



Selection of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2029 in Sweden

February 2024

The Expert Panel's report
pre-selection stage

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared for the European Commission. However, it only reflects the views of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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

E-mail: eac-unite-D2@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

© European Union, 2024

Selection of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2029 in Sweden

*The Expert Panel's report
pre-selection stage*

Edited by

Anne Karjalainen, Else Christensen-Redzepovic (Chair), Goda Giedraityte, Hrvoje
Laurenta, Jelle Burggraaff, Joakim Sandberg (Vice-Chair), Jorge Cerveira Pinto
(Rapporteur), Maria Jansén, Rossella Tarantino, Suvi Innilä and Toni Attard

Contents

Introduction	3
Panel meeting	3
Next steps	3
Assessments of the candidates	4
Kiruna	5
Contribution to the long-term strategy	5
Cultural and artistic content	6
European dimension	7
Outreach	8
Management	9
Capacity to deliver	11
Conclusion	11
Uppsala	12
Contribution to the long-term strategy	12
Cultural and artistic content	14
European dimension	15
Outreach	16
Management	17
Capacity to deliver	18
Conclusion	19
General recommendations	19
General	20
Management	23
Capacity to deliver	24
Signed	24
March 2024	

Introduction

This is the report of the expert panel (the “panel”) for the pre-selection phase of the competition for the European Capital of Culture in 2029 in Sweden. The competition is a European Union initiative, which started in 1985. The title “European Capital of Culture” has previously been awarded to two cities in Sweden, Stockholm in 1998 and Umeå in 2014.

The Swedish Arts Council was entrusted by the Swedish Ministry of Culture to act as the managing authority of the competition, which is governed by Decision n°445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 (the “Decision”) and by the “Rules of procedure - Competition for the 2029 European Capital of Culture title in Sweden” adopted by the Ministry and published on its website.

A panel of 12 independent experts was established for the selection process, in line with Article 2 of the Rules of procedure. The European Union institutions and bodies (European Parliament, Council, Commission and Committee of the Regions) designated ten members of this panel, while the Ministry designated two members.

The competition takes place in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and selection. The Ministry issued a call for submission of applications in December 2022. Two applications were submitted by the closing date of the call (2 January 2024) by: Kiruna and Uppsala.

Panel meeting

The panel members met in Stockholm on 20 and 21 February 2024. One panel member was excused for professional reasons. The panel elected Else Christensen-Redzepovic as its chair and Joakim Sandberg as its vice-chair. All panel members signed a declaration of no conflict of interest and confidentiality and gave it to the Ministry ahead of the pre-selection hearings. Representatives of the Ministry, of the Swedish Arts Council and of the European Commission attended the meeting as observers.

The observers took no part in the panel’s deliberations or decision.

At the pre-selection hearings, each candidate city, in alphabetical order, presented its case in 45 minutes and answered questions from the panel during a 60-minute time frame. The panel deliberations took place on 21 February 2024. At a live press meeting on the 21 February, the chair of the panel announced the panel’s recommendation that the Ministry invites the following cities to submit revised bids for the final selection round (in alphabetical order):

Kiruna and Uppsala.

Next steps

The Ministry will arrange for the formal approval of the shortlist based on the recommendations included in this report (Article 8 of the Decision). It will then issue an invitation to the cities named on the approved shortlist to submit revised applications for the final selection.

The shortlisted cities are encouraged to take into account the panel’s assessments and recommendations in this report.

The deadline for the submission of revised applications will be suggested by the Ministry at the same time to the pre-selected cities. The final selection meeting is scheduled to take place in Stockholm at a date that will be communicated by the Ministry.

Two to four panel members will conduct one-day visits to the shortlisted cities shortly before the final selection meeting, aiming to acquire a three-dimensional impression of the two candidates. Accompanying the panel members as observers during these visits will be representatives from the Ministry/Arts Council and the European Commission.

Thank you

In this regard, the panel members wish to extend their gratitude to everyone who participated in the pre-selection phase of the competition. The panel specifically observed that both cities utilised the bidding process as an occasion to strengthen their cultural strategies and emphasise the significance of culture and Europe in their socio-economic progress as a whole. This is already a substantial potential legacy that the ECoC competition has produced.

The two candidate cities are firmly encouraged to continue developing and implementing their respective cultural strategies. The panel wishes to extend its gratitude to the candidates from both cities and all those who made contributions to their proposals. Additionally, it extends its appreciation to the European Commission for its guidance, the Ministry and the Swedish Arts Council for their flawless coordination and the technical team.

Assessments of the candidates

In its assessment of the candidates, the panel noted the general and specific objectives in Article 2 of the Decision and the requirement for the application of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2029 in Sweden 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 outlined in Article 5 of the Decision:

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

In the commentaries that follow, the panel notes the main elements of their findings during the pre-selection phase.

One of the most important features in Decision 445/2014/EU governing the ECoC action from the 2020 titles on is the requirement that cities have a formal and explicit cultural strategy. This requirement is to ensure that the ECoC is grounded in a medium-term transformation of the city and its cultural life.

The panel noted that, in general, the two candidate cities need to strongly enhance the European dimension within their bids. The European dimension is the *raison d'être* of a European Capital of Culture and must be at the heart of a bid in all its different aspects.

The panel emphasises that, in line with the specifications in the call published by the Ministry, its assessments of the candidates were based on the bid books and the cities' presentation and Q&A sessions during the pre-selection meeting. A city's history, its recent and current policies as well as its cultural offer may form a basis for the proposed programme, but they are not criteria in the selection process.

In reference to the two successful cities, specific and common recommendations are made, to assist them in the preparation of their final bid books. The panel's recommendation for the shortlisted cities is also based on the analysis of the capacity of the cities to make the required steps before the final selection to win the ECoC title.

