



EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

The European Capital of Culture 2021 in Romania

The Selection Panel's Final Report

Bucharest

October 2016

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Introduction

This is the report of the selection panel (the “panel”) for the competition for the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2021 in Romania.

The Romanian Ministry of Culture (the “ministry”) is the managing authority of the competition.

The competition is governed by:

- Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 (the “Decision”¹)
- Rules of Procedure – “Competition for the 2021 European Capital of Culture title in Romania” (the “Rules”) signed by the Minister of Culture on 10 December 2014 and published on the ministry’s website².

Selection Panel

The selection panel consists of 12 members. Ten were appointed by the institutions and bodies of the European Union (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions) in line with article 6 of the Decision. The ministry appointed two members.

The panel appointed Steve Green as chair and Raluca Velisar as vice-chair. All members of the panel signed a declaration of non-conflict of interest and confidentiality at both meetings of the panel.

Pre-Selection

The competition is in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and final selection. The ministry issued a call for applications to all Romanian cities on 10 December 2014. There were 14 applications submitted by the deadline of 10 October 2015.

The panel met in Bucharest on 7-10 December 2015 for the pre-selection meeting. The panel recommended that the ministry invite four cities (Baia Mare, Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca and Timișoara) to progress to the final selection. The panels’ report is published on the websites of the European Commission³ and (in Romanian and English) on the ministry⁴.

The Romanian Minister of Culture accepted the panel’s recommendation and the ministry invited the four cities to submit revised applications with a deadline of 12 August 2016.

All four cities submitted their revised applications (“bidbooks”) by the deadline.

The bidbooks of the four candidates are available, in Romanian and English, on the ministry’s website at

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

² http://www.capitalaculturala2021.ro/ceac2021_doc_3_documente-utile_pg_0.htm

³ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2021-romania_en.pdf

⁴ http://www.capitalaculturala2021.ro/Files/docs/Raport%20juriu%20ECOC%202021_ro.pdf

http://www.capitalaculturala2021.ro/noutati_doc_38_candidaturile-oraselor-din-romania-pentru-etapa-de-selectie-finala-ceac-2021-sunt-acum-online_pg_0.htm

The following steps took place between the pre-selection and final selection meetings:

- The mandate of panel member Anton Rombouts expired on 31 December 2015 and he was replaced by Alain Hutchinson.
- All four cities met with the panel's chair via video-conference to seek clarification of the recommendations in the pre-selection report.
- Four members of the panel (Raluca Velisar, Valentina Iancu, Jordi Pardo and Agnieszka Wlazel) visited all four cities in September 2016, spending one day in each. They were accompanied by observers from the ministry and the European Commission. The panel members reported back to the full panel at the selection meeting.

National context

2021 will be the second time Romania has hosted an ECOC after Sibiu in 2007. The criteria for an ECOC have changed considerably. They now embrace a deeper and wider scope of the role of culture in city and European development. A particular new development is the requirement for a city to have a formal medium term cultural strategy. This ensures the ECOC is an element in progress of a city and not a one-off event. It enhances the importance of a sustainable legacy.

The panel welcomed the decision of the ministry to create a "European Cities" programme for the 10 cities not shortlisted and the three unsuccessful shortlisted cities. It seeks to support municipalities to maintain their commitment to sustainable and participatory cultural strategies and to European partnerships.

During the drafting of this report the panel learnt of the decision of Cluj-Napoca to continue with the direction of their bid. This is a very positive outcome of the competition. It demonstrates that a cultural strategy of a city is not just prepared for the possible award of a title but for the general well-being of a city.

Selection Meeting

The final selection meeting took place in Bucharest on 15-16 September 2016.

Representatives of the ministry and the European Commission attended as observers. The observers took no part in the panel's deliberations or decision.

The candidates appeared before the panel in alphabetical order. Each city made a 45 minute presentation followed by 75 minutes in a Question & Answer session. Delegations had up to ten members.

The chair of the panel announced the panel's recommendation at a press conference after the meeting in the presence of the Minister of Culture.

The Panel's Decision

The selection of an ECOC is based on the programme specifically designed for the ECOC year and set out in the bidbook, not the current cultural offer in a city or its cultural heritage.

The panel assessed each candidate against the objectives of the ECOC programme (article 2 of the Decision) and the six specific criteria in article 5:

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

The panel was presented with four different bids from four different cities facing their own challenges and each with its own approach to the six criteria. The panel noted that all four cities have a vibrant, although very different, cultural offer.

All of the bids had many strong points as well as weaknesses. The strength of four candidates presented the panel with a challenging task.

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

Each panel member weighed their own interpretation of the criteria against the four bids with their bidbooks, presentations and answers, augmented by the feedback from the visits.

