

PRE-SELECTION REPORT

1st February 2012

**Nomination of the
European Capital of Culture 2018 in Malta**

Selection Panel

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**Valletta
17-18 January 2012**

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 and a call for applications was launched to nominate a Maltese city for the title of European Capital of Culture for the year 2018.

The managing authority of the ECOOC competition in Malta is the Maltese Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Environment (hereinafter referred to as “the Ministry of Culture”). The procedure for implementing this Decision in Malta was set out in the document “Rules of Procedure – Competition for the 2018 European Capital of Culture title in Malta” signed by the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Culture and published on the Managing Authority website on the 18th of December 2010 (hereinafter referred to as “the Rules”).

In accordance with the Decision and the Rules, the Maltese 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 Maltese Minister for Culture in December 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 city submitted an application for the title of European Capital of Culture for the year 2018 by the submission deadline on the deadline of 17th of October 2011.

Valletta

The application (in English) was forwarded to the members of the Selection Panel after the closing date for examination. The Ministry of Culture invited the Panel to a pre-selection meeting, which was held in Valletta on 17 and 18 January 2012. Eleven members of the Selection Panel were present – six of the 7 members nominated by the European Institutions and five of the 6 members nominated by the Maltese Minister for Culture as set out in Article 6 of the Decision. Two members were unable to attend due to illness.

In further accordance with Article 6 of the Decision, the panel designated Dr Manfred Gaulhofer as the Chairperson and Professor Joe Friggieri as the Vice-Chairperson. H.E. Vicki Ann Cremona was appointed as the rapporteur for the meeting.

At the pre-selection meeting, Valletta was represented at the highest level by its Mayor and all the other local councils were represented by the President of the Local Councils Association. Leading figures from the Valletta 2018 Foundation, which has been entrusted with the delivery of the bid, were part of the delegation presenting the bid to the Selection Panel.

1 hour and 15 minutes were dedicated to the presentation of Valletta – 30 minutes for the presentation and 45 minutes for questions and answers.

The Panel carried out a thorough assessment of the application sent by the candidate city as well as the presentations and answers provided to the experts' questions during the hearing. The Panel appreciated the considerable efforts made by the city to present a convincing bid for ECOC 2018.

The panel stresses that, although 67 Local Councils forming the Association of Local Councils have joined the Valletta Local Council to establish the V18 Foundation and would participate in the event led and managed by Valletta, the title can be held by one city only and in no case by the islands as a whole.

- In its assessment, the Panel has thoroughly evaluated the extent to which the candidate 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 city to the questions included in the application form;
- assessed the potential impact of the programme of the European Capital of Culture at the national and European levels;
- carefully assessed the presentation prepared by the city and discussed the application with the delegation in order to gain a better insight into their proposal;
- considered that in order to be pre-selected, the city would have to satisfy the requirements and show that it was capable of ensuring the delivery of the designed programme of the event in practice.

2. Presentation delivered by the City and Panel's assessment

a) Presentation

The delegation from Valletta stressed that, from its origins, Valletta was intended as a capital city and an administrative centre. In spite of its small size and dwindling indigenous population, it has long been a top tourist attraction and highly popular shopping area. The delegates underlined that although the city was witnessing a hesitant gentrification, it also contained the largest proportion of social housing on the island, and offered shelter to disadvantaged minorities including immigrants and refugees.

It was mentioned that, through ECOC, Valletta wished to bridge the divide between the two realities of the city – the daytime busy administrative capital, with its lure of shops and cafés and the declining indigenous community, with its manifest creative assets, but also its current difficult socio-economic realities - by transforming the city through a process that would foster public involvement at all levels.

Being subsumed by its own heritage, the city explained that it intended to use cutting-edge arts and culture to create a self-generative and self-sustaining present and future which would clearly show that this is not a declining city. It intended also to use its heritage, which formed an intrinsic part of its grand narratives, as a springboard for the future, to create sound cultural infrastructures and promote cultural education for young people in order to drive the city's regeneration.

Because Valletta was presenting its bid six years before the 2018 deadline, it had deliberately chosen to present its artistic programme only at the final stage of the selection, focusing first on creating cultural infrastructure and sound governance structures to generate and support events in 2018 and beyond.

The delegation explained that the cultural programme for the year could not be designed at the current stage as the artistic director had not yet been appointed, but the idea was that s/he would implement the eight themes which had emerged through a bottom up process.

Through the right structures, cultural education and community involvement, Valletta intends to use ECOC to develop a process of cultural transformation that would bring the city and the country to a truly international level.

