



EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE

**Selection of the European Capital of Culture  
in 2020 in Ireland**

**The Selection Panel's report  
Pre-Selection Stage**

**Dublin  
December 2015**

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## Introduction

This is the report of the selection panel (the “panel”) for the pre-selection phase for the competition for the European Capital of Culture in 2020 in Ireland.

The Irish Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht of Culture (the “ministry”) is the managing authority of the competition which is governed by:

- Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 (the “Decision”)<sup>1</sup> and
- Rules of procedure – Competition of the European Capital of Culture in Ireland in 2020 – (the “Rules”) signed by the Irish Minister of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht on **24 June 2015** and published on the Ministry’s website<sup>2</sup>.

A panel of 10 independent experts was established for the selection process in line with article 2 of the Rules. The members were appointed by the European Union institutions and bodies (European Parliament, Council, Commission and the Committee of Regions). The ministry decided not to exercise its right to appoint up to two members.

The competition is in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and selection. The Ministry issued a call for applications on 17 December 2014. Four applications were submitted by the closing date of 17 October 2015:

### **Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford (Three Sisters)**

## Panel Meeting

The panel met in Dublin on 12-13 November 2015. The panel elected Mr Steve Green as its chair and Dr Suzana Žilič Fišer as vice-chair. All panel members signed a declaration of no conflict of interest and confidentiality. Representatives of the European Commission and the Ministry attended as observers. These observers took no part in the panel’s deliberations or decision.

At the meeting each candidate, in alphabetical order, presented their case (in 30 minutes) and answered questions from the panel members (in 60 minutes). Each delegation consisted of up to ten members.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/rules-of-procedure-june-2015-website-pdf.pdf>

The panel noted the general and specific objectives in article 2 of the Decision and the requirement for the application to be based on a cultural programme with a strong European dimension created specifically for the title (article 4).

The panel assessed each bid against the six criteria in article 5:

- contribution to the long term strategy of the city
- European dimension
- cultural and artistic content
- capacity to deliver
- outreach
- management

At a press conference at the end of the meeting the chair of the panel announced the panel's unanimous recommendation that the Minister invite the following cities to submit revised bids for final selection (in alphabetical order):

**Galway, Limerick, Waterford (on behalf of Three Sisters).**

## Next Steps

The ministry will arrange for the formal approval of the shortlist based on this report (article 8 of the Decision). The ministry will then issue an invitation to the three cities to submit revised applications for final selection.

The shortlisted cities should take into account the assessments and recommendations of the panel in this report.

The deadline for submission of revised applications is **1700hrs 17 June 2016**.

The final selection meeting will be held in Dublin on **14-15 July 2016**.

Two to four members of the panel will pay a one-day visit to the three shortlisted cities shortly before the meeting to obtain more background information. Representatives of the European Commission and the ministry will accompany the panel members as observers.

## Thanks

The panel members would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in this pre-selection phase of the competition.

The panel noted that this is the first time cities in Ireland have developed specific cultural strategies. This is already a significant potential legacy of the ECOC competition. The panel encourages all cities, not just those short-listed, to continue with the development and implementation of their strategy.

The panel thanks all four bidding candidates and everyone who contributed to their bids; the European Commission for their advice and the Minister of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht and her staff for their excellent administration.

## Assessments of the candidates

### Dublin

Dublin presented their bid under the banner "A Cultural Challenge to Europe's Divided Cities".

Dublin City's cultural strategy has three priorities: to ensure creativity and culture and the creative industries are central to competitiveness; to increase cultural participation (and deliver improved cultural infrastructure) and to promote social, economic and tourism development. Culture is seen as a priority across all departments of the City Council.

The programme of Dublin 2020 has four strands: City of Villages, Invisible City, European Pilgrim and City of Courage.

The projected operating budget is €83.3m of which just over €56m is earmarked for programme expenditure.

The panel appreciated the honest analysis of Dublin's social and economic challenges, characterised as a "two-speed city" and summed up by the "Divided City" concept. The bidbook clearly set out the differing divisions within the city, geographically, economically, socially and culturally.

