



EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE

# **Valletta**

**European Capital of Culture 2018**

**First Monitoring Meeting**

**Report by the Monitoring and Advisory Panel**

**Brussels**

**September 2015**

## Introduction

This report follows the meeting<sup>1</sup> in Brussels on 15 September 2015 between Valletta, one of the two European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) in 2018, and the monitoring and advisory panel (the “panel”). Valletta was recommended for the 2018 title at the selection meeting in October 2012<sup>2</sup> and formally designated as the ECOC in May 2013; the recommendations in the selection report and in the two post-designation reports<sup>3</sup> are still valid.

The report is addressed to the Valletta 2018 Foundation ("the Foundation") and will be published on the European Commission's website ([http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm))

## Attendance

The panel members:

Sylvia Amann and Cristina Farinha, appointed by the European Parliament 2012-14

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 Valletta 2018:

Jason Micallef, Chair of the Board of Directors Valletta 2018

Dr Karsten Xuereb, Executive Director Valletta 2018

Prof Alexiei Dingli, Mayor of Valletta

Margerita Pule, Programming Coordinator Valletta 2018

Graziella Vella, Research Coordinator Valletta 2018

Annaliza Borg, Communications Coordinator Valletta 2018

Sean Buhagiar, Vice Artistic Director Valletta 2018

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<sup>1</sup> The European Capitals of Culture action is governed by Decision 1662/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council for the titles 2007 to 2019. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32006D1622>

<sup>2</sup> Report at [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/documents/ecoc/2018/panel-report-malta\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/documents/ecoc/2018/panel-report-malta_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Post-designation reports are not official and therefore are not made public.

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

### **Report from V18 and presentation**

The V18 Foundation submitted a detailed written report in advance of the meeting. The report outlined the activities of V18 since the last post-designation meeting in November 2014.

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

- Jason Micallef presented the team and updated on the general situation on Valletta 2018 and the preparation of the year, including the new branding of Valletta 2018, its presence in national and international media, and the perception by the citizens.
- All structures needed are now up and running with the corresponding reporting arrangements. The project has increased visibility and support from all stakeholders and aims to be sustainable after 2018, with a legacy lasting for 15-20 years. The Gozo island is now fully associated to the project, notably by the opening of the first regional office in Victoria in 2015, as well as many local authorities.
- Capital expenditure is being implemented, including among others the regeneration of the Old Market, the Museum of Fine Arts and the new Design Cluster. These new infrastructures should be in place by 2018.
- The Mayor insisted on the city's ambition to bring culture to people and to develop as an intercultural city where everyone can fulfil his/her potential, with the ECOC year being an element of this wider ambition.
- Sean Buhagiar explained the main points of the programme that will include four major events in 2018. The following projects were highlighted: Opening as an outdoor festivity, Pageant of the Seas, a performance in the harbour aimed to become a biennale in the island as part of the legacy, a newly commissioned opera dealing with the subject of migration, and a visual arts extravaganza with exhibits throughout the country based on a cooperation with a world renowned foundation.
- Dr Karsten Xuereb updated the panel on financial aspects and human resources. The Foundation's relatively small core team works with 30 to 40 project managers, who work on the ground and

manage projects, and previews the engagement of regional coordinators.

- Margerita Pule explained the status of programming. Valletta 2018 is working with the population at small scale already. This includes a definition of community in the broader sense, not exclusive and of very diverse nature. The aim is to increase a sense of ownership and build a conversation between various communities. Greater emphasis on Mediterranean issues has been added to the programme with some projects already proposed. It also appears from the progress report that a programming strand specific to "exiles and migrants" is currently being developed.
- Finally, Graziella Vella updated the panel on research and evaluation issues while Annalisa Borg explained that a new branding and a new website have been put in place, along with a Communication Strategy. An information campaign is being designed to reach all audiences. Partnerships are being developed with other institutions such as Heritage Malta.

## Discussion

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

- The panel mentioned that some departments of the Foundation seem to be more advanced than others. There are no concerns about monitoring and evaluation or governmental support. However, there are still some concerns about the budget for administration, which is quite high compared to the budget for programme. Valletta 2018 said that the figures included the fees paid to artists and cultural operators taking part in the projects of the 2018 programme, as well as to the pool of project managers. The role of the project managers and their cooperation with the foundation were briefly explained.
  - **Recommendation 1:** As mentioned in previous reports, Valletta 2018 is advised to reconsider the figures. The structure of the costs included in the administrative costs should be more clearly explained, in what regards the network of project managers and the fees of artists, maybe splitting between personnel costs and other costs.

