

# **PRE-SELECTION REPORT**

21 December 2011

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

### **Selection Panel**

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**COPENHAGEN  
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## 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 event for the years 2007 to 2019 (hereinafter referred to as “the Decision”), a competition has been established to nominate a Danish city to the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) title for the 2017 year.

The managing authority of the ECOC competition in Denmark is the Danish Ministry of Culture. The procedure for implementing this Decision in Denmark was set out in the document “Rules of Procedure – Competition for the 2017 European Capital of Culture title in Denmark” signed by the Danish Minister for Culture 27 October 2011 (hereinafter referred to as “the Rules”).

In accordance with the Decision and the Rules, the Danish Ministry of 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 Danish Minister for 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 two cities submitted an application for the title of European Capital of Culture for the year 2017 by the 30 September 2011:

Aarhus and Sønderborg.

The applications (in English and Danish) were forwarded to the members of the Selection Panel after the closing date for examination. The Danish Ministry of Culture invited the Panel to a pre-selection meeting, which was held in Copenhagen on 24 and 25 November 2011. All thirteen members of the Selection Panel were present - 7 members nominated by the European Institutions and 6 members nominated by the Danish Minister for Culture as set out in Article 6 of the Decision.

In further accordance with Article 6 of the Decision, the panel designated Dr Manfred Gaulhofer as the Chairperson and Ms Christine Buhl Andersen as the Vice-Chairperson. The Ministry of Culture Denmark would be the rapporteur for the meeting.

At the pre-selection meeting, both Aarhus and Sønderborg were represented at the highest level by their Mayor, and leading figures from the organising com-

mittees 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 to host the event. The Panel also noted that the work already undertaken by the participating cities would be beneficial to each one, whatever be 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 “City and Citizens”;
- 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 two cities each presented their programmes for the ECOC 2017 event to the Selection Panel. The Panel noted that both presentations were very interesting and very different.

### Aarhus

The delegation of Aarhus used large prints (images, text, and diagrams) to present different key aspects of the Aarhus bid, its rich cultural life, as well as the development strategy of the city concerning education and tourism. It also presented the area involved in the project, comprising 18 municipalities in the Mid Denmark region (in addition to Aarhus itself), insisting on the strong motivation of small communities to participate in such event in a decentralised coun-

try as Denmark. The delegation also sketched a timetable for the preparation of the year and of the year itself.

The central concept "Rethink" was introduced, and delegates from different institutions and sectors presented the potential benefits they expected to experience if Aarhus wins the right to host the event European Capital of Culture 2017. The concept of the programme focuses on 3 arenas (city/values/creativity) and 10 themes. The different locations and periods planned for the main parts of the programme were also detailed.

Concerning finances, the delegation presented an operating budget for the 2013-2018 period of 66,7 millions euros, from which 75% would be allocated to the programme and 12% to promotion and marketing. The main sources would be the national government (26,7 millions euros) and Aarhus itself (13,3 millions euros), followed by the municipalities participating in the project and the Central region of Denmark.

An autonomous foundation would be established to implement the event and would be operational as soon as the city would be nominated. It would be composed of a secretariat and a board, the latter including both political representatives and representatives from the civil society to give the overall direction of the project. The secretariat will deal with planning and coordination of the programme, budget and communication. The leadership of the programme would be quite decentralised, with 3 co directors.

#### The Panel's assessment

The Panel recognised the richness, high level of ambition, modern approach and innovation in the Aarhus bid. However, the Panel also noted the perhaps concomitant complexity - bordering on opaqueness - of the bid book, which does not follow the recommended structure in the Proposed Application, exceeds the maximum number of pages requested, and leaves essential questions unanswered.

The Panel acknowledged the strong political coalition formed around the programme, but it was surprised to see a nominally low financial commitment to culture in the city budget (according to the bid book, approximately one percent of the annual city budget is dedicated to culture).

While the presentation provided a strong case for the existing cultural fauna and the possibilities and potential of the city and region, the European Dimension of the programme does not transpire and remains almost completely absent from the application.

