



EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

Leeuwarden

European Capital of Culture 2018

First Monitoring Meeting
Report by the Monitoring and Advisory Panel

Brussels
September 2015

Introduction

This report follows the meeting¹ in Brussels on 15 September 2015 between Leeuwarden, one of the two European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) in 2018, and the monitoring and advisory panel (the “panel”). It is the first formal monitoring meeting since the selection meeting in September 2013² and the formal designation of Leeuwarden as an ECOC in May 2014. The panel met Leeuwarden for an informal post-designation meeting³ in November 2014.

The report is addressed to the Leeuwarden Foundation (“Lwd2018”) and will be published on the European Commission's website.⁴

Attendance

The panel members:

Sylvia Amann and Cristina Farinha, appointed by the European Parliament 2015-2017

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

Ulrich Fuchs (chair) 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 Lwd2018:

John Bonnema, Business Director
Jelle Burggraaff, Head of European Affairs
Oeds Westerhof, Network and Legacy Director
Hanita Brouwer, Head of Marketing and Communication
Claudia Woolgar Nauwels, Thematic Producer
Lieven Bertels, Cultural Director

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (DG EAC) and the Ministry of Culture of the Netherlands.

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

² http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/documents/ecoc/2018/panel-report-netherlands_en.pdf

³ The post-designation report is not official and therefore is not made public.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm

Report from Lwd18 and presentation

The Lwd18 Foundation submitted a comprehensive written report in advance of the meeting. The report outlined the activities of LwD18 since the post-designation meeting in November 2014.

At the meeting LwD18 made a presentation which included these points:

- Oeds Westerhof gave an overview of the current situation and the changes since the last meeting and – more generally – since the city was recommended as the Dutch 2018 ECOC back in September 2013. Since then, the delivery structure has been set up with all the necessary reporting arrangements, and has been constantly reinforced, with the arrival of new staff members with no prior contact with the project. The team has now 20 people. It includes young people that participated in the bid book fase. Additional to the team, civil servants from local and regional government are detached to the operation.
- The team is currently assessing and adjusting if necessary the business and cultural plans of all the projects included in the bid-book with the view to going from ideas to project development.
- Lieven Bertels, who has recently been appointed as the foundation's cultural director, explains LwD18 views on why people from all over Europe should go to Leeuwarden in 2018. The programme will include 8 highlights with related events every 3 weeks and at least 6 events per weekend. As an example a blockbuster exhibition on Escher will be held in spring 2018 to attract visitors.
- The other highlights – which are already in preparation – include: a Mata Hari Opera as a pan-European collaboration, the Eleven Fountains project involving 11 world renowned artists working with 11 local communities, a cooperation with Royal de Luxe, the opening and closing events, a huge horse event with Frisian breeders as well as "a Sense of Place" with exhibits and many performances in the Wadden Sea region highlighting the relationship between culture and nature. The next steps are to bring together the budget and the projects, within the next 12 months.
- Stress is also put on bottom-up initiatives, with 450 proposals selected through an open call and involving more than 1 000

people. The team will develop a toolkit to help the managers of these projects to materialise the ideas. A balance is sought between the city and the wider region, with first "satellites" appearing in the region.

- Consultations have been carried out with Umea and their co-creation concept, which has changed the structure to a co-production organisation. Two lines of the cultural programme have been turned into open programmes to offer room for new initiatives. The foundation has now a facilitation and supporting role in relation with the national and international partners who will be the events' producers. Solid mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that the projects are consistent with the overall vision and contribute to the (government) policies. A grants scheme similar to Umea's Cultural Boost has also been put in place.
- The European Dimension is monitored by the International Relations Manager, with 6 weekly meetings with producers to ensure that they keep this dimension high in the projects they develop. The ECOC title is found useful to attract European partners into the project, and as a result many artists from other EU countries are involved.
- The promotion of the ECOC on European level is being done by means of selected European networks and Dutch Embassies.
- The cooperation with Valletta is ongoing with several projects already agreed and started (Potatoes Go Wild, Behind the Front Door, Curators in Valletta).
- On the budget side, securing funding has been a priority. The main risk is the contribution of the communities in the region, which is not secured yet. The team is working on the basis of 3 possible scenarios depending of the availability of funding (a worse-case scenario, an intermediate scenario and a best-case scenario) and has developed a different planning for each, within each budget projection. Whatever the scenario, priority is always given to projects.
- The sponsorship strategy has been developed with 3 different levels. Some agreements have been already obtained for around

9MM €, though not yet signed. A Club2018, similar to Club Mons 2015, has been created with a big success so far, around 150 companies already signed in (for a contribution of 2.018 € each).

