



Rijeka European Capital of Culture 2020

Third Monitoring Meeting

Report by the ECOC Expert Panel

Galway, October 2019

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
Directorate Culture and Creativity
Unit D2

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Introduction

This report follows the meeting in Galway on 15 October 2019 between the Expert panel (the “panel”) and Rijeka, one of the two European Capitals of Culture (“ECOC”) in 2020¹. Rijeka was designated as the European Capital of Culture 2020 in Croatia in July 2016 by the relevant Croatian authorities based on the recommendation included in the panel’s selection report². The Rijeka 2020 bid-book is available on the organisation’s website³. The first monitoring meeting was held in Brussels on 8 March 2017⁴ and the second monitoring meeting was held in Rijeka on 28-29 June 2018⁵. The third monitoring report is addressed to the Rijeka 2020 organisation (RIJEKA 2020 LLC) and will be published on the European Commission’s website⁶.

Attendance

The panel members:

Sylvia Amann, Cristina Farinha and Agnieszka Wlazel (Rapporteur), appointed by the European Parliament 2018-20

Paulina Florjanowicz (Chair), Dessislava Gavrilova and Pierre Sauvageot, appointed by the Council of the EU 2019-21

Beatriz Garcia, Jiří Suchánek and Suzana Žilič Fišer, appointed by the European Commission 2017-2019

Alin Adrian Nica, nominated by the European Committee of the Regions 2019-2021

For Rijeka 2020:

Vojko Obersnel - Mayor of the City of Rijeka

Ivan Šarar - Head of the Department of Culture, City of Rijeka

Emina Višnić - CEO and programme director, RIJEKA 2020

Slaven Tolj - Artistic Director, RIJEKA 2020

¹ The European Capitals of Culture action is governed by Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council for the titles 2020 to 2033, which provides for three formal monitoring meetings between designated cities and the panel. See at:

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG

² See selection report at:

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2020-croatia-report_en.pdf

³ See bid-book at:

<http://www.rijeka2020.eu/rijekas-bid-book-for-the-title-of-european-capital-of-culture-2020/>

⁴ See first monitoring report at:

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/library/ecoc-2020-rijeka-first-monitoring_en.pdf

⁵ See second monitoring report at:

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2020-rijeka-second-monitoring_en.pdf

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/capitals-culture_en.html

Irena Kregar Šegota - Partnerships and Communications Director, RIJEKA 2020

Iva Grego - Operations Director, RIJEKA 2020

Dražen Nikolić - Brand Management Consultant, RIJEKA 2020

Also, in attendance were observers from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) and from the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

Report from Rijeka 2020

The RIJEKA 2020 Organisation submitted a detailed and comprehensive written report in advance of the meeting. The report outlined the activities of the Organisation in preparation for the ECoC 2020.

At the meeting, RIJEKA 2020 made an in depth presentation, which included the following points:

- Vojko Obersnel, Mayor of Rijeka, underlined that Rijeka 2020 ECoC is a strategic project not only for the City administration but also for the whole of Croatia. Consequently, the project continues to receive full support – financial and logistical – on every level of territorial governance, including a strong national political support from the Government of Croatia. The city already observed an increased interest of national and international tourists as well as investors. The capacities of private accommodations increased by 40% last year. Financial, logistical and infrastructural goals and requirements are met, and the city and its partners are ready to deliver the ECoC. Moreover, the team is now building strategies for future developments based on the ECoC legacy.
- Ivan Šarar, Head of the Department of Culture of the City of Rijeka, presented the increased capacities of Rijeka that were achieved thanks to ECoC preparations. He underlined the upgraded capacities of the cultural sector in terms of skills, knowledge, visibility and internationalisation – such upgrades are perceived as the biggest legacy of the ECoC.

The infrastructure plans have been exceeded and investment in infrastructure is above €40m. It was stressed that the largest part of the infrastructural investments regards the new cultural quarter Benčić, where the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMSU) has already been opened (first phase of the project), to be followed by the consecutive openings of the Sugar Palace (March 2020), the Children's House as a unique – and the most important – building for long-term legacy (second phase), and finally to be rounded by the new City Library building to be opened beginning 2021 as an additional infrastructural investment that was not planned in the bid-book.