The Panel would also like to see a more elaborate strategy for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the programme.

All in all, the Panel agreed that the concept of the Aarhus programme "Rethink" that basically seemed to be ambitious and well thought through needed revision and more work on clear answers to the "Proposed application" questionnaire.

### Sønderborg

The presentation from Sønderborg began with a delegation member playing a trumpet fanfare. Following this, each delegate presented their background and relationship to both the city of Sønderborg and the European Capital of Culture organisation in Sønderborg. The delegation went on to explain the central methodologies of their programme consisting of a tripartite bridge metaphor. The delegates presented the Rainbow Bridge, the Mind Bridge and the Vitality Bridge and explained how each of these methodologies would strengthen the project and the theme of Culture Across Borders. Following this, the delegation clarified the underlying concept and vision of Sønderborg as a Countryside Metropolis. The delegates then addressed the relevance of their programme in the light of the criteria set out in Article 4 of the Decision, i.e. the "European Dimension" and the "City and Citizens" Dimension. The European Dimension was addressed by presenting Sønderborg's ambition to open up and enrich the area starting from personal relations and extending these into a European network based on a local foundation.

The Sønderborg delegation argued that the project was a relevant and efficient response to the current problematic decrease of the young population in the area, which means that 8 out of 10 young people leave the region, never return and are not replaced by new citizens moving to the region.

The delegation also presented key figures of the budget. It was explained how the budgeted operating expenditure for 2012-2018 of roughly 53 million euro could be accounted for. Sønderborg plans to spend 33 million euro (62% of total budget) on the programme itself, 13 million euro (24% of total budget) on promotion and marketing, 5 million euro (10%) on administration and 2 million euro (4%) on other expenditures. The main sources of income would be the national government (42%), the region (23%) and the city (19%).

Sønderborg outlined the organisation that would implement the event. The envisaged structure consists of different key elements including an independent legal body which would be functional no later than March 2013; a governing executive board consisting of nine members representing different stakeholders; four satellite committees and boards reporting directly to the executive board.

### The Panel's assessment

The Panel appreciated the clarity, vividness and enthusiasm clearly present in the Sønderborg application and presentation. The basic concept "Towards a Countryside Metropolis" was found to be an attractive foundation for the programme capable of being turned into a real strength.

The Panel also appreciated that the basic concept constituted a good framework for communicating on a general level the great potential benefit inherent in winning the title of European Capital of Culture.

However, the Panel also found that the concept still needs further development and more detailed elaboration.

The innate European dimension of Sønderborg as a city was a clear strength. The Panel however felt that the artistic level, coherence, direction and focus of the application were in need of further substantiation, as was the case for the financial and organisational feasibility of the programme. Specifically, the Panel was worried about the perceived limitations of external support for the programme and the integration of other local municipalities on the German side.

### **3. General conclusions**

After a thorough discussion of the panel of the two presentations and the bid documents, it was considered that, at this stage, both candidate cities met the objectives of the process and the criteria stipulated by the Decision. The Panel also believes that both candidate cities had the potential to develop and to deliver a programme that is up to the expectations.

The Selection Panel therefore made a unanimous decision to recommend to put forward the two cities of

Aarhus and Sønderborg

to the final selection phase of the Danish competition for the European Capital of Culture 2017 title.

The Panel communicates its recommendation to the Danish Minister for Culture by way of the present report. The Panel announced for the first time the shortlist of the cities put forward by the Chairperson Dr Manfred Gaulhofer, at a press meeting on 25 November 2011 immediately after the pre-selection meeting.

### **4. Recommendations**

Having read the cities' bidding documents, seen their presentations and participated in the exchange of information in the questions and answers session, the Selection Panel considered that both of them would have to considerably improve their applications in order to demonstrate their actual capability to reach the requested level of quality for the European Capital of Culture event. The Panel made the following recommendations for the cities guided by Article 7 of the Decision.

#### Aarhus

The Panel recommends Aarhus to put less focus at the final selection stage on the process of putting together the programme than on the concrete goals and expectations related to the overall ECOC event.

