

REPORT
ON THE SECOND MONITORING AND
ADVISORY MEETING
FOR THE EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF
CULTURE 2015

Issued by
The Monitoring and Advisory Panel for the European
Capital of Culture

April 2014

This is the report of the monitoring and advisory Panel following the second monitoring and advisory meeting concerning the 2015 European Capitals of Culture, Mons (Belgium) and Plzeň (Czech Republic), which took place in Brussels on 9 April 2014.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Designation of Mons and Plzeň as 2015 European Capitals of Culture

The European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) initiative is a major European Union action aimed at highlighting the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as promoting greater mutual knowledge and understanding among Europe's citizens. It is governed by Decision 1622/2006/EC¹ (hereafter, "the Decision").

In accordance with the Decision, Belgium and the Czech Republic are the two Member States entitled to host a European Capital of Culture in 2015.

Belgium and the Czech Republic were responsible for the management of their respective competitions. The final selection meetings in Brussels and Prague took place respectively in February and September 2010 and the Selection Panels recommended Mons and Plzeň for the 2015 title.

The final selection reports are available at the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/capitals/future-capitals_en.htm

Consequently, Belgium and the Czech Republic nominated Mons and Plzeň and notified the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions respectively in spring and autumn 2010.

Acting on a recommendation from the Commission, the EU Council of Ministers then officially designated Mons and Plzeň as the 2015 European Capitals of Culture respectively on 18 November 2010 and on 19 May 2011.

1.2. Monitoring process and Melina Mercouri prize

In accordance with the Decision, cities designated as European Capitals of Culture are submitted to a monitoring process between the moment of their designation and the beginning of the title-year.

The monitoring is carried out under the responsibility of a monitoring and advisory Panel (hereafter, "the Panel"), consisting of seven members designated by the European Institutions. This Panel is convened on two occasions to give advice on, and to take stock of the preparations for the event with a view to helping the cities develop a high quality programme with a strong European dimension. The panel may also seek ad hoc reports and visit the cities during this phase.

For the 2015 title, the first monitoring meeting took place on 14 November 2012 and the second, on 9 April 2014.

¹ OJ L 304 of 3.11.2006, p. 1.

According to Article 11 of the Decision, on the basis of the report issued by the 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 amount to €1.5 million for each city. In principle, it shall be awarded in full no latest than three months before the start of the relevant year. It is financed under the European Union's Creative Europe Programme. The requirements for the award of the prize are in section 5 below.

1.3. Remarks made by the Panel about the European Capitals of Culture 2015 during the first monitoring meeting

This section summarizes remarks made by the Panel during the first monitoring meeting held on 14 November 2012.

1.3.1. Mons

The Panel was generally impressed by the efficient work of the team and its achievements since the selection. It appreciated the close relationship between the Foundation Mons 2015 and the city.

Regarding the artistic programme, the Panel had some concerns about the involvement of local artists. The Panel also recalled that the motto of the winning bid was "where culture meets technology", which should remain at the heart of the artistic programme.

An update during the next monitoring on how exactly the city was embedding the event as part of a long-term strategy was requested. Though the financial contributions from the local and national authorities were secured, the Panel raised concerns about the absence of funding after 2015 as it considered the experience and skills of the Foundation as essential to address legacy issues.

The Panel reiterated the recommendation made at the selection stage concerning the European dimension and encouraged the Foundation to go beyond importing other European arts and networking, and highlighted that communicating the European dimension should be an inherent part of Mons 2015 communication and a way to further kindle the interest of and attract citizens from all over Europe and beyond. The Panel expected to see the development of European issues and challenges in the next iteration of the programme.

1.3.2. Plzeň

The Panel noted that a very great deal still remained to be done.

The Panel was concerned that the project was lacking sufficient senior management involvement in both overall management aspects and implementation of the artistic programme. Beyond leadership and staffing issues, the Panel recalled the importance for the Foundation to work as a team.

The Panel was concerned that only a part of the previous recommendations had been followed and urged Plzeň2015 to revisit all the issues previously discussed.

The Panel felt that communication and engagement with the outside world (e.g. public authorities, local artists and civil society including schools) needed strengthening in order to explain the aims and the programme of the title-year as well as to gain local support.

