



Ex-post Evaluation of the 2013 European Capitals of Culture

*Executive Summary
December 2014*



Introduction

This report sets out the findings of an ex post evaluation of the European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) action in 2013, focussing on the two cities hosting the title, Košice in Slovakia and the Marseille-Provence area in France. The evaluation explores the implementation of both ECoC throughout their 'life-cycle' i.e. from the preparation of applications, through the selection and designation process, to the development and completion of cultural programmes and supporting activities. This summary considers the impacts of hosting the title for the two cities, before a comparative review sets out the conclusions emerging from Košice and Marseille-Provence and their implications for the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the ECoC action as a whole.

Evaluation framework and methodology

This evaluation and its methodology are designed to satisfy the standard requirement of the legal basis for an "external and independent evaluation of the results of the European Capital of Culture event of the previous year"¹. Although this evaluation is primarily tasked with assessing the 2013 titles against the objectives and criteria set out in the 2006 Decision (the legal basis in force at the time of their official designation), the methodology takes account of the changing policy context for ECoC and changes to the legal basis wherever possible.

In order for results to be comparable with previous evaluations, the methodology follows a consistent approach for evidence gathering and analysis. The two cities were first evaluated individually, based on primary data either collected during the fieldwork or provided by each ECoC, as well as the analysis of a range of secondary data sources.

Primary data sources include interviews conducted during two visits to each city or by telephone, as well as through an online survey. These interviews have sought to gain a variety of perspectives on each ECoC, including those of the management teams, decision-makers at local and national level, plus key cultural operators, a range of partners involved in the delivery of ECoC and a sample of organisations either leading or participating in ECoC projects.

The secondary data sources include information in the original ECoC applications, studies and reports produced or commissioned by the ECoC, events programmes, promotional materials and websites, statistical data on culture and tourism and quantitative data supplied by the ECoC on finance, activities, outputs and results.

Main Findings

Košice 2013

Slovakia was able to propose a European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for 2013 under the terms of the chronological order of entitlement set out in Decision 1622/2006/EC, with Košice selected for the title by means of a national competition. Košice is Slovakia's second largest city, close to the country's Eastern border (and the European Union's Schengen border). The city has implemented European Capital of Culture as part of a long-term plan for transforming the city and its economy from an industrial to a creative city, by investing in cultural infrastructure and support for the creative and tourism sectors, as well as encouraging a whole range of new collaborations and interactions.

¹ 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 2019

The original concept for Košice 2013 was built around 'Interface 2013', drawing on the city's historical role as a multicultural city and a crossroads between central and eastern Europe, while recognising the city's developing creative sector. The final cultural programme combined large-scale public art festivals, experimental and innovative art forms, a programme of events reflecting the city's multi-ethnic heritage, activities linking cultural heritage to new ideas and practices, and a series of activities promoting Košice and the Eastern Slovakia region at different levels.

The European dimension of ECoC was reflected in a variety of activities across the cultural programme, among the most noteworthy aspects were the Košice Artists in Residence programme and a range of networking activities and good practice sharing, including in relation to the creative economy and tourism development.

Košice 2013 placed significant emphasis on involving local citizens in the ECoC, supported by the development of new cultural facilities, not least the SPOTS programme featuring the regeneration of a number of disused heat exchanger stations and a programme of cultural and community development activities around these new facilities. This is widely regarded as demonstrating good practice through its highly inclusive approach to the development of new cultural and social facilities in neighbourhoods. This will continue to improve access to culture and provide long-term support for community development, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

Košice 2013's overall budgets exceeded the original projections, thanks in large part to the successful acquisition of significant resources from EU Structural Funds (€59m) to finance the infrastructure investments. In common with many recent ECoC, Košice 2013 was affected by shortfalls in funding from regional and municipal government (and lower private sector contributions). Although this was partly offset by increased contributions from national government, this has served to reduce the budgets available for cultural programming and supporting activities such as marketing and communications.

In terms of impacts, while Košice's cultural programme was comparatively small, many new or additional opportunities were created for citizens to attend or participate in cultural activities. This was felt by many of those consulted to have boosted the vibrancy and quality of the local cultural offer, as well as making a significant contribution to developing the skills, capacity and connectivity of the local cultural, creative and tourism sectors. In this way, Košice 2013 has contributed to the city's long-term social and economic development while generating a number of more immediate effects, mainly through raised attendance at cultural events and an increase in the numbers of tourist visits, especially from neighbouring countries.

A key success of Košice 2013 has been the approach to sustainability, with significant time and resources allocated to legacy planning. In addition to the creation of new cultural and tourist assets, a long-term strategy has been developed, new legacy bodies established and ongoing financial commitments obtained from government partners.

