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# REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

## Ex Post evaluation of the 2011 European Capitals of Culture (Tallinn and Turku)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report is presented under article 12 of Decision n° 1622/2006/EC[1] of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019, which requires that "each year the Commission shall ensure the external and independent evaluation of the results of the European Capital of Culture event of the previous year in accordance with the objectives and criteria of the action laid down in this Decision. The Commission shall present a report on that evaluation to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions by the end of the year following the European Capital of Culture event."

This report puts forward the Commission's position on the main conclusions and recommendations of the external evaluation of 2011 European Capitals of Culture that can be obtained via the link below:

http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/capitals/evaluation-commissioned-by-the-eu_en.htm

The external evaluation first evaluated individually the two European Capitals of Culture (hereafter "ECOC"): Tallinn and Turku. It then compared findings and reached conclusions valid for both cities and the ECOC Action.

## 2. BACKGROUND TO THE ACTION

### 2.1. The EU action for the European Capital of Culture event

The initial scheme of "The European City of Culture" was launched at intergovernmental level in 1985[2]. On the basis of this experience, Decision 1419/1999/EC established a Community Action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2005 to 2019[3]. Member States were ranked in a chronological order of entitlement to host the event each year. The countries enabled to host the event for a given year were expected to put forward cities and to submit their applications including their cultural programmes for the year to a

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1 Decision 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019 (OJ L304 of 3 November 2006, p. 1)

2 The title "European Capital of Culture" was designed to help bring European citizens closer together. See Resolution of the Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs regarding the annual organization of the 'European City of Culture' of 13.06.1985

3 Decision 1419/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 1999 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2005 to 2019 (OJ L 166 of 1.7.1999, p. 1). Decision amended by Decision 649/2005/EC (OJ L 117 of 4.5.2005, p. 20).

European Selection Panel which recommended their designation to the Commission. The Council of Ministers formally designated the ECOC.
On 1 January 2007, Decision 1419/1999/EC was replaced by Decision 1622/2006/EC which refined the objectives, introduced a two stage national competition and monitoring process for the 2013 title onward. The new Decision introduced monitoring meetings after designation, which ends up by the Panel making a recommendation on awarding a prize in honour of Melina Mercouri to the Capitals, provided that the designated cities meet the criteria laid down by Decision 1622/2006/EC and have implemented the recommendations made by the selection and monitoring panels. EU financial support is provided by the EU's Culture Programme. For 2007-13 it makes available a maximum of € 1.5 million each year per ECOC. All designated cities as of the 2010 title have been submitted to the monitoring phase as defined in Decision 1622/2006/EC.

### 2.2. 2011 European Capitals of Culture

Estonia and Finland were entitled to host the ECOC in 2011 on the basis of the 2006 Decision, with transitional provisions set out in Article 14 of this Decision applying for selection and designation.

Moreover the 2006 Decision specifically states that for the 2010, 2011 and 2012 titles, the 1999 Decision would apply in respect of the criteria relating to the cultural programmes, unless the cities chose to base their programmes on the criteria in the 2006 Decision. However, the 2011 and 2012 ECOC would be co-financed and monitored according to new processes set out in the 2006 Decision.

The 2006 Decision introduced in particular a new EU funding mechanism for the ECOC in the form of the "Melina Mercouri Prize", to be awarded to designated cities before the start of the year, on the basis of the reports delivered by the monitoring panel. This Prize was awarded for the first time to the 2010 titles and again to the 2011 titles.

The selection process took place in 2007. In Finland a national competition was held in which the cities of Jyväslylä, Lahti, Mänttä, Oulu, Rovaniemi and Tampere in addition to Turku took part. In Estonia there was a national competition in two rounds; the first round in 2005 attracted bids from Haapsalu, Pärnu, Rakvere, Tallinn and Tartu. Tallinn and Tartu were invited to a second round in which Tallinn was ultimately successful. The Finnish and Estonian governments proposed the cities of Turku and Tallinn to the European selection panel. It then issued a report recommending that Turku (Finland) and Tallinn (Estonia) be approved for the 2011 title, while making recommendations to help them achieve the proposed objectives. In 2007 the Council of Ministers formally awarded the title to the recommended cities on the basis of a Commission recommendation.