The Panel was impressed by the ambition behind the very complex bid, but saw a real need to reduce the level of abstraction of the bid, to reduce the complexity

of the structure of the application (so as to comply with the structure in the Proposed Application) and put emphasis on desired outcomes.

This recommendation also reflects the Panel's concern that Aarhus might face great difficulties in adequately communicating the highly complex and overly process-driven vision of the current bid to the public, which again could result in a detrimental lack of excitement and engagement among citizens.

The Panel saw an inherent danger of inertia in the propensity to constantly re-think everything, and therefore recommends that Aarhus decide on a concrete subset of their many major projects to be developed further. Also, the Panel would like Aarhus to establish concrete timelines for these projects with corresponding actions to be taken and the rationale behind the respective projects.

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 properly presented in the application so far. The bid needs to specify concrete European regions or countries, cities, partners, themes and projects and their role in the Aarhus programme. The European Dimension should ensure European added value in the manner specified in the evaluation criteria for the competition (see Articles 3 and 4 of the Decision).

The Panel recommends that the issue of sustainability as mentioned in the evaluation criteria (see Article 4 of the Decision) is addressed clearly in the final bid. The Panel would like to see concrete strategic plans and expectations pertaining to the beneficial long-term impact of the European Capital of Culture 2017 event.

Finally, the Panel would like to see a more concrete and precise specification of the role of the surrounding region and partners.

The Panel expects to receive an application of a reasonable length, and insists that the bidding document be limited to 120 pages of written text. It is also essential that all the questions and the related responses appear clearly in the bidding document.

### Sønderborg

First of all the Panel recommends that the central concept of a Countryside Metropolis be further elaborated and developed in order to have a much clearer and focused vision of the outcome expected.

The Panel also felt that the artistic dimension of the Sønderborg programme needs more intellectual ambition in order to reach the level of artistic excellence expected of the European Capital of Culture event. This means that work needs to be done on several levels. The quality of the specifically Danish artistic components needs to be reviewed in order to combine artistic excellence with the attractive local flavour and emphasis. The relevance of the individual artistic projects and their correlation with the central concept of a Countryside Metropolis

needs to be significantly strengthened and clarified. This should improve the sense of direction and the focus of the presently overly ad hoc and “bottom-up” artistic dimension of the bid.

The Panel also suggests that Sønderborg improve their bid by including more external partners and describing its relationship to these partners. The University of Southern Denmark could be invited to play more important role, and seeking partnerships with cities such as Ribe and Esbjerg in Denmark and Kiel and even Hamburg in Germany could further increase the robustness of the bid on the artistic, financial and organisational level. Sønderborg’s plans for integrating other municipalities and building alliances with their own region will also need more precise elaboration in the final bid document.

The Sønderborg delegation convincingly described how part of the impetus for applying to become European Capital of Culture 2017 is the drain of young people from 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 (as opposed to an add-on) strategy securing the involvement and engagement of subcultures and youth in the area.

Furthermore, even though the Panel found Sønderborg to have a strong innate European dimension due to its highly transnational identity, the Panel would like to see a more thorough elaboration of the concrete projects pertaining to the “European dimension” criterion in the application. More specifically, although Sønderborg must clearly remain the clear centre of the project, the Panel would like to see more projects taking place outside Sønderborg itself and a specification of the geographic locations of these projects.

As a final point, the Panel felt that the narrow focus on the German minority in the Sønderborg application should be supplemented by a broader focus on other minorities as well.

#### General recommendations

The cities of Aarhus and Sønderborg 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. The Panel also insists on receiving applications of a reasonable length, and the bidding document should not exceed 120 pages of written text. The Panel additionally expects that the applications comply with the structure in the Proposed Application.

#### **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 the last half of August 2012 after the cities have forwarded their completed applications. The exact deadline for submissions will be specified in a separate invita-



tion 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 Danish Ministry of Culture.

Dr Manfred Gaulhofer, Chair

Ms Christine Buhl Andersen, Vice-chair

Mr Constantin Chiriac

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