The bidbook noted that the four councils around Dublin agreed to let Dublin lead this stage of the bid and would be more active in stage 2. The effect would be to increase the ECOC's catchment area to almost a third of the whole country; a major task. The panel welcomed this regional approach and understood the relationship between the city core and the surrounding areas. However the panel would normally expect a more active engagement with such regions, and their citizens, in the developmental stage of bids. This would include consultations and participation in programme ideas. This is more important as the regions are forecast to provide €9m or 12.5% of the operating budget.

The panel noted the extensive list of indicators and measures for Dublin2020's legacy set out in three categories: cultural, social and economic impact. These covered many of the areas referred to in the cultural strategy. The panel considered that few of them referred to the stated aims of the ECOC in tackling the divisions within the city and hence their relevance as legacy outcomes. The European dimension was also under-represented. These mismatches led the panel to be concerned about the relationship of the ECOC to the city and region's objectives.

Although many indicators had quantifiable and qualitative targets the baseline study is not due until 2016. Some measures appeared unrealistic (for example a 40% growth in artists' income).

The panel was disappointed in the lack of analysis of the long term legacy of Dublin's European City of Culture in 1991. Indeed this was almost dismissed during the presentation Q&A. Other ECOCs from that time (Glasgow1990, Antwerp1993) have made a feature of the long term benefits from holding the title, whilst, as in Dublin, their cities have undergone significant change in the subsequent 20+ years.

The panel noted the view that, for Dubliners, "nearly all roads lead to Boston rather to Berlin" and that awareness of the diversity of cultures in Europe was low. The intention to create a European Cultural Citizenship is ambitious and fits neatly into the aspiration to change that "Boston/Berlin" viewpoint. Given this starting point the panel would have expected to have seen, at this stage, more engagement and collaboration with both European and North American partners.

The bidbook outlines many expectations and possible future avenues of European partnership but with limited co-curation and co-production. There are many examples across the EU of social-cultural projects in socially divided cities which could bring strength to the European Dimension. There was less evidence that the bid team had sought out cities facing similar challenges in the peripheral parts of Europe. One consequence of the high percentage of the budget seemingly already allocated is that the panel did not feel there were events which would attract a wider audience from Europe as called for in the criterion. The communication strategy did not demonstrate how to promote the ECOC programme beyond normal tourist fluxes.

There was limited information in the bidbook on the role the major cultural institutions in Dublin would be expected to play, or not, in the ECOC programme. It was not clear that they had signed up to the radical change proposed in the project on their outreach policies.

The panel appreciated the range of the social-cultural projects outlined in the bidbook. The four strands show promising foundations for urban development. All would need further elaboration and a clearer cross reference to the objectives of the ECOC and cultural strategy in the evaluation section.

The panel noted the indicative budgets for projects. These amounted to €34m of the €56m programme expenditure forming the backbone of the programme. A high percentage was allocated to flagship projects (€ 12m) which the panel felt possibly contradictory given the emphasis on a bottom-up approach.

The depth of the consultation process in the city impressed the panel. This has included the cultural sector. The thousands of "Teas and Chats" had a wide participation. 60% of the proposed programme comes from citizens

engagement leading to low-threshold and inclusive projects. This is high figure compared to recent ECOCs who have had to manage with issues of quality control and the weakening of the European Dimension. There was little indication in the bidbook how these issues would be addressed.

The panel appreciated the structure of the four strands of the programme. There were several projects outlined in the bidbook which attracted the panel, including Voices in the Park, Green Spine and Museum on your Doorstep. There was a linkage to the aim of "social change through culture"; putting 80% of the programme in public spaces is an ambitious aspiration. This extensive approach, coupled with the high level of ideas and input from the participatory process, however becomes a weakness for an ECOC: there is less opportunity for artistically excellent projects which can attract an international audience over and above the normal, extensive, cultural offer of a city. An ECOC programme becomes too over-balanced towards local needs compared to the internationalisation inherent in the ECOC project.

The panel expected, for an ECOC in 2020, a stronger digital presence and innovation as integral parts of the cultural programme, beyond Digital River and some apps (as compared with the use of social media etc for communication and marketing).

The bid has the support of the city council and executive.