## 3. THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

### 3.1. The terms of the evaluation

The Commission entrusted ECORYS UK Ltd. to conduct the external evaluation[4] of the ECOC in 2011. The evaluation aimed at assessing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and

[4] Ex-post Evaluation of 2011 European Capitals of Culture, Final Report for the European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/culture/2012/ecocreport_en.pdf, carried out under framework service contract n°EAC/50/2009 on evaluation, evaluation-related services and support for impact assessment

likely sustainability and legacy of these ECOC against the objectives of the Action and against those objectives set by the ECOC themselves in their applications and during the implementation phase. The evaluation also considered the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the ECOC Action as a whole.

### 3.2. Methodology

The two cities were first evaluated individually before drawing conclusions on each. The evaluation was based on the analysis of the secondary data and primary data collection and analysis. The former one included analysis of the information in the original ECOC applications; studies and reports commissioned by the ECOC; events programmes, promotional materials and websites; statistical data and quantitative data supplied by the ECOC. The primary data collection was mainly based on the qualitative interviews conducted; interviews of managing teams and key stakeholders for each city during two visits and telephone interviews. In addition, ECOC projects were invited to contribute to the survey through taking part in an online survey. A comparative review and meta-evaluation exercise considered the conclusions emerging from the Tallinn and Turku ECOC, compared and contrasted approaches, and verified the quality of the research. Conclusions and recommendations relating to the implementation of the ECOC Action as a whole were based on the considerations of both 2011 ECOC.

### 3.3. The evaluator's findings

#### *3.3.1. Relevance of the Action*

The evaluation considered that the implementation of the Action had been relevant to Article 167 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union. The selection criteria specified in Decisions 1419/EC/1999 and 1622/EC/2006 ensured that the cultural programmes of title-holders were relevant to the detail of Article 167, although the criteria allow each ECOC the freedom to interpret the Treaty objectives in their own unique way. The evaluation considered that the ECOC Action continues to be of relevance to the objectives of the EU and that it complements other EU initiatives in the fields of culture, youth, citizenship, education and training and regional development.

The preamble to the 1999 Decision first introduced an explicit reference to the development of culture and tourism and to the need to mobilise large sections of the population. These references were later strengthened in the 2006 Decision by the inclusion of explicit criteria relating to "fostering the participation of citizens" and "long-term development". Many ECOC have gone further in stating explicit social, economic or tourism objectives.The growing importance of these objectives has been accompanied by a debate about balance, between whether culture should be supported for its own intrinsic value or as a means to deliver tangible, quantifiable returns on investment.

#### *3.3.2. Relevance of the 2011 ECOC*

The evaluation considered the motivation of the cities in bidding to become ECOC and the relevance of their objectives in relation to the objectives of the Action and of Article 167. It also studied the process by which the motivation of the 2011 ECOC was converted into a set of objectives and the changes to those objectives during the development phase. The two ECOC embraced the objectives of the Action and customised them in line with their own particular contexts and priorities. Both ECOC planned diverse cultural programmes and associated activities (e.g. communications, volunteering, etc) relevant to the EU-level

objectives of "developing cultural activities", "promoting the European dimension of and through culture" and "supporting social and economic development through culture".

### *3.3.3. Efficiency of Governance*

The evaluation looked at the efficiency of the governance of the ECOC, including their organisational models, processes for selecting and implementing cultural activities and events, communications and promotions, and processes for raising finance.

Similarly to the evaluation of the 2007 to 2010 ECOC, the evaluation of the 2011 ECOC highlights that it is essential but can be challenging to establish an appropriate organisational structure and build a team with the appropriate skills to implement the cultural programme. This requires a broader set of skills and thus a different structure from the team that had prepared the original application. There is also the need to balance artistic and political interests and to ensure that any new delivery mechanism is welcomed by the existing stakeholders as a co-operative partner. A new and independent structure is usually advisable, one that is customised to the political and cultural context of the city.