Marseille-Provence 2013

France was also entitled to nominate a European Capital of Culture under the chronological order of entitlement, though this was apparent as early as 1999². After a national selection competition, the European Capital of Culture title was awarded to the port city of Marseille in partnership with many of the cities, towns and communes in the Bouches-du-Rhône département, including Aix-en-Provence, Arles, Aubagne, Gardanne, Istres, Martigues and Salon-de-Provence.

2 Decision 1419/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 1999 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2005 to 2019

The funding commitments made at application stage by the stakeholders in Marseille-Provence were respected, with public contributions complemented by significant amounts of private sector sponsorship. The total budget of €98m was additional to existing cultural budgets.

Marseille-Provence 2013 has been a high-profile national and international event, seeking to build on the Marseille-Euroméditerranée urban renewal project in the heart of Marseille while promoting greater integration between the city and its surrounding area through support for arts, culture and the creative industries.

Marseille and its urban renewal projects formed the focal point for activities, though the ECoC was linked to improvements in the cultural infrastructure across the territory, including new venues such as MuCEM in Marseille (the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations), restoration projects in former industrial and commercial zones as well as numerous renovations and extensions of existing facilities.

Marseille-Provence 2013 implemented an ambitious and extensive cultural programme, reflecting the size and diversity of the area covered and covering a wide diversity of artistic themes and disciplines. The programme had a clear European dimension via the Partage des Midis (sharing the south) theme which cut across the entire cultural programme, highlighting Marseille's location and historic role as a meeting point between European and Mediterranean cultures.

One of the main objectives was to encourage wider participation in culture, through public and free events, specific events for young people and activities either taking place in disadvantaged neighbourhoods or showcasing the diversity of cultures present in the territory. A key contribution to this was made by the Quartiers Créatifs (creative neighbourhoods) project featuring a range of experimental arts and non-traditional cultural forms in different locations across the territory.

Marseille-Provence 2013 created a number of economic and social impacts, most noticeably in terms of total cultural audiences and increases in the number of tourist visits, particularly to the city of Marseille. The ECoC also generated considerable media coverage and high levels of awareness amongst the general population. There is also evidence that some of the negative perceptions of Marseille have been challenged and that, for the first time, Marseille is seen as a major cultural destination.

In the absence of legacy structures or formal cultural competencies for the Marseille-Provence Métropole, longer-term impacts are likely to be more limited. Nevertheless, it seems clear that ECoC has made a positive contribution to levels of cooperation in cultural governance and served to boost the capacity and connectivity of the local cultural and creative sectors.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The following analysis brings together the findings, success factors and lessons learned from the two ECoC city sections in the main evaluation report, comparing and contrasting experiences in order to provide an overview of the European Capitals of Culture action in 2013. Many of the findings from previous reports³, especially those pertaining to the overall relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the ECoC action, are still valid, but have been updated with new information gathered during the 2013 evaluation wherever possible.

Relevance

The experience of 2013 reinforces the finding from previous evaluations that ECoC remains highly relevant to the EU Treaty, particularly Article 167, through contributing to the flowering of Member State cultures, highlighting common cultural heritage as well as cultural diversity and increasing cultural co-operation between Member States and internationally.

The selection process introduced by Decision 1622/2006/EC ensured that the applications of both the eventual ECoC title-holders for 2013 set out objectives and approaches that were consistent with the legal basis for ECoC. On balance, both title-holders implemented cultural projects and supporting activities that were coherent with the essence of their applications, and therefore supported the strategic and operational objectives of ECoC as defined in the intervention logic.

The relevance of the ECoC Action is likely to be strengthened by the new legal basis established in 2014 to cover ECoC for 2020-2033. Indeed, the objectives and criteria of the ECoC Action set in the new legal basis⁴ better articulate the overall aims of EU policy and better reflect the aspirations of the title-holders and the nature of their programmes than do the objectives of Decision 1622/2006/EC.

Recommendation: The Commission should ensure that the selection panel and the monitoring and advisory panels provide recommendations that relate specifically to the criteria in Article 14 of Decision 445/2014/EU i.e. relating to the budget, artistic independence, European dimension, marketing and communication, and monitoring and evaluation.

The ECoC concept also continues to be of relevance to the objectives of local policymakers and stakeholders. The experience of 2013 shows that ECoC has made a positive contribution to developing the range and diversity of cities' cultural offerings; enhancing social development; promoting the international profile of cities; and supporting their economic development (through support for tourism and the creative economy).

