

Tartu
European Capital of Culture 2024

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

Virtual Meeting, 7th November 2023

Creative Europe

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, 2023

Contents

Introduction 1
Attendance 1
Report and Presentation from Tartu 2
Discussion 3
A. Long-term strategy 3
B. Cultural and artistic content 4
C. European dimension 5
D. Outreach 6
E. Management 7
F. Capacity to Deliver 8
Conclusion and recommendations 8

Introduction

This report follows the virtual meeting on 7th November 2023 between the panel and the Tartu 2024 team, one of the three European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) in 2024[1].Tartu was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2024 in Estonia by the Ministry of Culture of Estonia on 22 October 2019 on the basis of the recommendation included in the Panel selection report[2]; its bid-book is available on the Tartu 2024 website[3]. The first two monitoring meetings took place virtually on 22nd September 2020 and on 16th June 2022, and the panel's reports can be accessed on the European Commission website[4].

This report is addressed to the Tartu 2024 Foundation and will be published on the same website.

Attendance

The meeting was attended by the following individuals:

- The panel members):
  - Else Christensen-Redžepović, Suvi Innilä, and Jorge Cerveira Pinto (rapporteur), appointed by the European Parliament;
  - Marilyn Gaughan Reddan, Goda Giedraityte, and Rossella Tarantino (Chair) appointed by the Council of the EU;
  - Jelle Burggraaff, Toni Attard and Hrvoje Laurenta, appointed by the European Commission.
  - Anne Karjalainen, appointed by the European Committee of the Regions.
  - Anu Kivilo and Mikko Fritze, appointed by the Estonian Ministry of Culture.

- For Tartu 2024: Mayor Tartu / Tartu 2024 Foundation Supervisory Council Chairman; Tartu 2024 Foundation CEO; Tartu 2024 Artistic Director; Tartu 2024 Southern Estonian Coordinator; Tartu 2024 Head of Communication and Marketing Division; Tartu 2024 International Relations Manager; Tartu 2024 Social Studies Manager.

[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/bad-ischl-bodo-and-tartu#tartu

[3] See https://www.tartu2024.ee/arts-of-survival

[4] See https://culture.ec.europa.eu/bad-ischl-bodo-and-tartu#tartu

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and from the Estonian Ministry of Culture, Foreign Relations Department.

Report and Presentation from Tartu

Prior to the meeting, the Tartu 2024 team submitted a detailed and comprehensive written progress report. The report was structured around the six criteria 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 Tartu 2024 team made a 20-minute verbal presentation, outlining their progress less than two months before the start of the ECoC year. During the presentation the team addressed, among others, the following issues:

- They informed the panel that two weeks before, the cultural and artistic programme of the year was published, with significant social media coverage. The programme includes more than 150 projects in the main programme, generating around 1000 events.
- The Southern Estonia region is fully involved and actively participating. The team expects that the ECoC year will be the biggest event that ever happened in the region, bringing together organisations and individuals from the entire region, with hundreds of culture professionals involved and taking part in the various events.
- The team acknowledges that the programme concept is not easy to understand, but this is a critical and challenging concept that raises important questions at the right time.
- *Resilience* sums up their project concept: the pandemic, the inflation, the economic crisis and the war in Ukraine have just made this concept even more relevant. The team hopes the year to be a dialogue, around *arts of survival*.
- The next big moment will now happen with the Opening Ceremony in January.
- The involvement of the Russian speaking communities in the region remains critical for the project and the region; however, due to the current situation the team had to adapt and find new ways to incorporate it.
- The team reiterated that the bid book is still the foundation of the ECoC project, and the current cultural and artistic programme just further develops and details it. The proposals have remained, with minimal changes (80% of the bid book projects made it to the final programme): in total 22 projects from the bid book are taking place while 130 more were added from various proposals received.