The 2011 ECOC illustrate these points in different ways. In Turku, the foundation set up specifically to implement ECOC was first critizised for lack of transparency in project selection and limited communication with stakeholders, the media and the public. This changed before the start of the title year and one of the key success factors of Turku 2011 turned out to be the stable governance structures and management arrangements that had backing from the main political players. Also in Tallinn 2011 a new foundation was established, but the governance arrangements encountered difficulties, in particular reduced budgets resulting in a reduced cultural programme.

### *3.3.4. Efficiency of ECOC mechanisms*

The evaluation considers the efficiency of the selection, monitoring and financial processes operated by the European Commission and notes that the current monitoring arrangements show a significant improvement to the previous years. However, they do not ensure that all cities fulfil all their commitments made at application, first monitoring stage and second monitoring stage, thus also in respect to the award of the Melina Mercouri Prize, which is awarded on the basis of reports by monitoring panels.

Furthermore, the evaluation notes that the open competitions organised at national level in both Member States generated considerable interest in the ECOC on the part of cities. Member States were free to specify their own criteria.

Based on their considerations of the 2011 ECOC the evaluators note that, at national and local level, the governance and management of ECOC is often challenging and political influences remain very significant. To some extent this is expected due to the nature and scale of ECOC. In conclusion, in most cities holding the title, it is important to establish an independent delivery agency and ensure that political influences do not unduly affect the artistic independence and smooth implementation of activities. The funding necessary to achieve expected results varies significantly between cities. Whilst cities make implicit commitments in their applications regarding the funding, the funding in Tallinn was significantly reduced compared to the original application and also to a lesser extent in Turku.

The evaluation holds that, at European level, the ECOC Action continues to be very cost-effective when compared to other EU policy instruments and mechanisms. However, the

share of the Melina Mercouri Prize within the overall budget of the ECOC programme varied widely between the two cities and thus also its significance. In Turku, the Prize was primarily of symbolic importance while in Tallinn it represented more than 10% of the overall funding. In neither city were the benefits of the Prize made particularly visible to cultural actors and audiences.

### *3.3.5. Effectiveness in developing cultural activities*

The evaluation considers that the 2011 ECOC both succeeded in implementing cultural programmes that were more extensive, innovative and international (e.g. in terms of themes, artists/performers and audiences) than the usual cultural offering. They explored new themes, highlighted the richness, diversity and uniqueness of each city's cultural offering and used new or unusual venues.

Tallinn's application proposed a cultural programme that would be genuinely new and additional to the existing cultural offering of the city, with an emphasis on widening participation, involving established institutions and independent operators, and using public spaces and industrial premises as venues. Whilst the cultural programme was much smaller than originally proposed (due to the reduced budget), it can still be said that the ECOC was effective against the original objectives. In terms of scale, the programme comprised 251 projects and more than 7,000 different individual events. It attracted two million people, around twice the figure anticipated. 73% of the projects' promoters felt that the ECOC had been successful in attracting visitors and audiences. In terms of the artistic themes explored, the venues used and the method of delivery, Tallinn 2011 pushed the boundaries of what had been done before in the city.

Turku's 2011 ECOC year strengthened its status as a cultural city and increased the participation of Turku residents in cultural activities. The cultural programme delivered 165 projects, mostly selected during the open call for proposals organised in 2008, and 8,000 events. More than 20,000 artists, contributors and producers were involved and there were more than 2 million visits. Projects established new contacts and networks and improved their operational capacities in the field of culture. Increased co-operation among key stakeholders was seen as one of the key benefits for the culture sector in Turku. The cultural programme of Turku 2011 was well-balanced with both large-scale events and grassroots initiatives and projects involving cross-sectorial co-operation.

### *3.3.6. Effectiveness in promoting the European dimension of and through culture*

The 1999 Decision does not define the "European dimension" explicitly, but views it essentially in terms of cultural cooperation, including: the highlighting of artistic movements and styles shared by Europeans which the city has inspired or to which it has made a significant contribution; and the promotion of events involving people active in culture from other cities in Member States and leading to lasting cultural cooperation and fostering their movement within the EU. The criterion of the "European dimension" set out in the 2006 Decision provides flexibility for cities in their interpretation. Illustrations are given in the Guide to candidate cities which has been available on line since 2007.

