



Selection of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2025 in Germany

**The Expert Panel's report
Selection Stage**

Virtual Meeting, October 2020

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Introduction

This is the report of the expert panel (the “panel”) for the selection phase of the competition for the European Capital of Culture in 2025 in Germany. The competition is a European Union initiative created in 1985.

On behalf of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz), the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States (Kulturstiftung der Länder) acts as the managing authority (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”)¹ and by the “Rules of procedure – Competition for the European Capital of Culture 2025 in Germany” (the “rules”) adopted by Kultusministerkonferenz and published on the website of the Kulturstiftung der Länder.²

A panel of 12 independent experts was established for the selection process, in line with Article 2 of the Rules. Ten members were appointed by the European Union institutions and bodies (European Parliament, Council, Commission and Committee of the Regions). The two German members of the panel were appointed by the Kultusministerkonferenz and the Federal Government of Germany, respectively.

The competition takes place in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and selection.

Pre-selection round

The managing authority issued a call for applications on September 24th, 2018. Eight applications were submitted by the closing date of September 30th, 2019 by: Chemnitz, Dresden, Gera, Hannover, Hildesheim, Magdeburg, Nürnberg, Zittau.

The panel met in Berlin on 10-12 December 2019 for the pre-selection meeting. The panel recommended inviting five cities (Chemnitz, Hannover, Hildesheim, Magdeburg and Nürnberg) to progress to the final selection stage. The panel’s report is published on the website of the Commission.³

The Chair of the Conference of the Ministers of Culture (Kulturministerkonferenz) accepted the panel’s recommendation and invited the five cities to submit revised applications with a deadline of 21 September 2020.

All cities submitted their revised applications (“bid-books”) by the deadline.

A delegation of the panel - Cristina Farinha, Paulina Florjanowicz, Dessislava Gavrilova, Barbara Mundel and Ulrich Raulff - took part in online city visits on 19-23 October 2020. They were accompanied by observers from the managing authority and the European Commission. The delegation reported back to the panel at the selection meeting.

¹ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG

² <https://www.kulturstiftung.de/das-nationale-auswahlverfahren/>

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/default/files/ecoc-2025-germany-preselection-report.pdf>

Panel Meeting

The panel met online on 26-28 October 2020. Since pre-selection, one of the three members of the panel designated by the European Commission has changed in accordance with Article 6, paragraphs 3 and 7, of the Decision. Representatives of the managing authority and the European Commission attended the meeting as observers. The observers took no part in the panel's deliberations or decision. All panel members signed a declaration of no conflict of interest and confidentiality.

At the selection hearings on 26-28 October, each candidate city, in alphabetical order, presented its case (in 30 minutes) and answered questions from the panel (in 60 minutes).

The Chair of the panel announced online the panel's recommendation at a press conference after the meeting on 28 October 2020 in the presence of the Chair of the Conference of the Ministers of Culture (Kulturministerkonferenz), the Head of the European Commission Representation in Germany and the Secretary-General of the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States.

National context

2025 will be the fourth time Germany hosts the "European Capital of Culture" after Berlin in 1988, Weimar in 1999 and Essen for the Ruhr in 2010. The criteria for an ECoC have changed considerably since then. They now embrace a deeper and wider scope of the role of culture in the city and European development. A particular new requirement is for a city to have a formal cultural strategy including the ECoC project. This ensures that the ECoC is an element in the progress of a city and not a one-off event. It therefore enhances the importance of sustainable legacy. The selection of an ECoC is based on the programme specifically set out for the ECoC year in the bid-book and not the current cultural offer in a city or "business as usual".

The panel recognised all bids as ambitious, reflecting different situations in their respective areas and demonstrating a considerable development between proposals at pre-selection stage and those at the final selection. The panel noted that all cities have used the opportunity of the bidding process to reinforce their cultural strategies as well as the role of culture in their overall socio-economic development. This is already a significant potential legacy of the ECoC competition. The panel encourages all candidates to continue with the development and implementation of their strategies.

Assessments of the candidates

In their assessment of the candidates, 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, as reflected in the call for submission of applications:

- Contribution to the long-term strategy of the city,
- European dimension,
- Cultural and artistic content,
- Capacity to deliver,
- Outreach,
- Management.

The panel emphasises that its assessments of the candidates were based on the proposed programme set out in the bid-book and presentation session. A city's history, its recent and current policies, and its cultural offer may form a basis for a programme but play no part in the selection process. In the commentaries that follow, the panel notes the main elements of its discussions during the selection meeting. In the case of the selected city, specific recommendations are made, in order to assist it in the implementation of the ECoC.

Chemnitz

The city of Chemnitz presents their second bid-book under the new slogan **"C the Unseen – European Makers of Democracy"**.