- The programme is genuinely southern Estonian, deeply rooted into its people and region. But also, international.
- The project secured more than 20 public funders, from the national to the municipality level. In terms of marketing, several private sector partnerships were established with the most important Estonian brands.
- Although the impact of the year cannot be determined at this moment, the team believes that some of the impacts are already happening - e.g., in terms of announcement of new transport infrastructures. And the team hopes that 2024 will be a successful year, with long-lasting impacts.

Discussion

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

A. Long-term strategy

- The panel requested an update on the evaluation and monitoring activities, mainly about who is conducting the surveys based on the Finnish evaluation method (FEET) and how the independent evaluators for these activities and for assessing the data were selected. In their reply, the team explained that several of the surveys are being conducted by the team themselves - e.g., how the teams perceive the impact they are generating. However, the major audience surveys will be conducted independently. At this moment, the selection of who will conduct these surveys is not finalised.

- The panel asked the team to provide some more information on the indicators that have been identified to measure the European dimension of the project and about the plans for the dissemination of the evaluation results of the ECoC year at the European level. In their reply, the team made references to several examples/indicators included in the bid book and confirmed their plan to fully report on them. The communication /dissemination will rely on a big event after the end of the ECoC year where the results will be analysed and disseminated (part of the *Kultuurikompass* project). Furthermore, the team wanted to reinforce the importance of producing and disseminating social media statistics, following the example of Kaunas.

- The panel wanted further information about the legacy of the programme. More specifically, given that the team has developed strong relationships/partnerships, the panel wanted to understand what will happen after the ECoC year and what the plan in terms of legacy is. In their reply, the team stated that all municipalities in the Southern Estonian region

should continue the cooperation to gain visibility, be more open and well connected and to deliver better services to the citizens. They will propose the continuation of the cooperation - a meeting with all the mayors to discuss proposals will be organised and, for example, the Tartu 2024 Hospitality Network for business owners and service professionals should continue. Another project that should also continue is the *Kultuurikompass* project. Finally, the team added that they have identified other projects that they believe should continue. They made a good decision to invest in people and not in buildings and they hope that the activities will continue and flourish after the end of the year. They have developed an extensive programme, including allowing young people involved in the organisation of events and this will be a major legacy, since they will be the future culture operators.

- The panel further enquired the team regarding 2025 and 2026, since it is written that they expect to have 5.5 full-time positions in 2025 and 2 in 2026. The panel wanted to know about the role of these positions, specifically if they would be responsible for the legacy aspect of the ECoC year. In their reply, the team stated that they are not yet clear about the specific roles of these positions. Also, it has not been decided yet if the Tartu 2024 Foundation will continue as the organisational structure for future cooperation, but the discussion between the partner municipalities has been initiated. The team recognised that there is still a lack of clarity, even though they are very supportive of having an entity addressing Southern Estonian issues in a unified way. They continue to look into other cities to have some benchmarks and good practices to see how success looks like.

B. Cultural and artistic content

- The panel asked the team if they could provide examples of the project that will be best remembered from Tartu 2024 in Europe and the project they expect to make the main change for the inhabitants of Tartu. In their reply, the team mentioned the A*rts of Survival documentaries*, as an example of a project that they believe will have a major international impact, involving various film makers and being distributed and seen in international festivals. Other projects mentioned that will have major impacts in the city were *Kissing Tartu* and *Tartu World University*.

- On a similar issue, the panel requested the team to provide two examples of projects that they consider to be daring, edgy and of experimental nature. The team responded with examples such as the *Kaleidoscope of Emotions* project and the interdisciplinary project called The Year of Contemporary art by Youth.

- The panel wanted further information regarding the opening ceremony since the event will demand a significant financial investment. In their reply, the team confirmed that it will be an important event, complemented by four other events in different municipalities. The budget increase was partially explained by the inflation costs, but the team recognised that its original budget was probably under-estimated. It will be the biggest event ever done in the region, involving many partners and companies.