- Still on the financial side, the panel raised a question about the sponsoring and fundraising strategies. The Foundation explained that the figures are ambitious but also include in-kind contributions. These are sought also for the four main events. Fundraising works mainly on a personal basis, approach that will be widely used.
  - **Recommendation 2:** The foundation should closely monitor the private funding coming to the project. As it has been mentioned that the administrative costs cannot be reduced, the foundation should develop mitigating measures to avoid a drastic reduction in the programme budget if the private funding target cannot be reached. The in-kind contribution should be listed separately. Moreover, at this stage the realistic expectation for the private funding should be planned
  
- The panel is concerned about the status of development of the programme at this stage. While the programme should be the core of the preparatory work, it does not seem to have developed much since the last post-designation meeting. Moreover the European Dimension of the overall programming – in all its three facets (see footnote 4) – is under-developed. Also, the list of projects in the report seems very general. The foundation explains that the calendar is being plotted with a monthly big event and other projects happening during the year alongside these highlights. The panel stressed that the programme should differ from normal business not only in size and scope but also in artistic and cultural quality terms. This programme should also be clearly communicated to the rest of the team. The main idea of ECoC program of Valletta 2018 is not clearly perceived from the presented material. When this would be clear the communication through different tools would be easier.
  - **Recommendation 3:** A clear priority should now be given to the development of the programme, which must be in line with the original bid-book. The overall concept and vision of the programme should be further refined and communicated to the whole team to ensure consistency. This vision must be clearly European. Specific projects must be developed in line

- with this overall narrative. To do that, the programme team would need to be strengthened.
- **Recommendation 4:** Coherence should be sought between the highlight events and the daily programme developed for 2018. In this perspective, the links between the artistic team (Artistic Director and Vice Artistic Director) and the programme team should be stronger and the reporting mechanisms between those organisations developing the projects and the foundation be reinforced.
  - **Recommendation 5:** The Foundation should start identifying the partners for the (co-)produced projects and develop appropriate criteria for selecting projects that could be included in the programme though not financed. Such criteria should include a strong European Dimension, a focus on citizens' participation and a connection with the overall concept of the title-year.
- The panel welcomes the greater emphasis being placed on dealing with migration issues including the strand "Exiles and Migrants" and the information given about how the ECOC deals with minorities, and finds interesting the approach of including minorities in communities not directly linked to origins but more on interests, in a fluid manner, to foster integration and the intended collaboration with SOS Malta.
    - **Recommendation 6:** Valletta 2018 should develop this new project strand as a key element of its overall programme for 2018 and start working on specific projects. It should make use of this strand to increase its cooperation with partners from around the Mediterranean Sea and to reinforce the overall European Dimension of the programming.
  - Regarding the collaboration with Leeuwarden and with other cultural operators in Malta, the panel was reassured that some projects are already in preparation. It also welcomes the appointment in Leeuwarden of a dedicated staff for enhanced collaboration. The panel understands the collaboration with cultural operators is better with those whose programme aligns with the ECOC programme. There is however a need to have solid reporting mechanisms to ensure consistency of the whole programming.

- **Recommendation 7:** Reporting mechanisms between those organisations developing projects for 2018 and the foundation should be reinforced.
- The panel enquired about the legacy plans and how these will be financed, as there is no budget for 2019 and beyond. The foundation explained that it will be closed in 2019, but a Master Plan for Valletta beyond 2020 will be developed with a strong base on the results of the ECOC 2018.
  - **Recommendation 8:** There is a need for a strong cooperation between the Foundation and the various departments of the City and State authorities to ensure that the ECOC 2018 will feed into the overall Master Plan. Considerations should be given at City and State levels about the type of legacy structure to set up.
- The panel was interested also in finding out more about the Communication strategy and the main idea to be passed on. The foundation mentioned that some collaboration is already happening on the communications side.
  - **Recommendation 7:** Valletta 2018 should clarify the concept, the narrative and the motto of the ECOC to be able to communicate effectively.
- Overall, the panel feels that the preparation of Valletta 2018 is lagging behind the expectations at this stage of development and that the team should focus on regaining momentum and concretise plans for 2018
  - **Recommendation 9:** Clear milestones should be set for the development of the programme and these milestones should be closely monitored. A list of projects including timetable, budget, legal status, EU dimension and producing and co-producing partners, should be sent to the Commission for transmission to the panel before the end of 2015 and then regularly updated.

## Next Steps

The panel would like to visit Valletta in late 2015 or early 2016, with the aim to meet the new Artistic Director and to review with the artistic team the development of the programme for 2018. Interaction with cultural stakeholders involved in the programme for an exchange of views will be of interest for the panel.

A second monitoring meeting will take place in the first semester of 2017. In its report issued after this meeting, the panel will recommend to the Commission whether or not to award the Melina Mercouri prize to Valletta. 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 Decision<sup>4</sup>, 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 Valletta 2018 delegation for their report and the open discussion and looks forward to meeting the implementation team in Valletta in the short term.

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<sup>4</sup> 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.