

**Selection
of the European Capital of Culture
for 2017
in Cyprus**

Selection Panel

Final Selection report

Nicosia, 14 September 2012

1. Introduction

Acting by virtue of Decision No 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of the 24th October 2006 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007-2019 (hereinafter referred to as 'Decision'), a competition has been established to nominate a Cypriot city to the European Capital of Culture title for the 2017 year.

In the Republic of Cyprus, the procedure of implementation of provisions laid down in the Decision was set forth in the 'Rules of Procedure of the Selection Panel' (hereinafter referred to as 'Rules') set up for selecting of 'the European Capital of Culture 2017' which constituted an appendix to the Decision of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus of 8 December 2011, as further amended.

In accordance with the above-mentioned documents, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus was responsible for the organisation of a national competition, appointment of national experts, organisation of pre-selection and final selection meetings as well as coordination of visits of the representatives of the Selection Panel to the cities.

The Selection Panel was appointed by the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus in October 2011. All panel members signed a declaration of non-conflict of interest concerning their evaluation of the proposals made by the candidate cities.

In accordance with Article 6 of the Decision, the Selection Panel unanimously elected Manfred Gaulhofer as the Chair and Alecos Orountiotis as the Vice-chair at the beginning of its first meeting at the pre-selection stage. On 31 December 2011, the mandates of Danuta Glondys and Andreas Wiesand (both members who participated in the pre-selection stage) expired, and Steve Green and Jordi Pardo were appointed to replace them.

2. Pre-selection

The following cities responded to the call for applications for the title of the European Capital of Culture 2017 announced by the Minister of Education and Culture of Cyprus, by submitting their applications by 31 October 2011:

Limassol, Nicosia, Pafos

Under Article 7 of the Decision, which deals with the pre-selection stage, the panel assessed these three applications against the criteria stated in Article 4 of the

Decision. The pre-selection was held in Nicosia on 12-13th December 2011 and the two cities short listed for the second round were:

Nicosia and Pafos

Following the pre-selection meeting, the Panel submitted a report to the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus and the European Commission containing recommendations concerning the applications made by the two short listed cities.

3. Final Selection

Both pre-selected cities submitted their application for the title of the European Capital of Culture 2017 by **20th July 2012**.

A delegation of four panel members visited the two short listed cities in preparation for the final selection meeting: Nicosia (12 September 2012) and Pafos (13 September 2012). The two short listed cities were allocated exactly the same time for the visit.

The delegation consisted of the following members of the Selection Panel: Dr. Elizabeth Vitouch, Sir Jeremy Isaacs, Professor Chris Bailey and Professor Yiannis Ioannou. The Selection Panel was accompanied by a representative of the European Commission (Ann Branch) and a representative of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus (Michalis Karakatsanis).

The final selection meeting was held in Nicosia at the Conference Hall of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus on 14 September 2012. All the Panel members participated in the meeting, except one nominated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Representatives of the European Commission and the Ministry of Education and Culture were present as observers.

Before the meeting with the candidate cities, the four delegates who participated in the visits to the cities extensively reported back to the other Panel members.

Then, both Nicosia and Pafos presented their completed bids to the Panel. Both cities were represented by local authorities at the level of the Mayor, directors of cultural institutions, non-governmental organisation members, artists, curators, advisors, experts, young people and representatives of the institutions appointed to organise the city's cultural programme for the European Capital of Culture 2017. The final selection meeting consisted of a thirty minute presentation by the bidding team of each city, followed by a sixty minute question and answer session.

On the basis of the completed applications submitted, the Panel's recommendations following the pre-selection stage, the visits, the oral presentation and the accuracy and relevance of the responses provided by the cities during the question and answer session, the Panel held an in-depth discussion in order to recommend one city for the 2017 European Capital of Culture in Cyprus. To this purpose, it considered:

- the degree of compliance of the completed applications of the short listed cities with the objectives of the ‘European Capital of Culture’ event, particularly regarding Article 4 of the Decision: the ‘European Dimension’ and the ‘City and Citizens Dimension’;
- the overall capacity of the cities to ensure the implementation of the event, notably the governance, the budget, the support of local authorities and the business sector.