The panel did not reach a consensus on a single candidate. After careful consideration the panel went to an open vote as required by the rules. Two cities tied with six votes each. The panel then discussed these two candidates further and proceeded to a second vote. This was also a tie at six votes each. The chair of the panel then, with the full approval of the panel and in accordance with the rules, cast a deciding vote. The whole panel agreed with this outcome.

Accordingly the panel recommends that the ministry designates, as a European Capital of Culture in 2021, the city of

Timișoara

Assessments of the candidates

The following assessments record the main aspects of the panel's deliberations. In the case of Timișoara recommendations are made both in their assessment and later in the report to assist their transition from candidate to implementation.

Baia Mare

Context

Baia Mare presented their bid under the theme of "Culture of Hosting". The bid team emphasized the urban/rural nature of their situation which is reflected in their proposed programme. The city seeks to escape the inertia of a post-industrial city. There is a close collaboration with the county of Maramureş. The bid has four main priorities: a 30% increase in GDP and employment, tripling the audiences and number of events after 2021, qualifying in the top five cultural destinations in Romania and doubling the participation of at risk and hard to reach audiences at cultural and educational programmes.

The proposed programme is based around four strands: "Meet", "Greet", "Show" and "Share". In addition there are two major year-long programmes "Performing Food" and "The Old Calendar".

Cultural Strategy

The Council approved the Cultural Development Strategy in February 2016. Some elements are already underway, most noticeably in capacity building, the creation of the Centre for Excellence in Cultural Management and the restoration of the Colony of Painters. Since pre-selection the bid team have carried out a wide range of activities testing various elements of their bid. The panel acknowledged the linkages between the strategy and the ECOC bid.

The ECOC is seen as an "accelerator for change" in the cultural life of the city and region. The panel would have liked to have seen more concrete plans for this desired change. There is a strong emphasis on cultural tourism in the region which is the main focus of the county support. The creation of a Centre for Resources and Micro-funding in Tourism is an interesting idea but lacked a business plan for implementation. Within the city however the panel was less convinced on the relationship of the bid to urban development.

The panel liked the range of activity since pre-selection in the testing of "proof of concept".

European Dimension

The European Dimension did not come through strongly in the bidbook or in the presentation. The bidbook claimed that 90% of projects would include European or wider international partners. However, based on the projects outlined, this claim lacked a coherence and relevance to the specific elements of the criteria. The range and scope of European partners is less than would be expected in an ECOC. Although there was discussion of European themes such as tolerance, mobility, exile they were not translated into project plans. The panel noted that the need for a European dimension was not one of the criteria in the planned open calls.

The bid team have a range of project plans with forthcoming candidates and has reserved €300,000 for projects with ECOCs. It hopes that these will take place.

Artistic programme

The funding profile is for 25% on major flagship projects; 35% on co-productions; 30% on a series of open calls and 10% for small community projects. It was intended to

connect the urban and rural areas. The panel felt that the structure was out of balance with the large programmes of the Old Calendar and Performing Food fitting awkwardly alongside the thematic aspects. The panel could not identify an overall coherence in the proposed programme relating to the Hosting concept. There was a lack of innovative approaches to topics.

The Performing Food idea was, in the view of the panel, overplayed. In itself it was well-structured with a sound international collaboration but as a niche conceptual artistic endeavour it appeared in parallel and separate to the ECOC core programme.

The Old Calendar contained several interesting events but seemed another parallel activity to the main ECOC thematic programme. It had the potential to link the immaterial heritage of Europe. However the proposed international partnering was limited to single documentary visits to the region and the outcomes only presented in Baia Mare.

The panel welcomed the co-operation plans with Cluj-Napoca and the agreement of both candidates to reserve funding for joint projects.

The panel noted the inclusion in the strategy of a social development objective with the Roma community. The proposed programme did not, in the view of the panel, follow through with this strategic objective and there were few Roma related projects in the programme and an unclear social policy. The panel felt the issue lacked depth and engagement with the majority population and local arts sector.

The panel had concerns over the budget forecasts of proposed projects.

Capacity

The candidature has the full support of the Mayor and the political parties on the Council.

The panel noted the difficulties now seen with the brownfield CUPROM area and the more temporary nature of possible events on the site in 2021. There is no clearly defined strategy and objectives for the site or its funding and governance. Ideas for a cultural industries hub at the site were underdeveloped. The Painters Colony renovation is nearing completion and will be ready to accommodate residencies and exhibitions. Overall the panel noted the range of renovations being planned and the risk of non-completion by 2021. The programme carries a high risk factor in terms of infrastructure. This was amplified by the rather limited capacity building proposals.

The plans for the centre for Excellence in Cultural Management and the European Centre for youth Guest House were relevant but both lacked a firm approach to business implementation.

Outreach

The panel noted the efforts put into engagement with citizens and the cultural sector, through an open door approach, in the bid development. The panel welcomed the formation of a City Makers Association and the self-generated Volunteers Centre as a result of the bid teams activities. The dynamics and inter-activity of social networks was remarkable.