Kiruna

Kiruna is a city that possesses a significant cultural legacy, while also facing the difficulties of industrial growth, the use of renewable energy sources, and the reshaping of its urban landscape. Frequent detonations occur within the city, resulting in the destruction of roadways and the deformation of infrastructure. The iron-ore extracted from its subsoil is of utmost importance for both national and European interests, leaving the city responsible with no alternative but to relocate the city. The city is currently experiencing a mix of sadness and anticipation for the future, as it strives to be designated as the European Capital of Culture in 2029.

Due to its unique Arctic landscape, Sami inhabitants and strategic geographical position, the city has a remarkably rare opportunity to reconstruct, preserve and showcase its exceptional characteristics by harmonising human activities with the natural environment.

Kiruna is encountering a substantial obstacle as it transitions from its most extensive subterranean iron-ore mine to the urban core. The city's notion of movement is intended to replicate the multi-dimensional nature of Kiruna, with a specific emphasis on the city centre shifting three kilometres to the east, along with its population of 6,000 residents. The concept of mobility is intended to prioritise the well-being of one another, minority cultures, nature, history, and the future.

Ultimately, Kiruna aspires to be designated as the European Capital of Culture in 2029, fully embracing its distinct cultural identity and confronting the obstacles it encounters.

Contribution to the long-term strategy

- Kiruna's long-term cultural strategy was approved in October 2023 and spans until 2026 (a review for the period after 2026 is expected to be elaborated). Its work plan will undergo annual reviews. The placement of the ECoC within the long-term cultural strategy is compelling. However, while it is a strength that a cultural strategy is in place, it is essential that the strategy extends well beyond the title year.
- The Kiruna 2029 bid demonstrates a convincing legacy plan, encompassing a comprehensive set of initiatives and commitments that, however, require further detail. Furthermore, the bid presents a good case for the value of ECoC to the city, its challenges, its future, and legacy.

- The overall concept of movement has potential, and the narrative is persuasive and explains the challenges. The relocation/new city could offer numerous occasions to be the testbed of innovative urban experiences and creative placemaking. However, the links between the cultural sector and other sectors need further development.
- The panel considers that the role of the universities and space activities is underexplored, which is a missed opportunity. The creative and cultural sector is dispersed and reduced in number, and it is not clear what the policy is to attract the new artists and creative people the city needs to become more culturally vibrant and to implement its ECoC project.
- The monitoring and evaluation structure is well defined and covers both qualitative and quantitative measures, with research led by Luleå University of Technology and Umeå University.

RECOMMENDATION

The panel recommends the development of a comprehensive, well-defined long-term strategy that extends beyond the ECoC title year. This strategy should articulate clear goals, objectives, and priorities, providing a roadmap for sustained cultural development and legacy-building.

To ensure the effective integration of the ECoC within this long-term strategy, the panel advises the formulation of a detailed capacity-building plan and targeted measures to attract and retain artists and cultural professionals. Understanding the underlying factors affecting the city's attractiveness to cultural professionals is essential for devising effective retention strategies and fostering a thriving creative community.

Furthermore, the panel underscores the importance of formalising the city's commitment to sustaining cultural activities beyond the ECoC title year. This entails incorporating explicit plans for ongoing cultural engagement and investment in the city's long-term strategy, ensuring the continuity of cultural vibrancy and legacy-building efforts.

Cultural and artistic content

- The artistic vision is clear and well explained, providing a programmatic framework that has the potential to develop into an innovative ECoC programme. The programme concept (Movement) and lines (Below ground - On earth - In space) are relevant and well connected to the city. The programme, at this stage, was presented with 14 projects covering a wide range of disciplines.
- The city has involved local artists and cultural organisations in the development of its ECoC project through various means, such as participation in open meetings. Furthermore, the city has provided examples of European interest in Sami art and Sami soundscape, which can be expanded to a European level.
- The team affirmed that the programme, which is at this stage presented in broad terms, will be further developed for the second round of the competition, and they expect to organise an open call for new ideas of projects and artists. Open calls will

be organised locally, nationally, or internationally, and the city plans to have a wider approach in Europe through other ECoCs' collaborations.

- Kiruna lacks a substantial cultural sector, and in the vicinity, there are few, if any, larger cities that boast sizable cultural sectors. To manage this, collaboration is key, and the city already has many professionals working with and within various parts of Sweden. The panel seeks more clarity on how the regional level in Norrbotten can and will support the ECoC project, in terms of their cultural institutions.
- The bid book for Kiruna does not offer strategies for digital production, delivery, and communication, which is considered a weakness, especially given Kiruna's peripheral location and the prevailing state of digitalization and AI technology permeating societies and cultural sectors.

RECOMMENDATION

The culture programme is still weak overall since there are no strong, obvious linkages between its several parts. To address these deficiencies, the culture programme needs to be improved from a wider European perspective and more cultural specialists need to be involved in order for it to be carried out successfully. Furthermore, it is critical to locate analogous sites with analogous histories and challenges within a European and global framework, actively involving local artists and cultural organisations in the process. A good example that requires further clarification is the concept of a network of cultural farms. More information is needed, such as how distant these farms are from the city and how mobility concerns will be handled.

It is essential to look into further connections between the increase of iron-ore mining activities in Kiruna and the pristine natural environment.

Lastly, creating a strong digital strategy that integrates AI components into artistic production, performance, and communication is necessary.

European dimension

- The local context, with its cultural diversity, is an essential part of an ECoC; however, it must be elevated to a European level that extends beyond merely establishing European links as supplementary elements. While the team is planning to have comprehensive project descriptions, both curated and co-curated, finalised and confirmed with national and international partners, including other ECoCs, for the final round of the competition, it is essential to underline that a strong European mindset must permeate the entire cultural and artistic programme.
- The team described some exceptional connections in Europe, and provided examples of existing connections, including the Venice Biennale and Documenta, and notable other mining sites that have been converted into artistic endeavours.
- While the proposal acknowledges the importance of addressing European issues that have been historically overlooked - such as the importance and contributions of indigenous cultures to our modern societies - it is important to ensure European

integration and the promotion of cultural diversity, through shared European heritage, history, and cultures at the project's core.