Following the final deliberation (at 17.30 on 14 September 2012), a press conference was held at the Ministry of Education and Culture, to announce the result of the selection process. The Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus, George Demosthenous, introduced the press conference.

4. Evaluation by the Selection Panel

The Panel noted the dedication of both cities in the preparation of their bids and the careful work undertaken to implement the recommendations formulated by the Selection Panel in its report at the pre-selection phase. The panel appreciated the enthusiasm and energy behind both bids. It felt that each city fully realized how the event was an important opportunity to develop their cultural life and to use culture as a catalyst of change and transformation, be it a change of mentality, social change or improvements in both cultural infrastructure and in the acceptance of artistic challenges. Therefore, the Panel emphasised that effort invested by both cities would benefit each one, regardless of the final outcome of the competition.

The Panel felt that both cities were addressing three objectives through culture: urban development for long term sustainable development, a rapprochement between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities through shared cultural projects, and an inclusive approach to the “new Cypriots” now increasingly resident in Cyprus from both within the EU and from other countries. It also acknowledged the strong emphasis both bids were placing on children and young people.

The Panel also noted the effort made by both cities to stick to the objectives of the event, to incorporate the criteria laid down in Article 4 of the Decision (i.e. the “European Dimension”, and the “City and Citizens Dimension”) in their further development of the cultural programme. The Panel however underlined that further

improvements were still needed for both cities to fully meet these criteria. It considered that both bids focussed too much on national or local objectives and underplayed the European dimension as required by the criteria set out in the Decision.

The panel was also concerned that both bids might be severely affected by the current financial crisis and its likely impact on future public sector funding, and possibilities for private sponsorship. The panel noted however that both cities were fully aware of this crucial issue and took it into account to a certain extent in their respective approaches.

The panel highlighted the following characteristics of the two bids:

Nicosia

Through the slogan of their project “Get in the zone”, the motto of Nicosia’s bid was to actively reshape the future of the city inviting citizens, especially young people, to participate in a cultural and social evolution by changing the perception they have of their city. The idea behind this was to bridge the real and imagined “Buffer Zones” which exist between the different communities. The aim was to create a favourable environment through a “convergence zone” which should allow people to better understand each other.

The bid of Nicosia highlighted the challenges presented by the ‘last divided city’ in Europe and proposed an artist led and bi-communal approach to projects such as the so-called “Social innovation Camp” carried out by the Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC) or their plan to create the headquarters of the Nicosia team in the Buffer Zone.

The panel was impressed with what Nicosia has already achieved in the past as with regard to strategic planning under the difficult conditions of a divided city and the city's clear commitment to overcome internal and external buffer zones by culture and a programme that would celebrate diversity and encourage engagement with each other.

The panel welcomed the motivation and aspiration of Nicosia and the strong commitment of the Mayor. The bid outlined interesting and valuable projects aiming at connecting the different communities. However, the panel was concerned that some projects might not be feasible in practice, such as for instance the proposal to convert the old, disused “airport” into an “artport”, a cultural space of co-existence and common creative activities. It also considered more diversity in the team that presented the bid could have given the indispensable support by the Turkish Cypriot community more weight.

The time plan dividing the overall ECoC endeavour into three zones – the departure zone from 2013 through 2016, the convergence zone in 2017 and the connection zone from 2018 through 2020 – seemed quite convincing to the jury as it comprised the commitment to view Nicosia 2017 as the starting point for a long lasting further development after the cultural capital year.

The bid also assured the involvement of universities in some long-term infrastructure projects, such as Neropolis (City of Water in Larnaka), a green infrastructure project based on sustainable materials or the Research Centre For Experimental Sustainable Architecture, a platform connecting European architecture schools (including Aarhus) for testing sustainable methods of living in the future.

The programme included in the bid planned many different activities but lacked coherence and a clear artistic vision as it went into too many directions. The panel underlined however that Nicosia was a big central city already equipped with excellent arts infrastructures and resources which could be seen as a real asset.