The Panel strongly recommended Plzeň2015 to quickly come up with a first draft of the artistic programme, including flagship projects, and to see the intended legacy of Plzeň 2015 reflected in this programme.

The Panel was concerned about the relatively low budget at around €18.5 million. In particular, the Panel highlighted that the funding by the Region was low despite the Region's involvement in the bid. It noted with regret that the national government would not increase its contribution. The Panel stressed that better relationships with the Region would help Plzeň2015 getting additional funding from the EU Structural Funds. The Panel also strongly recommended Plzeň 2015 to liaise with other European Capitals of Culture that had been successful in raising structural fund money in order to exchange experience and to learn from best practice.

The Panel urged Plzeň 2015 to work further for the development of a strong sponsorship strategy and to talk to other European Capitals of Culture about their strategies.

The cooperation with Mons was still lacking sufficient implementation.

The Panel reminded that the award of the Melina Mercouri prize was conditioned by the city meeting its commitments with the two criteria for the ECOC action ("the European Dimension" and "City and Citizens").

2. SECOND MEETING OF THE MONITORING AND ADVISORY PANEL IN BRUSSELS (9 APRIL 2014)

2.1. The Panel

The Panel members for the meeting were:

- Ms Suzana Žilič Fišer and Mr Ulrich Fuchs, appointed by the Commission for the 2014-2016 period;
- Mr Jordi Pardo and Mr Steve Green, appointed by the European Parliament for the 2012-2014 period;
- Ms Anu Kivilo and Mr Norbert Riedl, appointed by the Council for the 2013-2015 period;
- Ms Elisabeth Vitouch, appointed by the Committee of the Regions for the 2013-2015 period.

The Panel was chaired by Mr Steve Green.

2.2. Organisation of the meeting

Mons 2015 and Plzeň 2015 submitted progress reports in advance of the meeting. They included responses to a questionnaire from the Commission asking, inter alia, for a follow up of the issues raised by the monitoring and advisory Panel during the first monitoring meeting.

Each city in turn gave a presentation to the Panel and answered questions. The Panel then, in a closed session, discussed the progress and agreed on this report.

The delegations of the 2015 European Capitals of Culture were:

Mons 2015:

- Mr Nicolas Martin, Mayor
- Mr Yves Vasseur, General Commissioner (excused)
- Mr Gilles Mahieu, Administrator supervisor
- Mr Pascal Keiser, Artistic Advisor
- Ms Anne-Sophie Charle, General Secretary
- Mr Emmanuel Vinchon, Project Manager
- Ms Marie Noble, Deputy Artistic Commissioner
- Mr Gilles Mahieu, Administrator
- Mr David Picard, Technical Advisor

Mr Patrick Denis, Chief Inspector in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, attended the hearing of Mons 2015 as an observer, in accordance with Article 10.2 of the Decision.

Plzeň 2015:

- Mr Martin Baxa, Mayor
- Mr Martin Zrzavecký, Deputy Mayor
- Ms Běla Zelenková, Head of the Mayor's office
- Mr Jiří Suchánek, General Director Pilsen 2015
- Mr Jiří Sulženko, Programme Director Pilsen 2015
- Arnošt Marks, Secretary of Project Council Pilsen 2015 (excused)
- Ms Adéla Foldynová, International Projects Manager

Ms. Petra Smolíková, Chief Director Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, attended the hearing of Plzeň 2015 as an observer, in accordance with Article 10.2 of the Decision

The following were present from the European Commission, as observers: Karel Barták, Sylvain Pasqua, Vincent Lagarre, Valérie Moermans and Constanze Aka (Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Creative Europe – Culture Unit).

3. SUMMARY OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE 2015 ECOCS AND QUESTION/ANSWER SESSIONS

3.1. Mons 2015

The Mayor of Mons said that he was very pleased to meet the Panel and to provide them with an update on the recent developments of the Mons 2015 project.

The delegation explained its intention to focus its presentation of Mons 2015's very large artistic programme on two very important dimensions mentioned by the Panel during the first monitoring meeting: the participatory dimension and the digital dimension.

