

**Selection of the European Capital of Culture
for 2015
in the Czech Republic**

Selection Panel

Final Selection report

Prague, 8th September 2010

Under the Annex to Decision No. 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019 /hereafter referred as „the Decision“/ the Czech Republic is entitled to organise a competition of cities for the title “European Capital of Culture” for 2015. In the Czech Republic the Managing Authority is the Ministry of Culture. The project implementation process in the Czech Republic is defined by the Competition Rules of Procedure approved by the Minister of Culture in January 2009.

In line with the Decision and in compliance with the Rules of Procedure, the Ministry of Culture bears the responsibility for the organisation of the national competition, appointment of the national experts to the selection panel, organisation of the first and second round of the selection meeting and coordination of the visits of the selection panel members to the pre-selected candidate cities. The Ministry of Culture also maintains on-going contacts with the European Commission.

The Czech Republic Selection Panel was established by the Minister of Culture in September 2009. The Selection Panel was given the task of recommending one city for the title “European Capital of Culture” for 2015 in the Czech Republic.

The three cities listed below entered the competition for the title „European Capital of Culture“ for 2015 by the set deadline, which was 31 October 2009:

Hradec Králové, Ostrava and Plzeň.

Under Article 7 of the Decision, which deals with the first round of the selection process, the panel reviewed the applications in line with the criteria stated in Article 4 of the Decision. The first round (pre-selection) was held in Prague on 7th – 8th December 2009 and two cities were short listed for the second round: Ostrava and Plzeň.

In accordance with Article 6 of the Decision the selection panel unanimously elected Sir Robert Scott the Chairman, Roman Bělor the Vice-chairman and Olga Poivre d’Arvor the Rapporteur at the beginning of its first meeting at pre-selection stage. The members of the Selection Panel were elected to these functions for the entire selection process (both first and second rounds).

The results of this session are reported in the Report on the First Round of the selection process, which was submitted to the Ministry of Culture and the European Commission by the set deadline.

Selection Process – Phase 2

Two day visits to the cities short listed in the first round preceded the final selection: Plzeň (6th September 2010) and Ostrava (7th September 2010). The delegation consisted of the following members of the Selection Panel: Sir Robert Scott (Chairman), Roman Bělor (Vice-chairman), Olga Poivre d’Arvor (Rapporteur) and Danuta Glondys (panellist). The Selection Panel was accompanied by a representative of the European Commission (Jacqueline Pacaud) and a representative of the Ministry of Culture (Kristína Magdolenová). All members of the panel received the completed bids of both cities in good time. The short listed cities

sent these bids to the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic by the deadline, 30th June 2010.

The final selection meeting was held in Prague at the Ministry of Culture premises on 8th September 2010. Five European and six national members of the panel participated in the meeting. Two European panellists apologised for their absence, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges and Elisabeth Vitouch. Each city sent ten representatives for the final presentation, which consisted of a thirty minute presentation by the bidding team, followed by a sixty minute question and answer session. The panel assessed both proposals against the criteria established in article 4 of Decision (European dimension and city and citizens). Immediately after the deliberation (at 4.15 p.m.) a press conference was held at which the winner of the competition was announced.

The Minister of Culture Jiří Besser opened the closed morning session and he later also participated in the press conference. Representatives of the European Commission and the Ministry of Culture were present at the entire session, as observers.

When the session started, the panel was reminded of the principles to be followed by the panellists during the final decision, including two key evaluation criteria: “the European Dimension” and “City and Citizens” as specified in Article 4 when assessing the cultural programme.

The Evaluation by the Selection Panel

The panel appreciated that both cities demonstrated a highly professional approach and had invested a great deal of effort considering the event as an important opportunity to develop their cultural life and to use culture as a catalyst in their local development. The project budgets were well prepared. The panel considered the involvement of the socio economic world of the cities and in particular the large private sponsors in the projects as extremely positive elements.

The panel found both bids interesting, noting that the two cities had chosen very different approaches.

Plzeň achieved an excellent balance between the cultural projects planned for the year 2015 and the regeneration of the city. Ostrava's project was more centred on long-term urban and architectural ambitions to transform the city and in particular to turn former industrial infrastructures into cultural venues. The panel praised Ostrava's civil society involvement in creating the bid and enthusiasm in undertaking the challenge of cultural regeneration of the city.

The panel concentrated its assessment on the objectives and criteria of the “European Capital of Culture” title, as mentioned in the Decision. It strongly considered to what extent the projects are feasible and realistic in the given time horizon of four years (by the beginning of 2015). It was recalled that it is not only about what the title of the European Capital of Culture means for each city, but also what the contribution of the particular city will be for Europe.

In this context, the project of Plzeň was judged to respond best to the objectives and criteria of the event (the "European dimension" and "city and citizens"). The Panel appreciated the relevance and creativity of the presentation, the capacity of the delegation to provide the panel with clear and focused responses to the questions, as well as its vision for its cultural strategy and its understanding of the European dimension inherent to the project.

Other positive points noted by the Selection Panel were:

- strong political commitment on part of the mayor of the city and all local authorities involved regardless of political allegiance;
- solid governance involving people with clear leadership, experience in the cultural sector and/or relevant skills;
- a high quality, well-balanced programme with a good understanding of the concept and requirements for a European Capital of Culture;
- the already established European links and contacts;
- a clear and realistic budget;
- the openness of the project strategy.

After an intense debate, during which each panel member could freely express his/her opinion, each panel member voted and Plzeň received the majority of votes. The members of the panel unanimously agreed to endorse the final decision.

Consequently, the panel recommends that Plzeň should be designated as European Capital of Culture for the 2015 title.