Although the Galeb yacht restoration will start later than planned, it is expected that it will be finished in December 2020. The touristic traffic already doubled thanks to the ECoC title. Mr Šarar underlined that such a successful progress was possible thanks to an ECoC team that remained mostly unchanged since the selection phase. The development/amendment of the post-ECoC cultural strategy has already started.

- Subsequently, Iva Grego, Operations Director, presented the operational budget. The budget is slightly lower than planned but, according to the team, this change has not affected the quality of the ECoC programme. As the income coming from the County has decreased to 1/3 of what was initially planned, two strategies for mitigation were introduced: the number of projects in the region decreased and some projects were co-financed directly by the local cities and municipalities participating in the projects. Additionally, the initial plans to attract EU funding were too ambitious compared to the concrete opportunities to participate in EU funded projects. The majority of grant applications, prepared by the partners with the ECoC team's support for EU funding, were successful. From the €2.3m plans to attract private sponsorship, only 20% is currently secured. Major negotiations, based on the funding of programme elements, are however on the way. The total operational budget would be €26.33m.
- The general structure of the cultural and artistic programme remains as originally planned. Rijeka implemented pilot projects from the start of the implementation phase so capacities of the sector have been gradually developed. This was a strategic decision aiming at rooting the programme in the local communities, Rijeka and the regional cultural scene.

70% of the programme elements are confirmed and Rijeka worked with 250 partners from 40 countries. A short description of key programme elements from diverse art forms followed and a new programme strand "Beyond flagships" was introduced.

- Irena Kregar Šegota, Partnerships and Communications Director, focused on legacy issues regarding partnerships. For example, the ECoC team is developing tools and platforms for people to participate before, during and after the ECoC. In this regard, she mentioned the examples of the 27 Neighbourhood project, RiHub and the volunteer programmes that were systematically developed. International conferences and sessions linked with the upcoming EU Croatian Presidency, ECoC programme lines and other events and networks are under preparation. Monitoring and evaluation open source tools should become an important legacy on the European level. A three-year long longitudinal study is underway, with all the data and new methodologies available online for further use.
- Dražen Nikolić, Brand Management Consultant, presented the outlines of the new communication strategy. To develop the audience, an audience profiling in connection with the programme was created. The focus of communication is on a catch territory of some 750 km around Rijeka. The main target of this phase is international audience and the plan is to attract 30% local and 70% national and international audiences. The main tactics used are content marketing and affiliate marketing (used for the first time in Croatia for such projects). The signature of contracts with media partners is on the way. Furthermore, negotiations are in the final phase with major ticketing providers. Additionally, a national and international promoting road show has already started. The team is also developing sponsorship relations and integrating sponsors as partners of the programme and "corporate artists".

Discussion

During the discussion, the panel sought clarification on a number of issues, raised questions and offered experience and advice. Topics discussed included the following:

- The panel enquired about the development of the infrastructural projects, especially the Galeb yacht and Benčić complex, their role in the ECoC programme, their post-ECoC use and the entity that will take charge of their post-ECoC maintenance and programming.
- About Galeb, Ivan Šarar informed the panel that the City is currently finishing a public procurement process and that, with its permanent exhibition managed by the City Museum of Rijeka, it will not host specific ECoC projects. The City planned consecutive openings of other buildings in the Benčić complex during 2020 and beginning of 2021 (the City Library). All buildings are - and will be - managed by the institutions that occupy them.
- The panel offered advice in that matter, underlining that, in case of delays, the team should clearly communicate about it to manage the inhabitants' expectations.
- The panel asked about the 27 Neighbourhoods project and its long-term capitalisation and about the future of the RIJEKA 2020 Company.
- As far as the 27 Neighbourhoods legacy is concerned, the project is considered as an organic building of social capital and a methodology of facilitation and motivation for local communities, which are a key ECoC legacy. For the period post-2020, local and county authorities are expected to support it, also financially. The urban agglomeration of Rijeka has also a good chance to get EU funding and increasing the local communities' international cooperation is part of the capacity building in this regard.
- As far as the future of the ECoC company is concerned, this is still an open case. Several options are currently explored, for example, the Benčić complex could be managed as one cultural district and the company could take it on board. Another idea is that part of the ECoC 2020 team could take over the RiHub management. The company may therefore continue existing, but with a reduced staff (which is currently of 67 people). In addition, a new multidisciplinary Centre for Urban Transition, Architecture and Urbanism - DeltaLab - has been established at the University of Rijeka, as a long-term attempt at closing the gap between research, education and practical work in the community. Consequently, team members may not only find new positions in the cultural sector but will also become valuable resources in the academic sector.
- The panel appreciated the positive energy of the team that is also translated into the communication strategy. Moreover, it highlighted the opportunity to bring the agenda for culture to the forefront, as Croatia will take over the EU Presidency at the beginning of 2020, just when the new European Commission enters into office.