Regarding the participatory aspects, the delegation underlined how constantly and extensively Mons 2015 had been working with a high number of partners, including schools and universities, local amateur and professional artists, associations and non-profit organisations, representing all different sections of the city population, with a strong focus on youth and vulnerable people.

The "Grand Huit" project (eight weeks of festivities by and for local inhabitants in eight geographic urban and rural sectors of the Greater Mons area), as well as the "Grand Ouest" project (further linking the city centre with 12 municipalities in the suburbs) are

exemplars of this approach. These two participative projects rely on the active participation of the inhabitants and artists of the city and its surrounding region—including the many migrants living in the area. They aim to get Mons 2015 closer to the local population and to bring out everyone's hidden or unknown talents, paving the way for an intangible behavioural change legacy of local people's empowerment.

Regarding the digital dimension, the delegation highlighted that digital technology had been the basis for the socio-economic redevelopment of the whole region for quite a few years. Many multi-national digital companies were now major employers in the Mons region. Mons 2015 – with its very challenging ambition to connect culture and technology – was to be seen as a key element in this wider and longer-term strategy. Mons 2015 was contributing to the city and region's unique and specific effort to offer their inhabitants a programme of continuous education in digital technology. These efforts have already resulted in a renaissance of the city in digital, creative and economic terms. Education workshops with young people and job-seekers from the region are led by the artistic and technical teams. This initiative was said to be a first in the history of the European Capitals of Culture.

Two specific projects connected with the digital dimension of Mons 2015 were presented to the Panel.

"Metro IT Europa" is a major exhibition of contemporary art articulated around four virtual metro lines, which will explore the challenges of the relationships between art and technology. Based on the architecture of the "digital city" project in Mons, each station of the lines will be a wi-fi hotspot, where visitors will have access to both real and virtual works of art on their smartphones or tablets. This project is in collaboration with some major European digital art institutions.

Another example was "Café Europa", a network of digitally connected modular and moveable places across Europe revisiting the collective identity of this iconic place. It will propose a concept of cultural, creative, educational and social innovation centres enabling new long-term links between Mons and other European cities based on cultural and artistic projects. The objective was to create a convivial environment using new technologies where it would for example be possible for citizens from different partner cities to discuss together European issues.

The delegation illustrated the exchange programme with Plzeň 2015, highlighting in particular the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the two Mayors, which will pave the way for cooperation between the two cities. At least five projects are in final discussion.

The delegation then presented the opening week-end of the year, 24-25 January 2015. Conceived as a very festive and grand opening, it will showcase Mons' most beautiful and attractive features and offer a wide range of events – from immersive installations to fireworks display, glittering parades and a huge concert all night long – taking place in 23 different places around the city.

The presentation and subsequent question-and-answer session were also the opportunity for the delegation to further put to the fore the European dimension of Mons 2015, be it through the many European and international partnerships developed, through projects such as "Home and Away" (eight weeks presenting the culture of eight European and international cities and overseen by a commissioner from the city in question) or the

year's blockbusters (Verlaine and Van Gogh exhibitions), through the joint curating of exhibitions or through the many exhibition loans from European museums or galleries.

The budget was now secured with 80 % of all contracts already signed. The delegation highlighted that approximately 20 % of the total budget would now come from private sponsorship, which is more than initially foreseen.

3.2. Plzeň 2015

The Mayor of Plzeň introduced the members of the delegation – which included his Deputy Mayor. He confirmed that the ECOC has and would continue to have, the full support of the city administration and all the political parties represented in the City Council. This cross-party support will continue during and beyond the municipal elections in autumn 2014. He highlighted the increased financial support from the Czech Ministry of Culture and announced that the new theatre – which would host several ECOC-related performances in 2015 – would be ready in time to host the years' opening on 17 January 2015. Techmania opened in March 2014 and will co-operate on certain projects; Světovar is on budget and schedule. This means all three major cultural venues promised in the bidbook will be operational in 2015.

The delegation said that the reorganization of the governance and management structures was now complete and that the Plzeň 2015 Foundation was now functioning efficiently and effectively. Team managers were contracted and the team spirit was high. Now that the ECOC was entering the operational phase the team would be restructured to ensure the smooth implementation of the programme.

