



**EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE**

Aarhus

European Capital of Culture 2017

First Monitoring Meeting

Report by the Monitoring and Advisory Panel

Brussels

November 2014

Introduction

This report follows the meeting¹ in Brussels on 19 November 2014 between Aarhus, one of the two European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) in 2017, and the monitoring and advisory panel (the “panel”). Aarhus was selected in August 2012²; its bidbook is available on the Aarhus2017 website³. There was an informal meeting between Aarhus and the panel in October 2013.

The report is addressed to the Aarhus 2017 Foundation (the “Foundation”) and will be published on the European Commission’s website⁴.

Attendance

The panel members:

Steve Green (chair) and Jordi Pardo, appointed by the European Parliament 2012-14

Anu Kivilo and Norbert Riedl, appointed by the Council of the EU 2013-15

Dr Ulrich Fuchs and Dr Suzana Žilič Fišer, appointed by the European Commission 2014-2016

Dr Elisabeth Vitouch, nominated by the Committee of the Regions 2013-2015

For Aarhus 2017:

Rebecca Matthews Managing Director

Ole Wolf Programme Administration and Operations

Carsten Holst Creative Director

Lene Øster Regional Manager

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (DG EAC) and the Danish Representation in Brussels.

Report from Aarhus2017

The Foundation submitted a detailed and comprehensive written report in advance of the meeting. The report outlined the activities of the Foundation since October 2013.

¹ European Capitals of Culture are governed by Decision 1622/2006 of the European Parliament and the Council. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32006D1622>

² http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/documents/ecoc/2017/panel-report-denmark_en.pdf

³ <http://www.aarhus2017.dk/en/ansoegningen-om-titlen-som-europaeisk-kulturhovedstad>

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm

At the meeting they gave a presentation which included these points:

- The Foundation has slightly changed the original concept of “Re-think” into “Let’s Rethink”. The concept remains to “change the mind-set”. The ECOC retains the ambitions of the bidbook to address citizen’s concerns over, for example, rural isolation, health and education and to reflect on their challenges and lives.
- The programme for 2017 is illustrated by a wheel: by seasons, by flagship events each month (“full moon” as in the bid book) and by a range of supporting events and projects. There will be an “OFF 2017” programme to facilitate more edgy and adventurous projects. The Foundation gave examples of events planned for 2017.
- The call for projects in 2014 resulted in 44 projects in development and 24 micro-projects (funded by less than €1,300 each).
- The aim remains to change the mind-set of cultural institutions, not just focussing on audience development and funding but assisting in finding co-partners. The planning timetable sets out that in 2014 20% of the 2017 programme will be in development; in 2015 50% and in 2016 80%. This will leave scope for last minute good projects.
- The review of the bidbook revealed some missing art forms (e.g. contemporary music) which are being added to the programme.
- The Foundation team has visited several past and future ECOCs and major festivals (eg Edinburgh, Holland) to share experience. It is in contact with the co-ECOC in Pafos and working on joint projects including ones based on a shared focus of villages.
- The Foundation is building partnerships with municipalities and national arts organisations, using MOUs as the formal process.
- Two senior staff have left in the year, the Communications Director and the Artistic Director. The former has been replaced and a temporary solution found for the latter. The Foundation intends to create two senior posts to lead its artistic team, a Programme Director and a Creative Advisor.
- The funding from city and regional levels is secured. Lengthy discussions with the national government resulted in less than expected, the effect of which is under review.
- The approach to the private sector is based on three tiers of offer and the Foundation will seek local business support before going national.

Discussion

During the subsequent discussion the panel sought clarification on a number of issues and offered experience and advice. Topics included:

- The panel noted the strong business management and governance of the Foundation. The local elections in 2013 had no effect on the political support for the ECOC. The Foundation was making good progress with stakeholder relations in the region both directly and through various committees. The format of a Strategic Business Plan linking down through road maps and then to operational plans from 2015 is producing a strong structure to oversee the diverse and wide scope of an ECOC.
- The ECOC's projected financing has taken a blow with the less than expected support from the national government. The panel agree with the plan to continue to seek increased national funding, as well to seek projects which could be financed from EU structural funds. The strategy for private sector funding is sound.
 - **Recommendation 1:** an interesting approach towards private sector funding has been taken by Leeuwarden who took a group of local private sector possible sponsors to an ECOC to talk to their counterparts about the benefit of association with an ECOC.
- The Foundation has reacted well to the loss of senior staff during the year without losing momentum. It has a clear staffing plan through to 2017 and 2018. The secondment system is in place and will assist in meeting legacy objectives. The volunteer system is also in place and with the bonus of support from Tuborg.
 - **Recommendation 2:** the incoming Creative Advisor and Programme Director should take a key management role in the marketing function (which can have the tendency to be dominated by the particular needs of the tourist sector).
- In contrast to the governance and management functions however the panel is concerned about the programme and its development. Aarhus was awarded the title on the basis of the strong, high quality and broad cultural programme set out in the bidbook. This assessment covered more than the high level themes and included the sample projects and sectors in the book. In effect the bidbook, and its projects, is the de facto contract for the holding of the title. Monitoring panels do not expect all the projects in the bidbook to be realised but the majority should be, albeit often adapted and developed. Throughout the development phase of an ECOC the progress of developing and starting to implement the bidbook projects should lead the work of the artistic team. They then build on this core to programme the year with new projects. Open calls for projects are usually reserved for "second level" activities requiring a high degree of small cultural operators and citizens groups (of which the call for micro-projects and the OFF programme are good examples).

- The panel was concerned that few of the projects described in the report or at the meeting refer to those in the bidbook. At the same time they found it difficult to identify the degree of “re-thinking”, of “changing the mind-set” that was being led by the Foundation. Most of the projects listed in the attachments to the report (those selected in the 2014 call) appeared to involve Danish organisations only. This is unusual in an ECOC as one its special features is a high degree of international partnerships. This links to the first of the three elements of the European Dimension criteria (co-operation between artists and cultural operators). The other two elements (common aspects of European culture and the awareness of the diversity of cultures in Europe) also require international partnerships and engagement.
- The panel sought clarification on projects involving the migrant communities in Aarhus and the poorer neighbourhoods. The selection panel was impressed on the focus being put on these sectors as a key part of “Rethinking the city” and the monitoring panel learnt that these areas are not yet in the development stage.
- The panel notes that the artistic team is being re-organised with two new lead posts, a programme director and an artistic advisor. This gives the Foundation an opportunity to rethink its approach to implementing the ECOC in closer line with the bidbook and with a stronger international element.
 - **Recommendation 3:** the Managing Director and the Board have a responsibility to ensure that the strategic objectives of the ECOC criteria and the bidbook are met. This does not interfere with the autonomy of the artistic team in selecting projects and events within this given vision. The panel suggests that the managing director, with the incoming senior artistic team, ensures that the various Boards and advisory panels are aware of the importance of the bidbook and the internationalisation of projects.
 - **Recommendation 4:** the Foundation, once it has its new artistic team in place, review the bidbook projects (in all of its sections) and revitalise them. Some may have fallen by the wayside, been implemented or be too expensive but they should form the core of the 2017 programme. This includes the digital and capacity building sections.
 - **Recommendation 5:** The panel repeats the recommendation from the selection panel on the need to enhance the European Dimension. Most projects will have an international partnership: this is a key element of marking out an ECOC from a purely national city of culture activity.
 - **Recommendation 6:** In selecting the programme manager and the artistic advisor the Foundation should ensure that the candidate understands the particular importance of the ECOC criteria, the internationalisation of projects and the concepts set out in the bidbook. This includes the importance of being

seen to change the existing cultural processes as an element of “Let’s Rethink”.

Next Steps

The panel now makes regular (one-day) visits to ECOCs during the development period to supplement the information and exchange at the formal meetings. The panel would wish to visit Aarhus in early 2015 once the new artistic management team is in place. The prime focus will be to review with the artistic team the development of the programme for 2017 and to review an interim update on the recommendations in this report.

The next and final formal meeting between the Foundation and the panel will be in March or April 2016. At this meeting the panel will review the programme planned for 2017 and the actions taken by the Foundation on the recommendations in the reports of the meetings of the selection panel and this monitoring panel. The panel will then decide whether to recommend to the European Commission that Aarhus be awarded the Melina Mercouri Prize.

The panel thanks the Foundation’s delegation for their report and the open discussion and looks forward to the meeting in Aarhus in 2015.