The panel noted the €83m project budget. This is larger than most recent ECOCs but commensurate with a programme aimed at reaching over 30% of the country's population. However the panel did not consider it prudent at this stage to forecast a national government contribution of €34m compared to the currently stated €15m. The panel was not convinced by the optimistic statements made in the Q&A. The bidbook stated the budget had the support of the city council but made no reference to formal agreement of the regional contribution.

The proposed governance structure appeared sound, although the panel would wish to see more information about the Executive Committee and its decision making authority especially the authority of the artistic director.

Overall the panel considered the bid was strong on its social-cultural programme responding to the analysis of the city. It has been well-structured and the four strands provide a strong foundation. There has been a strong consultation process. There was not a clear vision what would happen to Dublin if it would be given the title of ECOC.

The panel felt that the artistic and cultural vision was a weaker part of the bid with little to attract visitors. The European Dimension had not been developed as expected at this stage. There was little in the proposed programme, the majority of which had been described in the bidbook, to indicate how people's perception

of the diversity of cultures in Europe would be changed. Given the acknowledged low starting point of this awareness the panel would expect the European Dimension to have been emphasised far more than in the bid.

## **Galway**

Galway's bid was presented under the banner "Making Waves".

The city's cultural strategy, a ten year vision (2015-2025), was published in September 2015. The main goals are to highlight the benefits of culture, to guarantee access to resources, to foster employment and innovation in the cultural and creative sectors, to protect and enhance Galway's distinctive cultural heritage and to consider the contribution of technology. The City and County councils have committed to increase their overall spend on arts and culture from 4.7% to 15% to support this strategy.

The ECOC is complementary to this strategy; it does not seek to tackle all of its aims. Actions within the strategy on capacity building, access to culture and protection of cultural heritage will facilitate delivery of the ECOC. The bid includes Galway city and the surrounding rural areas and islands.

The ECOC programme structure has six strands within the "Making Waves" theme: Wave; Tucla: Surf, Splanc, Swell and Perfect Storm.

The proposed operating budget is €45.750m of which €35.650m is for programme expenditure.

The panel recognised the ambition of the region in developing its cultural and social offers. It is already a UNESCO City of Film and is bidding for the European Region of Gastronomy in 2018 and the European Youth Capital in 2019. The bidbook did not explain how these titles (assuming success) would relate to the ECOC and how they might impact on the admittedly underdeveloped managerial competences in the region.

The panel appreciated the enthusiasm of the presentation team which complemented the extensive consultation and listening process. The team continued in this vein during the Q&A indicating ability to on-board take new ideas and respond to sometimes critical comments.

The cultural strategy clearly sets out the objectives for culture in the regional development. There were several interesting approaches including the "Galway 2020 Book of Stories". The challenges facing city/rural areas is an European issue although the panel was less clear how the ECOC was going to address this at a European rather than regional level. The bid preparation did not seem to have sought out similar areas in Europe for learning and partnership as would be expected at this stage. The panel recognised the clear role the ECOC would play within the cultural strategy and the interlinking within the strategy of foundations for the ECOC.

The programme is based on a clear and coherent strategy. The range and diversity of projects is well set out for this stage of the competition. There were some imaginative ideas (eg Hy Brasil).

The panel noted several ambitious aspirations in the proposed programme: 50% of the projects in the rural areas; every project to have a European partner; streaming of all events and activities. At this stage however the panel was not clear on how these were to be achieved.

The panel was impressed with the “Fuinneog/Window on the World” project, a virtual ECOC. This has the potential to be an innovative aspect of an ECOC (along with the programme being developed in Matera2019 who have had an online TV station for several years). At this stage the project appears to have more a dissemination focus rather than artistic content, which needs to be developed in the programme. The cooperation with IT companies is only at a first stage which gave the panel some uncertainty on the feasibility of the project. Many possible partners were listed in the project outlines, but their role in the cultural and artistic programme was not clear. The Gilgamesh project provides a “fil rouge” through the year.

The panel felt that the poetically designated “Making Waves” was an apt overarching theme but six strands of a programme may be difficult to market to people; most ECOCs tend to run 3 or 4 themes with a degree of clarity.

The panel felt that the European Dimension was the least developed part of the bid. It was covered in only one page of the bidbook and did not set out a comprehensive strategy to meet the three elements of the criterion. The panel noted that the “impact score” attached to European engagement, in the risk analysis, was low; as this is central to an ECOC a maximum score is more appropriate.