The delegation explained that the programme had been re-evaluated in the light of the bid-book and would still cover its four main programme streams, namely "Art and Technologies", "Relationships and Emotions", "Transit and Minorities" and "Stories and Sources". The promotion of the "Book 1 programme" in Prague in December 2013 had been successful in gaining national support and awareness.

The programme would feature eight flagship projects, including "Trnka/Pixar" (which consists of two main exhibitions showcasing the art and craft of puppetry and film animation from the early beginnings to the most up-to-date forms) and the "New Circus Season" (a year-long festival bringing top-quality European new circus shows).

The delegation said that almost half of the contracts connected with the programming were already signed or about to be signed, with the target to sign 90 percent by the end of June. Additional legal support had been contracted and the team were well aware of the critical nature of this part of the preparation.

The delegation stated that the slogan "*Opening up*" was essential, as the year was meant to open up the mind-set of city inhabitants to other cultural realities and communities. The programme has a high behavioural change objective.

"Hidden City" was presented as one of the key projects of Plzeň 2015 which has particular relevance in this respect. As part of the project, local citizens would showcase Plzeň from their subjective perspectives in a digital guide. The guide would be produced with the wide involvement of the public during various workshops and would be displayed on a web-site and a mobile application. "Hidden City" was intended both as a platform for participation and a tool for hospitality and innovative tourism.

There would be various artistic intervention projects spread over the city's public spaces

The delegation pointed out that 120 volunteers were already involved. The Everfund platform for crowd-funding – offering sustainable support for local initiatives and sponsorship for culture and creative industries – had been launched. The delegation stressed that this platform not only involved citizens, but was consistent with civic/cultural engagement all over Europe.

The delegation emphasized that a large number of projects were based on interactions at European level and were realized in cooperation with various European and international cultural partners, networks or cultural institutes. As an example of this European presence, a national TV broadcasting studio would be installed in the city's main square throughout the whole year, broadcasting discussions on European issues and concerts through the European Broadcasting Union. The programme has a high number of European artists, theatre and circus performances. In addition, the delegation explained that the artist-in-residence programme created a strong link between the European dimension and the involvement of the citizens as it was based on an active interplay between invited artists and citizens.

The delegation highlighted that the cooperation with Mons was developing well and has resulted in five large joint projects: Home and Away, Café Europa, the exchange of contemporary music ensembles, high school exchanges and a co-production involving Théâtre le Manège in Mons and Světovar in Plzeň.

The delegation said the legacy would be achieved on three levels: built infrastructures, programmes and people. The delegation emphasized the special importance of the Světovar community centre which would continue to exist beyond 2015 and would focus on setting up projects for creative businesses. The industrial area around Světovar would be utilised again as a living part of the city. The intention was to apply for EU funding and to run the centre as a public/private partnership.

The delegation reported that despite having one of the smallest budgets in the history of ECOCs the year would be carried out effectively, as the final operating expenditures of approximately €21 million was now confirmed by all public authorities. Additionally, negotiations with potential high scale sponsors were still ongoing and could potentially lead to an increase in the overall budget. The co-branding strategy with Pilsner Urquell had been successfully developed and awaits final signature. Finally, various multiannual projects were enrolled in applications for funding at EU, Visegrad and international levels. Several were important for the legacy of Plzeň 2015.

The delegation said that a marketing campaign would be launched in September 2014. It would target the national and international audience, with a special focus on a region 300kms in diameter covering Germany and Austria. It reported that the local media was gradually reporting more positively on Plzeň 2015.

4. THE PANEL'S ASSESSMENT

4.1. Mons 2015

The Panel thanked Mons 2015 for the presentation, and congratulates them for the overall level of preparation of the project and several noteworthy achievements already.

The Panel appreciates the stability, since the bidding stage, of the governance and management structures. It notes the recent strengthening of the senior management team.

It commends the teamwork both within the Mons 2015 Foundation and between the Foundation and the city administration.

The Panel appreciates the long-term reliability of the financial commitments. The way Mons 2015 has integrated business stakeholders (in the Mons2015 business club) into the project is extremely positive. The private sector sponsorship figures are impressive.

