

**Designation of the
European Capital of Culture 2017**

Selection Panel

PRE-SELECTION REPORT

**NICOSIA
December 2011**

1. Introduction

In accordance with the Decision 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) event for the years 2007 to 2019 (hereinafter referred to as “the Decision”), a competition has been established to nominate a Cypriot city to the European Capital of Culture title for the 2017 year.

The managing authority of the ECoC competition in Cyprus is the Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture. The procedure for implementing this Decision in Cyprus was set out in the document “Rules of Procedure - Competition for the 2017 European Capital of Culture title in Cyprus.” signed by the Cypriot Minister of Education and Culture 08 October 2011 (hereinafter referred to as “the Rules”).

In accordance with the Decision and the Rules, the Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the pre-selection and final selection meetings and coordination of visits of the representatives of the Selection Panel to the pre-selected cities. The European Commission provides guidance to the Ministry when necessary.

The Selection Panel was appointed by the Cypriot Minister of Education and Culture in October 2011. According to Article 7 of the Decision establishing the first phase of the competition called “Pre-selection”, the Selection Panel has to assess the applications in accordance with the criteria set out in Article 4 of the Decision, and following this assessment agree on a shortlist of cities to be examined in greater depth and submit a report containing recommendations for the shortlisted cities.

The following three cities submitted an application for the title of European Capital of Culture for the year 2017 by the 31 October 2011:

Limassol, Nicosia and Pafos.

The applications (in English and Greek) were forwarded to the members of the Selection Panel after the closing date for submission. The Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture invited the Panel to a pre-selection meeting, which was held in Nicosia on 12 and 13 December 2011. Twelve members of the Selection Panel were present - 6 members nominated by the European Institutions and 6 members nominated by the Cypriot Minister of Education and Culture as set out in Article 6 of the Decision. Mr Andreas Wiesand was excused by a justifiable absence.

In further accordance with Article 6 of the Decision, the panel designated Dr Manfred Gaulhofer as the Chairperson and Mr Alecos Orountiotis as the Vice-Chairperson. The Ministry of Education and Culture Cyprus would be the rapporteur for the meeting.

At the pre-selection meeting, all three cities, Limassol, Nicosia and Pafos, were represented at the highest level by their Mayor, and leading figures from the organising

committees appointed by the cities were part of the delegations presenting the programmes to the Selection Panel.

1 hour and 15 minutes was dedicated to each city – 30 minutes for the presentation and 45 minutes for questions and answers.

The Panel carried out a thorough assessment of the applications sent by the candidate cities as well as their presentations and answers provided to the experts' questions during the hearings. It was clear to the panel that a considerable effort had been made by the authors to provide a compelling case for their visions for the ECoC 2017 programme. The panel recognised the great desire expressed by each city to host the event and the work they were ready to undertake for this purpose. The Panel also noted that the work already undertaken by the participating cities would be beneficial to each one, whatever the final result of the competition, by strengthening the role of culture in the city's development strategy and stimulating and enriching local cultural life.

To draw up the short-list of cities, the Panel:

- ⤴ has thoroughly assessed the extent to which the candidates met the objectives of the European Capital of Culture event, as set out in Article 3 of the Decision and the criteria defined in Article 4 of the Decision: “the European dimension” and the “City and Citizens dimension”;
- ⤴ assessed the accuracy and quality of the responses provided by the cities to the questions included in the application form;
- ⤴ assessed the potential impact of each of the programmes of the European Capital of Culture at the national and European levels;
- ⤴ carefully assessed the presentations prepared by the cities and discussed their applications with them in order to gain a better insight into their proposals;
- ⤴ considered that the cities which were to be pre-selected should be those which best satisfied the requirements and were capable of ensuring the delivery of the designed programme of the event in practice.

2. Presentations delivered by the cities and Panel's assessment

The three cities each presented their programmes for the ECoC 2017 event to the Selection Panel. The Panel noted that all three presentations were very interesting and very different.

Limassol

The delegation from Limassol detailed the highlights of their bid: the strategy and the action plan, the cultural programme, the organization and budget and the support and participation.

The presentation started with the explanation of the core concept of the Limassol bid of “Metamorphosis – with culture as a compass”. This concept suggests that in case Limassol should be awarded the EcoC title, the city would undergo a far-reaching metamorphosis to a Mediterranean Cultural Centre that could serve as an example for future European Capitals of Culture. The directions the metamorphosis would take would be based on a compass representing different areas of culture.