The ECoC Action remains complementary to other EU initiatives in the field of culture, and this report highlights examples of the 2013 ECoC working with the Creative Europe programme as well as with a range of programmes in other linked fields such as youth, citizenship, education and training and regional development.

Both 2013 ECoC utilised ERDF resources, with ECoC perhaps the key driving force behind Košice's ability to access significant amounts from EU Structural Funds to finance cultural infrastructure improvements. Marseille-Provence also made use of ERDF both for its infrastructure developments and for elements of the cultural programme.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm

⁴ Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 establishing a Union action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033 and repealing Decision No 1622/2006/EC

Recommendation: The Commission should explore ways to promote and strengthen the contribution of the EU Structural Funds to the European Capitals of Culture, for example, through identifying and disseminating good practice or through providing guidance and information targeted to applicant and title-holders on how the Structural Funds can reinforce ECoC.

Efficiency

The city sections of the main report show that the 2013 ECoC chose similar organisational forms for the delivery agencies, i.e. arms-length bodies but governance and management arrangements were much more complex and challenging in Marseille-Provence, given the size of the territory.

Clearly the 2013 title cities are very different places, with the greater Marseille-Provence urban area covering a population of 1.8 million people and the Košice region having a population of 360,000. It therefore follows that the resources required to achieve the expected results (or a 'critical mass' of impacts) in each city will vary significantly. Indeed, the operating and programming resources available to the 2013 ECoC are comparable when these population differences are taken into account.

The 2013 ECoC repeat the pattern seen in recent years, with title cities from newer Member States in central and eastern Europe tending to produce ECoC programmes that are smaller in scale and more vulnerable to budget reductions in the lead-up to the title year. In both cities, stakeholders (and the majority of funders) were committed in their support of ECoC, though funding commitments in Košice were more vulnerable to local political changes, with the absence of a long-term funding agreement for municipal and regional contributions a key cause of the limited resources available for cultural programming during the title-year. The funding commitments made at application stage by the stakeholders in Marseille-Provence were respected and the entire budget of €98m was additional to any existing budgets for culture.

Recommendation: The Commission should encourage Member States to indicate at the outset (e.g. when the call for applications is issued), the amount of funding that they intend to make available to winning cities.

Marseille-Provence exceeded their target for private sponsorship, with €16.5m raised from 207 companies. This success reflected a coherent strategy to create good partnerships with corporate sponsors and an understanding of the need to generate mutual benefits. Efforts to raise private sponsorship were less successful in Košice, at least in part due to the lack of a culture of corporate giving or supportive tax regime in Slovakia, though there were private contributions to infrastructure projects and in-kind support of various kinds.

Recommendation: The Commission should seek to encourage further policy dialogue with Member States and stakeholders on ways of encouraging and incentivising private sector investment in the arts and culture.

At European level, the ECoC Action continues to be very cost-effective when compared to other EU policy instruments and mechanisms, given the very modest EU funding available from the Melina Mercouri Prize

Marketing and communications presented a challenge for both ECoC, but in different ways. In very simplified terms, Marseille-Provence faced the challenges of promoting a large and diverse territory and of overcoming negative perceptions of Marseille, while Košice (and Slovakia as a whole) was seeking to raise its profile amongst European audiences and put in place structures that would maintain and expand progress in this area.

The nature of the Marseille-Provence ECoC covering such a large, diverse area was always likely to make the formulation and projection of a coherent unified 'brand identity' problematic. Nevertheless, the development of a shared vision for each ECoC and its communication remains of importance, especially where the ECoC title covers a diverse area.

To some extent both cities' efforts were complicated by limited marketing budgets and the need to enlist a variety of tourist and public bodies in communication efforts. This is not unique to 2013; the temporary nature of ECoC means that there must be effective partnership working between ECoC delivery agencies and the bodies responsible for communication and tourism promotion for communications efforts to be successful.

The 2013 ECoC were the first ones formally subject to the selection process introduced by Decision 1622/2006/EC, with no evidence of criticism or problems in relation to transparency or fairness. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the new process enabled two high quality applications and two interesting, innovative ECoC to be selected.

Moreover, there is evidence that specific recommendations of the EU monitoring panel positively affected final implementation. For Marseille-Provence this related to the further development of the European dimension in the final programme, while Košice took on board recommendations on legacy planning and the need to reach new audiences. There is less evidence that informal meetings between panel members and ECoC delivery agencies had a beneficial effect on the results of the 2013 ECoC.

Effectiveness

Despite a shortage of comprehensive data on results and impacts available at the time of writing, it is safe to say that the 2013 ECoC created a more extensive cultural offer in both cities during the title-year. Marseille-Provence implemented a comprehensive range of activities and attracted an audience that was estimated to exceed 11 million, making it perhaps the best-attended ECoC to date. Although Košice's programme was clearly smaller in scale and spread out over a longer time period, it was however highly innovative in scope and content, with experimental art forms and creativity in its broader sense strongly represented.