The Panel finds the tourist target ambitious. Based on previous ECOCs the Panel suggests a prudent approach when calculating tourists to avoid over-expectations. The Panel recommends that the management team review their projections with the appropriate tourist agencies.

The Panel suggests that Mons 2015 publish a short summary booklet or leaflet (as well as online) to help potential visitors easily find their way through the rich and varied programme.

The Panel recommends that Mons 2015 keep the doors open for smaller “last-minute” projects.

The Panel was impressed with the "Café Europa" project and felt it had potential to be a successful public/private enterprise. The Panel recommends that the Mons 2015 team commission a business case exploring its future possibilities.

The Panel appreciated the emphasis on "where culture meets technology", a theme consistent from the bidbook onwards. The co-operation with Europeanea is a contemporary way of interpreting the European Dimension.

The Panel points out that an ECOC may be the opportunity not only to highlight the bright parts of one's history, but also to tackle some more controversial aspects of it. The Panel noted the concurrent programme organised by Mons on the city in the Great War.

In order to measure the evolution of public opinion – and more particularly the way the title-year is instrumental in opening up people's appreciation of the European Dimension – and to build on it, the Panel suggests carrying out opinion polls at least once in 2014 (to create a baseline for comparison) and twice in 2015 and 2016.

The Panel stresses the need to ensure a legacy based on the momentum created by the 2015 European Capital of Culture. The legacy needs to go beyond an increased number of tourists, an improved image or new infrastructures. The Panel notes the increased number of museums and galleries, the way the ECOC has acted as a catalyst for cooperation in the region and with the business sector. These are positive developments for city development. At its heart however the ECOC is a cultural project and in particular it should provide a springboard for artists and creatives in the city. The Panel recommends the management team, and city authorities, revisit this aspect of the legacy.

The Panel recommends that the city should plan sufficient resources for covering the recurrent running costs of the new cultural infrastructures and services as after the ECOC year

The ECOC team is reminded that the ECOC title is a European Union programme and the EU should have a high visibility throughout the year on publications, online and at events. The EU is not merely one of many sponsoring organisations but the owner of the brand name.

In conclusion, the Panel is quite confident that Mons 2015 has the potential to be a successful ECOC in a relatively small-sized city.

4.2. Plzeň 2015

The Panel recalls that the journey since selection has been difficult for Plzeň. It has included three visits to Plzen by representatives of the Panel. The Panel now congratulates the team for the significant progress made in the last twelve months. The Panel expresses its confidence that the team and city authorities will continue on this promising track as there is still much to be done; a point recognised in the delegations' presentation. It appreciates the attention paid to "opening up" philosophy which was a strong feature of the bidbook.

The Panel acknowledges the successful teambuilding process and appreciates the now established efficacy in the governance and the management structures of the Foundation. There is now a good working relationship with the relevant local and national public authorities.

The Panel also commends the all-embracing support of the city authorities and their assurance to safeguard a successful implementation of the ECOC during and beyond the elections in autumn 2014.

The Panel appreciates the strong support from the Minister of Culture and the possibility that the Ministry may increase in its financial support.

The Panel recognizes the variety and diversity of projects included in the programme. It has a concern that there may be too many, given the number being managed in-house. It wonders if this may weaken the quality of projects.

The proportion of in-house managed projects to those delivered by partners is relatively high by previous ECOC standards. This may reflect the shortage of cultural management in the city. The Panel recommends the team review the project list before final contract signatures giving more responsibility to partners if possible at this late stage or reducing the total number.

The Panel noted the forthcoming change in the teams' organisational structure as it moved from planning to implementation; time for a close management oversight of the management budget.

The Panel reminds that the ECOC year may be the opportunity not only to highlight the bright parts of one's history, but also to tackle some more controversial aspects of it.

The Panel notes and supports the ongoing negotiations with private sector sponsors. As more projects are contracted the team will have a stronger "offer" to make to prospective private sector partners.

The Panel congratulates the delegation on the marketing and communication campaign to be launched in September 2014. It suggests combining the prominence and strength of the ECOC brand with the concrete programme. It is also of the opinion that to be a popular success Plzeň 2015 needs intensifying its local, national and international marketing efforts.