The audience development programme has not been developed as much as the panel would expect. It also lacked a coherent interaction with the proposed programme.

Elements such as the pilot Multipass scheme and the intention to introduce LCD based marketing tools are useful.

Management

The forecast budget for the ECOC is €45m of which the city will contribute €19m, the national government €10m, the region €3m, EU programmes €3m, other public sector agencies and programmes €3.25m and the private sector €6.75. The income is allocated 63% to programme costs, 17% to marketing, 9% to salaries and administration and 11% towards non-salaried staff and logistics and evaluation etc.

The panel felt the overall budget was sound. The programme expenditure was lower than expected with a corresponding higher level of marketing spend. The 15% of income for private sector was ambitious; few ECOCs have reached this level and the strategy did not seem to warrant this level of ambition.

The panel was not convinced about the governance of the Foundation. It has concerns on the role of project managers on the Extended Board. There was little information on the role of the Board of Directors/Supervisory Board which is required to ensure the accountability of the staff of the Foundation.

The marketing plans were only sketched out in general at this stage, although the panel did not find the very small print of the bidbook a good example of marketing.

Summary

Overall the panel felt that there had been significant development since the pre-selection. In some areas this was strong but there were weaknesses in most criteria. The artistic programme contained some promising projects and ideas but appeared to be two or three parallel strands with little connection or inter-action. The "Hosting" concept did not come through as a guiding principle for project selection. The European Dimension was underplayed and did not offer the citizens of Baia Mare a broad approach to develop their understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultures in Europe.

Bucharest

Context

Bucharest presented their bid as a city in transition balancing pre-89 socialist reality with post89 neo-liberalism. A consequence is a polarised and fragmented society suffering in the words of the bidbook "a total distrust of discourse and rhetoric". The cultural sector is overbalanced towards the city centre (68% of cultural institutions), 24% in the inner ring and only 8% outside, where the majority of the population live. Surveys have indicated that the majority of the population have a low interest in culture.

The ECOC proposed programme is presented under the title "in-visible city". The programme has three main themes: "Lost and Found"; "Peripheries" and "Microtopias".

Cultural Strategy

Bucharest did not have a cultural strategy at pre-selection. The City Cultural Strategy was approved in August 2016. It covers 2016-26. It has six long term goals: embed culture for sustainable urban development, provide access for participation of all inhabitants in culture, establish Bucharest as an attractive cultural capital, bring cultural entrepreneurship from the margins to the centre, communicate Bucharest as connective

city and increase the capacity of the cultural sector. It was led by ARCUB and involved considerable engagement with the cultural sector and stakeholders. There was less engagement with the general public. The panel noted a gap between the cultural policy creators and the city administration. This raised a concern over implementation. The project to create a Cultural Observatory was sound.

The ECOC is a central part of the strategy with close alignment of its objectives.

European Dimension

The approach to the European Dimension remains as at the pre-selection phase with its four strands: working with Europe, the Europe of Bucharest, engaging both in European themes and with the European and international public. The panel maintained its appreciation of the approach but overall did not see the degree of development that is to be expected. There was still a high degree of generality. The proposed programme did not appear to significantly build on the existing European offer in the city. The focus on the Balkan region did not have high visibility. The panel would have expected much more active partnerships in projects with other ECOCs.

The panel noted the "10 city" focus. This would normally be a useful strand within a programme but not as a major component of the European Dimension. Even so the panel did not feel that the strand was developed as deep as expected. There was a strategic approach with Linz, for example, but this was materialised with only a small project.

Artistic programme

The artistic vision of an "in-visible city" has the potential for an ambitious cultural programme. This was evident in the plans for 12 programmes with 50 core projects and up to 200 associated projects. With the majority in public spaces, especially in neighbourhoods, this both demonstrated the ambition, and foreshadows a difficult management task of implementation.

The programme was explained in the bidbook in a rather confusing diagram which the panel felt has more use as an internal planning tool but did not bring out clearly the themes and programme.

The panel felt that the proposed programme did not live up to its ambitions. The projects outlined in the bidbook appeared too inward looking. The intended aim of encouraging new forms of citizenship, both local and European was not visible.

Overall the panel felt there was a strange contradiction in the programme between the vision and the goals. The panel was concerned that citizens were very inactive in participating in cultural events, with statements about the clash of mass entertainment and culture. However the proposed programme is very intellectual and academic, even elitist in places. An example is with museum projects which appear to speak to other museums professionals about methodology. There were no clear flagship events which would attract the attention of an external audience and link to the city's tourism objectives.

The impression gained was of a collection of projects with limited coherence and cohesion to a strong theme. The panel did not feel there was a strong connection with the elements of the cultural strategy and included in the ECOC's aims.