The European dimension was an integral part of Marseille-Provence's programme, explicit in the Partage des Midis (Sharing the South) theme and resulting in many collaborations with other countries, including with Mediterranean countries outside the EU. Košice's final programme placed less emphasis on the European dimension, which was incorporated in a number of specific activities rather than permeating the entire programme. There was also some collaboration between the two ECoC title-holders, although this was modest in scale, reflecting the very limited links that would otherwise exist between these two places.

In terms of economic impacts, both ECoC made a clear contribution to developing the creative economy and the tourism offer in their respective cities. Both had a positive effect on the cities' national and international profiles and attracted significant numbers of additional visitors, Marseille-Provence in particular generated considerable media coverage and high levels of awareness among the general population.

Both ECoC also made a contribution to urban development, particularly by bringing culture to peripheral and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, including via artist residencies and themes dealing with specific ethnic communities.

Recommendation: The Commission should routinely include examples of good practice from ECoC in the various communication and dissemination activities of the Creative Europe Programme, any future European Culture Forum and through relevant cultural networks and stakeholder platforms.

The experience of both cities shows that the effective involvement of non-traditional cultural audiences or disadvantaged communities requires extensive preparatory work and/or effective partnership working with intermediary organisations. These organisations are often small, inexperienced or 'amateur' in nature and are less likely to (successfully) apply for funding in programmes of this size and significance.

Košice 2013 had greatest impact on the city itself, with regional effects more limited and focussing mainly on improved regional cooperation. Clearly, in Marseille-Provence, the intention was always to generate impact across a wider, sub-regional territory. Whilst such benefits have occurred, some lessons have been learned about the risk of saturation and competition for profile and audiences within a territory; there is a limit as to how many cultural events can take place at any one time, even in a large territory. A large part of the impact will inevitably be concentrated in the city of Marseille itself, since the majority of new infrastructure developments and cultural events took place there and much of the benefit of these will endure.

It is also important to consider the extent to which the ECoC action, and the way it has been implemented in 2013, has generated 'European added value'⁵. This is generally understood as the ability of EU interventions to create greater value or benefits than Member States acting alone, which in the cultural field requires actions with a strong transnational or multilateral focus, that are visible and accessible to large numbers of EU citizens, and that aim to make a longer-term contribution to European priorities (i.e. cooperation, integration, mutual knowledge and understanding)⁶. While the ECoC action has clear potential to make contributions in all of these areas, the content of the main report suggests that Marseille-Provence had more demonstrable impacts than Košice in relation to European added value.

Recommendation Given the rich experiences of 2013, the Commission should publish (or provide links to) the cities' own evaluation reports on its website, in addition to reports of the EU level evaluations.

Recommendation: In order to strengthen evaluations commissioned by the cities, the Commission should establish voluntary guidelines and common indicators for such evaluations.

Sustainability

Evidence of lasting improvements in the cultural vibrancy of cities is perhaps strongest in the case of Košice, thanks to the numbers of continuing projects and the establishment of a new timetable of recurring events and festivals. Marseille-Provence 2013 did however have a positive impact on the level of (international) collaboration and networking amongst local cultural operators.

Both cities saw significant improvements to the cultural infrastructure, which are a key legacy effect. In some ways this is most noteworthy in Košice given the context of many years of underinvestment. The city of Marseille enjoyed huge investment in its cultural infrastructure in the year leading up to 2013, with the title-year providing a stimulus for their timely completion and the opportunity for them to host ECoC events and benefit from the communication activities of the ECoC.

Although a key objective of Marseille-Provence 2013 was to deepen collaboration across the Marseille-Provence area, though as highlighted above, this is most likely to be done on an informal basis in future. The experience of 2013 illustrates that legacy planning must involve a range of partner organisations, begin at an earlier stage and be adequately resourced, if ECoC are to create more sustainable longer-term effects.

⁵ Defined in the evaluation questions as 'Community added value'

⁶ Council Resolution of 19 December 2002 implementing the work plan on European cooperation in the field of culture: European added value and mobility of persons and circulation of works in the cultural sector

Košice's programme was part of a long-term process of urban development and, as a consequence of this (supported by the recommendations of the EU monitoring panel), legacy planning in Košice was well-developed by the close of 2013. This has included the establishment of three legacy bodies (for cultural policy, management of cultural infrastructure and tourism development), adoption of a new long term cultural development strategy and renewed willingness on the part of public agencies to value and fund investments in culture.