The evaluation considers that the European dimension of Tallinn's ECOC application related primarily to putting the city back on the European cultural map, in the context of Estonia's (at that time) recent accession to the EU. Where themes were relevant to the European dimension, these tended to be through various international festivals or individual projects,

which all had to have such a dimension in some form, rather than through the programme as a whole.

For Turku, the evaluation notes that the European dimension was reflected in particular in the strong focus on the Baltic Sea region. Furthermore, some 50% of projects increased cooperation with international partners in the field of their activities during the title year. Increasing the visibility of Turku outside Finland was also an important element.

Whilst both Tallinn and Turku presented very strong local narratives, those narratives can be seen as containing common themes that are essentially European in nature. For example, the cultural programme of both cities highlighted their common histories related to the role of Russia, the Baltic Sea and as well as the contemporary characteristic of being multicultural societies. The experience of 2011 demonstrates therefore that the ECOC title offers possibilities for such local narratives to be communicated to European audiences in a meaningful way. The European dimension of the cultural programme of both ECOC mostly related to the efforts to support transnational cultural co-operation and to internationalise the cities' cultural sectors. Whilst European themes were present in both ECOC, these tended to relate to specific projects rather than permeating the entire cultural programme.

*3.3.7. Effectiveness in achieving social, economic, urban development and tourism impacts*

Both Tallinn and Turku aimed to develop arts and culture as one means by which to pursue the economic and social regeneration of former industrial areas.

For Tallinn, the evaluation notes that the ECOC made an important contribution to the economic and urban development of the city, though it did not fulfil the original vision in its entirety. Tallinn's application contained ambitious objectives related to supporting the development of its creative economy, enhancing the city's cultural infrastructure and making the city a more attractive destination for tourists. These objectives were retained, but were reinterpreted as being about opening up the city to the sea. Whilst the original application emphasised broad economic and social developmental objectives, the revised approach was more focussed and better-aligned with the priorities of the city.

Regarding the development of Tallinn's creative economy, the evidence demonstrates that cultural operators now are better placed to operate internationally and at greater scale. Operators have better international connections and there is more cooperation across different sectors and artistic disciplines. The evaluators note that the enhancement of this capacity is all the more significant given that Estonia does not have a long tradition of a diverse, independent and multi-disciplinary cultural sector or many long-established private and commercial operators in the cultural and creative industries.

As concerns support to social development through culture, the objectives of Tallinn 2011 were related to widening participation in culture rather than social development as such. The ECOC involved a wider set of citizens as audiences, creators, performers, and volunteers and operated a sizeable volunteer programme.

For Turku, the ECOC title had a significant economic impact. The Turku School of Economics estimates that the ECOC contributed to employment increase by 3,300 person years and the total production increased by €260m. Tourism stood for a significant share of this impact. For Turku, development of the creative industries was a key objective and the evaluation considers that the ECOC helped introduce this issue into the political agenda.

Turku 2011 was the first ECOC emphasising the links between culture, access to culture and well-being in its cultural programme. Moreover, attention was given to ensure that cultural activities were not only happening in the city centre but also in each neighbourhood of the city. Around 1,500 events and activities targeted nurseries, schools, hospitals, housing for the elderly and prisons. Many artworks in public space were meant for casual passers-by. Participation in cultural events and activities increased in 2011 when compared to previous years. Turku's cultural sector benefitted for the first time from a co-ordinated volunteer programme targeting a wide range of activities across the city.

Both Tallinn and Turku strongly supported citizens' active participation and targeted people who traditionally tend to participate less in cultural activities. In Tallinn, significant attention was given to involvement of the Russian community. In Turku, the Swedish-speaking community was encouraged to take part by translations of materials into Swedish. However, the experience of both ECOC highlights the fact that very different (typically more intensive) approaches are required to widening the participation of citizens as creators or performers, as opposed to merely widening their participation as audiences.