The City Council had already adopted in January 2019 its cultural strategy for 2018-2030 under the title of "Making Space for Culture". The ECoC role in the city's cultural development, to "uncover the creative makers" and build up a European community, is evident. More recently, the strategy has been adapted to the current challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, including the intention to build structural capacity in the area of, among others, digitisation. The panel considers this flexibility adequate. The proposal to build a digital platform "maker-space.eu" to merge digital and analogue dimensions, reach out to the wider European audience and become one of the key ECoC legacies is sound. The extra fund for digital pilot projects shows a commitment to support the sector in the current difficult times. Regarding capacity building, the "European Workshop for Culture and Democracy", including the "Academy of Autodidacts" and the "Festival Ateliers" extending to the Euro-Med area, as well as the "MBA for cultural and creative entrepreneurs", are extensive initiatives to bring people together and learn from each other. Overall, there are clear and welcomed connections between the ECoC project and the cultural strategy, which are well explained in the bid-book. The bid proposes to connect 24 surrounding municipalities and cities to the cultural region, which is sound. The strategic focus is placed on collaboration through thematic partnerships in cultural programming; and in the long term, uniting the region through a sustainable concept for cultural, creative and 'maker' tourism. Though promising, the latter is not consistently described. These steps are meant to form the basis for the future Regional Culture Strategy 2030, which are fine prospects. The plans for evaluation and monitoring are well connected with broader research until 2030 (i.e. The Chemnitz Monitor), involving the region and rightly integrated into a participatory environment for data collection and analysis, notably making use of a mobile app survey and gamification. The impact goals are all rightly aligned with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Chemnitz's intention to change the city (self-)image via building up wide trans-local communities of makers is promising, most notably with the wide ranging capacity-building programme planned within the "European Workshop for Culture and Democracy". Activating the "silent middle" is a relevant concept locally and European wise. The "Open European Process" exhibit is an interesting project that allows engaging in new dialogues over the city's recent terrorism history (National Socialist Underground) with peer cities. There are also valuable links to other partners such as ECoCs, with special emphasis on the cross-border region, including various links to partners from the Czech Republic and Poland, taking advantage of the triangle of former ECoCs, Wroclaw, Krakow and Pilsen. The association to Manchester, exploring both cities' textile industry heritage, is valuable

(project “European Manchester”). The capacity to attract international audiences is promising in view of the proposed makerspace platform connecting European makers, the concepts for diverse exhibitions, notably “Realism in the 1920s and 1930s” in Europe and “Edvard Munch”, as well as the “Purple Path”, a European art trail with young and international artists.

The cultural and artistic programme was radically changed from the preselection phase and rests on four renewed lines focusing on different areas and themes: 1/ “Eastern State of Mind”; 2/ “Generous Neighbours”; 3/ “Makers2”; and 4/ “It’s Moving!”. The concepts proposed have huge potential to be widely understood and meaningful, though the elaboration of the concept of makers is still limited at this stage. Similarly, the targeted category of the “silent middle” reveals a concept with great prospects and relevance locally and European wise, however missing a thorough diagnosis and refinement. The programme results from a sound bottom-up approach integrating local artists with international counterparts. The flagship project “3000 Garages” is praised for its openness and capacity to engage a diversity of citizens and visitors, though demanding and missing parallel monitoring and management plans. The long-term plans for creating an “Academy of Experimental Arts” (2027) as a hub for art, science and technology are providing good opportunities for further innovation and ECoC legacy. The articulation of local cultural heritage (most notably from former GDR) with new innovative interpretations is convincing, within projects such as “Object and Space” and “Monumental Art is Not Enough”. However, a wide European perspective in these projects is not clearly visible (for instance, one that would include partners from all over Europe). To approach Karl Marx’ philosophy, featured most especially in “Thinking Marx Globally”, is understandable in terms of reviewing the city’s cultural heritage, yet it is missing an in-depth analysis on the causes and effects of communism and the related role of philosophers and writers. The fact that each programme line is aligned with a capacity-building programme is an asset. Overall, however, the artistic vision that would link and give a more thoughtful sense and a wider international appeal to the various projects, though promising and potentially exciting, remains not fully elaborated yet.

The bid benefits from a strong political engagement at diverse levels. The newly constituted City Council in July 2020 confirms its support. The ECoC project also enjoys good involvement in the region and Saxony State levels. The infrastructures planned have the capacity to contribute to improve quality of life in the city, while, most notably, also providing better conditions for the cultural and creative sectors to operate.

The co-creation nature of several projects and activities, like the “The Parade of the Apple Trees” and “Public Spaces”, involving citizens and civil society organisations, makes the bottom-up approach convincing. Each of the four city departments is now equipped with a position for “citizen participation”, which reveals the importance civic engagement plays for the City. Initiatives such as the “The Friends of Chemnitz”, the volunteer programme and the approach via sports are also relevant to ensure wide participation. Accessibility is rightly a transversal concern of the programme, notably visible at the “European Dream Concert”, a music event that combines creative talents and the sensitivity of people with and without disabilities. The involvement of University students, youth and schools, working on intergenerational, inclusive and media skills projects is also sound. Interestingly, the strategy for audience development spans creative tourism with participatory activities in the region targeting both locals and visitors. Some ideas for audience development projects are

well noted, but an ECoC audience development strategy, especially as far as “the silent middle” is concerned, is not fully developed.

The proposed operating budget at € 60,780,000 provides a solid basis, though the contribution from the national Government, at € 24,500,000, seems too optimistic. The financial commitments for post-2025 have been reinforced since the pre-selection round, which is an asset for ensuring appropriate legacy. The EU funding strategy is broad and well detailed in the bid-book, and it includes specific training for the sector, which is of benefit. The private investment strategy is convincing. The estimated budget for infrastructures is consistent with the proposal (€ 30,500,000) and well linked to funding programme lines. The plans for the delivery structure are realistic. The proposed supervisory board is balanced, as it includes diverse levels of representation. The staffing plans are in general valid, but the organisational structure is not reflecting the extensive bottom-up nature of the programme. The contingency planning is reasonable. Finally, the marketing strategy is well aligned with the “makers” concept, which may serve as the basis for an interesting narrative European wise. The approach to social media, the media makers and the open mobile marketing are also strengths.

Conclusion

The panel finds that the intention to uncover and build up a European community of creative makers is based on a strong bottom-up process and that it is well inscribed into the city’s and regional cultural development strategy. The “maker-space.eu” platform and related prospects to build up a European community of makers is very promising and in line with the ECoC’s mission. The concepts proposed have huge potential to be widely understood and meaningful. However, the artistic vision of the programme does not clearly connect concepts and projects. There is a good base for a European narrative with potential to activate “the silent middle”. The participatory approach and associated wide-ranging capacity-building programme are important assets. The engagement and clear support at diverse territorial levels is very convincing. The long-term infrastructure and urban development investments are consistent and well linked with an exciting cultural programme that addresses the city’s challenges with the potential of a strong European resonance.