As noted above the aspiration to have a European partner in every project was not elaborated; this has proven difficult to achieve, especially where open calls are envisaged. There were potentially strong areas for development in a European context: culture in rural areas, the Irish language (which deserves more than the Jam Jar project), maritime villages etc.

The bid has the clear support at political and executive levels (and the business community).

The city and region have the proven capacity to manage one-off large scale events; it needs to show it can develop this for a year-long major programme in addition to the normal cultural offer. Most ECOCs have in excess of 500 events over and above their normal cultural offer. The panel has concerns over the ability of the region (including in the rural areas with 50% of the programme) to manage a venture of this magnitude and gave importance to the capacity

building programme to upscale the cultural management in the region. This needs to be outlined in more detail.

The bid noted that retaining skilled people was a main challenge for the region and this capacity building is a key element in seeking to retain talent. The panel appreciated the interesting proposal to create a network for city creative hubs and considered this may need to be associated within the capacity building strategy. The panel also noted the risk that tourist accommodation may be a constraint in an ECOC year.

The panel appreciated the well set out analysis of the consultation and engagement activities. During the presentation the Galway team said that the discussions went beyond marketing and information giving about the ECOC and went into proposals for the programme although this was not clear in the bidbook.

The overall proposed budget is sound at this stage. The panel noted the equal funding from the city/county with that from the national government which is a healthy balance. Of particular note was the agreement of the local business community to an increase in the business rate, on the condition it is used for the ECOC. This is an exceptional statement of intent and support.

The panel felt that the projected wages and overheads component of the budget is well below the levels achieved (rather than planned in bidbooks) in recent ECOCs (closer to 15-18% rather than 10%).

The governance of the ECOC is yet to be finalised which led to uncertainty on the panel. It was not clear where decisions would be taken and in particular it was uncertain on the authority of artistic director who needs final authority on the artistic programme (subject to the vision and programme in the final bidbook). The panel also questioned the rather late timing for the recruitment of the artistic director.

The panel recognised the ambition and drive to use culture in the development of the region. This is clearly articulated and the role of the ECOC within the overall strategy is clearly set out. There is an undoubted passion behind the project. The programme outline at this stage is sound but is let down by a weak exposition of the European Dimension beyond cultural partnership; more is expected at this stage. There is a strong starting ambition of innovation. The capacity building programme will be crucial and needs further elaboration and costing. The governance proposals need a rethink.

## **Limerick**

Limerick's bid is formed around "Multiplicity". This concept emerged from research by the University of Limerick Intelligence Unit Culture Lab working with young researchers and the wider community. It recognises the multiple Limericks which now co-exist. Limerick's cultural strategy 2015-2030 is

embedded in the regional development plan. The strategy has three strands and nine embedded ambitions. The strands are culture and capacity; the nature of the city and Limerick as a Living Lab. The cultural vision of the strategy shapes the bid for the ECOC title. The ECOC itself has three values: integration, innovation and imagination. The bidbook links these to the appropriate strands of the cultural strategy.

The proposed operating budget for the ECOC is €35m of which €24.718m is earmarked for the programme expenditure.

The panel acknowledged the long term and comprehensive nature of the cultural strategy. The presentation team put this into context by pointing out that several years ago Limerick was a "broken city" bypassed by the boom years of the "Celtic Tiger". By hosting the Irish National City of Culture title in 2014 the city had boosted the self-esteem of citizens and demonstrated the importance of culture in the progressive development of the city. It had shown its capacity to manage a year-long arts festival. The panel was less convinced that the approach to the ECOC, which requires a strong European dimension, was sufficiently different from approach taken for Limerick2014. It would have been important to hear more about the concrete legacies of this year and how the results of the year would be built upon, especially as there had been two formal external impact evaluations.

The cultural strategy has a wide and comprehensive list of indicators and targets set over a long time period. The panel appreciated the direction these legacy issues were taking but was uncertain on the direct role and added value the ECOC would have in achieving many of the targets and was concerned that few related to the European and international nature of an ECOC.

The proposed programme was outlined in the bidbook. It is based around the three values of integration, innovation and imagination. The panel welcomed the strong emphasis on creating residencies in a wider than usual range of sectors. The bid outlined a strong development of the individual creative industry sectors which could be worked up into a more strategic approach for the creative industries.