Representatives of different sectors and institutions laid out the potential benefits they expected to secure in their respective field of activities if Limassol were invited to host the European Capital of Culture 2017 event.

The delegation provided an overview of the six thematic lines of the programme: sea and the port; on the trail of history; art and popular culture; industry and art; culture and communication; wine including humour and satire) and explained how these thematic categories related to the programme and to the city of Limassol. It also pointed to the city’s demonstrable ability and tradition to mount successful annual events: a carnival, a wine festival, an open-air film festival. They would be working intensively with an entertainment company which was used to organising large numbers of large scale events.

Concerning finances, the delegation confirmed the overall budget of 82 million Euros to be spent for the EcoC event, of which 60 million would be allocated to (cultural) capital expenditure and 22 million would be operating expenditure for the cultural programming, communication, staff and monitoring. It was also confirmed that roughly 9 million Euros of the operating expenditure would come from funds specifically set apart for the EcoC event and the remaining 13 million Euros would be taken from the annual cultural budget of the city. It transpired from the presentation that Limassol is already quite well equipped with cultural infrastructure and that no major investment would be needed to host the event.

Regarding the communication strategy, Limassol would apply an integrated communication strategy that would dynamically tell the story of the progress of the bid, promote the content of the Limassol 2017 Cultural Programme and communicate the benefits of being named the European Capital of Culture. An important element of the strategy would be the use of platforms for online collaboration and the combination of social networking and traditional communication channels to efficiently address local and international audiences. The communication strategy would also take advantage of the island’s strategic location as the crossroad between the Middle East and Europe.

Limassol would heavily rely on volunteers for the preparation and promotion of the event. A volunteering programme would be initialised as early as in 2012 with the formation of a group of volunteers for the “Limassol 2017” Programme.

The Mayor closed the presentation by expressing his confidence that Limassol would succeed in implementing the European Capital of Culture 2017 programme in a way that would provide for real European added value and for long lasting cultural co-operation across Europe and the Mediterranean neighbourhood.

The Panel's assessment

The Panel was impressed by the team's determination to grow and improve their cityscape, and the support of the private sector.

However, the Panel was concerned with the lack of a specific local Limassol "touch" of the year's programme as presented in the bid document. It felt the programme did not refer to any specificity of the city and how it would build a coherent artistic vision for the ECoC concept, and seemed to lack the necessary nurturing and tapping into local creativity, relying too heavily on outsourced imported international cultural artefact available and familiar from elsewhere.

The panel was also surprised to note the artistic direction would be in the hands of a general management committee on which vested interests were likely to be represented – a committee on which the artistic director would sit, rather than lead. This was unsatisfactory, and could further this imbalance between locally rooted projects and imported projects without specific reference to Limassol.

This was deemed even more important to the Panel since the role of local artists seemed to be reduced to the one of proposers and providers of small scale projects under the category of "other events".

There was therefore a strong concern that the city lacked a sufficiently original creative vision for the event.

Furthermore, while the presentation provided a strong case for the existing cultural life and the possibilities and potential of the city and the surrounding region, it did not provide sufficient understanding about both the "European dimension" and the "City and Citizens" dimension of the ECoC criteria in its planned programme.

Although the city indicated it would work with the university to conduct an evaluation process of the event to measure its impacts, the Panel would also have liked to see a more elaborate strategy for ensuring the long-term sustainability and legacy of the programme.

All in all, the Panel agreed that the concept of the Limassol programme, that basically seemed to be quite ambitious, would need significant revision and substantial re-working on clear answers to the "proposed application" questionnaire as well as to budget issues in case Limassol should be put forward to the final selection stage.

Nicosia

At the beginning of the presentation, the Mayor of Nicosia expressed the hope that the presentation would be able to communicate the unique character of the capital, for so long at the centre of the island and its affairs. Nicosia began with delivering their vision of culture, as the medium which energises thinking towards our relations with the other, nature and society. Citizens were involved in the bid through a bottom up approach, and there was a new generation to cater for with the end of the Cold War, the Internet and social media.

The uniqueness of the city as viewed by itself was also reflected by the core element of the bid: the “Nicosia model”, culture as a force to create a common denominator. According to the delegation, this model builds on the Nicosia culture that liberates and unites the communities and provides for peaceful coexistence. As the last divided city in Europe, Nicosia was determined to turn diversity into creativity and culture in order to meet the city’s objective for the ECoC 2017 vision of “reshaping the future”.

Several examples were given of initiatives in the past (as, e.g., the Nicosia Sewerage Board and the Nicosia Master Plan) that proved that the Nicosia model worked in practice and not only in theory.