Hannover

The leitmotif of the Hannover 2025 bid is **“Agora of Europe - Normality is not an option”**. The city plans to involve the Hannover Region, consisting of 21 towns and municipalities.

The Cultural Development Plan (CDP) leading up to 2030 was approved by Hannover City Council in April 2020. However, the connections between the CDP document and the ECoC, as well as the strategic engagement of the City authorities and relationships with city and regional cultural institutions are not adequately presented. Those aspects may potentially impede the successful ECoC implementation, as some ECoC plans, such as, for example, the “Mobile Agora”, might ultimately be significantly altered (e.g. due to city urban development issues not yet discussed) or considered as a threat to the city’s regular cultural life (e.g. due to a drain in resources). Evaluation is professionally planned with adequate guiding

principles, a good qualitative angle and some innovative approaches. However, the ECoC impact indicators are too general. The “Upgrade Hannover” – a capacity-building programme committed to reciprocal learning of different sectors – is an interesting idea and an asset. The aim for the artistic projects to be environmentally, economically, socially and culturally sustainable is paramount and welcomed by the panel, but how this will be achieved is not explained. The long-term strategic approach and ECoC’s legacy for Hannover remains unclear.

The “Agora of Europe” concept is interesting *per se* with an immediate European resonance. The panel notices many compelling project ideas and imaginative city interventions. “Mobile Agora”, a moving festival centre with twelve “Spotlights”, and “Digital Agora” have their internal conceptual coherence, but they are not interlocked into a coherent artistic vision for the ECoC. Even if the principles developed for the projects’ selection are good, the substantial programme, which is explained through the formats of projects rather than their content, is not fully convincing. In the panel’s view, the ‘Normality is not an option’ manifesto remains on the level of a declaration rather than a basis for action. For example, the panel has doubts about the environmental and social sustainability of some projects and wonders why the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is not addressed when a focus on Planet Earth is planned. Moreover, putting risky projects in the spotlight may provoke resistance, which may in turn result in jeopardising stakeholders’ engagement with other interesting elements of the programme that are currently more in the backstage. The range and diversity of the activities included in the bid-book as well as the involvement of the local cultural and creative sectors are satisfactory; however, the engagement of the cultural institutions seems minimal, which is a weakness. Art-related aspects and projects touching remembrance are visible, but the panel was left with the impression that the ECoC was not firmly building on the city’s DNA. The way local cultural heritage and traditional art forms will be linked with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions is not convincingly presented. The programme in general is professionally developed but the panel is not convinced about the feasibility of its key elements, due to the absence of corresponding practical details in the bid-book, as well as about the overall message Hannover wants to convey. In the panel’s view, the concept of Agora remains too open and therefore not clearly leading to a coherent cultural and artistic programme and a powerful narrative with clear aims and outcomes.

The European dimension builds on the concept of city activism, which is *per se* a relevant vision. The European issues to be addressed by the ECoC project - although in general correctly put into projects’ selection criteria - are not elaborated. “Spotlights” are to shed light on different parts of the continent, thereby having potential to highlight the diversity and common features of European cultural expressions; and international partners are listed. Nevertheless, the panel considers the European dimension as too broadly presented. Hannover sees itself as a creative space for debate about the future of Europe but the topics are too many and too vague. The overarching and specific European narrative is lost in and overshadowed by the formal and structural aspects of the programme. Important issues such as solidarity and global responsibility are mentioned but not operationalised even concerning the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the local and European cultural and creative sectors. The cultural diversity that is present in the city is not clearly incorporated into the cultural and artistic programme. There is no consistency between partners mentioned in the programme chapter of the bid-book and those in the European dimension chapter. This blurs the general vision for international cooperation and the European

dimension. In this sense, the approach for generating a wider European debate and attracting European audiences is not convincing, although the city already has the experience of attracting major international interest with EXPO 2000. Hannover has a clear potential for impact on the global scale due to its engagement in various networks; this potential, however, is not exploited.

The majority of the political parties in the City Council and the president of the region support Hannover's bid for ECoC 2025, which is very positive. The city has an excellent infrastructure to host the ECoC. However, the feasibility of some programme elements that require the closure of parts of the city transport infrastructure is doubtful, as it was not presented with solid evidence. In the panel's understanding, those aspects could not be agreed upon with the current city administration due to frequent changes in the local government. Finally, the lack of capital investment may diminish the legacy of the project.

The organisation of interdisciplinary think tanks was a good base for incorporating the needs and perceptions of the local residents into the design and production of the project. The involvement of the "Ausnahmestand network", with almost all major players from the independent cultural scene as well as environmental organisations, is also an asset. On the other hand, the seemingly minimal involvement of cultural institutions and grassroots organisations of e.g. multicultural origin weakens the project's outreach. There are some interesting ideas in terms of audience building, such as a citizens' lab or tackling multilingualism in the city school sector, as well as some relevant partnerships. Yet, the bid lacks an adequate audience development strategy to attract and sustain the interest from a variety of audiences.

The suggested budget is sound with operating expenditure planned at € 80,000,000. The sponsorship strategy is good with concrete examples on how to involve sponsors. The management team will work in a flat structure with a high level of autonomy, and the panel appreciates the intention to establish an "Upgrade Management Team" and a dedicated complaints team. The expertise of Deutsche Messe AG will support the ECoC delivery methodology, which is promising. However, the procedures for the collaboration with the city hall departments are not described. Contingency planning is not convincingly developed either. The idea of sharing national funds with other ECoC candidates seems rather unrealistic to the panel. There are some excellent marketing ideas, whilst creating a multilingual and activist communication campaign is quite appropriate. However, the panel is not convinced that a strategy consisting in creating not only suspense but also confusion is the best communication strategy for a project such as an ECoC. Hannover's message for its inhabitants and Europe remains unclear.