Capacity

The project has the support of the six district mayors. The city mayor's support was read out to the panel in the presentation session. The panel understands that this comprehensive support is unusual in Bucharest. Despite this political level support the panel was not convinced of the active relationship between the city officials and the organisation sub-contracted to prepare the bid (and by the same token the subsequent agency who will deliver it).

Around 70% of the proposed programme is planned to take place in public spaces with 30% in cultural institutions. This is a feasible but difficult approach and perhaps too heavily weighted towards outdoor activity. The high proportion of outdoor activities also calls into question the sustainability of a legacy.

The bidbook outlined a strategy for capacity building for cultural operators, teachers, city officials and the tourism sector. The panel had concerns that this was not to the depth seemingly required for the strategic objectives of enhancing the cultural offer in the outlying areas.

Outreach

The panel noted the relatively narrow approach to consultation taken to develop the bid. This engaged with the cultural sector, through open calls and meetings, but appeared more limited with the general public, especially those in the outlying areas where culture is not prevalent.

The panel noted the engagement with NGOs and the independent cultural and community sectors. The development of a longer term programme with schools, including training for teachers, was positive.

The panel felt the approach to audience development was set out in a theoretical framework. It was poorly linked to the challenges of enhancing and widening the audiences, in the outer areas. The panel had expected the bid to engage through its programme with the 110,000 students in the city and indicate the contribution of the universities to the ECOC beyond evaluation.

Management

The forecast budget for the ECOC operational programme is €75m. This however includes the Melina Mercouri award of €1,5m which is conditional. The guidance for bidding requires this to be excluded at this stage. The effective budget is therefore €73.5m. The public sector is forecast to provide 92% with 8% from the private sector. The main funders are planned to be the Ministry of Culture (€15m, 20%), the city (€37.5m, 50%), the districts of Bucharest (€9m, 12%), the county (€1.5m, 2%) and various EU funds (€4.5m, 6%). The city, districts and county have confirmed their contributions. The private sector contributions include "in-kind" services and products.

The planned expenditure is €52,5m (70%) on the programme, €15m (20%) on marketing and €7.5m (10%) on staff and administration.

The panel considered the financing sound. The panel was concerned that the build-up of expenditure was rather slow with relatively high a percentage to be spent in 2021. This reflects a weakness in the artistic programme of a relative lack of multi-annual projects.

An objective of the bid is to decentralize the cultural offer in the city. The bid envisages over 200 cultural operators with a high degree of autonomy. However the bidbook was not clear on how the ECOC agency would maintain quality and ensure outcomes and priorities in line with the ECOC's objectives.

The panel appreciated the intention that ARCUB would remain the bid leaders for 12 months in order for the ECOC association to be formed, staffed and up and running. It would be hoped that 12 months was the maximum period. The proposed subsequent governance structure did pose a few issues for the panel. The panel was not convinced about the efficacy of a 100 strong Association committee with potentially decision making authority. The opportunity for conflicts of interests was high (as members may also be project managers).

The Curatorium (of 12 international and 12 national curators) has performed a useful role in the bid development. The panel was concerned that keeping it going in its planned format may introduce a conflict of interest (or a perceived conflict) with members both being in the Curatorium and project managers. This has the potential of deepening the fragmentation of the project.

Summary

The panel felt that the ambitious intentions of the programme were underdeveloped in the proposed programme. There were concerns over the likelihood of a sustainable legacy. These arise from the uncertainty of the ownership of the overall project and the nature of the programme itself. Subcontracting the development of a bid to an agency can be beneficial as long there is a close interaction between the city officials who will be responsible for legacy and other city objectives. The panel did not see this. The programme itself was seen as inward looking, and with a limited approach to the European dimension. The panel had concerns over the proposed management structure.

Cluj-Napoca

Context

Cluj-Napoca presented their bid with three main goals. Firstly to engage the communities of the city (there is a tendency for the many communities in the city to ignore each other, a duality *leitmotif*, and for the Roma to be segregated); secondly to become a leading European city in arts and culture and thirdly to make culture work for the development of the city. The city has over 80,000 students at its 12 universities. In recent years there has been a considerable change in the city's cultural life with an audience of over 2 million every year from over 2,000 events. The 45 most prominent cultural institutions generated a turnover of more than €22m in 2015. The ECOC title is seen as a stepping stone in the larger city strategy. It will dare to pick at, as the bidbook states, "open wounds" such as the Roma living segregated around the refuse dump.

The bid is, as at preselection, under the main concept "East of West". It has three thematic strands: "Culture Inspires"; "Culture Connects" and "Culture Works". An important transversal programme underpins these three, the "Open Academy of Change".