Referring to the two parts of the country and the “green line” separating them from each other, the delegation stressed the fact that appr. 95% of the buffer zone are located within the reach of the 9 municipalities in the Nicosia and Larnaca regions that are behind the Nicosia bid. The city municipality was speaking with one voice on the bid.

The project manager gave a detailed overview of the 6 pillars of the programme (architecture; arts and heritage; economy; civil society; environment; sciences) which would structure the EcoC year together with the programme’s three core values, i.e. man, nature and society. The programme wanted to rediscover place, redefine public space, re-educate people, rethink and reposition themselves, re-evaluate performance and revalorise the urban and natural environment for better living conditions. He laid out that Nicosia’s objective was to “get back to the human”, the desires of people, not just their needs and the Nicosia programme therefore relied on an anthropocentric approach. One of the outcomes of this approach would be the re-discovery of play as one of the focal points of cultural activity. The programme’s aim was also to reverse the role of cultural audience and to change the role of the audience from passive observers into active participants.

No examples were provided of possible cultural projects to be realised in 2017. The delegation stated projects would be described in detail in a second bid document in case Nicosia should be put forward to the final selection stage.

It was made clear by the delegation that the old historic centre of Nicosia needed fast action to revive it, and that the European Capital of Culture title would facilitate this to a considerable extent. Concerning finances, the delegation presented an overall operational budget of 42 million Euros, of which 65% would be spent for the cultural programme, 20% for marketing and communication and 15% for administrative costs. It turned out in the discussion that a large majority of the funding was meant to come from the annual cultural budgets and only a minor part of the funds would come from “new money” set apart specifically for the EcoC event.

The Nicosia delegation did not provide any budget for capital expenditure attributed specifically to the ECoC event but stated that there already exist a number of planned and secured infrastructure and renovation projects whose total expenditure exceeds 2 billion Euros. These projects include both municipal and state funded projects and private projects. A list of these projects along with their detailed description is part of the bid document. Although their budget was small compared to some previous Capitals, in their view, an innovative approach and a return to the human side did not

necessitate the same kind of large sums as those required for infrastructure investment.

At the end of the presentation, the Nicosia delegation expressed the vision that as a result of the EcoC 2017 year, Nicosia would rather be a city of citizens than a city of inhabitants, as well as a city that needs to be shared with others.

The Panel's assessment

The Panel appreciated the importance and centrality of Nicosia's place in Cypriot life, and the high level of intellectuality, modern approach and interesting ideas in the Nicosia bid. However, the Panel also noted the concomitant complexity of the bid book, which does not provide for any precise information about the actual structure and content of the cultural programme for the European Capital of Culture 2017 year.

While the Panel agreed that the concept of the Nicosia programme, "Reshaping the Future", seemed to be ambitious and well thought through, it also stressed the challenge between good ideas and programmes written on paper and the actual delivery of a comprehensive programme comprised of many diverse projects. The panel would need precise and detailed information about the projects Nicosia is planning to realise in the framework of the EcoC 2017 programme in case the city should make it to the final selection stage.

Concerning the "European dimension" of the programme, the panel felt the Nicosia bid was focusing too much on the city itself and did not take into consideration the European dimension sufficiently.

As with regards to the budget, the Panel noted that there is a perceived imbalance of the financial resources that the municipality is planning to allocate during the next 5 years for the ECoC project and the resources that the city expects to receive from the national government as support for their nomination as European Capital of Culture 2017. It would like to see a stronger financial involvement of the city of Nicosia and the other municipalities in the final bid document in case the city was put forward to the final selection stage.

Furthermore, regarding the implications of the political situation in Cyprus and Nicosia's status of "Europe's last divided city", the Panel also noted that it would have expected a more clear and precise plan for engaging with both the Turkish-Cypriot community and other ethnic minorities currently residing in Nicosia.

Concerning governance of the EcoC, the panel would be interested in clear and detailed information on the management structure of the implementing body to ensure no possible conflicts of interest could arise.

The Panel also asked about the degree of adequate tourism infrastructure in Nicosia.

Pafos

The presentation began with the Pafos delegation reminding the panel of the birth there of the beautiful Aphrodite, goddess of love – a considerable attraction in itself in their view. The city's presentation was made in an original kafeneio (Coffee-shop) setting with each member standing up to present their background and relationship to both the city of Pafos and the European Capital of Culture organisation in the city. The Mayor opened the presentation stressing the importance of the project for the city's long-term development. One contributor, a Turkish Cypriot, stressed her own and her community's collaboration and involvement.