Conclusion

Hannover presented a strong creative team and a bid offering a solid base for an interesting and artistic ECoC. The panel appreciated the artistic creativity expressed in the form and unique style of both bid-books at pre-selection and final selection stages. Yet, although the structures of the programme are clear and the form of the activities is promising, the content of the ECoC is considered underdeveloped. A clear, exciting, engaging and unique narrative that may be appealing for local, national and European audiences alike is missing. The European dimension remains too generic. The involvement of creative industries is well visible in the proposed programme, but the involvement of cultural institutions is less evident, which may negatively impact the legacy and sustainability of the actions. In

general, the panel felt that the bid-book concentrated on the delivery of a city festival rather than a project of importance for the city's cultural development with a strong European relevance.

Hildesheim

Under the new revised motto **"WE CARE - Beets, Roses and the Meaning of Life"**, Hildesheim, in today's turbulent and complex times, wants to counter indifference and encourage a more compassionate, pro-active and sustainable way of life locally and regionally, but also in Europe and in the world.

The city's cultural strategy 2030 was already approved in June 2019, featuring a relevant role for the ECoC project, well rooted in the local context and integrating due reflection and adjustments to the present Covid-19 impacts on the cultural and creative sectors. The District's cultural strategy was delayed due to the pandemic, but it is planned for adoption before the end of 2020 and is now integrated in a new regional development concept. The ongoing commission of a parallel regional tourism strategy is also an asset. Overall, the bid provides sound prospects in terms of regional involvement and the ECoC legacy at this level. The capacity-building programme for the cultural and creative sectors, "Access Art Lab", is substantial and will be based in the new Cultural Hub, a place for work, encounters and learning. The alignment with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is sound. However, the environmental goals, in particular the intention to deliver a free carbon footprint ECoC, is insufficiently elaborated. Finally, regarding evaluation, the panel regrets that the "We Care" concept is not innovatively translated into the assessment plans and the legacy formulation. On the other side, the impact expectations are meaningful, the university partner selected is credible and the monitoring efforts, though found to be starting late (i.e. in 2023), have many participatory elements.

The "We Care" concept holds a potential for a global and European dimension, based on solidarity and cooperation; the intention to become a role model for other rural areas allows bringing about relevant European issues such as ageing, migration and climate change. The range of European and international partners and ECoC connections, including networks, youth exchanges and other German candidate cities like Hannover and Magdeburg, is consistent and valuable. The involvement of the Muslim-Turkish community and projects such as the new common holiday are seen as good examples of promoting the existing cultural diversity. The panel also values the examples given in the bid-book of worldwide cooperation and international outreach. The purpose and benefit of the proposal to create a "boring cities network" is still not evident for the panel under such a provocative slogan. Additionally, the panel does not see the formulation of a clear narrative and legacy with a corresponding potential to attract European wide attention. In particular, the programme highlights targeting European and international audiences, as described in the bid-book, are not convincing.

The programme is structured around four perspectives: 1/ "We Care for Each Other"; 2/ "We Care for Ourselves"; 3/ "We Care for Our Planet"; and 4/ "We Care for Our Past and Future Heritage". The decentralisation targets towards the whole region and the embeddedness into the communities are considered very relevant and sound. The panel recognises a renewed effort to integrate the city's rich cultural heritage with the involvement of the church, as well as a promising intention to debate and create the

heritage of the future, for example in projects such as “Mobilising Histories” and “Creating the Sites of Tomorrow”. Still, this incorporation was felt as limited, most notably regarding how the existing cultural institutions will be reviewing their programmes for the ECoC. Moreover, the artistic vision, as emerging from the projects in the bid-book, was judged as not daring enough to constitute an attractive international programme.

The bid has steady majority support from the city and district of Hildesheim together with all the 17 municipalities involved. The Federal State of Lower Saxony also confirmed its commitment to support a potential ECoC in its territory. The capital investments are diverse and relevant. However, the feasibility and business plans for both the Cultural Hub and the Quarter for Cultural Participation in Nordstadt are insufficiently elaborated raising doubts regarding their sustainability.

The engagement actions and plans are well incorporated into the programme, in the preparatory and implementation phases, which match well with the caretaking and caretakers concept. The audience development strategy is convincing and it is well reflected into the Nordstadt quarter of cultural participation initiative. There are relevant examples of cooperation projects with universities, students and young graduates, as well as schools and adult education. The approach to youth is solid, notably having a budget handled totally by youngsters and specific radio programmes. VolunTours will combine volunteer involvement and exchanges at the international level; capacity building is rightly embedded in the outreach – “Speaking One Language” is one good project example. Moreover, accessibility to cultural events but also in tourism are soundly approached.

Since pre-selection, there has been an increase in the amount of the operating budget to € 68,700,000, which is a solid basis, though the amounts expected from the national Government at € 20,000,000 and from the private sector at € 10,000,000 seem slightly optimistic. There is an unbalanced budget contribution between local (9%), district (11%), state (43%) and national levels (34%). Indeed, the city contribution is relatively low, at only € 5,000,000, while the commitments from the district, municipalities and Federal State are substantial. As a consequence, there is a budgetary risk if these other levels of governance do not fulfill their financial commitments in time. Furthermore, despite some positive developments already made in this regard, the target in terms of private sector contribution is high (14,5% of total income), raising doubts about its feasibility. Regarding governance, the proposed regional forum, the regional coordination and the programme advisory groups are in accordance with the bid’s participatory approach, which is an asset. Staffing plans are reasonable despite the high number of in-house productions. Some doubts were raised regarding the decision-making process at the leadership level (between programme manager and programme director). The flexible working schemes proposed follow the “We Care” philosophy, which is sound. In what comes to communication and marketing, the panel considers that the slogan has potential in terms of impact though it remains too generic. Yet, the presented marketing and communication roadmap is credible and valued especially regarding the ethics concerns.