The panel felt that the programme had many individual strong points within an uncertain overall artistic vision (the three values are rather general and can apply to virtually all cultural activities). The panel would expect a greater international focus with more co-curation and co-production at this stage of the bid. The more successful ECOCs have elements which go beyond the local (and national) audience. The panel did not see strong evidence at this stage of possible events of a high artistic excellence in the programme which would do this. Consequently the panel was uncertain how the programme would be attractive to international visitors beyond the normal tourists.

The proposed programme includes projects with international partners funded from the competitive Creative Europe programme and the panel shared the bid team's hope that many would be successful.

The bidbook set out the intention to develop exhibitions on topics including land, sea, community and industry. The panel would expect to see more detailed information on these exhibitions, including their international partners in the second stage. The panel noted that in a city with over 50% under the age of 30 there was a desire to have an "age friendly city". This, along with several other themes and ideas in the bidbook has a wider European interest and forms the basis for more detailed international partnership opportunities.

The panel felt that the programme outlined in the bidbook lacked a degree of decisive innovation, partly in the digital arena. It was under-developed at this stage of the bid.

A number of cultural infrastructure projects were outlined in the bidbook; whilst it was clear that these positive developments are consistent with the cultural strategy it was less clear which ones would directly be utilised by the ECOC programme itself.

The European Dimension highlights many existing partnerships; these form a good foundation for subsequent development but the panel did not see a major step change. An aim of an ECOC is to build new links, new partnerships and to extend the international nature of the cultural offer in a city. The European Dimension is a noticeable difference between a national city of culture and an ECOC which has a more international emphasis both in its programme and ambition. The panel would have expected to see a central element where citizens of Limerick would increase their awareness of the diversity of cultures in Europe as well as integration with the cultures of the "new Irish" in the city.

The panel noticed the strong support for the bid from the political parties and the Chief Executive and welcomed the Charter of Cohesion signed by many stakeholders.

The bidbook described an extensive programme of consultation with many interesting formats including the "Kitchen Table" approach of small meetings. The panel welcomed the work with schools. It gained experience in 2014 on how to engage with citizens, beyond being spectators and audience. It was less clear of the impact these consultations had with the projected programme.

The proposed operating budget of €35m is, in general terms, adequate at this stage. The panel considered the combined contribution of the city and region at 24% of total income to be rather low and did not reflect the degree of support and commitment set out in the bidbook. The panel notes the proposed private sector funding at 18% is ambitious for an ECOC (none have achieved this level) although the presentation team was optimistic. The panel was concerned that

there was no funding set aside for 2021. There is a substantial amount of work required in the year after an ECOC, including evaluations and legacy hand-overs.

The progressive ramp up of the expenditure facilitates an incremental approach to programming (which was less evident in the programme section of the bidbook). This may offset the recent decline in the cultural budget of the city

The panel noted the different contributions from the national government in tables 6.2.2 and 6.2.5. The idea of the "Round-Up" funding approach in the retail and hotel sectors is an innovative step for an ECOC.

The panel considered the proposed 10% for wages, overheads and administration to be low in the light of experience (rather than plans) of recent ECOCs which tend towards the 15-18% level.

The panel welcomed the reassurance that the Director of the cultural programme will have the final say in the artistic content of the programme (subject to the final bidbook and finances).

The panel noted the independence of the special purpose company although raised the question that it may be overbalanced at Board level with institutional members. There was also a concern about the relationship of the Board to an umbrella Limerick2030 committee of the Council and how this may compromise the independence of the ECOC organisation.

Overall the panel was impressed with the commitment to a long term cultural strategy as a core element of the city, and regional, development. The goals for 2030 with building infrastructure, new developments such as the Troy Studios are ambitious. The consultation and citizens engagement has been conducted widely and openly. Limerick's successful national city of culture programme in 2014 could form the basis for a successful ECOC. The panel consider that the programme as outlined needs considerable development with a particular emphasis on the European Dimension criterion.

### **Waterford, on behalf of the Three Sisters**

The three cities of Waterford, Wexford and Kilkenny have come together in a partnership under the banner "Three Sisters" to bid for the ECOC. Formally, to abide by article 4.1 of the Decision, Waterford is the lead city.

