

Chemnitz
European Capital of Culture 2025

Third Monitoring Meeting
Report by the European Capital of Culture Expert Panel

Virtual Meeting, 15 October 2024

Creative Europe

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Introduction

This report follows the online monitoring meeting on 15 October 2024 between the Expert panel for the selection and monitoring of European Capitals of Culture, hereinafter referred to as "the panel", and the Chemnitz 2025 team, one of the two designated European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) in 2025[1].

Chemnitz 2025 was nominated as European Capital of Culture in January 2021 by the relevant German authorities on the basis of the panel selection report[2]. Its bid book is available on the Chemnitz 2025 website publications section[3]. The first two monitoring meetings took place online on 28 September 2021 and 23 May 2023. The panel's reports can be accessed on the European Commission website[4].

The present report is addressed to the Chemnitz 2025 organisation and will be published on the European Commission's website.

Attendance

Panel members nominated by EU institutions:
Toni Attard
Jelle Burggraaff
Jorge Cerveira Pinto
Else Christensen-Redzepovic (rapporteur)
Marilyn Gaughan Reddan
Goda Giedraityte (chair)
Suvi Innilä
Anne Karjalainen
Hrvoje Laurenta
Rossella Tarantino

Panel member nominated by the German authorities:
Barbara Mundel

For Chemnitz 2025:
Mayor and Chairman of Chemnitz 2025
CEO Programme Director
CEO Managing Director

[1] The European Capitals of Culture action is governed by Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council for the titles 2020 to 2033, which provides for three formal monitoring meetings between designated cities and the panel. See: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG

[2] See selection report at: https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ecoc2025-germany-selection-report.pdf

[3] See: https://chemnitz2025.de/bidbook/documents

[4] See monitoring reports: https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-11/ecoc-2025-germany-first-monitoring-report.pdf
https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-11/ecoc-2025-germany-second-monitoring-report.pdf

Head of Cultural Department, City of Chemnitz and Head of Staff Unit ECoC Chemnitz 2025
International Relations manager
Curator Makers, Business & Arts
Creative Director
Preparatory Staff ECOC 2025 of the Chemnitz Police Department

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture), from the State Chancellery of Saxony and from the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the German Länder (KMK).

Report from Chemnitz

Prior to the meeting, the Chemnitz team submitted a detailed and comprehensive written progress report. The report was structured around the six criteria of the ECoC action and presented in detail the major developments since the last monitoring meeting, while providing additional information related to some of the questions, recommendations and issues raised in the previous monitoring report.

The Chemnitz team presented a short video followed by a verbal presentation, outlining their progress less than three months before the start of the ECoC year. During the presentation the team addressed, among others, the following aspects.

The Mayor expressed excitement and pride at the progress of the Chemnitz 2025 preparations and the overall positive atmosphere in Chemnitz, noting the city's growing visibility within Germany and internationally. The main opening is scheduled for 18 January 2025, centred around the Karl-Marx Monument. Significant efforts are being made to ensure thorough planning, covering programme details, security, infrastructure, permits, and budget management. The team has expanded to manage the increased workload, and they affirmed the stability of their financial position, with assurances from the federal Government and the State of Saxony supporting their sponsorship and funding objectives.

The team highlighted significant community engagement, noting over 500 volunteers aged 18 to 92, including international students, had joined the project. Maker hubs have become key spaces for collaboration among creators, entrepreneurs, and the local community, enriching the city’s creative landscape. The European Workshop for Culture and Democracy has spurred active participation, resulting in 60 new projects that align with Chemnitz's European vision.

Chemnitz 2025 has established partnerships with over 400 organisations and strengthened international connections, including cross-border collaborations with Poland and the Czech Republic. The event is being promoted globally through the Goethe-Institutes and German embassies, with a successful project presentation in Berlin and collaboration with 15 other ECoCs, particularly Nova Gorica.

The Mayor addressed security and public perception, describing the formation of a dedicated ECoC task force and an increased police presence. He noted Chemnitz’s experience in managing major events and demonstrations, which positions the city well

for ECoC 2025. The Mayor also mentioned a positive shift reflected in recent electoral outcomes, showing decreased attendance at anti-democratic gatherings and emphasising the importance of art and culture in fostering civic growth.