Conclusion

The panel acknowledges the importance of making European rural areas more visible and culturally dynamic. In the panel’s view, the solid cultural strategy and capacity-building programme, combined with a relevant regional involvement, at both programme and governance levels, are positive developments that may convincingly lead to a steady

cultural and urban development. Yet, the ECoC legacy is not precisely devised. The revised slogan “We Care” is rightly responding to current societal challenges; however, its European vision and narrative are not finely elaborated. On the other hand, the range of European and global partners and ECoC connections, including networks, is consistent with the programme’s themes and valuable. The engagement and audience development approaches are sound. The governance and political support are convincing, though the budgetary risks remain. Finally, the panel would like to express its appreciation for the aesthetic and design quality of the bid-book document, reflecting well the “We Care” spirit.

Magdeburg

In the second round Magdeburg presented its bid under the title **“Force of Attraction”**, which represents a change from the first “Out of the Void” concept. Magdeburg moves from a problem to a solution focus, putting a positive spin on what the city wants to achieve.

A new cultural strategy setting out a vision of “Kultur mit Allen” (“Culture with Everyone”) for Magdeburg’s cultural development up to 2030 was formally approved in May 2020. An interesting new concept for a regional thematic cooperation is developed and Magdeburg plans to include the surrounding area in its ECoC, i.e. county districts Börde, Jerichower Land and Salzlandkreis. The new, future-oriented outlook is welcomed by the panel. However, the vision for the city and involved districts, as well as the role and legacy of the ECoC towards regional development remain unclear. The good approach to linking cultural strategy with urban development is well noted. The panel appreciates that some plans based on the strategy are already being implemented. The panel appreciates the approach to tackling Covid-19 pandemic challenges as well as the design of alternative plans in case the bid for getting the ECoC title is not successful. The aims of the capacity-building programme cover not only the cultural and creative sectors, but also city administrators, which is positive. The long-term impacts developed through the “Theory of Change” methodology are well conceptualised and linked to solid monitoring and evaluation plans, building on extensive baselines. Those, however, focus more on measuring well-being and greater social cohesion through cultural activation and community building than on the implementation of the ECoC. The cultural strategy, evaluation plans and capacity building remain too much concentrated on local development, unsatisfactorily linking those issues with the ECoC project.

Three programme lines linked to the specific historic context of Magdeburg are planned: 1/ participatory “Spheres of Home” explores city through a modern twist of Magdeburg Rights; 2/ “Nature of Space”, seeking to recreate the spirit of Magdeburg as the original Bunte Stadt (Colourful City), builds on Modernism and Bauhaus; and 3/ “New Frequencies” focuses on digital art and music building on Telematic traditions. The programme clearly takes inspiration from local heritage; however, it mostly concentrates on the 20th century and the Eastern/Central European and communist past. Although many projects in the programme involve credible partners, the bridge between Western and Eastern/Central Europe is still underdeveloped. Moreover, projects connecting heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions are less visible in the bid-book. In the panel’s view, the transformational projects targeting a social impact, though valuable, are dominating in the programme, reflecting a lack of balance with more artistically led projects. The panel appreciates interesting proposals concerning minorities and the Roma community. However, in general, it is not convinced about the artistic potential of the bid-book’s

programme. The criteria for the selection of the projects are also too general and they lack internationalisation and European aspects. On a more positive note, the involvement of local artists and cultural organisations in the conception and implementation of the cultural programme is sound.

The European dimension is not sufficiently elaborated within the city strategy as well as in the cultural and artistic programme for 2025. The specific European themes to be addressed are unclear. The ECoC's narrative is too broad and unfocused, as it is the sum of concepts that are not properly tied together. Moreover, two of the main programme lines are mostly about local stories that concentrate on the city's cultural development. The panel takes note of some creative ideas, for example, those linking heritage and art pilgrimage, but the scope and quality of the activities promoting the cultural diversity of Europe is underdeveloped. An involvement of European artists and organisations covering most of Europe and collaboration with European Capitals of Culture is planned, but the bid lacks a wider cooperation with European cultural networks. Moreover, in the panel's view, international partnerships omit some players that would be particularly relevant for the topics selected. This indicates a lack of a strategic approach to the setting up of new partnerships, an aspect that can ultimately diminish the European impact of the programme. The "Force of Attraction" concept as such does not convey a clear message of European relevance and the strategy to attract European and international audiences is not very convincing. The panel sees the proposal as a sequence of projects that are coherent with the city DNA but lacking a strong artistic, and not only cultural, European vision.

The bid is supported by the City and the State of Saxony-Anhalt and the city has been clearly committed to the ECoC project since 2011. The hearing further underlined the commitment and engagement of the Mayor of Magdeburg. The city's existing infrastructure will be further expanded through a number of capital investment projects, which is positive as long as they correspond to the needs of the city.