The bid is presented under the theme of "Currents of Culture". The Three Sisters seek to be a European pioneer for peripheral and relatively rural regions as they explore new and radical ways of working. The cities in the region have their own cultural strategies. Now they are coming together to develop a shared cultural strategy 2016-2025 for approval in early 2016. This will incorporate existing strategies and develop a new regional model for cultural partnership. There will be four pillars: festival development and innovation; creative and cultural economy, social contract for wellbeing, and urban and rural regeneration.

The ECOC is a key element in the cultural strategy; it is seen as a catalyst for change in a semi-rural region underperforming in many key economic and social indicators. The proposed ECOC programme has the primary, if over-wordy, theme of “Re-imagining the possibility of the rural, non-metropolitan region” with two connecting themes “Cumar” (the Irish word for co-operation) and “Arrivals” (as a region past present and future). This has a sound and clear narrative for developing the concept for the ECOC project.

The proposed operating budget is €31m of which €22.9m is earmarked for programme expenditure.

The bid is innovative for an ECOC in the way it is from three smaller cities working in an equal partnership. The panel recognised the ambition of the three relatively small cities to work together as a single enterprise. The challenges they face in a semi-rural context are shared by many similar areas across the European Union. The willingness to change was evident in the presentation. The ECOC acts as a pioneer project in bringing the three cities into a closer working relationship which may well extend into other sectors including tourism, social cohesion and others sectors where culture is now an established component. Should the Three Sisters succeed in their bid, they would renew the institution of ECOC in a way that would allow smaller and smaller towns to become part of it

The proposed programme concept is based around cultural excellence, an improved caring and sharing culture and to embed culture and creativity across the economy. This was strongly put across in the presentation and Q&A. The programme is set out by season with an indicative listing of projects. Much of the programme is based around existing festivals and institutions. There is a move to establish better regional coordination between the existing cultural offer. There is a strong underlying emphasis on quality.

The panel appreciated the professionalism of the bid approach and the intention to upgrade the existing offer. However one of the requirements of an ECOC is that the programme is significantly different to an enhanced “business as usual” and here the bid appears weaker and needs significant development.

The theme of “collaboration” is more of a method rather than a theme. There is a strong creative industry segment in the programme. The panel appreciated the proposal to act as a bridge between European organisations and the US market where festivals in the Three Sisters have strong connexions. There are several promising strands in development including culture in health and wellbeing, a region of high technology and innovation and a sharing economy.

The panel considered the proposed European Dimension in the programme to be underdeveloped at this stage of the competition. The outline of the programme indicates a range of visiting European artists for events. It is less strong on projects with co-curation or co-production. There is an aspiration to create 1,000 new collaborations but the panel was uncertain how this ambitious objective

would be realised. There are many topics in the bid book which lend themselves to deeper co-operation with similar areas in Europe and a reaching out to those areas would enhance the programme. It was unclear how people in the region would increase their understanding and awareness of the diversity of cultures in Europe beyond being audiences and spectators for performances and exhibitions. The outreach strategy did not ensure how to raise the European profile of this region and how to communicate this new “Three Sisters” brand in a clear way.

The bid has strong party political and executive support. The panel was reassured that the financial contributions from the three administrations would not be used to create three parallel programmes but would be pooled into a single coherent programme. The regional cultural sector has shown it can support major festivals and events but the bid does not elaborate on how, in addition to this extensive offer the region has the managerial capacity for an additional 500+ events in a typical ECOC.

The bidbook outlined a comprehensive consultation process with the local communities. Over 2,000 ideas have been generated; a mobile “Culture Cabin” has given the bid increased visibility in the region. The panel noted the mapping of the cultural and creative sectors (over 300 businesses) as a sound foundation for development. There are good plans to engage with schools, with a noted emphasis on new migrant and refugee communities. The plans for the volunteer programme are clear at this stage.

The proposed operating budget of €31m is sound. The panel noted the relatively low contribution from the three cities at 24% compared to the 48% from national government. This shows less commitment that is evident in the policy sections of the bid. Although at this stage detailed financial plans are optional the panel noted that the timetable for spending was overbalanced towards the 2020 year itself; most ECOCs have a considerable spend in the prior year as multi-year projects, rather than one-off events, become underway.