- Connection with some ECoCs has been established and will be strengthened in the next phase of the competition. Partnerships have been formed with the Creative Europe funded Culture Next network and locations such as Happaranda in Sweden, Narvik in Norway, as well as collaboration with cities and organisations in Germany and Poland have been explored, which is a good start that must, however, be substantially deepened, expanded, and intensified for the final round of the competition
- Highlighted challenges include the relocation of the city centre and potential collaborations with other European towns in culture-oriented urban planning, with limited details provided. Overall, there is a lack of substantial instances of collaboration with other regions of Europe, and the European aspect is conceptual rather than tangible.

RECOMMENDATION

To elevate the Kiruna 2029 bid to a genuine European level, it is essential to infuse a strong European mindset throughout the cultural and artistic programme. This requires fostering real cooperation projects with European operators and other ECoCs, cultivating initiatives, and establishing robust partnerships with European cultural institutions, networks, and individual artists.

Moreover, the bid should emphasise shared European heritage, history, and cultures at its core, strengthening European integration and promoting cultural diversity. Strategies to attract a wider European audience must be evident, ensuring that the bid resonates with broader European values and interests.

Additionally, the bid should address challenges such as urban relocation, indigenous representation, culture-driven urban planning, and environmental sustainability. By incorporating these considerations, the bid can offer a holistic and socially responsible approach that aligns with the values of the European Capital of Culture initiative.

Outreach

- In addition to cultural organisations, the city and region boast an affluent and diverse civil society, composed of more than 400 associations, of which 30 are council-funded and approximately 10 are councils established in the municipality to create opportunities for the participation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups. This is a strong basis to activate various stakeholders in the further development and preparation of the ECoC project.
- The councils play a crucial role in interacting and engaging with marginalised and disadvantaged groups, and they have been asked about their preferred method of working with the ECoC project, which is encouraging. Nevertheless, it is necessary to reassess the suggested proposals and determine their integration into the overall programme.

- While the Sami people are already engaged internationally, with four countries participating in cross-border cooperation, the aim of the ECoC 2029 is to further promote the recognition of Sami culture beyond Sweden. This will be achieved through enhanced visibility and influence the legislative authority of the Council of Europe. These efforts would facilitate a sense of inclusion for the Sami within a broader European community. measures to broaden and deepen the awareness and recognition of Sami culture in Swedish schools should be considered.
- It is also positive that the bid's outreach section description cross references projects and communities with projects in the programme and interestingly explores other community groups such as the "Macho man" and the "A-traktor drivers". However, details about the involvement of the civil society in the Kiruna 2029 project are missing and no information is provided on migrants or the LGBTQIA+ community, which is considered a weakness.

RECOMMENDATION

The project should strive to enhance and clarify the involvement of associations and other civil groups, preferably as creators of new artistic-led projects.

Further, assurance of full inclusion of marginalised groups must be ensured across all activities. Measures to emphasise and promote Sami culture across Sweden and Europe should be considered.

It is recommended that significant commitments be made to further develop the digital strategy of the ECoC before progressing to the next stage of the competition. Improved digital capabilities will enhance regional and national participation, attract, and retain audiences, and facilitate interaction with expatriates, migrants, and minority communities, ultimately ensuring a more inclusive and impactful cultural programme.

Management

- The Kiruna 2029 project is set to be realised with a budget of 15 million euros. The City plans to invest 1.8 million euros in the operating budget, which is less than 50% of its annual budget for culture. This amount also represents only 15% of the public resources expected to cover the operating costs of the ECoC, which may be seen as a limited commitment to the project. The team recognised that this is a small budget, but they also count on a strong cooperation with the city's business communities.
- The Municipality is considering a governance model where the organisation of the project will be set in city structures, rather than as an independent unit. While this could be a viable model, the panel emphasises the importance of maintaining arm's length principles for the ECoC project. This is especially crucial considering the municipality's strong focus on the city's relocation that requires substantial human resources.
- The allocation of only 7% of the budget for promotion and marketing poses a major concern to the panel as a strong and substantial strategy with sufficient resources in this field is paramount for the Kiruna 2029 project to resonate across Sweden

and Europe. Conversely, a significant 25% of the budget is allocated for wages and administration, however, justified as a necessity for attracting qualified staff to an area where salary levels are high due to generous salary levels in the mining industry.

- While the City has reached a common agreement to earmark 1.8 million euros to the project, the Region of Norrbotten will make a decision only after the selected city is announced, which is a concern. The national Government has not announced its financial contribution but is expected to do so for the final round of the competition. Funding is also expected from EU programmes. The plan for the ECoC 2029 includes a high proportion of non-public funding, with 22% coming from the private business sector. The Municipality is currently in discussions with many companies - though no agreement has been reached yet, which however would be expected to be the case for the final selection stage.
- The panel would like to have more information about the management and governance/control of the ECoC project, especially if it is integrated into the municipality administration. For example, the city's artistic content function is at the same hierarchical level as the project strategist, who is responsible for essential resources for creative content success. Clarity is required in terms of decision-making process and responsibilities.
- The marketing and communication strategy lacks a clear focus on how to attract the attention of the national and international audiences. The candidature aims to highlight the ECoC as an action of the EU, and there is unanimous support for the bid from the Municipality and other public and semi-public entities.

RECOMMENDATION

To ensure the success of the Kiruna 2029 project, a revised operating budget is crucial. It should achieve a more balanced distribution of costs across programmes, wages/administration, communication/marketing, contingency budget, and evaluation. The budget must demonstrate the project's impact at the European, national, and local levels, emphasising the participation of artists and cultural organisations from these spheres.

Regarding the delivery entity, it is imperative to uphold arms' length principles to safeguard artistic independence, as outlined in the bid book. However, the proposed small team size of full-time staff is concerning. Exploring alternative benchmarks, such as Bodø, for comparison and evaluation, is recommended.

Given the Municipality's full engagement in the relocation exercise, adequate human resources dedicated to the cultural programme are essential to prevent negative impacts on its implementation. This highlights the need for a clear governance structure, decision-making process, and delineation of responsibilities within the municipality administration.