Pafos

The Pafos bid proposed a well-conceived and highly coherent programme, built on an appropriate, simple, imaginative and easily intelligible concept – the Open Air Factory, which was well balanced between local and international creators, and between local and global themes. The concept referred to the use of open air venues as locations for performances and co-productions by artists and citizens.

The cultural programme proposed a good mix of projects articulated around three main themes which perfectly highlighted the cultural heritage and specificities of Pafos: the “Myth and Religion”, the “World Travellers”, and the “Stages of the Future”. The programme would grow from 2014 until its climax in 2017 and demonstrated potential for sustainable legacy in terms of its creative partnerships, new facilities and transformed perceptions within the region and from outside. The “Open Air Factory” concept would work well in Pafos due to its climate, along with the many good sites for performance, such as the Odeon and the Medieval Castle. The panel was also persuaded by the potential of the concept to use cultural heritage venues for all kinds of performing arts activities, either classical or contemporary art.

The bid and the visit effectively highlighted the active and encouraging participation of citizens from the broader Pafos district in different activities. Additionally, there was a well-established structure of volunteers amongst professions with the wider public which could strengthen the already well-established citizen ownership of the project,

The panel welcomed the approach used to addressing through culture the bi-communal character of the Cypriot society. The presentation and the visit illustrated the clear and active participation from the Turkish Cypriot community and the new

resident communities in Pafos. The restoration and re-use of the Ibrahim Khan and especially the bi-communal approach were singled out for positive comment.

The Pafos bid was considered as innovative in taking arts to the audiences in the rural areas. The panel welcomed the idea of bringing culture to even the most remote areas of the district through local and visiting artists with whom rural residents can enter into a dialogue and interact. This was namely illustrated by the programme “Travelling Playground” which proposed different cultural activities to encourage young Pafians to discover the myths, folk tales and traditions of their country and of Europe.

The development of non-institutional cultural sectors was perceived as dynamic and there was clear evidence from the artists in the team of the development of new bottom-up arts networks. The presentation team’s diversity indicated wide engagement and support for the project.

The connection to the tourism strategy and likely trends in the industry was obvious, whereas the urban regeneration projects (with the involvement of local architects) were practical and many already underway. The integration with the tourist trade was important both in terms of eco-tourism and increasing added value through greater cultural offer.

All in all, the Panel was convinced that the European Capital of Culture 2017 project would be accurately used by the city for actually placing culture at the core of future development.

During the final closed-door discussion, each panel member openly expressed his/her opinion. The debate focused on the criteria as laid out in Article 4 of the Decision and the quality and sustainability of the cultural programmes presented by both cities.

After an intense debate, a secret vote was held and **Pafos** received the majority of votes. The members of the Panel unanimously agreed to endorse the final decision. The Panel concluded that the bid of **Pafos** best reflected the objectives and criteria of the European Capital of Culture, and that it provided the best potential to implement successfully the event. The Panel therefore recommended that **Pafos** be designated as the European Capital of Culture for 2017.

5. Recommendations of the Selection Panel to the nominated city

In accordance with Article 8 paragraph 4 of the Decision, the panel makes the following recommendations to Pafos regarding the progress to be made and the work to be carried out in advance of 2017:

The Selection Panel underlines that Pafos has been recommended for the title due to the coherence of the whole concept, the quality of the artistic and cultural programme proposed. Accordingly, the Monitoring and Advisory Panel will seek to ensure that

the scope, the content and the quality of the programme be maintained and further developed, as proposed in the application. The connection between the great heritage areas (mosaics, tombs, medieval castle), the sea area, and the Cypriot inhabitants should be made so that visitors come into contact with all three aspects of the city.

The Monitoring and Advisory Panel will also closely monitor the delivery of all commitments made by the city at the application stage.

The Selection Panel recommends the representatives of Pafos to make sure that artistic excellence is respected as the core objective of programme development throughout all phases of the proposed programme development process.