- The team answered that links with the upcoming EU Presidency had already been established. The Presidency team will communicate about ECoC projects, and some ECoC projects will be part of the Presidency programme – e.g. art travelling abroad. The values of culture will be communicated throughout the year. The ECoC team, in cooperation with the Croatian Ministry, is working on having the presence of high-ranking officials at the opening ceremony. The Session of the Ministers of Culture of South East Europe will be organised just before the opening of the ECoC so it is expected that guests would stay for the ceremony. Formal invitations to the EU institutions will be sent in the first week of December, but informal conversations will start earlier, as soon as new EU Commissioners are announced. Moreover, in April 2020, a second ECoCs' Mayors conference and a meeting of the European Committee of the Regions will take place in Rijeka, giving additional opportunities to put cultural development issues in the political arena.
- Subsequently, the opening ceremonies were discussed, and the panel mentioned it was important to have events taking place in January to facilitate pre-opening communication.
- The panel sought clarification on sponsorship issues and received more details and satisfactory examples from the sponsorship strategy. It was also mentioned that Rijeka expected to increase the number of visitors by ca. 25% (ca. one million visitors) in 2020 and planned to reach 5 million people online.
- The approach to monitoring and evaluation was discussed. The team provided more information about the tender and selection of the consortium that will run those activities. The selected consortium (composed of six organisations) will manage the data, publicly present it every year and make it available through a website. As social cohesion is important in the evaluation agenda, the consortium is developing new methodologies to measure social change and impact with a qualitative approach.
- The panel asked about contracting details, the state of play and issues included in the contracts with organisations delivering the artistic programme. The team answered that the procedure of signing contracts was well underway and should be finalised in a month. The contracts with ten major partners are already signed or about to be signed, while contracts with other partners are almost ready. All contracts include financial provisions, contribution to reporting and communication, protocol, procedures with volunteers, ticket selling system use obligation and an annex with a list of activities and more detailed budget. The other organisations sign standardised general contracts with yearly annexes. Some other contracts e.g. coproduction contracts with local authorities and artists are trilateral.
- Details of the centralised ticketing system that is under development were discussed. Although 70% of projects will have free entry, the system will serve not only the purpose of events' ticket sales but also as a tool of collaboration with tour operators. The system will enable the sale of packages with accommodation and discounts for restaurants. It will also help to run some marketing/audience

development campaigns – e.g. “bring a friend” action. There will be different pricing for the citizens of Rijeka and for other guests.

- The strategy for tourism development, its targets and aims, was discussed. Although the City does not have the legal authority to manage how its inhabitants rent rooms, it hopes that over-tourism and gentrification will not happen in Rijeka. The city has been working on a strategy to make Rijeka a touristic destination based on culture and heritage for 10 years. The estimation for the whole region is 4 million visits, meaning an increase of one million compared to the current level. The team is careful with the size of events and their profile.
- The panel sought further information about the reason of the County’s smaller financial involvement. It received details about the reasons for the delay and decrease of the budget as well as the ways those problems were overcome.
- The panel asked whether there were any artistic challenges and received assurance that there were no problems with artistic leadership. The vision, values and structures of the programme have been well prepared. The artistic leadership is spread among the various partners and it is not focused on just an individual and centralised curatorship. This aspect is treated as part of the ECoC legacy.
- The panel was interested in the archaeological project on island Rab and received assurance that the issue would be addressed with the expected sensitivity and in close collaboration with experts from the Conservation Department at the Croatian Ministry of Culture. Moreover, the panel received the information that NEMO (Network of European Museum Organisations) would also organise its conference during the ECoC year.
- The panel requested additional details about audience engagement projects, especially regarding current non-audiences. The team has worked on sustainable solutions: capacity building of the culture sector in this respect (through the Classroom project) and the production of a toolkit for the sector. The team will also create audience journeys and link programme elements for “upselling” and cross-promotion. Other elements mentioned were supporting co-creation and accessibility (e.g. Porto Etno project with ethnic minorities), collaboration with schools and programme elements that included different art forms, or gamified elements to enhance frequency of attendance. HR departments will be able to award their staff with tickets for events; there will be events in unexpected places to raise public interest. Audience development plans are being developed in many local organisations, which is a new achievement.
- The panel sought information about the relationship with the University. RIJEKA 2020 explained that there was a good and productive relationship. The Centre for Urban Transition, Architecture and Urbanism - DeltaLab - is an example of a sustainable connection. It is already a part of the ECoC legacy as a hybrid space set up at the Delta 5 building (run by the City of Rijeka), which will host programmes and various educational formats after 2020. It will also facilitate an innovative postgraduate specialist programme “Urban Studies”, already approved by the University of Rijeka Senate and pending license by the Ministry of Science