Furthermore, the marketing and communication strategy should focus on attracting national and international attention to the ECoC. Emphasising the ECoC as an EU initiative and garnering support from various public and semi-public entities are positive steps, but a more targeted approach is needed to effectively reach the intended audience.

Capacity to deliver

- The Municipality Council has unanimously decided to support and proceed with the ECoC application. Letters of support were already received from the Region of Norrbotten and the Association of Local and Regional Authorities Norrbotten's Municipalities. However, it is important that more specific information is given regarding the type of support provided.
- There are clear plans for moving the city to its new location, numerous cultural infrastructure plans, innovative considerations regarding accommodation absorption capacity, adequate public transport access, as well as a historical museum and a Creative Hub planned as a legacy of the ECoC. The ECoC bid book has undergone review in the Sami Parliament, yet it has not received unanimous approval.
- However, there are uncertainties regarding the completion of key venues and major infrastructure. The core project of moving the city is a risky endeavour, but it has strengths in innovation and courage. An ECoC in a dynamic and a moving Arctic city would garner European and global attention.
- There are concerns with regard to sourcing an adequate number of artists and producers for a successful execution of the ECoC year. Risks include the capacity to attract people to work for the ECoC due to its difficulty to reach and costly transport, and the focus of the Municipality on the move and reconstruction endeavours.
- The city's available cultural venues for hosting ECoC events, including several anticipated large-scale events, appears to be limited in number.

RECOMMENDATION

The Municipality's unanimous support for the ECoC application is commendable, but specific details on the type of support are needed. Risks associated with key venues and infrastructure completion must be addressed. Options include taking bold risks or focusing on essential infrastructure projects. Capacity-building strategies are crucial to attract and retain artists. Detailed plans, budgets, and timelines for infrastructure arrangements should be provided for the final round of the competition.

Conclusion

The panel recommends that the bid of Kiruna proceed to the final selection phase. Kiruna, with its rich cultural legacy, is confronting challenges from industrial growth and urban reshaping. The city envisions a new, agile culture city centred around the ECoC title, emphasising the well-being of residents, minority cultures, nature, history, and the future.

Despite facing challenges in its current strategy, the city aims to combine local heritage and traditional art forms with innovative expressions, making the ECoC bid for Kiruna 2029 a unique opportunity to reconstruct its cultural identity.

While the ECoC bid shows promise, there are areas that require attention. Specifically, there is a need to ensure a convincing European dimension throughout the project and to

professionalise the artistic programme. The proposal acknowledges the importance of engaging with other ECoCs and European partners and for recognising historically neglected aspects. The city's ability to deliver the ECoC, potential financial challenges, and marketing strategies require careful consideration. Recommendations include increasing community engagement, refining the marketing approach, and strategically managing risks to enhance the bid's success.

In conclusion, Kiruna's ECoC bid presents an exciting opportunity to redefine its cultural landscape, addressing both local and European dimensions. Addressing the identified areas of improvement will strengthen the bid, making it a compelling case for securing the ECoC title in 2029. Embracing these recommendations will not only bolster Kiruna's candidacy but also contribute to the broader objectives of the European Capital of Culture initiative, fostering cultural exchange, innovation, and inclusivity across the continent.

Uppsala

Uppsala is applying to become a European Capital of Culture in 2029, with the view to harnessing culture as a driving force for a sustainable future, placing mobility issues at the forefront. Uppsala's position as a knowledge hub with two world-class universities and strong growth provides it with favourable conditions to lead in the sustainability transition.

Uppsala is one of Sweden's largest and rapidly growing cities with ambitious goals to become a global leader in environmental and climate transition. The municipality aims to break down social segregation and create a safe city with a high quality of life for everyone.

The European Capital of Culture year is envisaged as a catalyst to set things in motion and contribute to the change needed to confront the significant challenges they face. Uppsala's application focuses on the process, journey, and ambitions of becoming a true cultural capital with the aim to enhance international partnerships, reinforce cultural pillars for social development, increase attention and recognition, and be a model for creative transition from a wasteful society to a sustainable one.

Uppsala's bid also highlights its commitment to inclusivity and diversity, aiming to ensure that cultural initiatives benefit all segments of society. Additionally, the city seeks to inspire other communities worldwide to embark on similar journeys towards sustainability and cultural enrichment.

Contribution to the long-term strategy

- The long-term cultural strategy of Uppsala was approved four years ago, based on former strategies. The strategy is currently being revised with expected completion in 2025/2026, which does not cover the ECoC year, while a formal requirement is for the strategy to cover the action and include plans for sustaining the cultural activities beyond the year of the title.
- The city has ambitious goals to become a global leader in environmental and climate transition and create a safe city with a high quality of life for everyone. The ECoC is envisaged to serve as a catalyst to increase citizens' participation in this transition and is interested in decentralising the cultural offer and linking urban and rural

areas. The connection between the city's long-term strategy and the ECoC project, however, is not sufficiently detailed.

- The university's connection with the EIT Cultural and Creative KiC programme is encouraging and if developed further and integrated in the ECoC concept it could be of exceptional value.
- The city of Uppsala is working on mapping its cultural ecosystem and identifying new layers to better understand its needs, capacity, and weaknesses. While this is positive, it is urgent to have this process completed for the results to serve as the framework for the cultural and artistic programme that needs to be substantiated for the final round of the competition.
- The bid gives evidence of the difficulty to reach different audiences, also because of the social and residential segregation. Yet, these specific questions are not analysed and an audience engagement plan that takes into account also the issue of multiculturalism is not presented.
- The city's plan to strengthen the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors, including developing long-term links between the cultural, economic, and social sectors is not sufficiently detailed and requires further elaboration for the final selection stage.
- The proposed monitoring and evaluation plan is rather generic and connected mainly to the overall cultural development. A more substantial plan for the ECoC project would need to be developed including a clear timeline and baselines along with relevant and realistic qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure impact as well as a solid plan for dissemination. Information on who will be carrying out the evaluation must also be provided.