The delegation presented Pafos as a place that has suffered a lot from the division of the country and that would like to grasp the opportunity of being European Capital of Culture 2017 to overcome some of the major problems with which the city has been confronted since 1974. They stressed the now empty houses and other places formerly inhabited by Turkish Cypriots, the division of the city into an upper and a lower part, the split of the city's inhabitants into different communities – three parallel societies (local, immigrants, some 600,000 tourists each year) - that do not communicate with each other and the effects of an ageing society on the life in the city. They wanted to highlight Europe's diversity and they wanted to foster and explore European identity as a way of over-coming national distinctions through culture and unite these parallel societies.

The delegation then explained the underlying strategy of the "Open Air Factory", which would take a vast range of outdoor spaces and turn them into production centres in order to produce culture, to rethink public spaces, to re-establish the connection with the sea, and to bring social groups together. They presented an overview of projects which would be performed in the framework of the Open Air Factory. By maximising outdoor space they would seek to tackle the problem of limited infrastructure.

Pafos seems to be confident to be able to turn around the city through culture and this optimism is also mirrored in the EcoC logo of Pafos: a mosaic that creates the sun accompanied by the motto "Linking Continents-Bridging Cultures."

The city would lay a specific emphasis on the bi-communal dimension of the programme since it is still suffering from the emigration of its Turkish citizens. Examples of projects addressing this issue were presented and the delegation stated the bi-communal aspect of the programme would be fostered through targeted funding of such projects.

The proposed programme had been designed in a way to serve as a catalyst for the long term development of the city of Pafos. As the Pafos delegation expressed, the city intended to fully utilize the beautiful landscape, the passion and the inspiration of the citizens. The bid for the European Capital of Culture 2017 would be regarded as the most important step ever in developing the city, and the delegation stated that the passion of the citizens to gain the title had fuelled the bid.

The Open Air Factory would function through different levels or "production lines" of culture, including artists/cultural operators from Cyprus, Europe and third countries

engaging with citizens through open co-production studios, and joint partnership of Greek and Turkish Cypriots promoting tolerance and trust.

According to the delegation, the citizens had been and would continue to be involved in the programme and its development. The strategy was based on empowering people. The fact that Pafos was a small city would be considered an advantage, since it meant the city is open, flexible, agile and responsive.

A Pafos 2017 Barometer would measure perception, giving regular feedback, measuring pride in the event and city. It would start five years before, run through the period and measure perceptions five years afterwards.

Regarding funding, the delegation presented an estimated overall budget of 46 million Euros of which 26 million would be used for capital expenditure and 20 million for operating expenditure. 14,75 million Euros (=74%) from the operating expenditure would be spent for the cultural programme, and 1,9 million Euros for marketing and communication. The remaining balance would cover administrative cost and cost for monitoring and evaluation.

The Panel's assessment

The Panel appreciated the vividness and enthusiasm reflected in both the Pafos application document and the presentation. The basic concept "Open-Air Factory" was deemed to be an attractive foundation for the programme capable of being turned into a real strength if implemented successfully. However, the Panel also found that the concept still needs further development and more detailed elaboration.

The Panel appreciated that Pafos presentation was truly incorporating the language of cultural development and audience development. Nevertheless, they urged the city to provide more precise information verifying the support and engagement of the city's population, especially of the non-Cypriot communities.

Moreover, the Panel felt that the artistic level, coherence, direction and focus of the application were in need of further development. There was concern that the programme would focus solely on co-created amateur activities instead of also ensuring artistic excellence in the programme.

The financial plans and figures would need in-depth revision in case the city should be put forward as would the organizational feasibility of the programme. More specifically, the Panel was worried about the perceived deficiency of a critical mass of local cultural professionals and organizations.

3. General conclusions

After a thorough discussion amongst the panel of the three presentations and the bid documents, the Selection Panel held a secret ballot to recommend which cities should be put through to the final selection stage of the Cypriot competition of the European Capital of Culture title 2017. Cities with a simple majority of votes cast were

recommended to go through to the final selection. The panel subsequently recommended two cities to go forward:

Nicosia and Pafos

The Panel communicates its recommendation to the Cypriot Minister for Education and Culture by way of the present report. The Panel's recommendation concerning the shortlist of cities to be put forward was announced on their behalf by Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, at a press conference in Nicosia on 22 December 2011.

