely to be of critical importance.

Although the current monitoring arrangements are a significant improvement on those of previous years, they still do not ensure that cities fulfil all the commitments made at application, and during the monitoring stage. The evaluator suggests considering annual implementation plans or more regular reporting milestones than those set out under the strengthened monitoring procedures within the proposed new legal basis for ECoC.

There is a demand for clearer commitments from a range of partners in financial terms: applicants should be encouraged to clearly state what funding is committed and what is 'hoped for' in their applications in order to avoid drastic reductions in budget. The experience of Guimarães in 2012

demonstrates the potential of ECoC to be reinforced by and add value to investments made by the ERDF, but also reinforces the importance of planning well in advance of the action year.

It is suggested that future ECoC begin international marketing and commercial revenue generation strategies at an early point of the process, in order to maximise the potential wider economic benefits of the action.

In both cities, cultural operators have gained valuable skills and experience and there are likely to be moderate effects in terms of enhancing the cities' cultural offer. Continued impacts on cultural governance appear unlikely however, reinforcing the need for long-term strategy to be incorporated in selection and monitoring processes under the proposed new legal basis for ECoC.

5. Follow-up of the evaluation results

The Commission proposal for the post 2019 ECoCs was adopted in July 2012 and it is currently under discussion by the Council and the European Parliament. Guidelines are being prepared for the use of future ECoCs, which will incorporate the practical recommendations provided by this evaluation.

6. Conclusions of the assessment of the Evaluation Report

The evaluation provides a true and complete picture of the 2012 ECoCs as far as 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.