### *3.3.8. Sustainability*

The ECOC is intended to "be sustainable and be an integral part of the long-term cultural and social development of the city".[5] In both ECOC, there is evidence of new cultural activities that will continue beyond the title year and new refurbished cultural facilities. In terms of sustained capacity for culture, there is greater experience and expertise as a result of the ECOC, as well as better networking and co-operation within the cultural sectors.

Tallinn, at the end of its title-year, prepared a plan for the sustainability of various cultural activities. The ECOC featured numerous new or expanded events, many of which will continue in 2012 and beyond; 82% of operators responding to the survey reported that some or all of their activities would continue, whilst a further 8% reported that (although their ECOC project would not continue) they were inspired to introduce new activities in 2012.

In Turku, work started on a sustainability strategy in mid-2011. Increased co-operation among cultural operators and other stakeholders was mentioned as a significant effect of the ECOC year. Activities of some of the projects will be implemented at a larger scale in 2012 than in 2011. Turku 2011 Foundation will continue to fund some activities until 2013 and provide support for some networks and associations, thus contributing to the implementation of the sustainability strategy.

As identified in previous evaluations, ECOC generates new activities, co-operation and cultural facilities that are sustainable beyond the title year itself. This is the case for both cities hosting the title in 2011. The creation (or continuation) of a dedicated agency is one way by which a positive legacy can be ensured. The 2011 ECOC have demonstrated the potential for improvements in the governance of culture within each city and for greater contributions from the cultural sector to the wider development of the city. However, the fulfilment of such potential remains to be seen and will depend on the choices made by the key stakeholders.

[5] Decision 1622/EC/2006

## 4. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE COMMISSION

The Commission agrees with the overall recommendations by the evaluators, based on the considerations of the 2011 ECOC but relating to the implementation of the ECOC Action as a whole. They confirm that the ECOC title remains highly valued, generates extensive cultural programmes and significant impacts. The EU title and financial contribution have a considerable leverage effect, making it a cost-effective and efficient initiative. The Commission shares the evaluator's overall assessment and accepts its recommendations as formulated in the section above.

The recommendations are largely in line with the Commission's recent Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Union action for the European Capitals of Cultural for the years 2020 to 2033[6]. The work on the new proposal was based on a broad range of inputs. These included the conclusions of the 25 year anniversary conference of the ECOC held in March 2010, independent evaluations of past Capitals, an independent evaluation of the current selection and monitoring procedures, an on-line consultation, a public consultation meeting and DG EAC's own experience of coordinating the initiative since 1999.

The aim of this proposal is to build on the strengths of the current scheme which is overall working well, while learning from experience and making some improvements in order to maximise the potential benefits of holding the title as well as taking part in the competitive process for all bidding cities and their citizens. The new proposal retains the main features and general structure of the current scheme while proposing a number of improvements. It suggests in particular continuing to award the title on the basis of a rotating system among Member States. In addition, the proposal reflects the following recommendations made in past evaluations:

– The introduction of a general objective related to the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities;

– The introduction of a more explicit and comprehensive set of selection criteria, including related to governance and funding;

– The reinforcement of conditionality for the award of the Melina Mercouri Prize, in relation with the cities' progress in delivering their commitments and their use of the EU logo in communication materials, and the postponement of its payment during the title-year;

– The obligation for cities to carry out some research tasks to better measure the achievement of their objectives.

It is worth noticing that the Commission's proposal also takes into account recommendations of the 2010 evaluation in introducing a potential opening of the Action to candidate and potential candidate countries as well as the obligation for the bidding cities to have a strategy for the cultural development of the city in place at the time of the application, and in keeping the Action's focus on cities.

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6 COM(2012) 407 final

Last but not least, in line with another recommendation of the 2011 evaluation, the Commission organised on 15 October 2012 an exchange of good practices among past, present and future European Capitals of Culture targeted more particularly at future bidding cities, and will maintain its efforts to encourage such positive exchange in the future.