- The panel enquired the team about the side programme, which includes a significant number of events and how it will be distinguished from the ECoC actual programme. In their reply, the team explained that the motivation was to give more local operators the chance to be involved. The main programme is funded by the ECoC budget, but not the side programme. However, the side programme will also be promoted through the ECoC marketing and dissemination efforts. The team expects that the side programme will have around 200 events. The events are expected to be of good quality, and some of these events have already been taking place, so they have a history of being delivered. The team also explained that while the main programme has a high degree of innovation, to be part of the side programme, the proposals just needed to align with the ECoC themes, objectives and procedures. For the visitor, the differences will not be visible, but of course the expectations in terms of demand are very different.

C. European dimension

- The panel enquired the team about the total number of European /international partners involved in the programme, and if they could provide an estimation in percentage of how many of these partners that were mentioned in the second bid book, ended up in the final version of the programme, just presented. In their reply, the team mentioned that they have 20 different partners and countries involved in the programme. Also, some projects are still adding partners and artists. They estimate that a total of 150 international partners will end-up participating in the programme. Finally, it was mentioned that a total of 22 projects included in the bid-book have been kept and will be delivered, and that most of the projects and international partnerships were successfully kept, although with changes.

- The panel wanted to know how the local community and the ECoC audiences will be aware that Tartu ECoC is a European Union initiative and what that means. In their reply, the team stated that they have built different networks that will reach mostly in Estonia - e.g., municipalities' contact persons; network of teachers; network of municipalities' newspapers; network of hospitality professionals. Through these networks, they will

reach the entire population. All the services and different layers of the local and regional society are involved, and this is an on-going process, with regular meetings. Accessibility is a critical core value of the projects, and the programme has events to everyone, while embedding the European dimensions along it.

- The panel enquired the team about how Tartu will be remembered as an ECoC. In their reply, the city Mayor mentioned that the event will be associated with the opening of more and better connections to Finland and overall improvement of transport connections/connectivity. The ECoC will also positively impact the university, by raising its profile, and contribute to positioning Tartu as an open, tolerant, and culturally rich city and region. With more than 1000 events taking place, this will create a new standard in cultural management and internationally raise the profile of the city and the region.

D. Outreach

- The panel wanted further clarity regarding the accessibility approach of the Tartu 2024 programme. In their reply, the team mentioned that they were working at two levels: regular experience-sharing meetings for organisers and more formal and prescriptive guidelines, to be published. They also mentioned that the *Viljandi Kondas Centre* will be a major legacy project, as a trans-European hub of more inclusive arts management practices. The ECoC year will allow the centre to be more international, through partnerships.

- The panel further enquired about the approach towards more transgenerational projects, rather than distinguishing between teenagers and elderly as two separate target groups. The panel wanted to know if the approach had already been tested and if they had any indicators showing how this approach is more successful to address this priority group. In their reply, the team reinforced the idea that the concept and value of transgeneration is a core value of the ECoC project and demonstrated this by providing examples of projects where the approach is being implemented.

- Given the special tense moment in the relations between the EU and Russia, the panel asked the team if they agreed it was now especially important to deal with the Russian speaking minority in Tartu and Estonia and if this has been discussed within the Tartu 2024 team and partners. In their reply, the team confirmed that they had to put projects on hold, due to the end of collaboration with Russia. They had to cancel all relations, but remain open to change this, if the situation justifies. They also mentioned that there are Russian artists in exile that will participate in the events, keeping in mind

the need to also manage the Ukrainian community carefully in the city/region. Furthermore, concerning the Russian speaking community of Estonian origin, the planned events will continue with their involvement and active participation. Examples were given of projects/programmes.

E. Management

- The panel asked the team if they could provide an update regarding the engagement with the "silent majority", as it was recommended in the previous report. In their reply, the team mentioned that they have identified 16 personas, from teenagers to elderly individuals – and they continue to add new personas, e.g., Ukrainian family. They believe this approach is the most correct one, and the personas identified represent the major target groups. They continue to research about them and believe the communication and involvement strategies they have are good to reach the relevant communities.