RECOMMENDATION

It is urgent that the city of Uppsala finishes the work on mapping its cultural ecosystem and integrating it into its cultural strategy.

The city's ECoC strategy should adopt a more expansive outlook, emphasising the cultural landscape, audience participation, and social and residential integration. It is imperative to enhance the overall monitoring and evaluation plans, including the international dimension, while encompassing assessments of social and cultural changes during and beyond the title year.

The cultural concept and framework of the ECoC project can be strengthened by the input from the comprehensive cultural mapping strategy. Capacity-building plans must be further developed, and the basic description of the legacy plans requires further clarification.

While integrated into the culture strategy, the bid signals a shift from an economic focus to a holistic perspective, and this is positive. Although the goals, including cultural decentralisation and addressing social issues, are clear, the ECoC project should strive to

articulate how these principles are effectively realised, while at the same time, grounding the concept in a more artistic and identity-oriented approach.

Cultural and artistic content

- The concept of Uppsala 2029 is “Between the lines”, and it is meant to reflect upon the ongoing urban development of the city with new railway, tramway and bike lines under construction and the corresponding need to fill the spaces in between and create a new ecosystem. While appreciating the endeavour, the panel thinks that the bid would benefit from substantially strengthening the artistic aspect of the concept, its uniqueness, and its sense of place.
- Uppsala 2029's programme is structured around the phases of Identify, Activate, Initiate, and Experience, with "conductors" serving as key figures. While this concept is interesting, the panel perceives it more as a description of an implementation process rather than a fully developed cultural and artistic strategy. Furthermore, the combination between local cultural heritage and traditional art forms and experimental cultural expressions should be further investigated and developed.
- The proposed process to ensure the development of the future culture and artistic content of the ECoC shows robust capacity-building efforts and initiatives but faces obstacles like potential schedule delays, unclear “conductor” responsibilities, and lack of originality in event planning. Furthermore, although it highlights community involvement, it lacks international networking and overall a compelling vision.
- The Uppsala 2029 bid envisions a cultural programme where curatorial responsibilities will be managed by the conductors' circle, involving city institutions and citizens. However, as presented in the pre-selection bid book as a 'cultural process', this is not possible for the panel to assess. It is important to underline that the final selection bid book is a *de facto* contract with the European Commission, therefore, the panel emphasises the importance of preparing concrete projects, budgets, and partnerships tailored specifically for the ECoC year for the final round of the competition.

RECOMMENDATION

To strengthen the Uppsala 2029 bid, the panel recommends a thorough refinement and enhancement of the artistic approach, with a focus on exploring and showcasing the city's cultural challenges and uniqueness. This entails developing a more robust and compelling narrative that effectively communicates the bid's artistic vision and sense of place. Additionally, the bid does not convincingly demonstrate collaboration with international partners, fostering cross-cultural exchange and enriching the programme with diverse perspectives and expertise.

While the bid demonstrates strengths in capacity-building efforts and community involvement, it faces challenges such as potential schedule delays, ambiguous conductor responsibilities, and a lack of originality in event planning. To address these obstacles, the

bid should prioritise streamlining its implementation process, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and infusing creativity and innovation into its programming.

Furthermore, in advancing to the second round of the competition, the bid must develop concrete projects and initiatives accompanied by detailed plans for artists, cooperation partners, timelines, and budgets. This entails transitioning from a conceptual 'cultural process' to tangible, actionable projects tailored specifically for the ECoC year. Emphasising concrete deliverables and partnerships in the final bid book is crucial, as it serves as a contract with the European Commission and demonstrates the bid's readiness for implementation.

European dimension

- The emphasis on Northern Europe and climate consciousness, along with the aspiration to integrate Uppsala into a wider European network, showcases a promising approach with potential European resonance. However, significant development is required to make it convincing.
- The bid's commitment to a digital strategy and its aim to establish Uppsala as part of a larger web of networks is positive. However, there is substantial room for improvement in the digital realm, particularly in enhancing digital production, delivery, and communication. Additionally, the integration of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) requires further attention.
- The awareness of European themes, particularly climate consciousness, adds depth to the bid's strategic vision, and the emphasis on attracting a broad European and international public for extended stays is commendable. However, the integration of other European themes must be explored.
- The city has engaged in collaborations with European projects with cultural relevance, particularly in the academic and student sphere, which can potentially benefit the ECoC process.
- Initiatives such as the creation of a resource centre and the announced commitment to ensuring 70% of projects with European dimensions is commendable. However, details of these planned approaches will need to be set out in detail for the final round of the competition. The absence of specific details regarding collaboration with European partners, artists, and networks, including other ECoCs, is a significant concern. This deficiency raises doubts about the bid's connectivity and international exchanges, as well as its overall European dimension.
- Additionally, while the bid highlights the intention to promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, there is a notable lack of specificity in addressing common aspects of European cultures and heritage.

RECOMMENDATION

To strengthen the European dimension of the Uppsala 2029 bid, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive and compelling programme that resonates with a European audience.

This involves enhancing collaboration with European partners, cities, regions, and other ECoCs to create a diverse and interconnected network of cultural exchange. Concrete details of cooperation, co-creation, and co-curation initiatives should be outlined, highlighting the bid's commitment to fostering European integration, dialogue, and cultural diversity.

Furthermore, the bid should prioritise the integration of European themes beyond climate consciousness, exploring common aspects of European cultures and heritage. By showcasing the richness and diversity of European cultural traditions, the bid can attract a broader European and international audience to Uppsala.

In addition, the bid must bolster its digital strategy, focusing on improving digital production, delivery, and communication. Embracing advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance the bid's digital presence and accessibility, making it more engaging and interactive for audiences across Europe.

Overall, by developing a strong European dimension programme and prioritising collaboration with European partners, the Uppsala 2029 bid can position itself as a compelling destination for European cultural exchange and dialogue.