The budget for the event would be 48 million euros.

b) The Panel's assessment

The Panel recognised the driving conceptual vision and long-term structural approach of the Valletta bid. It noted the attractive presentation of the bid book. It found the presentation and the discussion interesting and fruitful. The peripheral location of Valletta, a European city with a Mediterranean identity, situated on the frontier between Europe and Africa, was clearly a strength. However, the Panel noted that the bid needed to be further substantiated at various levels, both from the artistic and organisational aspects, with concrete plans and projects.

The Panel also felt that some of the objectives mentioned in the bid as, e.g., the focus on young people, were not translated into concrete programme or project ideas.

The bid also did not present any example of projects that would be part of the overall ECoC programme. However, both the envisaged content of the cultural programme and its artistic excellence are core elements in the selection process.

It was noted that culture had never been a main focus in Malta's national budget, which might be a weakness for the long-term development of the country through culture.

The Panel provided recommendations that the Valletta 2018 Foundation should take into consideration in view of the final selection.

3. General Conclusions

After a thorough discussion of the bid documents and the presentation, the Panel unanimously considered that Valletta had met so far the criteria stipulated by the Decision, and expressed its belief that Valletta had the potential to develop a programme that would rise to the expectations of ECOC. Consequently, it recommends that the city should go on to the second selection phase.

4. Recommendations

After a careful assessment of the bidding documents, the presentation and discussions during the question-and-answer session, the Selection Panel felt that the bid needed to be worked on intensely in order to reach the required level of quality of such a demanding event as the European Capital of Culture and to be successful.

The following points were raised by the Panel

Budget: The Panel requires that the final version of the bid include clarification on the expenditure for cultural development after 2018. Feasibility studies for cultural infrastructures should be added to the budget.

Participation and governance :

- More information about the levels and modes of cooperation with the 67 local councils needs to be provided. It is not clear how local governments will be participating actively even after 2018. Clearer indications of sustainable developments in localities should be supplied.
- The Panel would appreciate some indication of how the Valletta 2018 Foundation will develop into permanent cultural structures after 2018.

Concept of the event : The Valletta 2018 Foundation had hinted at themes such as peripheral cities dominated by power struggles, colonization, the idea of freedom, free speech and dialogue, but the current bid is not clear enough about the outlines and main aims of the event.

Project ideas: The Panel felt that the bid lacked concrete plans to reach the objectives put forward. It highlighted the need for further elaboration on the artistic vision, concrete artistic projects and artistic autonomy from the administrative structures, as well as their relation to a central concept. It would like the Foundation to clarify the terms of reference

for selecting an artistic director able to take up and deepen the vision expressed in the bid. It recommended that this artistic director should be independent from the political authorities and that s/he be nominated quickly, in order to go forward in the preparations, The criteria which will be used to select the projects as parts of the programme should still be specified, as well as the way artistic excellence would be combined to local emphasis. The panel would like to see more information about bottom-up public involvement.

The panel stressed that cultural events of international scale needed to be designed and planned very well in advance.

It would like more information with regard to the international aspects of Valletta European Capital of Culture both from the artistic and organisational aspects, particularly with regard to co-production.

European and Mediterranean dimensions : The European dimension needed to be further developed. The panel would like to see concrete projects with a strong European dimension as parts of the programme – in particular co-productions, artistic linking and involvement of local and foreign artists. The problems and stakes Europe is currently facing could be taken into consideration in the designing of such projects. The Valletta 2018 Foundation showed Valletta as a place of exchange between Europe and North Africa but this aspect still needed to be brought out more concretely.

Education: The Panel would like to have more information about the measures envisaged in the education area.

How does V18 intend to use the weaknesses of the city and the new infrastructure to create windows of opportunity in this regard? What concrete measures can link the ECOC process to schools, and help connect Maltese and European schools? Are there any planned educational projects, including in human resources, such as training, cultural management etc?

Legacy: The Panel would appreciate to getting a better idea of the concrete targets and planned legacy of ECOC. During the discussion, the Valletta 2018 Foundation mentioned as targets a sharp increase in full-time cultural employment, and cultural infrastructure, which still needed to be specified.

5. Visits

Four delegates of the Selection Panel will pay a visit to Valletta on the 11th October 2012 to obtain more complete information for the final selection process, after the city has forwarded its completed application for the final selection stage. The exact deadline for submission will be specified in a separate invitation. The final selection meeting will be held on the 12th October 2012.

Valletta, 1st February 2012

The Selection Panel:

Dr. Manfred Gaulhofer – Chairman

Prof. Joe Friggieri – Vice Chairman

H.E. Vicki Ann Cremona – rapporteur

The Hon. Minister Erna Hennicot-Schoepges

Prof. Richard England

Sir Jeremy Isaacs

Ms. Cynthia de Giorgio

Mr. Steve Green

Mr. Sandro Zerafa

Mr. Jordi Pardo

Mr. Constantin Chiriac