4. Recommendations

Having read the cities' bidding documents, listened to their presentations and received further clarifications and information in the question and answer session, the Selection Panel considered that both pre-selected cities still needed to considerably improve their applications in order to demonstrate the necessary level of quality for the European Capital of Culture event, both in terms of the programme and capacity to deliver the event. The Panel made the following recommendations for the cities guided by Article 7 of the Decision.

Nicosia

The Panel recommends Nicosia to put more focus at the final selection stage on the presentation of a concrete programme of cultural events and on defining specific and real goals and targets related to the overall ECoC event. The Panel is impressed by the ambition behind the very complex bid, but sees a real need to reduce the level of abstraction by going beyond philosophical concepts, and putting emphasis instead on desired outcomes. This recommendation reflects the Panel's concern that Nicosia might otherwise face difficulties in adequately communicating a highly complex and overly philosophical-driven vision of the current bid to the public, which might run the risk of undermining the enthusiasm of citizens for the project.

As regards the idea of 'united-divided' city, the Panel recommends clarifying and explaining this in a more understandable way. Moreover, the Panel notes that, having in mind the current political situation in Cyprus, Nicosia has to be more precise on the role of the Turkish-Cypriot community in the project while also explaining more clearly their plans for engaging with the immigrant communities currently living in Nicosia.

For the final selection phase, the Panel also needs to see a fully developed European dimension of the bid, since this key aspect of the event is not yet met to a sufficient extent. The bid needs to specify concrete European regions or countries, cities, partners, themes and projects and their role in the Nicosia programme. The European Dimension should ensure European added value in the manner specified in the Guide to candidate cities published on line (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/capitals/guide-to-candidate-cities_en.htm).

In terms of infrastructure, the Panel recommends Nicosia to use contemporary and historic locations for projects.

Finally, the Panel would like to see a more concrete and precise specification of the role of the local artists throughout the project in view of ensuring the feasibility of specific strategy regarding audience development.

Pafos

The Panel recommends that the Pafos bid is re-addressed and re-examined in terms of the objectives set by the city for its aspiration to become the Cypriot European Capital of Culture 2017, in order to make it more concrete and have a much clearer and focused vision of the expected outcomes.

The Panel also feels that the artistic dimension of the Pafos programme needs more intellectual ambition in order to achieve the level of artistic excellence expected of the European Capital of Culture event. The quality of the specifically Cypriot artistic components needs to be reviewed in order to combine artistic excellence with the attractive local flavour and emphasis.

The Panel, whilst impressed by the idea of the "Open Air Factory", is at the same time concerned with the lack of indoor cultural infrastructure in the area. This could pose problems regarding programming cultural events during the course of a full year. Clarification is needed.

The Panel finds the Pafos bid to be ambitious and well-thought through, but they ask Pafos to address their concern that the city may lack sufficient critical mass of professional capabilities for hosting a large-scale, one year programme. The Panel asks them to explain further their administrative capability to manage the European dimension and scale of the ECoC project.

The Pafos delegation convincingly described how part of the impetus for applying to become European Capital of Culture 2017 is the drain of the local inhabitants of the region. The Panel would therefore like to see this challenge addressed more clearly and more comprehensively in the bid. This should be done by way of an integrated strategy securing the involvement and engagement of both Cypriots and immigrants living in the area. The Panel feels that the focus on the Turkish-Cypriot minority in the Pafos application should be supplemented by a broader focus on other minorities as well.

General recommendations

The cities of Nicosia and Pafos are expected to complete their applications on the basis of the criteria and objectives required for the event. In particular, both cities should consider the Panel's assessment and recommendations mentioned above. Regarding all bids, the Panel felt that all cities had given a rather general and vague idea about the ECoC programme at this pre-selection stage and asks the shortlisted cities to provide much greater detail and precision in the final selection stage, also concerning their long-term strategy for culture in the city.

5. Visits

To obtain more complete information for the final selection process, the Selection Panel will pay visits to the pre-selected cities. The visits will be held in September 2012 after the cities have forwarded their completed applications. The exact deadline for submissions will be specified in a separate invitation to participate in the final selection stage. During the visits, members of the Panel will be accompanied by representatives of the European Commission and the Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture.

Dr Manfred Gaulhofer, Chair

Mr Alecos Orountiotis, Vice-chair

Prof. Chris Bailey

Mr Constantin Chiriac

Ms Danuta Glondys

Prof. Yiannis Ioannou

Sir Jeremy Isaacs

Ms Erna Hennicot-Schoepges

Prof. Demetris Michaelides

Mr Marios Papadopoulos

Dr Elisabeth Vitouch

Prof. Tasos Zembylas