The panel would like to underline that Ostrava can benefit from the work undertaken during the competition to boost its development through culture. Indeed, the panel appreciated the ambition of the urban and architectural projects presented during the visit and the presentation. It also felt that the city had the capacity to mobilize the funds and political support. It encourages the city to go forward with its ambitions, since the core of the project can be implemented without the "European Capital of Culture" title.

The outcome of the vote was announced by the Chairman Sir Robert Scott at the press conference held immediately after the closed session of the Selection Panel. On behalf of all members of the Selection panel the Chairman congratulated the winner of the competition and emphasised the difficulty of taking a decision due to the high quality of both projects.

Recommendations of the Selection Panel:

In accordance with article 8 paragraph 4 of the Decision, the panel makes the following recommendations to Plzeň regarding progress to be made and the work to be carried out in advance of 2015:

- The Selection Panel congratulates Plzeň for winning the competition and reminds it of the commitments the city made and which should be delivered (for example the new theatre complex);
- The Selection Panel underlines the great importance of the Světovar and Techmania projects;
- The Selection Panel believes that the private sector contribution to the project is rather low in light of the number of companies operating in Plzeň and that they should be more ambitious in this regard;
- The Selection Panel reminds the City of its promise, that if in the course of the preparation for 2015 the general economic situation improves, the programme will grow;
- The Selection Panel highlights the fact that the City committed itself to investing in the training of more and better qualified cultural managers;
- The Selection Panel recommends an increase in the marketing and communication budget to ensure a genuinely European impact of the project. The Selection Panel is not convinced that the existing budget will be sufficient;
- The Selection Panel expects the planned exchanges with the city of Mons and joint projects to materialise;
- The Selection Panel reminds the city that they have an ambitious and costly programme and hopes that it will be realised in the planned scope and developed in the future;
- The Selection Panel stresses the importance of maintaining the good balance between the Board and the City (Council and Councillors), its long term strategy and cultural policy on one hand, and the project management and its artistic vision on the other;
- The Selection Panel will check that this balance will not be challenged by any possible change in political configurations in the forthcoming years and that the project will be completed within the currently proposed scope;
- The Selection Panel hopes that Plzeň will co-operate with Ostrava in joint projects in the future;
- The Selection Panel stresses the importance of displaying the official logo of the European Capital of Culture title on communication material regarding the event;
- The Selection Panel further emphasises that the award of the Melina Mercouri Prize by the European Commission is not automatic as a result of winning the title. The city will have to deserve the prize by meeting all its commitments stated in the project while taking into account the comments of the Selection and Monitoring Panels;

Next Steps towards the designation:

- The Selection Panel will submit this Report to the Ministry of Culture and the European Commission. They will publish the Report on their relevant websites;
- The Czech Government will formally approve the proposed City of Plzeň to be awarded the title of the "European Capital of Culture" for 2015 and will notify the European Parliament, Council, Commission and the Committee of Regions of this fact

by the end of this year at the latest. This notice will include the justification of the proposal based on the Selection Panel's Report;

- The European Parliament can submit its position to the European Commission within three months after it receives the proposal, at the latest;
- The EU Council of Ministers, upon the recommendation of the European Commission made in line with the position of the European Parliament and the justification based on the Selection Panel's Reports, will formally designate the European Capital of Culture for 2015 in the Czech Republic at its meeting in May 2011.

Monitoring Phase:

In accordance with the Decision, the 2015 European Capitals of Culture, once designated by the EU Council of Ministers, will be submitted to a monitoring phase until the beginning of the event.

The monitoring panel will be comprised of the seven members designated by the European Institutions. The first monitoring meeting will take place by late 2012 and the final one by spring 2014.

On the basis of the report issued by the monitoring and advisory panel after its second meeting, a prize "in honour of Melina Mercouri" shall be awarded to the designated cities by the Commission provided that they meet the criteria of the action and have implemented the recommendations made by the selection as well as the monitoring and advisory panels. The prize shall be monetary and shall be awarded in principle three months before the start of the relevant year that means by September 2014 for the 2015 title. It will in principle be financed from the European Union's Culture Programme.

Selection Panel:

Sir Robert Scott, Chairman

Roman Bělor, Vice-chairman

Olga Poivre d'Arvor, Rapporteur

Eliška Fučíková

Manfred Gaulhofer

Danuta Glondys

Constantin Chiriac

Jaroslav Kořán

Michal Lukeš

Pavla Petrová

Andreas Wiesand

Annexes: 2

The list of present representatives of Ostrava and Plzeň at the final presentation:

Ostrava

Petr Kajnař – Mayor of Ostrava

Lubomír Pospíšil - Deputy Mayor of Ostrava

Čestmír Kopecký - Project Director

Dita Eibenová - Project Developer

Ondřej Slach - expert in the field of urban marketing

Kateřina Janků, Ph.D. - sociologist, expert in multicultural issues

Nick C. Allen - Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers, consultancy on budget of the project

Karel Kolář - Senior Manager, PricewaterhouseCoopers, consultancy on budget of the project

Adam Gebrian – architect

Pavel Telička - consultant for European affairs

Plzeň

Pavel Rödl - Mayor of Plzeň

Marcela Krejsová - First Deputy Mayor of Plzeň

Milan Svoboda - Director of the Project Plzeň 2015

Yvona Kreuzmannová - Art Director of the Project Plzeň 2015

Anna Podlesná - team member of the Project Plzeň 2015

Roman Černík - team member of the Project Plzeň 2015

Vilém Dubnička - team member of the Project Plzeň 2015

Jiří Boudník - team member of the Project Plzeň 2015

Thu Thao Dugong - team member of the Project Plzeň 2015

Denisa Haubertová - team member of the Project Plzeň 2015