The proposed governance and management structures are sound starting points although the panel noted that the plans for the Board to meet monthly may indicate an executive rather than strategic role. The panel expressed concern about the role of the artistic director, who should have final say on the artistic content (subject to the artistic vision and projects outlined in the final bidbook and finance).

Overall the panel recognised the ambition of the three administrations to work together and to use culture as one of the drivers for change in the region. The bid is founded on the excellence of the existing cultural offer. The bid team have benefitted from a sound and widespread consultation process. The diverse team presenting the bid convinced the panel both with their enthusiasm and consistency. The proposed programme has strengths, notably in creative industry sector and in enhancing the existing festivals. There are promising

proposals in the schools sector. It needs more development breaking out of the current cultural offers, to meet the criterion of a special programme for the year rather than an enhanced current offer. The European Dimension has not been developed as far as the panel would expect at this stage; the three strands of the criterion are less evident in the proposed programme. The panel has concerns over the balance between national and local funding.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations apply to all three shortlisted candidates. The panel will expect significant changes in the final bidbooks to reflect these recommendations.

The panel consider that all three cities need to develop their bids for the final selection in order to reach the required level of quality for such a demanding event as an ECOC. There is a considerable step-change between proposals at pre-selection stage and those at final selection.

The shortlisted candidates are advised to study carefully the six criteria in the Decision and the comments in the assessments above.

A study of the evaluations of recent (since 2013) ECOCs may also be of value. These are available on the European Commission's ECOC pages.

## **General**

The bid-book at final selection becomes the de facto contract for the designated city; it sets out the artistic vision and the key objectives, projects, directions, financing and management of the programme. Close concurrence with the bidbook is a factor when the panel will recommend the payment of the Melina Mercouri prize.

In the final selection bidbook candidates must cover all the questions in Annex 1 (the "application form") in the call for applications. There are extended questions, compared to pre-selection, on the proposed programme and the financial plans.

On a general note the panel recommends that the three cities (and Dublin) develop a joint co-operation strategy between themselves to use the opportunity presented by the ECOC in Ireland in 2020 to project, connect and interact on behalf of the country and its EU partners.

## **ECOC and Cultural Strategy**

All candidate cities have recently developed wide-ranging cultural strategies. These were outlined in the bidbooks. There was less information on priorities within the strategy and how resources will be changed over the next few years (rather than changes in the total budget allocated to culture).

A city's cultural strategy will normally be wider in scope than the objectives of an ECOC. Bidbooks should indicate more clearly which priorities of the broader cultural strategy the ECOC is seeking to contribute to.

The pre-selection bidbooks set out in general terms the objectives of why a city is seeking the title. The panel would expect a more focussed (and shorter) explanation which can link to the programme vision, themes, the programme, and through evaluation, to the outcomes in the subsequent legacy. An ECOC is a transformational opportunity for a city.

There was a tendency in the evaluation sections of the bidbooks to list many indicators. The final bidbook should focus on the **priority** indicators for the ECOC (rather than those for the entire cultural strategy). One of the priority areas should be how the ECOC will meet the three elements of the European Dimension criterion.

Consideration should be given to the monitoring arrangements during the ramp-up period, 2016-2019, which can inform management on a timely manner to take action. Shortlisted cities may wish to involve management consultancies in addition to the more academic approach currently proposed.

### **European Dimension**

The panel felt that this criterion was considerably under-developed in all bidbooks. At this stage the proposals are too inward looking in their local context in the city, the region and Ireland. The panel would wish to see a greater deepening and widening of programmes to ensure a more relevant European dimension. That a city is in Ireland, in Europe, has a vibrant existing cultural offer and will market itself in Europe is not in itself a strong interpretation of the European dimension. The European dimension has a two-way direction. An equal focus is on seeking to broaden the understanding and awareness of the city's own citizens on the diversity of cultures in Europe and linking through cultural and other projects with citizens in other countries. It is this focus on other cultures which primarily differentiates an ECOC from a national city of culture. An ECOC offers the opportunity for a city and its citizens to learn from others in an open way. The panel expects to see a significantly increased focus on European partnerships (co-productions, co-curations as well as visiting artists/performers) and multi-year projects addressing issues of concern cross Europe, appropriate to each city's strategy.