Public transportation and city marketing were emphasised, with new train connections to Berlin and Leipzig airports and a new bus route to Prague Airport established. The Mayor confirmed that 29 intervention areas would be completed by spring 2025, overseen by the city development office. Early legacy planning has been ongoing for over a year and includes collaboration with 38 municipalities.

The Mayor concluded by expressing Chemnitz's readiness and commitment to a successful ECoC year. He emphasised that the city was prepared to continue evaluating its efforts and would present a comprehensive a final report by the end of 2025. The Mayor and the team are excited for the opportunities the ECoC year will bring to engage with Europe, explore cultural similarities and differences, and build a stronger, more inclusive community.

Discussion

During the subsequent discussion, the panel sought clarification on a number of topics and offered experience and advice.

Long-term strategy

The panel enquired about the main challenges facing the Chemnitz2025 team in the lead-up to the event. To this question, the Chemnitz2025 team responded that their primary concerns were related to weather, security, and budget control, although they felt confident that these aspects were being well-managed.

The panel sought clarification on how Chemnitz2025 was ensuring that their legacy planning would have long-term cultural and social impact. The team explained that they had initiated an international conference to engage local and regional stakeholders in the legacy planning process. They highlighted the involvement of the regional Government in funding initiatives that would continue beyond 2025, including a programme focused on young European culture rights that was already funded until 2029. They have also embedded legacy into various programmes, equipping spaces and conducting capacity-building initiatives to support independent operations in the future.

The panel was interested in knowing how real-time monitoring aligned with the legacy goals and asked about adaptation based on monitoring results. The team responded that they had partnered with the university to create a comprehensive database to support legacy initiatives, with ongoing updates planned. Monitoring per project is conducted to assess time, budget, and content, with a support team available to provide assistance as needed. However, they acknowledged that adapting based on monitoring results remained a complex process.

The panel noted the delay in collecting baseline data, initially scheduled for 2023 but shifted to autumn 2024. The Chemnitz2025 team mentioned that although there were tendering challenges, preliminary cultural focus groups and project activities from 2023 provided valuable qualitative insights.

Cultural and artistic content

The panel enquired about the specifics of the opening event, emphasising the importance of setting the tone for the entire ECoC year. The Chemnitz2025 team explained that the opening would be based on the theme "European Makers of Democracy," featuring various performances, presentations by artistic groups, and community-led initiatives throughout the city. The evening will include multiple performances, an official ceremony, and a midnight club event, with additional flagship events planned for the following day.

The panel sought clarification on challenges encountered since the original bid and how these were resolved to maintain an innovative yet realistic programme. The team stated that while the original bid book from 2020 remained a foundation, significant updates had been made to address evolving needs, including intergenerational projects and enhanced European discourse. All flagship projects from the original bid book will be delivered and only of them has changed.

Questions were raised about the status of projects that required co-funding. The Chemnitz2025 team reported that flagship projects were progressing as planned, while some co-funded projects might need adjustments to scale if funding issues arose. The panel also asked about the total number of projects and their readiness. The team indicated that approximately 140 projects were ready, with more being developed, noting that some contracts might not be finalised by the opening but would commence later in the year.

The panel wanted to know more about the format of the European workshop for culture and democracy and the involvement of marginalised groups in these interventions. The team explained that the programme had been ongoing since 2021 reaching out to a wide spectrum in the community. The formats would alter depending on the content and the composition of the partnerships and networks. Key to the methodology is transfer of knowledge and know-how.

The panel sought clarification on the number of interventions projected inside the 3000 Garages. The team informed the panel that there were currently 1000 active garages divided into 11 separate projects. This will further develop throughout the ECoC year.

European Dimension

The panel enquired about efforts to deepen partnerships with European partners beyond neighbouring countries and to secure legacy continuity. The Chemnitz2025 team confirmed plans for a legacy organisation to manage European relationships, with an emphasis on embedding European affairs within the municipality.

The panel sought examples of memorable initiatives for international audiences. The team highlighted "Tales of Transformation," a project involving partnerships with institutions from seven European countries and 11 universities.

The panel asked how Chemnitz2025 is measuring and enhancing international audience participation. The team mentioned collaboration with tourism companies, participation in major tourism fairs, and partnerships with the ECoC family and embassies. An international programme presentation to journalists was also noted as part of their outreach strategy.