The involvement of the local population and civil society in the preparation of the bid and the implementation of the ECoC project is well planned, including through the engagement of volunteers and community building actions in the future. The collaboration with universities is also well visible. The strategy for audience development is partly satisfactory. On the one hand, there are good ideas for actions opening access as well as corresponding appropriate budget and partnerships in this regard. Audience development is also mentioned in capacity building plans, which is positive. On the other hand, however, those plans are in general more appropriate for the city's cultural development, while their connection to the ECoC project is less visible. For example, how the seven priorities identified (know – understand – remove barriers – innovate – model – measure – programme) will be implemented in relation to all target groups (and especially to elderly people or the so-called "lost generation") is unclear.

The proposed budget at € 68,000,000 slightly increased from the pre-selection phase, indicating good financial support. Even though some financial commitments from potential sponsors are mentioned, the panel was not fully convinced about the feasibility of the sponsoring and fundraising plans. Significant capital investment, in this case coming mostly from EU regional funds, has already been voted. The management structure is clear and appropriate for the delivery of the cultural programme of the title-year. Due to the vagueness of the "The Force of Attraction" concept, the communication and marketing strategy is not convincing as far as its European resonance and impact is concerned.

Conclusion

The panel appreciates an honest assessment of Magdeburg's weak and strong points, and a visible shift towards positive opportunities for the future. The involvement of the local population and civil society is well planned and the city administration's commitment is an asset. The panel felt that the city has the capacity to host the ECoC title and that the bid had the makings of a promising cultural offer. The bid builds conceptually on important Magdeburg heritage (for example, Otto von Guericke or the Magdeburg rights). However, the links between the city's past and European ambitions are not satisfactory presented and translated into a cultural programme with a European dimension. The panel was not convinced that Magdeburg's artistic vision, plans and communication tactics could make an impact at the European level.

Nürnberg

The city's bid continues under the leitmotif of **"Past Forward"**, reiterating the importance of facing history while engaging in a new beginning in Europe and globally.

The city's cultural strategy, approved already in January 2018, is being implemented, which is sound. The panel appreciates that due consideration and support is given to the cultural and creative sectors, which are seriously hit by the current Covid-19 pandemic. In this respect, important key areas and objectives were defined and reinforced. There are also improvements in regards to the involvement of the metropolitan region, spanning 41 municipalities and districts. However, the ECoC governance legacy, most notably in view of the regional cooperation in the metropolitan area, is still unclear. The initiative for the cultural and creative industries provides interesting capacity building prospects for the sector, via the development of a new creative centre – "the Garage" project. Yet, a wider and more comprehensive capacity-building action going beyond the cultural field to include other sectors and city administration is not elaborated. The evaluation and monitoring plans are well articulated and rightly linked to the city's strategic goals, which relate to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The long-term impacts are well assessed, built on the "Theory of Change", though, in some cases, the ECoC impacts are not distinguished from the overall city strategic goals. The intention to have a longitudinal post-ECoC evaluation running until 2030 is a strong feature of the bid.

The topics that the ECoC project intends to debate through cultural and artistic interventions, such as humanism, playfulness and community are very relevant and timely to the city and region, but also to the whole of Europe. However, the topics of humanism and international criminal law are not clearly connected with remembrance issues and are less explored to constitute the basis for a wider dialogue with other partners. On the other hand, the programme contains many relevant initiatives promoting transculturality and intercultural dialogue such as "Be my Guest", "Cultural Hackaton" and the projects focusing on the Jewish memories and heritage. There are also diverse and very welcomed connections to European and international partners, including many ECoCs and networks. The proposed "Triologue", Krakow, Nürnberg and Prague is a sound initiative, but this regional cooperation remains little visible in terms of the programme. The strategy to attract international audiences is promising, due to the artistic quality of the programme and also the strong resonance of the topics in today's Europe.

The programme's revised three strands are: 1/ Humanity, 2/ Activity and 3/ Community. They reflect important concepts though the panel had the impression that they might convey too generic messages. The concept of "Past Forward" makes sense to the city's history and rightly brings all strands of history to the present and future. The programme is multilayered and professionally articulated having a good capacity to mix local cultural heritage with new artistic expressions. However, its complexity might cause difficulties in communication. In the panel's view, the programme is cleverly constructed around the idea to deal with the former Nazi rally grounds and the Kongresshalle. Such an approach, though risky, is understandable from the city's perspective, and therefore considered crucial for the process of reinventing the city's image and the urban potential of the quarter. The panel, however, questioned the legacy of the ECoC programme for the Nazi rally grounds, especially given the limited elaboration of a participatory approach, which did not include all relevant stakeholders in those developments. The gamification dimension of the programme, also connected to the city's history as the European capital of the toy industry, has improved, proposing interesting projects such as "Haus des Spielens", "Toys of the Future" and "Archipelagos of Play". The involvement of the local artistic scene through a wide curatorial scheme indicates a good participatory focus. The wide integration of cultural operators from across the region in online and offline workshops is convincing. However, the projects' descriptions lack details in budgetary terms that would allow understanding their size and importance for the programme.

The capacity to deliver is overall strong, with solid political and financial support from all levels of governance, a solid infrastructure already existing as well as good infrastructure plans, including due timeline, supporting the ECoC programme. However, the operating models for the venues planned are at this moment still underdeveloped. Nevertheless, there is potential for a good ECoC legacy in this regard.

The community development strategy is pertinent. The engagement of a wide range of citizens in the bid preparations is solid, notably including those disadvantaged and marginalised. The volunteering process is very credible, based on the interesting concept of cultural diplomats. There are also relevant connections with schools, and projects like the "Kinderkulturhauptstadt" and "Being an Artist" are sound. The role of the university remains less present in the programme though. The bid is focusing on community development; however, the relation between community development and the ECoC audience development plans are not clearly presented.