The Selection Panel highlights that the European Dimension still needs improvement. In order to strengthen the European dimension, the city's development in a broader European context should be considered by developing European co-operation and connections based on European themes. The Panel expects Pafos to increase this aspect of their ECOC programme and to present clear progress on this at the first occasion it meets the monitoring panel.

The Panel suggested that the Pafos team should establish a temporary group of experts to select some key European topics to be addressed by the programme. This expert group has to work quickly. The European dimension should include a key-message which could be communicated during the public campaign of ECoC 2017.

Thus, the communication campaign should focus not only on promoting Pafos as an interesting destination but also as a challenging location with a European vision. Since Pafos aims at “bridging the continents” and using its geographic proximity to the Middle East and North Africa, the issue of migration, integration and inter-cultural dialogue might be an interesting European theme to develop. Europe is comprised of different cultures and inter-cultural dialogue based on mutual recognition is increasingly fundamental, both between Europeans, as well as with migrants.

The Panel further recommends Pafos to quickly extend and intensify its link with Aarhus, the Danish city recommended to share the ECOC title in 2017, in order to develop future cooperation and come forward with joint project proposals at the first meeting of the Monitoring and Advisory Panel.

The Selection Panel recommends Pafos to increase the managerial capacity of the city to handle the ECOC. The Panel suggests a review of plans to improve capacity including stability in the key positions.

The selection panel recalls the importance of constant and stable support by all political forces throughout the preparation of the project. The selection panel therefore recommends the City to think of how best to associate the City Council whilst fully maintaining the artistic independence of the Pafos team.

The Selection Panel stresses the need after designation to revisit evaluation plans to include concrete objectives and milestones between now and the ECOC year. This should also be extended into the legacy period. These specific milestones will enable the management team, and the Monitoring Panel, to better measure progress.

The Panel further emphasizes that Pafos should ensure fall back options in the event of financial shortfalls and for it to make sure it has a risk management strategy in place to ensure that the core of the programme can be safeguarded. The Monitoring and Advisory Panel should be regularly updated on the development of the extended financing and the fall back planning.

The Pafos delegation should ensure that the high level of artistic directorship of their programme be sustained until 2017. The selection panel recommends therefore that the city keeps the artistic team and the director on board.

The Selection Panel would welcome efforts by Pafos to seek partnerships and develop joint projects with other Cypriot cities, including the other cities that bid for the title.

The Panel stressed the requirement of displaying the official logo of the European Capital of Culture title on any communication material (online, print, other media) regarding the event. This requirement helps to indicate the European rather than just the Cypriot nature of the ECOC label.

6. Next Steps towards the designation:

- The present report, submitted to the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus, is to be published on its website and the Commission’s website;
- The Government of the Republic of Cyprus will formally nominate one city for the “European Capital of Culture” title for 2017 in Cyprus on the basis of this report and will notify the European Parliament, Council, Commission and the Committee of Regions by the end of the year at the latest. The European Parliament may forward an opinion to the European Commission within three months after it receives the nomination;
- The EU Council of Ministers, upon a recommendation of the European Commission drawn up in the light of the opinion of the European Parliament and the justification based on the Selection Panel’s Report, will formally designate the European Capital of Culture for 2017 in Cyprus, probably at its meeting in May 2013.

Monitoring Phase

In accordance with the Decision, the 2017 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 and Advisory Panel will be comprised of seven members designated by the European Institutions. The first monitoring meeting will take place before end 2014 and the final one in spring 2016.

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 and Monitoring and Advisory Panels. The prize is not automatic. It shall be monetary and shall be awarded in principle – if all necessary conditions are met - three months before the start of the relevant year that means by September 2016 for the 2017 title.

Nicosia, 14 September 2012

The Selection Panel:

Manfred Gaulhofer, Chair
Alec Orountiotis, Vice-Chair
Chris Bailey
Constantin Chiriac
Steve Green
Erna Hennicot-Schoepges
Yiannis Ioannou
Sir Jeremy Isaacs
Demetris Michaelides (Excused)
Marios Papadopoulos
Jordi Pardo Rodriguez
Elisabeth Vitouch
Tasos Zembylas