Outreach

- The Uppsala bid demonstrates strengths in its commitment to equal access to culture, particularly addressing issues faced by individuals with limited physical mobility or disabilities, the elderly, youth, and the LGBTQIA+ community. The decentralised "stations" are designed to tackle these challenges, prioritising projects proposed by the community.
- The bid acknowledges the importance of audience involvement and aims to engage marginalised groups, with a specific focus on young people. Initiatives involving the local population and civil society are listed, showcasing a strong intention to incorporate diverse voices in the cultural programme. This aspect should be further exemplified in concrete projects for the final bid book.
- Outreach plans for engaging marginalised groups such as the elderly, youth, disabled individuals, and the LGBTQIA+ community need further exploration.
- The strategy for audience development requires further elaboration, particularly in creating opportunities for the participation of disadvantaged groups and outlining the link between education and audience engagement.
- The bid gives evidence of the difficulty to reach different audiences, also because of the social and residential segregation. Yet, these specific questions are not analysed and an audience engagement plan that takes into account also the issue of multiculturalism is not presented.
- The role of the conductors, mainly institutions, raises concerns about governance and the potential lack of a bottom-up approach. The bid book description is generic, and its approach appears more institutionally driven than grassroots-oriented,

potentially hindering innovation. Community involvement is perceived as complex. This aspect will require substantial clarification.

RECOMMENDATION

To strengthen audience engagement, the bid should provide detailed plans for engaging marginalised groups like the elderly, youth, disabled individuals, and the LGBTQIA+ community. Enhancements in the audience development strategy, particularly regarding education and participation opportunities for disadvantaged groups, are needed.

The role of conductors, mainly institutions, raises governance concerns, indicating a potential lack of a bottom-up approach. The bid book should clarify this role and emphasise plans for grassroots involvement to foster innovation.

Moreover, the decision-making structure needs clarity, and the process of community involvement must be effectively implemented. Concrete projects showcasing diverse voices should be outlined in the final bid book to demonstrate a genuine commitment to inclusivity and diversity in the cultural programme.

Management

- The operational budget for Uppsala 2029 is 23.11 million euros, which raises concerns due to its perceived inadequacy considering the city's size and aspirations to become a European Capital of Culture in 2029. Developing a high-quality cultural and artistic programme with a strong European dimension for an entire year demands significant financial and human resources. Furthermore, it is crucial to ensure the necessary budget for the implementation of an ECoC by the final round of the competition, thereby demonstrating a firm commitment from all funding stakeholders.
- Notwithstanding accounting for less than 15% of its yearly culture expenditures, the municipality has made a commitment to allocate 6.75 million euros for operational purposes. Nevertheless, the panel acknowledges the city's expertise in engaging with the private sector. Should it achieve success, it could potentially serve as a blueprint for formulating strategies to attract private investment in cultural endeavours throughout Europe and Sweden. Nevertheless, for the purpose of establishing a more equitable financial system, it is vital to augment the number of private financiers and revise the public fund commitments. Further clarification is also necessary regarding the potential benefits that Uppsala 2029 could derive from the 1% rule for public art investment.
- The distribution of operating costs is relatively well balanced, with 65% of the budget allocated to the programme, but only 15% for communication and marketing, and 20% for wages, overheads and administration. It might be worth considering a higher percentage of the budget for ensuring sufficient resources for communication and marketing. The budget contains no provision for contingency, which is a shortcoming.

- The municipal government is considering a model where the organisation of the project will be set within city structures rather than as an independent unit. Although this could prove to be the right decision, at this stage, the panel considers that the proposed governance and delivery structure are insufficiently elaborated. Moreover, the panel underlines the importance of ensuring arms' length principles for the ECoC project.

RECOMMENDATION

To ensure solid resonance of an Uppsala ECoC across Sweden and all of Europe, the panel recommends a substantial increase in the overall operating budget that aligns better with the size and capacity of the city. Additional enhancements are required to establish a resilient and efficient governance structure capable of supervising and executing the successful implementation of the ECoC year while effectively managing its legacy. These improvements should encompass augmenting the participation and involvement of the private sector beyond financial contributions to achieve a more significant impact.

Moreover, focusing on improving the proposed governance and delivery system is crucial for ensuring efficient execution and long-term viability. Providing greater clarity regarding future funding allocations for the project would significantly improve long-term planning and contribute to its overall success. Furthermore, it is necessary to enhance the marketing and communication plan for the upcoming phase.

To ensure the delivery structure maintains appropriate artistic independence (consistent with the bid book's cultural and artistic content), arms' length principles must be adhered to. The integration into the structure of the municipality must be thoroughly justified and explained.

Capacity to deliver

- According to the team, the pre-selection bid was approved by the city Council with a majority vote.
- The city boasts well-established institutions, contributing significantly to its cultural landscape, with a history of local and national importance. It can also boast a strong presence of independent cultural organisations as well as artists and creative professionals.
- The city plans to leverage the existing well-established cultural infrastructure while also proposing new facilities to support the ECoC activities. However, the lack of detailed information on the infrastructure plans raises doubts about whether the proposed infrastructure will be completed in time.
- The city's focus on reinterpreting and reconstructing existing sites aligns with contemporary values of climate neutrality and sustainability. Moreover, Uppsala has viable regional, national, and international transport networks and a sufficiently high absorption rate in terms of tourists' accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION

Securing substantial and largely consensus-based political support, along with financial guarantees, is of utmost importance prior to the final round of the competition.

Providing more detailed plans for the proposed infrastructural constructions, specific programme descriptions, budgets, and completion timelines is essential information for ensuring a comprehensive and compelling proposal for consideration in the final round of the competition.

Conclusion

The panel recommends that Uppsala's bid proceed to the final selection phase. Uppsala aspires to become the ECoC with a vision centred on leveraging culture for a sustainable future. Positioned as a knowledge hub with two leading universities, Uppsala demonstrates strength in its commitment to sustainability, innovative cultural programmes, and potential to be a model for private investment in culture.

Revisiting the cultural and artistic concept with a view to strengthening its artistic appeal, highlighting its uniqueness and sense of place and its contribution to European cultural diversity will greatly strengthen the bid.