The timing of the competitions for the 2020 titles has meant that contacts between **candidates in Ireland and Croatia** have been less than usual. The ECOC in Croatia will be announced in time for a more extensive partnership to be outlined in the Irish bidbooks. The panel would also expect to see further collaborations between ECOCs already designated for 2016-2019.

One of the elements of the criteria for the ECOC title is the ability to attract **visitors from the rest of Europe**. The panel would expect to see proposed

ideas in the ECOC programme in 2020 (i.e. distinct from the normal tourist offers of the city and region) which meet this criterion.

All three shortlisted cities raised their links with the USA. They have considerable potential to enhance an international dimension of the ECOC project, to build cultural bridges between continents.

### **Cultural and Artistic programme**

The focus of the final selection is the **operating programme** between 2016, when the ECOC will be formally designated and, in particular, the ECOC year of 2020. A city's previous cultural history and heritage and its recent and current cultural offer, may form a basis for this programme but plays no part in the decision. The panel will expect to see considerably more detail on the programme and its projects. The three cities should set out their artistic vision, the programme and projects more clearly; differentiating between partners who have indicated firm interest and those who are still only potential or possible partners. An approximate budget should be shown for each major project for the panel to understand the relative balance of projects in the programme.

The panel recommends a more focussed and detailed approach digital cultural content (not just social media promotions and inter-actions) as integral parts of their programme.

Information on urban development and infrastructure programmes, cultural heritage restoration projects and new cultural premises is useful as background and context at pre-selection. The final selection will focus on **the capital projects which directly impact on the programme activities** (e.g. a new cultural centre in a restored building which becomes a focal point for community arts projects contained in the programme). A timeline for these projects would be useful.

### **Capacity to deliver**

Candidates should indicate how their proposed structure is independent of possible party political changes between 2016 and 2020 and enjoys the support of all political parties in the participating municipalities and regions. The panel would expect that the relevant councils and executives would have re-asserted their support for the candidature by formally agreeing the final bidbook including the financial forecasts and commitments.

All three shortlisted cities explained their capacity to manage large one-off cultural events. In recent years ECOCs have included over 500 events in addition to the normal cultural offer in their title-year. The panel expects more information on the managerial capacity in the city/region to manage the depth and range of an ECOC.

## Outreach

The **audience development** programme is expected to be much further developed in the final bidbooks including online and offline measures and channels for all identified target groups. Special focus should be dedicated to those audiences which are more difficult to reach but being crucial for a new “cultural climate” in an ECOC city (e. g. minorities, people temporarily in the city, the “new Irish”). The bidbooks should cover the participation of schools, youth groups, volunteers etc in the city.

The panel expects the three cities to publish their final bidbooks on their websites both for public accountability and engagement. The bidbooks should be online shortly before the final selection meeting.

## Management

If projects are planned to be funded from competitive EU programmes (e.g. Creative Europe) this should be indicated.

The **membership of governing boards** should be explained, with post holders (or positions) and the method of appointment.

The **General and Artistic/Cultural Directors** play a key role in all ECOCs. The selection, preferably through an open international call, of these posts before the candidates’ appearance at the final selection meeting, will be to their advantage. This is especially important for the Artistic Director as, unlike many such appointments, the artistic vision is already set out in the bidbook. The same applies if a candidate proposes a collective artistic leadership. It is acknowledged that the appointments may be conditional on the outcome of the competition.

The final bidbooks should clearly indicate how potential **capital investments crucial for the ECOC** (those mentioned in the capacity to deliver criteria above) will be managed (management structures, state-of-play related to the EU-ESI-Funds such as the connection with the relevant Operational Programme, time line and public procurement).

The planned staffing arrangements from 2016 to 2021 should be outlined including secondments, interns and volunteers.

## **Signed**

Steve Green (Chair)

Sylvia Amann

Cristina Farinha

Ulrich Fuchs

Jordi Pardo

Anton Rombouts

Aiva Rozenberga

Pauli Sivonen

Agnieszka Wlazel

Suzana Žilič Fišer (vice-chair)

## **Dublin**

**December 2015**