- The panel enquired the team about the contingency plan related to key positions within the organisation if impacted by illness, accident, burnouts, etc. Was there also any plan to mitigate risks in relation to adverse weather conditions, such as snowstorms that could severely impact the reputation of the ECoC brand? Any contingency plan in terms of severe energy restrictions and/or severely rising costs? In their reply, the team mentioned that they have regular meetings to make sure that everyone is doing well and if there are situations that they need to be all aware of, creating redundancy in the team (parallel work). The communication team has also prepared a crisis communication plan. Finally, regarding cost increases and what their priorities are in terms of cost reduction if needed, they believe that inflation is now under control, and they do not expect major changes. If needed, they will find additional funding or reduce the scale of the events. They gave the example of securing an additional 3 M€ euros from European funds as an example of success.

- The panel asked the team for a justification regarding the fact that in Annex 11 it is not mentioned that they have signed contracts for private sector funding valued at 1.013M€. In their reply, the team mentioned that they have secured good partnerships – more than 10 contracts signed – and they have calculated the value of in-kind contributions. This will be properly valued and reported, but not in the annex. Furthermore, the team mentioned that they have signed naming product contracts and a percentage from the sales will be received. However, the exact value of this will be determined by 2025 based on the sales results of 2024.

- The panel wanted further explanations regarding the reference to 3.2M€ from different Estonian funds in the financial projections. What funds were

these and if these funds go through the Tartu 2024 Foundation (projects) or go directly to culture organisations. In their reply, the team confirmed that there were different situations, with some funds going directly to Foundation – e.g., Creative Europe funded projects – and others going directly to the project owners – e.g., funds coming from the northern collaboration. Also, there are funds also being channelled through the foundation, to support the various projects.

F. Capacity to Deliver

- The panel enquired the team about the negotiations to open a new Tartu-Riga train line, with daily departures. In their reply, the team informed the panel that this is confirmed, and they hope it will have a positive impact on the ECoC visitors.

- The panel sought additional clarification regarding the responsibilities for the annual activity report for each municipality, since a total of 19 municipalities are financially contributing to the ECoC. In their reply, the team clarified that this was done in two ways: the projects that are happening in the municipalities and the collection of results overall. Surveys have been done across all municipalities and the research results were provided to everyone. The municipalities will also provide their own data and information. And the team corroborated the idea that it is a huge amount of work and integration, but necessary, since they are using the municipalities' funds in capacity building and programme. Furthermore, the team mentioned that they have been working with their European partners and learning how they also work with their municipalities.

Conclusion and recommendations

The panel appreciates the important progress made by Tartu 2024 since the last monitoring meeting and the commitment of its team to deliver a successful ECoC year. On the basis of the report, the presentation and discussion, the panel expresses the following recommendations for the next coming months:

- The panel welcomes the wide surveying work conducted by the Tartu 2024 team to monitor their activities, but it urges the need to bring in/select independent assessors for the evaluation studies. Likewise, it recommends drafting a clear dissemination plan of monitoring and evaluation results.

- The panel suggests a clearer distinction between the official and the side programmes. This could be achieved, for example, by incorporating some

forms of distinction – maybe through marketing and image. It is critical that the uniqueness of the ECoC programme and offer is safeguarded.

- The panel recommends that more international speakers are involved in the *Kultuurikompass* capacity building programme. This would be an easy and fast way to increase its international relevance.

- Although the team seems aware of the potential risks that could negatively impact the ECoC, the panel recommends that more detailed and action-driven mitigation plans are prepared.

- The panel would like to stress the importance of Tartu 2024 legacy, and encourages the team to develop a specific plan to ensure long-term benefits.

* * * *

Based on the report submitted by Tartu 2024 as well as the hearing with the Tartu 2024 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 Tartu receives the Melina Mercouri prize.

The panel would like to remind the Tartu 2024 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 2025.

The panel would like to thank the Tartu 2024 team for a very informative and interesting meeting and looks forward to a successful realisation of the Tartu European Capital of Culture project in 2024.

All panel members (signed)