The bid aims to enhance visibility, collaboration, and cross-sectoral engagement, fostering co-production and co-creation. The commitment to addressing challenges faced by individuals with limited mobility, the elderly, youth, and the LGBTQIA+ community is commendable.

While strengths lie in equal access to culture and a forward-thinking approach, concerns arise about the potential lack of a bottom-up approach in the role of conductors. Furthermore, it will be critical that the final bid book present a cultural and artistic programme consisting of concrete project proposals. Collaborating with international counterparts and refining the artistic approach will further elevate Uppsala's bid. Clarity on collaboration with European partners and networks is crucial and the bid's governance and delivery system require improvement. Finally, a more realistic approach to ensuring sufficient resources for the delivery of a high-quality European Capital of Culture should be secured.

General recommendations

The following recommendations apply to the two shortlisted candidates.

The panel would like to emphasise the considerable step-change between proposals at the pre-selection stage and those at the final selection. The final selection phase offers an opportunity for shortlisted candidates to consolidate their bids and improve the level of quality throughout. The panel expects significant progress in the final bid books to reflect the expanded six criteria in the Decision for final selection cities and the recommendations of the panel. Studying the panel's comments on both candidate cities in the assessments above may also be useful.

A study of the evaluations of ECoCs (since 2013) and monitoring reports of recently designated ECoCs may also be of value. These are available on the European Commission's ECoC website.¹

The panel would also like to emphasise to the Ministry of Culture the urgency of indicating the state financing share for the ECoC 2029 as soon as possible. This information will be crucial for the candidates to make accurate further planning.

General

Since 2020, Europe and the rest of the world have seen a paradigm shift due to the impact of COVID-19, climate change, a new geopolitical crisis, and inflation. The emerging paradigm is resulting in significant upheavals, apprehension, trepidation, and constraints. The panel believes that it is necessary to adopt a fresh strategy to synchronise culture and significant year-long events with the current world, particularly by implementing new protocols and meeting new standards. This encompasses all activity levels, from artistic expression to administrative tasks. A detailed contingency plan with appropriate alternatives should be an essential component of long-term preparation. This challenge presents an excellent chance for all of us, including the cities competing to host the event, to contemplate and develop new and sustainable cultural models.

The bid book at final selection becomes, ***de facto*, a contract for the designated city**. It sets out the artistic vision and the key objectives, projects, directions, financing and management of the programme. Close concurrence with the bid book is a factor when at the end of the monitoring phase, the panel makes a recommendation to the Commission regarding the payment of the Melina Mercouri prize.

It is the responsibility of the panel (which functions as both the selection and subsequent monitoring panel) to safeguard the European Capital of Culture brand. Candidate cities should be aware that with the level of international attention now being given to ECoCs, policy decisions over a wide area (not just cultural) may affect the reputation of the city, and, in turn, the image of the European Capital of Culture Action. The panel expects the ECoC candidate and title cities to take all possible steps to minimise negative and potentially harmful international and national issues connected to their city.

It is the recommendation of the panel that the cities progressing to the second stage of the bidding process include the following in their bid books (in line with the final selection questionnaire):

- Clear commitment from all partners in the candidacy, as evidenced by budget lines and projects that reflect that commitment.
- Precise project delineations, accompanied by identified and dedicated local, national, European Union, and other global collaborators.
- A robust European dimension that permeates the entire proposal.
- Models of outreach that are explicit and well-defined within the cultural programme.

¹ <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/culture-in-cities-and-regions/european-capitals-of-culture>

- A delivery organisation with a well-defined structure and transparent decision-making procedures.
- Detailed budget breakdowns that distinguish between capital and operating expenditures.

It is also the panel's recommendation that all those attending the presentation be active participants in either the presentation and/or subsequent questions and answers session. Further, it is recommended to clearly state who in the presentation team are from within the bidding team and who are externals.

Contribution to the long-term strategy

A formally approved and updated city cultural strategy needs to be in place before submitting the final bid book. The panel expects very focused bid books and presentations for the final round: cities should indicate the priorities of the cultural strategy that are connected to the ECoC project, its target outcomes and how resources will be assigned over the next few years. The expected legacy of the ECoC should also be described.

An ECoC is a transformational opportunity for a city. The pre-selection bid books set out, in general terms, the objectives of why a city is seeking the title. The objectives should be clearly put, as there is a tendency to perceive ECoC as a panacea for every city challenge. An important aspect that requires elaboration is the expected visible change in the urban landscape. The panel would expect a more focused (and shorter) explanation, which can link to the programme vision, themes, and activities and, through monitoring and evaluation, to the outcomes in the subsequent legacy. There is considerable literature and research available for cities to see the range of cultural, urban development and social benefits of an ECoC.

The evaluation sections of the bid books should be given more attention in the second phase (especially research in order to establish baseline data), and the panel expects to receive ECoC indicators of success. However, the monitoring and evaluation should not be overwhelmed with (just) statistics and data gathering. The final bid book should focus on the priority objectives for the ECoC (rather than those for the entire cultural strategy). One of the priority areas should refer to how the ECoC will meet the various elements of the European dimension criterion.

Capacity-building should be based on a wide understanding of specific capacity-building needs of all kinds of cultural players and hospitality industry and services. The cultural and creative sectors (CCS) should be understood as a transversal topic of the cultural and artistic programme and must be linked to a related mapping and needs analysis of the sector. Capacity-building should therefore also encompass the CCS.

Cultural and artistic content

The focus of the final selection is the operating programme between early 2025, when the ECoC will be formally designated and, in particular the ECoC year of 2029. The panel recommends that the two cities should have an open-minded and daring artistic approach and not be afraid of new, experimental ideas. Deeper considerations of the visions presented in the bids could offer more clarity overall. Consistency between the vision

selected and all other elements of the bid must be ensured. Innovation and originality are required not only in theory but also – even more importantly – in practice. The panel will expect more details on the programme, its individual projects and its partners. Indeed, the cities should set out more clearly not only their artistic vision but also the programme and projects; differentiating between partners who have indicated firm interest and those who are still only potential or possible ones. ECoC programmes normally cover a wide range of art forms and include the increasing development of creative interventions in social issues. An approximate budget should be shown for each major project so that the panel can understand the relative balance of projects in the programme.