The Panel suggests being very realistic and prudent when forecasting tourist targets to avoid over-expectations. Reaching the target needs to be a shared responsibility with the city tourism office working with the national tourist organisation.

In order to measure the evolution of public opinion and understanding – and more particularly the way the ECOC is instrumental in opening up people's appreciation of the European Dimension – and to build on it, the Panel suggests carrying out opinion polls at least once in 2014 (to create a baseline for comparison) and twice in 2015 and 2016.

The Panel emphasizes the importance for the ECOC to leave a legacy beyond 2015. To ensure such a legacy, it reminds the delegation of the importance to plan the final stages of the year well in advance and to foresee tangible plans for all follow-up actions, including in terms of budget allocation, in 2016 and beyond.

Světovar has the potential to be a major legacy for the cultural and creative industries in the city. Whilst the building works are on schedule the need for an experienced and innovative manager of a multi-funded, multi-purpose centre is critical. It will be a difficult post to fill but needs to be filled soon to enable the manager to develop a programme and secure sustainable financing.

The city authorities and management team are reminded that one of the original points made in the application and noted by previous Panels has been the need to train more people in cultural management. In particular the Panel noted the need to ensure a legacy for the management of participatory projects (not just the specific projects themselves). This is a key legacy issue.

The ECOC team is reminded that the ECOC title is a European Union programme and the EU should have a high visibility throughout the year on publications, online and at events. The EU is not merely one of a number of sponsoring organisations but the owner of the brand name.

The Panel is confident that Plzeň 2015 now has the potential to be a successful European Capital of Culture.

5. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARDING THE MELINA MERCOURI PRIZE

The Decision states that on the basis of a report issued by the Panel after its second monitoring meeting, a prize in honour of Melina Mercouri shall be awarded to the designated cities by the Commission, provided that they meet the criteria laid down in article 4 of the Decision (see below), have fulfilled their commitments and have implemented the recommendations made by the selection as well as the monitoring and advisory Panels. The prize consists of a payment of €1.5 million and shall be awarded in principle three months before the start of the relevant year. It is financed from the EU's Creative Europe Programme.

Article 4 of the Decision specifies the criteria that the cultural programme shall fulfil. They are subdivided into two categories, "the European Dimension" and "City and Citizens".

As regards "the European Dimension", the programme shall:

- a) foster cooperation between cultural operators, artists and cities from the relevant Member States and other Member States in any cultural sector;
- b) highlight the richness of cultural diversity in Europe;

- c) bring the common aspects of European cultures to the fore.

As regards "City and Citizens", the programme shall:

- a) foster the participation of the citizens living in the city and its surroundings and raise their interest as well as the interest of citizens from abroad;
- b) be sustainable and be an integral part of the long-term cultural and social development of the city.

6. THE PANEL'S RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE MELINA MERCOURI PRIZE

The Panel, in the light of the criteria specified by article 4 of the Decision and on the basis of the information contained in the progress reports it received from Mons and Plzeň, on interim reports and visits and of the exchange of views with the delegations during the meeting held on 9 April 2014, **recommends that:**

the European Commission award the Melina Mercouri prize to Mons 2015 and Plzeň 2015.

If the Commission – on the basis of the Panel's recommendation – decides to award the prize to both 2015 European Capitals of Culture, the Panel encourages the two cities to allocate this amount of money to legacy activities. It recommends that both 2015 European Capitals of Culture organise a high profile event when the Melina Mercouri prize is awarded .

To further improve the quality and the success of their respective European Capital of Culture projects, the Panel invites Mons and Plzeň to make use of the assessments and recommendations contained in section 4 of this report.

In conclusion the Panel thanks the two delegations for their reports and discussions since their formal designations in 2010 and 2011. It wishes both cities a successful ECOC year and a lasting legacy.

Steve Green (chair)	signed
Jordi Pardo	signed
Suzana Žilič Fišer	signed
Ulrich Fuchs	signed
Anu Kivilo	signed
Norbert Riedl	signed
Elizabeth Vitouch	signed