The bid proposes a € 83,200,000 operating budget, which is a very solid basis for an ECoC. The private investment expectations remain high and the present pandemic might well increase the risk of not reaching such an ambitious target. Nevertheless, there are good fundraising skills and strategy. The regional involvement in the governance is limited. The bid presents an interesting project management scheme, though the panel has doubts regarding the dual leadership. The recruitment plan is appropriate though the number of staffing expectations for the ECoC year is considered too low. The contingency planning is credible. Regarding marketing and communication, despite the conceptual adequacy of the "Past Forward" slogan, its efficiency to speak to wider international audiences is unconvincing.

Conclusion

The bid has the potential for a strong cultural and urban strategy development for the city and the region. The artistic and cultural programme explores relevant topics and displays artistic quality projects with the involvement of European and international partners. However, the European messages and slogan are still intricate without fully exploring its potential for dialogue across Europe. The topics of humanism and international criminal law, which are inherent to the city's history, are less explored to constitute the basis for a wider dialogue with other partners. The participation and outreach process is convincing, especially regarding the involvement of schools. However, the audience development strategy that would go along the conceptual cultural and artistic programme and the European dimension is insufficiently elaborated. The bid benefits from a strong political and financial commitment, but the local and regional legacy of the ECoC is not clearly devised.

The Panel's Decision

The panel was presented with five different bids from significantly different cities facing their own challenges and each with its own interpretations of the ECoC criteria. The bids had many strong points as well as some weaknesses. The panel was looking, according to Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council, at the programme specifically designed for the ECoC year and with a strong European dimension.

After the presentations, the panel debated the merits of each city against the six criteria and then in the final discussion the applications were weighed up against each other.

Each panel member weighed his/her own interpretation of the criteria against the five cities with their bid-books, presentations, questions and answers, augmented by the feedback from the online city visits.

The panel, by voting, reached consent on a single candidate.

Accordingly, the panel recommends the Kulturministerkonferenz to designate, as the 2025 European Capital of Culture in Germany, the city of **Chemnitz**.

Designation

This report has been sent to the managing authority and the European Commission. Both will publish it on their websites. In accordance with Article 11 of the Decision, the Kulturministerkonferenz in consultation with the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media will designate Chemnitz to hold the title of ECoC 2025 in Germany based on the recommendation contained in this report. It will then inform the European Parliament, Council, Commission and Committee of the Regions. This formal designation enables Chemnitz to use the title "European Capital of Culture 2025".

Melina Mercouri Prize

The panel recommends that the European Commission award the Melina Mercouri Prize to the designated city on the basis of this report. The payment of the €1,5m Prize is however deferred until 2025, in line with Article 14 of the Decision. It is conditional. The ECoC Expert panel will make a further recommendation to the European Commission in late 2024 at the end of the monitoring process on whether to make the payment.

The conditions for the payment are as follows (Article 14):

- The ECoC honours its commitments made in the application;
- It complies with the criteria;
- It takes into account the recommendations contained in the selection and monitoring reports;
- There has been no substantial change to the programme and strategy set out in the bid-book;
- The budget has been maintained at a level capable of delivering a high-level programme and at a level consistent with the bid-book;
- The independence of the artistic team has been appropriately respected;
- The European Dimension has remained sufficiently strong in the final programme;
- The marketing and communications strategy and material clearly reflect it is a European Union action;
- Plans for monitoring and evaluation are in place.

Reputation of an ECoC

A city awarded the ECoC title receives considerable international attention from the selection recommendation extending well beyond the ECoC year. It has a responsibility to uphold the reputation of the ECoC brand for the benefit of those previous titleholders and future ones. City administrations should be aware that decisions taken (and not just in the cultural sector) might attract formal media and social media attention far beyond what they are used to handling. This adds a special and new aspect to decision taking in the city over a wide full range of issues much beyond culture only.

The monitoring phase

Once an ECoC has been designated, it enters the "Monitoring Phase" (Article 13 of the Decision). Under the auspices of the European Commission, the panel will work with the ECoC to ensure the quality of the ECoC brand and to offer advice and experience.

The **bid-book** at final selection becomes the *de facto* contract between the designated city, on the one hand, and its own citizens, the Expert panel, the Kulturministerkonferenz and the European Commission, on the other hand. It has an important role in the payment of the Melina Mercouri Prize. The panel will expect a close alignment with the bid-book during the preparation phase and during the ECoC year. Significant variations from the bid-book should be discussed with the panel, through the Commission, in advance of decisions being made.

There are three formal monitoring checkpoints (normally autumn 2021, mid 2023 and autumn 2024) when the ECoC will meet with the panel under the auspices of the Commission. Prior to each meeting the European Commission will invite the ECoC to provide progress reports. The Commission, after consultation with the panel, will indicate areas that specifically need to be addressed in the reports.

In addition, the panel may decide, with the agreement of the European Commission, to visit the city to observe progress.

The panel's reports after all three meetings will be published on the Commission's website. The ECoC may decide to publish its own progress reports in the interest of transparency.

The panel's recommendations

The designated ECoC now moves to a transition period from a set-up suited to a bid campaign to the more formal ECoC delivery structure that is independent of local city administration. The panel expects Chemnitz to develop cooperation with other bidding cities and the wider artistic and cultural community in Germany. The ECoC in Germany in 2025 provides a national opportunity, which will reflect internationally not only on Chemnitz but also on the country as a whole.

The panel will expect the first progress report in autumn 2021 to take into account the recommendations and comments in the assessment of the bid as well as the recommendations below.