Outreach

The panel was interested in the volunteer programme, asking about recruitment, training, and management processes. The Chemnitz2025 team noted that volunteers were involved in project development and received training, ensuring an enriching experience.

The panel asked about the strategy for reaching marginalised and non-local audiences. The team responded that their diversity programme development team included feedback from migrants, people with disabilities, and other community representatives. Digital and social media campaigns were mentioned as tools for broadening reach.

The panel enquired about the "maker-space.eu" platform, which is critical for connecting European makers. The team admitted that the platform was still under construction, set to launch in January 2025, and was designed to facilitate global maker connections.

Management

The panel sought insights into how Chemnitz2025 was safeguarding political and institutional support amidst regional populist trends. The team affirmed strong backing from political institutions and noted efforts to demonstrate the value of European connections. They also mentioned initiatives linking historic and culturally significant locations with local engagement.

The panel asked about the communication strategy, including responsibility and key milestones. The team indicated that their marketing and PR teams, soon to reach 20 members, had been active in promoting the programme and preparing for upcoming digital campaigns.

The panel asked about steps taken to improve international communication strategies. The team responded that significant improvements were underway to strengthen outreach, with a campaign for the programme launch planned.

The panel raised concerns about practical information for visitors, especially regarding travel options. The team acknowledged this gap and promised that such details would be included in their upcoming programme launch.

Capacity to Deliver

The panel enquired about the digital strategy for those unable to attend in person. The team outlined their digital plan, including online tools for partners, digital content creation, event streaming, and documentation.

The panel asked how Chemnitz2025 was managing internal team care and volunteer well-being. The team shared that they had employed a trusted individual for staff support and prioritised work-life balance and regular team celebrations to maintain morale.

The panel inquired about the sustainability of new initiatives post-2025. The team noted strong political support and ongoing negotiations to secure funding for cultural spaces and programmes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to the Chemnitz 2025 team:

- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation processes are clearly linked to legacy planning.
- Maintain consistent communication with stakeholders about the progress and impact of legacy projects, strengthening their sense of involvement and investment in post-2025 initiatives.
- Strengthen efforts on international maker hub collaborations for sustainable impact.
- Increase international outreach and promotion such as regular updates and distribution of online press kits, including visuals, project stories, and press releases, to keep international audiences engaged throughout the ECoC year.
- Intensify outreach efforts to marginalised groups and non-local audiences by leveraging digital advertising and local partnerships that reach diverse communities.
- Review and refine contingency plans for potential issues, such as security challenges or political interventions. Ensure all team members and key stakeholders are briefed and prepared for quick action. Establish a dedicated crisis response team to coordinate communication and responses swiftly if unforeseen circumstances arise during the ECoC year.

Conclusion

The Chemnitz2025 team has demonstrated impressive progress and dedication in preparing for the European Capital of Culture year. Through extensive community engagement, robust partnerships, and comprehensive planning, they are well-positioned for a successful event that reflects the city's unique culture and its connections with Europe. The panel's recommendations are intended to further support these efforts, helping Chemnitz2025 to maximise the impact of their programme. The panel is confident that with continued focus and collaboration, Chemnitz2025 will deliver a memorable and inspiring ECoC year for both Chemnitz and Europe.

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Melina Mercouri Prize

Based on the report submitted by Chemnitz 2025 as well as the hearing with the Chemnitz 2025 team, the panel considers that the conditions regarding the payment of the Melina Mercouri Prize, as specified in Article 14 of Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, are met. Consequently, the panel is pleased to propose to the European Commission that Chemnitz receive the Melina Mercouri prize.

The panel would like to remind the Chemnitz 2025 team that, in line with Article 14, its marketing and communication strategy and its communication material have to clearly reflect the fact that the European Capital of Culture is a Union action, as well as that, in line with Article 16 of the same Decision, it will have to draw up its own evaluation report

of the results of its ECoC year and transmit it to the European Commission by 31 December 2026.

The panel would like to thank the Chemnitz 2025 team for a very informative and interesting meeting and looks forward to a successful realisation of the Chemnitz 2025 European Capital of Culture project in 2025.

All panel members (signed)