- On marketing and communication, the team stressed their "open door" policy. A new website has also been launched to increase local and regional awareness about the ECOC project. Social media use is also increasing. Some partnerships have already been agreed, e.g. with a TV channel, the train company, and discussions are being held with KLM. Cruise companies are also being targeted. Finally, a volunteering programme is under development.

Discussion

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

- The panel agrees with the policy of not spending money that has not been secured and welcomes that priority is given to programme expenditure. The panel also welcomes the initiative to help the projects tapping in the different EU and local / national funds, as well as the case by case approach described, whereby a funding strategy is developed for each individual project. Finally the panel would like to be informed about the progress made in the negotiations regarding the regional financial contribution.
 - **Recommendation 1:** The panel recommends that LwD18 should stick to the principle of spending only secured money and closely monitor the timing for requesting funds, in particular ERDF funds, where delays can be quite long.
- The panel asked if business being already part of the project would influence the programme. The panel was pleased to hear that this is not happening.
- With regards to the outsourcing of projects, the panel takes note of the co-creation concept ultimately chosen by LwD18, but underlines the need to keep control and closely monitor the projects to ensure alignment with the bid-book as well as a strong European dimension. In this respect, the panel appreciates the appointment of a person dealing specifically with the European dimension of the

projects. More generally on the programme development, the panel welcomes the list of projects detailing and describing activities previewed and already implemented included in the report as a very useful monitoring tool.

- **Recommendation 2:** The panel recommends LWD2018 to stick to its solid monitoring and reporting arrangements to ensure the consistency of the programming with the overall vision as well as a clear European dimension.
- **Recommendation 3:** The panel recommends LWD2018 to ensure a clear agenda for self-produced projects as well as for the open programme.
- The panel welcomes the appointment of a dedicated staff member for enhanced collaboration with Valletta, the other ECOC in 2018.
- The panel noted with interest the tradition in the Netherlands of having supervisory boards which are independent from the government institutions and the financing entity, which ensures transparency and will avoid undue influences in the programme. On management of expectations, the tradition of transparency will indeed be helpful, as mentioned by the team.
- The panel appreciates also the intended flexibility of the programme to adapt to new realities, as for example the refugees crisis currently present in Europe. Meetings with the refugees in the city will be held to involve them in the projects of the bid-book.
 - **Recommendation 4:** The panel recommend that LwD2018 see the work it is developing with refugees in a European perspective as the whole of Europe is facing an unprecedented number of refugees and migrants.
- The panel took good note of the concern of the team regarding the fact that the tourism regional entity is not operating at its full capacity The panel is aware of the challenge of Leeuwarden not being yet known as an interesting cultural destination, and encourages the team to collaborate as closely as possible with the tourism office to create new tools for synergies between culture and tourism. The programme activities that are planned for 2018 should

be presented to touristic organisations which could include the activities of LwD2018 in their promotion at global and national level.

- **Recommendation 5:** The panel insists on the need of changing the perception of the region as a cultural destination at an early stage and get prepared, also regarding the touristic infrastructure and their hospitality quality, for 2018. Investments need to be done now to be ready for the ECOC year. The panel would recommend the touristic organisation in Fryslan to visit and to invite together with the Leeuwarden 2018 team mirroring organisations in former ECOCs and leverage on best practices from these.

Next Steps

The panel will invite Leeuwarden 2018 to the second monitoring meeting in 2017. In the meantime, the panel invites LwD18 to contact the panel (through the Commission) on any topic that might have an impact in the implementation of the project.

In its report issued after this meeting, the panel will recommend to the Commission whether or not to award the Melina Mercouri prize to Leeuwarden. The award of the prize is not automatic. The condition for the city to be awarded the prize is that it meets the criteria laid down in article 4 of the Decision⁵, has fulfilled the commitments made at selection phase and have implemented the recommendations made by the panel in its various reports.

The panel thanks the LwD2018 delegation for their report and the open discussion. It congratulates them on the current status of the preparation, which is progressing very well, and looks forward to another successful year in the development of the ECOC.

⁵ Article 4 of the Decision specifies the criteria that the cultural programme shall fulfil. They are subdivided into two categories (the "European dimension" and the "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 the "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.