The recommendations refer to the content of the proposed programme:

Cultural strategy

- The work continues on the implementation of the cultural strategy and further arrangements are made for integration between policy areas (culture / urban development / innovation and creative industries / education). All documents are published to ensure transparency.
- Stronger connections between the cultural and creative sectors and the city administrative staff are secured with involvement of both in the capacity building activities; long-term links between the cultural, economic and social sectors in the city are being developed.
- The ECoC 2025 impact assessment is detailed with monitoring tactics, the baseline figures are defined and first attempts to outline the specific targets are made. KPIs include European sources of information like Eurostat, for example.
- The capacity building is intraregional, cross-sectoral and run with the view of a successful implementation of all ECoC aspects, as well as sustainability and long-term legacy. The topic of agile and flexible strategic planning is included in the capacity building topics to prepare the teams for unexpected events.

European dimension

- The scope and quality of activities promoting the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue, and greater mutual understanding between European citizens as well as highlighting the common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history are secured, deepened and developed. A participated East-West debate with multiple perspectives to prevent a kind of East-nostalgia is included.
- The cooperation and communication with partners from across Europe, including a wide range of the ECoC titleholders, as well as partnerships with other continents are developed and strengthened.

- Actions to generate an interest in other parts of Europe are strategically promoted.

Cultural and artistic content

- The programme involving a multitude of local and regional stakeholders is very demanding. An open communication towards a multitude of programme partners needs to be done in a transparent and professional way in order to create one big ECoC team.
- The artistic programme elements out of the existing cultural events need to be further developed and connected with the ECoC narrative. An appropriate strategy to develop and implement micro-projects (especially those in public spaces) needs to be carefully prepared and monitored in a participatory manner.
- Innovative, experimental and digital programme elements are strengthened to ensure the ECoC 2025 meets the needs of the 21st century.
- There is a need to ensure that freely developed content has coherent and clear artistic outlook and European importance in line with the ECoC vision and mission.
- The production capacity of the Chemnitz 2025 organisation and its partners, in terms of ECoC programme implementation, should be reviewed and addressed.

Capacity to deliver

- The urban development plans affecting the ECoC delivery are clarified. The Chemnitz 2025 team has clear information on the status of the implementation of these projects.
- The accommodation and transport capacities, also those in the region, are revised and addressed to fully support participation (of diverse public) in all elements of the ECoC programme.

Outreach

- Work continues to ensure social innovation and meaningful participation in line with the ECoC mission and vision.
- The ECoC audience development strategies and plans for local, regional and international audiences are developed. Clear and specific audience development strategies to reach out to the local, regional and European “silent middle” – one of the central target groups of Chemnitz’s ECoC project – are developed. A special focus to be dedicated to reach out to European and international audiences.
- Meaningful involvement of the young generation (beyond formal cooperation with universities and schools) is further developed to increase its scope.
- Both audience development and community engagement are included in capacity building activities involving all relevant partners.

Management

- Information about the registration of the Chemnitz 2025 organisation and its statutes, as well as the ECoC implementation strategies are publicly available.
- An early appointment of an artistic director, with his/her independent role, is needed and his/her high-level position needs to be secured.
- A robust organisation structure dealing with both internally and externally produced projects is created in order to successfully deliver this demanding project. Sustainable and effective mechanisms for delivery of an extensive cultural programme with partners demonstrating different levels of expertise (especially in the "Garages" flagship) are developed.
- The ownership of strategic areas and spaces is clearly defined and clear information on what will be integrated and what will not be included in the programme is communicated.
- The strategies and copyright issues of the "C the Unseen – European Makers of Democracy" concept including authorship rights of related merchandise and services are developed and publicly communicated.
- The communication message (including a European dimension) is clearly articulated for use by the ECoC team and other relevant partners and stakeholders.
- The highest quality standards for digital makers' platform, digital cultural offers and related copyrights are ensured.
- Issues of security are addressed.
- Issues of data protection are addressed and clearly communicated.
- The sensitivity towards environmental impact is demonstrated.

The bid-book sets out several actions to be taken in before 2025 – these timeframes should be met. Experience has shown that successful ECoCs use the first year after selection to establish all **the governance, management and administration structures and systems**. This essential role needs to run concurrently with the first stage of the project in 2021. Recommendations in this section are based on the experience of previous ECoCs.

The panel would expect:

- The relationship between the Supervisory Council, other fora / councils and the staff of the Chemnitz 2025 organisation to be clearly delineated and made public.
- Members of the Supervisory Council to understand their role as strategic, not executive, facilitative, ambassadorial and financially accountable. The Supervisory Council as presented in the bid-book, is usually too centered on political representatives. The expectation is that politicians and political appointees will be in the minority within the Supervisory Council and that representatives of civil society and the art sector (perhaps also from abroad and/or with former ECoC experience) will be included. Members of the Supervisory Council have a special responsibility to focus on the legacy objectives.

- The senior staff is recruited through open competitions.
- The General Director issues, with the approval of the Supervisory Board, financial regulations for the Chemnitz 2025 organization:
 - An external organisation is appointed to undertake annual audits and to approve the annual accounts of the organization.
 - Arrangements are made for the publication of the Annual Accounts and the Annual Report to ensure transparency.
- Internal management and administrative processes are in place. These will include human resources, legal aspects (e.g. project contract arrangements, data privacy, and intellectual property rights), the criteria and systems for calls for projects, the marketing and branding strategy.
- An internal communications strategy is developed and implemented. This covers communications within the Chemnitz 2025 organization, between the organization and the city (and regional) administration, between the organisation and the Kulturministerkonferenz and between the organisation and the European Commission.
- A detailed staffing plan up to 2025 including involvement of volunteers is created.
- The organization ensures that in all its (on- and offline) marketing and communications there is recognition that the ECoC is a European Union action.

Thanks

The panel members would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in this selection phase of the competition. The panel thanks all bidding candidates and everyone who contributed to their bids; the European Commission for its advice and the managing authority for its excellent administration. The panel encourages all cities to continue with the development and implementation of their respective cultural strategies.

Signed

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