Cultural Strategy

The city's Development Strategy was approved in 2013 for 2014-20. Culture has two specific chapters and is also seen as a transversal value throughout the strategy. As evidence of the implementation of the strategy the culture budget has increased from €1.26m in 2013 to €3.05m in 2016. The panel had commented favourably in the preselection phase on the strategy and the role of the ECOC within it. The panel noted the ECOC comes in the transition period from the current strategy period to the next, taking it to 2030. This gives it an opportunity to assist the city change direction in several areas, including culture in a social context and the development of the creative industries. However it does mean that there is no formal strategy in place for the post ECOC period.

The panel appreciated several project ideas which have the potential to develop longer term linkages between the cultural sector and other sectors. Notable among these is the "Art and Happiness" flagship project which seeks to position Cluj-Napoca as a leading regional centre in art and therapy in the important health sector. The panel was informed that there are 2,000 arts and creative graduates every year but not enough jobs for them; the ECOC seeks to develop "culturepreneurs".

The panel was less convinced on the linkages with urban development beyond the long term aspiration to improve the riverbank environment.

The panel thought the approach to evaluation was sound as was the intention to go to international tender for the organisation to carry it out over a ten year period. The panel noted that several targets were identified in separate sections of the bidbook (e.g. a million tourists and 3 million overnights).

European Dimension

The panel maintained its positive view at preselection of the concept "East of West". It noted that there were far more proposed partners (450) from a wider Europe than at preselection. The "Remake" programme, a series of good projects selected from previous ECOCs, was welcomed as an interesting development in ECOCs.

Several pan European themes are to be explored: the Roma and the Holocaust, bilingual cities, and the intention to be an environmentally sound "Green ECOC".

There are strong links with several other ECOCs and candidates. The panel welcomed the formation of a network of candidate cities. It also noted the co-operation envisaged with Baia Mare. The proposal to form a shared communication strategy with the other two ECOCs in 2021 is a good idea.

Artistic programme

The panel felt at preselection that the "combination of "East of West" and "Re-signifying Europe" could be a strong anchor for the programme. However at final selection the panel was not convinced that the approach to challenging values across Europe was as strongly evident in the proposed programme. The programme had strengths in developing the cultural and creative industries in "Culturepreneurs" and the "Social Creativity Platform". These contributed to an overall impression of a strong emphasis on implementing a capacity and local change project but lacking an overall consistent artistic vision and coherence. The artistic focus was strongly, perhaps too strongly, orientated around the "European Centre for Contemporary Arts". At preselection this

was associated with a significant film scene and a projected academy for film; this was less apparent in the bidbook. The panel was not convinced that the proposal would indeed make Cluj-Napoca a leading European city in the visual arts.

The panel appreciated the partnership with Baia Mare. It noted the “Jivipen” projects centred on the Roma community. The intention to tackle blocked memories of the Roma Holocaust and Roma slavery was welcomed as was the international approach of the project.

The panel felt the artistic programme was well-structured in its own right but fell short of its declared strategic objectives of overcoming the identified problems of parallel communities and their transformation into a “ClujUnion”.

Capacity

The panel noted the strong political support for the ECOC from the Mayor. The City and County Councils re-affirmed their support for the candidature (including the financial aspects), in July and August 2016.

The panel appreciated the strengthening and widening on an international scale of the Open Academy of Change as recommended in the preselection report.

The panel was concerned over the tight timetable for many of the proposed capital projects which would host elements of the programme.

Outreach

The panel appreciated the scope of engagement with citizens in the development of the bid.

The audience development strategy was outlined but is not yet fully in place as would be expected at this stage. The panel was unclear on the audience development intentions of the existing cultural institutions and festivals (beyond programmes for training) who would take the lead in audience development.

The panel felt that the various projects engaging with the youth sector were sound as was the intention to protect the legacy of the European Youth Capital title held in 2015. The plans for schools were less developed.

Management

The forecast operational budget is €35m. It will be raised from the city (€15m), national government (€10m), county (€6m), the EU (mostly competitive bids) (€1.5m) and €2.5m from the private sector. The intention is to allocate 70% to programme costs, 16% to marketing and a realistic 14% to salaries and administration.

The panel was content with the financial projections.

The panel was also content with the proposed governance structure. The staffing proposals were generally sound although the lack of a senior artistic director (working with the programme director and managing the eight curators) was noted as an unusual approach.

The panel considered the triple theme/slogan approach: “East of West”; “Re-signifying Europe” and “Servus” would make marketing difficult to both local and international audiences

Summary

The panel felt this was a strong bid and had improved since the preselection phase. The team was enthusiastic and convincing. The European Dimension was well explored, with several innovative features. The bid was consistent with the city's current cultural strategy and laid the foundations for a change following 2021. The absence of a strategy beyond the ECOC year was a weakness. ECOCs do not usually encompass the full scope of a cultural strategy. The Academy of Change and Culturepreneurs should deliver a strong professional legacy for the city. The support criteria (management and governance) were sound.