As integral components of the programmes, the panel suggests a more targeted and comprehensive strategy for digital cultural content (beyond social media promotions and interactions alone). Furthermore, greater emphasis should be placed on the cultural, environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the initiatives in order to guarantee the ECoC's anticipated substantial legacy.

European dimension

The European dimension being the *raison d'être* of an ECoC the panel expects to find Europe at the heart of the final bids and permeated throughout the cultural and artistic programmes. The panel expects to see a continuous focus on European partnerships: co-productions, co-curations, conferences, networking as well as visiting artists/performers. Cities should encourage their cultural operators to actively participate in European cultural networks.

At this stage, the two bids failed to engage fully with the challenges. The teams focused mainly on their cities' image and relations within Sweden and/or the neighbouring regions whereas the panel would like to see a deepening and widening of the programmes that ensures a more embracing European dimension. Merely desiring to promote itself in Europe does not constitute a robust interpretation of the European dimension for a city. Although an ECoC facilitates international promotion for a city, that is merely one aspect of the matter.

Developing European cooperation requires strategic approaches and actual partnerships with artists as well as cultural organisations and institutions throughout Europe. It cannot be limited to relations with other former and future ECoCs, existing European cultural networks or twin cities, which has been understood in the pre-selection bids.

The European dimension has a two-way direction. It is, of course, to present to the rest of Europe the city's contribution to European cultural diversity. However an equal focus is on seeking to broaden the understanding and awareness of the city's own citizens on the diversity of cultures in Europe and linking through cultural and other projects with citizens in other countries. It is important to demonstrate how the European dimension is translated into concrete projects in the cultural and artistic programme. This focus on other cultures primarily differentiates an ECoC from a national city of culture. An ECoC offers the opportunity for a city and its citizens to learn from others in an open way. One important legacy area is the creation of new and sustained partnerships between a city's cultural players and those from other countries.

An aspect comprising the European dimension criterion for the ECoC title is the capacity to draw visitors from outside of Europe. The programme must possess its own appeal, which is why it differs from the typical tourist offerings of the area and city. The panel would anticipate these enticing programme concepts in the finalists' ECoC 2029 proposals. The panel recommends that a comprehensive strategic communication plan be developed for the ECoC initiative and that a link be established between the artistic and cultural programme and a global marketing objective.

Outreach

The audience development strategy for the ECoC is expected to be much further developed in the final bid books, including online and offline measures and channels for all identified target groups. The bids should approach audience development from a long-term and strategic perspective, using both online and offline measures.

A special focus should be dedicated to those audiences that are more difficult to reach but crucial for a new "cultural climate" in an ECoC city (e.g. minorities, the elderly, disabled, people outside of city centres or temporarily in the city etc.).

The panel would expect to learn how the audience development policies of the main cultural organisations, including independent operators and NGOs relate to the ECoC programme.

The contribution and function of universities (with the exception of evaluation participation) must be clarified and expanded.

Management

New times of uncertainty necessitate novel management strategies as well. Particular emphasis must be placed on the risk assessment contained in the final bid document. This section should contain a comprehensive analysis of the anticipated effects of the ongoing geopolitical crisis and the current economic situation on the preparation and implementation phase of the ECoC.

The panel anticipates that the two cities will undertake comprehensive assessments to ascertain the feasibility of capital investments.

With regard to management models, the panel advises that ECoCs should draw lessons from the experiences of other organisations without necessarily replicating pre-existing concepts.

In every ECoC, the delivery team assumes a critical role. The communities ought to proactively and comprehensively deliberate on the optimal framework that ensures the autonomy and excellence of the project's artistic direction.

It is imperative to delineate the recruitment procedures and intended staffing configurations spanning the years 2025 to 2029, encompassing secondments, trainees, and volunteers.

Beyond conventional methods of disseminating information, the marketing of an ECoC should incorporate an enticing narrative that highlights the significance and relevance of Europe while remaining consistent with the artistic vision. It is essential to keep in mind that the marketing of an ECoC requires a comprehensive communication strategy and is

primarily concerned with a European message that the city wishes to share with the rest of Europe, as opposed to merely municipal branding.

Capacity to deliver

Candidates should re-confirm that their bid book, including the overall vision and concept and the financial commitments, have the formal approval of the mayor, the city (and county/region if appropriate) councils and vast political support. The panel also recommends that the two cities have common understanding and expectations regarding the financial contribution from the national Government.

Candidates are reminded that the criterion for an ECoC requires a special programme for the year in addition to the normal cultural offer. The panel expects more information on the managerial capacity in the city/region to manage a programme of the depth and range of an ECoC. Capacity-building should not be confused with the implementation of the cultural strategy, but it should be in accordance with local and regional development plans. The cities should also plan strong capacity-building programmes as ECoC's scope goes beyond current local capacities. If projects are planned to be funded from competitive EU programmes (e.g., Creative Europe), this should be indicated.

Information on urban development and infrastructure programmes, cultural heritage restoration projects and new cultural premises are useful as background and context at pre-selection. The final selection will focus on those infrastructural projects that directly impact the ECoC programme activities (e.g., a new cultural centre in a restored building that becomes a focal point for community arts projects contained in the programme). A timeline for these projects and a realistic estimate of completion should be given.

The final bid books should clearly indicate how those potential capital projects would be managed (management structures, state-of-play related to the EU ESI-Funds such as the connection with the relevant Operational Programme, timeline, and public procurement).

Signed

Anne Karjalainen
Else Christensen-Redzepovic (Chair)
Goda Giedraityte
Hrvoje Laurenta
Jelle Burggraaff
Joakim Sandberg (Vice-Chair)
Jorge Cerveira Pinto (Rapporteur)
Maria Jansén
Rossella Tarantino
Suvi Innilä
Toni Attard

March 2024