and Education. In addition, the Classroom programme is looked at as a possibility for a lifelong programme to be continued by the University.

- The panel asked about RiHub and the plans for social innovation and entrepreneurship. The team confirmed that civil initiatives are being developed. Civil servants are already participating in providing support for the development of citizens' projects and RiHub will become in that sense a one-stop-shop for civic initiatives in terms of administrative procedures.

Panel's deliberations

The panel acknowledges the great work carried out by Rijeka 2020 since its nomination and appreciates the progress being made, plans for the implementation phase and strategic approach to legacy issues. The positive results of the strong and long-term teamwork are also clearly visible.

Rijeka 2020 can act as a positive example of how an ECoC can influence cultural development. The city fully embraced the opportunities arising from the European Capital of Culture title. The process has helped Rijeka create a new identity and establish stronger links with the region and other parts of Croatia, as former competitors for the ECoC title (e.g. the cooperation with the City of Varaždin or with a large number of cultural institutions from Zagreb) are now joining the project. The strong support from the City and the independence of a professional, committed and stable team are important fundamentals of successful processes. The stable financial situation, which allows timely contracting, is part of the project's success as well. The panel congratulates the City of Rijeka and RIJEKA 2020 for an effective use of financial opportunities on the European level, which fostered the development of cultural infrastructure. The ECoC legacy goes beyond the city itself, and Rijeka, with its open and innovative evaluation scheme, may have an important legacy also on the European level.

The approach to communication and marketing is professional and well thought through. The panel noticed with content that the ECoC visual identity and branding may support and enhance the Rijeka vision. The panel however would like to suggest reviewing, reworking and clarifying the general ECoC message, to keep coherence between programme, communication and message that Rijeka wants to communicate to both local and European audiences.

The panel is impressed with the ECoC teamwork and its ability to positively cope with challenging situations. The team will now have to deal with the specific issues of the implementation phase. The panel would like to suggest reviewing the key staff's responsibilities and, possibly, shifting parts of those between team members. The operating ecosystem should also further support artistic leadership in the programme delivery. The future of the company is not yet clear, but some positive ideas are being developed at the moment. This issue should be decided and communicated as soon as possible to keep the morale of the team high during the whole ECoC implementation.

The professional support from the Ministry was also noticed and the fact that the ECoC year coincides with the upcoming Croatian Presidency of the EU provides an exceptional opportunity for the visibility of the city, the ECoC and culture at a European scale.

Based on the report submitted by RIJEKA 2020 as well as the hearing with the team, the panel considers that the conditions regarding the payment of the Melina Mercouri Prize, as specified in Article 14 of Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, are met. Consequently, the panel is pleased to propose to the European Commission that Rijeka 2020 receives the Melina Mercouri prize.

The panel would like to remind RIJEKA 2020 that, in line with Article 14, its marketing and communication strategy and its communication material have to clearly reflect the fact that the European Capital of Culture is a Union action, as well as that, in line with Article 16 of the same Decision, it will have to draw up its own evaluation report of the results of its ECoC year and transmit it to the European Commission by 31 December 2021.

The panel would like to thank RIJEKA 2020 and its partners for their commitment and looks forward to the successful implementation of its European Capital of Culture in Rijeka in 2020.

(signed) all panel's members