Timișoara

Context

Timișoara presented their bid from an "intercultural, multi-confessional and entrepreneurial community". The city has been a city of small sparks that ignited transcontinental transformations. The city, according to the bidbook, faces the same growing pains of any middle sized economically stable Central European city: complacency, rejection of the new, griping without taking action. The city lacks the instruments necessary to make the much needed connections between the local and the international.

The proposed programme is under the theme "Shine your Light- Light up your city". It is structured around three "territories": "People", "Places" and "Connections". Each is further subdivided. At the centre of the scheme is the Power Station, a capacity building project with multiple strands.

Cultural strategy

The panel noted the broad participative approach used in the creation of the cultural strategy 2014-2024. The bidbook was clear in the interactions of the projects in the proposed programme with the cultural strategy. The panel was pleased to learn that one of the weaknesses of the current cultural sector (the relatively low percentage of city funds going to the independent sector) was in the process of change.

The panel strongly appreciated the importance and clear vision of people (culture and creative agents, audiences and decision makers) in the linking of the impact of the ECOC with urban development. These will be the agents of change in the run up to the ECOC year and beyond.

A positive element of the bid was the high level of support and engagement of the different communities' leaders and artists in this multilingual and multicultural city.

The bidbook clearly set out the longer term impacts in the social, economic and cultural sectors. The panel welcomed the direct relationship of these impacts with three target groups of people (cultural and creative agents, audiences and decision makers).

The panel noted several strong points in the strategy's objectives including the aim to develop behavioural change by decision and policy (individually and collectively) makers, through a three step process of engagement, participation and outreach and the inclusion of a European outlook.

The panel felt these were well thought through and covered the desired outcomes of the ECOC. They can act as clear factor in decision making in the ECOC.

The evaluation plan itself based on a logical framework is sound. The outline of objectives and indicators was well presented with a number of key overall targets. The bidbook recognises the current weakness in evaluation in Romania and intends to use the West University of Timișoara, European experts and consultants.

Recommendation: There are currently several attempts in other ECOCs to form a longer term and pan-European ECOC evaluation network and the panel recommends further investigation of participation.

Recommendation: The panel would expect evaluation to have its own budget line and not be included in the programme budget,

European Dimension

The panel welcomed the intention for over 75% of projects to be co-produced with partners from Europe. The aim should be to increase the citizens' awareness of the diversity of cultures in Europe today.

The panel noted the strong emphasis on projects with the neighbouring countries (cross-border). These have the virtue of closeness but the panel did not see how they were tackling regional challenges in the cultural, social or economic areas.

Recommendation: The panel recommends that the Artistic Director make a special emphasis for the remaining elements of the programme to seek partners from further afield and to widen the participation of the regional projects. 30% of the budget is currently reserved for future calls. The panel suggests that the European dimension (broader than the near neighbours) be made a mandatory criterion above the others put forward in the bidbook.

There are good relationships with other ECOCs including shared projects (e.g. Dare!).

Recommendation: There will be three ECOCs in 2021: Novi Sad, Timișoara and a Greek city to be selected in November 2016. The panel expects a considerable range of partnerships between the three cities.

The proposed programme has strengths in addressing European themes (for example themes connected with LGBT, linguistic diversity, Holocaust, youth unemployment, hostility to newcomers and migrants).

The proposed programme included several interesting ways outside of the arts sector of meeting the criteria including "Temporary Citizen", "Live with a Local" (community based tourism) and "Take a Stranger out".

Artistic programme

The proposed programme presents an interesting structure as a journey with power stations and territories. It is the result of a clear and strong process of community participation, including the needs of the cultural sector as well as cross-border and international partners.

Many of the projects are multi-annual, a strong element of the programme, and likely to result in a greater legacy of change than single one off events.

The panel felt that the thematic approach to the programme was stronger as a developmental tool than as a programme outline for production. The incoming Artistic Director, in line with the overall strategy of co-creation with the audiences, needs to animate the programme, especially in 2021 itself, for a more coherent public presentation.

Several projects stood out for the panel as holding significant potential including "Moving Fireplaces", "Spotlight Heritage" and the creation of an archive of citizens' memories of the 1989 revolution in Romania.

The panel appreciated the intention to have a digital element in almost all projects; an innovative approach.

The panel welcomed the partnership with the former candidate city of Arad. There is an active relationship with many ECOCs which is developing around specific project plans.

There are clear criteria for the future open calls and programme enhancements.

Recommendation: The panel recommends that financial viability should be added to the list and that the European dimension falls into a mandatory category.

Capacity

The bid has the strong support from the mayor and the council.

The Power Station action derives from a close analysis of the needs and weaknesses of the cultural sector. The depth of consultation was clear. Its route map of "from empowerment to praxis to employment" is strong and sets the legacy hopes of the ECOC on a strong pathway.

The panel noted the aim to create 100 new jobs, a stiff target on such a limited budget, but one which should drive the ECOC management.

Recommendation: The panel recommends a further in-depth review of the CCI sectors with an emphasis on job creation, in partnership with the city's economic development strategy.

There is a long list of infrastructure projects which are to be used by the ECOC. This creates a risk for the ECOC and alternative "Plan Bs" should be in place. The panel noted the renovation of cinemas into broader based cultural centres and considers this is an opportunity for an international project (e.g. Plovdiv2019).

Outreach

The panel appreciated the innovative central focus of the proposed programme on engagement (supported by a senior staff member as engagement director) leading to participation to outreach. ECOCs have tried this approach but not with the same degree of centrality and attention.

Audience development is approached as a transversal element throughout the ECOC. The three levels of engagement developed by the team will be implemented through the "Conductors" programme 2018-21. Setting audience development as a transversal programme has several advantages, not least in ensuring it is played in all projects rather than as a stand-alone. The overall strategy of placing audiences centre stage will

drive the changes in audience development in the existing festivals and cultural institutions.

Management

The proposed programme has a forecast budget of €48.5m of which the city contributes €20m, national government €12m, county €5m, EU programmes, (mostly competitive) €3m and €4m from other public sector agencies. The private sector is expected to contribute €4.5m.

The income is forecast to be allocated 70% to programme, 15% to marketing and 11% to salaries and administration. 4% is left for contingencies and late cutting edge ideas.

The panel was content with the proposed financing.

The panel was content with the governance structure of the Association set up to administer the ECOC. It appreciated the intention to abide by the Governance Code for Culture developed in the Netherlands and the "management of expectation plan".

Recommendation: the panel strongly recommends that no member of the Board should be associated with projects within the ECOC.

The staffing plans were acceptable with one exception. The panel was not sure of the "coordinator" functions and their relationship in terms of authority and decision making with the Executive and the Artistic Directors.

Recommendation: The panel recommends a review of the senior staffing structure to ensure the primacy of the Artistic Director over all artistic aspects of the programme.

The panel appreciated the thorough and open analysis of the strengths, weaknesses and risk discovered during the bid preparation.

For marketing purposes the panel felt the programme structure of three strands with sub-programmes will be difficult to get over to audiences and citizens. The flexibility and dynamism of the "Light Up" slogan was noted.

Summary

The panel was strongly impressed with the central focus to put people first throughout the project. This matches the overall objective of the ECOC action and sets up the opportunity for a strong legacy and is given added impetus with the Power Station capacity building programme. The cultural strategy of the city is comprehensive and the panel appreciated the clarity of targets and objectives and how these matched the intended outcomes. The panel considered the support criteria of capacity and governance to be sound. The proposed programme is strong, it tackles edgy European themes, has a deep digital and audience development focus. The European Dimension needs to be strengthened with a broader reach beyond the near neighbours.

Formal Designation

This report has been sent to the ministry and the European Commission. Both will publish it on their websites. In accordance with article 11, and based on this report, the ministry will designate Timișoara to hold the title of ECOC in Romania in 2021. It will

inform the European Parliament, Council, Commission and the Committee of the Regions. This formal designation enables Timișoara to use the title “European Capital of Culture 2021”.

Recommendations to the ministry

The panel recommends that the ministry expedites two critical issues to assist the successful implementation of the ECOC. Experience has shown that to be successful ECOCs need to have a firm foundation built in the immediate period after designation.

- The introduction of a new legal basis to enable the TM2021Association to operate.
- The agreement on the national governments’ contribution to the ECOC. This should treat the ECOC as a single project and not require the ECOC to bid on a project by project basis.

Melina Mercouri Prize

The panel recommends that the European Commission awards the Melina Mercouri Prize to the designated city. The payment of the €1.5m prize is deferred until 2021. It is conditional.

The conditions are (article 14 of the Decision):

- The ECOC honours its commitments made in the application
- It complies with the criteria
- It takes into account the recommendations of this selection panel report and the reports of the monitoring panel
- There has been no substantial change to the programme and strategy set out in the bidbook; this includes plans for the legacies after the ECOC year
- The budget has been maintained at a level capable of delivering a high level programme and at a level consistent with the bidbook
- The independence of the artistic team has been respected
- The European Dimension has remained sufficiently strong in the final programme
- Marketing and communications have clearly shown it is a European Union action
- Plans for monitoring and evaluation are in place.

In late 2020 the monitoring panel will make a recommendation to the European Commission on whether to make the payment based on these conditions.

Reputation of an ECOC

A city awarded the ECOC title receives considerable international attention from the panel’s recommendation and extending well beyond the ECOC year. It has a responsibility to uphold the reputation of the ECOC brand for the benefit of previous and future title holders. City administrations should be aware that decisions taken (and not just in the cultural sector) may attract formal national, international and social media attention far beyond they are used to handling. This adds a special and new aspect to decision taking in the city over a wide range of issues.

The monitoring phase

Once an ECOC has been designated it enters the “Monitoring Phase” (article 13 of the Decision). The monitoring panel will work with the ECOC to ensure the quality of the ECOC brand and to offer advice and experience.

The bidbook at final selection becomes the de facto contract between the designated city and its citizens, the monitoring panel, the ministry, the European Commission as well to the other candidates. It has an important role in the payment of the Melina Mercouri Prize. The monitoring panel will expect a close alignment with the bidbook during the preparation phase and during the ECOC year. Significant variations from the bidbook should be discussed with the panel, through the Commission, in advance of decisions being made.

There are three formal monitoring checkpoints (**autumn 2017, spring 2019 and autumn 2020**) when the ECOC will meet with the panel in Brussels. The European Commission, on behalf of the monitoring panel, will ask the ECOC to provide a progress report. These reports should indicate the major developments taken by the ECOC, updates of projects and plans in the bidbook, a risk review and an outline work plan for the subsequent period. The Commission, after consultation with the panel, will issue areas which specifically need to be addressed in the reports. These will include information on the implementation of recommendations by the selection and monitoring panels.

The panel may decide to visit the city to observe progress.

The panel's reports of all three meetings will be published on the Commission's website. The ECOC may decide to publish its own progress reports. The panel recommends publication in the interests of transparency.

The panel's recommendations

The following recommendations are made to Timișoara (page references are to the bidbook). The monitoring panel will expect a progress report on their implementation (as well as on recommendations in the assessment section). The panel may ask, via the Commission for an interim report in early 2017.

- The Timișoara2021 Association Supervisory Board to be fully operational with its Board members appointed. (p84). Care should be taken that no member has a vested interest in the operations of the programme. This applies especially to those members from the cultural sector to be elected by the general assembly.
- The panel recommends the ministry is invited to have a full representative on the Board and not with the observer status put forward in the bidbook. Its role is to ensure cooperation from various other ministries, national institutions and organisations.
- The relationship between the Board and staff of the company to be defined and made public.
- Board members need to understand their role as strategic and not executive or day to day management which is the task of the Executive Director. The Board holds the Executive Director and staff accountable at their quarterly meetings. Board members have roles as facilitators and ambassadors.
- Board members have a special responsibility to focus on the legacy objectives.
- The Executive Director draws up a legacy plan for presentation to the Board and maintains an active brief with city officials for its implementation.
- The new Supervisory Board should re-affirm the appointment of the Executive Director. The recruitment of the Artistic Director takes place through an international open recruitment process (page 90).

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- The senior staff of the company are recruited through open competitions and contracted to be in place by spring 2017.
 - The Executive Director issues, with the approval of the Board, financial regulations for the company including the explicit delegation of financial and legal approvals.
 - An external organisation is appointed to undertake annual audits and to approve the Annual Accounts of the Association to ensure transparency and public accountability. The Annual Report and the Accounts of the Association must be published.
 - Internal management and administrative processes are in place. These will include human resources, legal (e.g. project contract arrangements), data privacy, intellectual property rights, the criteria and systems for calls for projects, the marketing and branding strategy. It is important that these are prepared early in the transition period as systems used in the bid process are unlikely to be robust enough for implementation.
 - The panel draws the ECOC's attention to the external evaluation of the 2014 ECOCs (on the European Commission's website) and in particular the importance of an early direct control of marketing and communication by the ECOC association.
 - Close attention should be paid to the reports of the monitoring panel for future ECOCs (2018-2019) to identify possible similar issues.
 - Partnerships with ECOCs from 2017 onwards are developed including shared marketing, sharing of evaluation projects and research as well as operational projects.
 - An internal communications strategy is developed and implemented. This covers communications within the association, between the association and the city administration, between the association and the ministry and between the association and the European Commission. This could also extend to the other three candidate cities to assist collaboration.
 - A detailed staffing plan up to and including 2021 including the use of interns, secondees and volunteers. There should be a clear distinction between the roles each employment category will perform so that unpaid interns and volunteers do not replace fully paid staff.
 - The Board and staff ensure that there is recognition that the ECOC is a European Union programme. This goes beyond the use of the EU logo in all its marketing and (on and offline) and external communications (where the logo should be *prima inter pares* of other corporate logos). This will include an emphasis on Europe Days, on inviting speakers on EU issues, on organising events with a European themes or emphasising values during the ramp years as well as in 2021 etc.

Thanks

The panel wishes to place on record its thanks to the Minister, the staff of the ministry, ably supported by the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, for their efficient management of the competition.

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October 2016