

Compendium of recommendations from ex-post evaluations of European Capitals of Culture 2007-2019

Brussels

September 2021

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

PDF 978-92-76-41873-3 doi: 10.2766/129160 NC-01-21-270-EN-N

© European Union, 2022

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.The reuse policy of European Commission documents is regulated by Decision 2011/833/EU (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39).
For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not under the EU copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.

Contents

Introduction 3
1. GOVERNANCE ISSUES AND DELIVERY BODY 3
2. CULTURAL PROGRAMME AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES 5
3. FUNDING 8
4. EVALUATION AND MONITORING 10
5. COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING 10
6. LEGACY 13

Introduction

This compendium has been developed by the Commission.

It compiles the recommendations included in the independent ex post evaluations carried out for the Commission for the European Capitals of Culture 2007 to 2019.

The aim of this compendium is to make these recommendations available in an easy-to-use format as a rich resource for cities wishing to bid for the 'European Capital of Culture' (ECoC) title. It is hoped that it will help them learn from past lessons and good practice and use the bidding exercise as a way to move forward culture in their medium to longer term overall development. The compendium is also meant as a tool for cities developing their ECoC year so that they can benefit from past title-holders and avoid some of the pitfalls and difficulties that the latter met all along the way to the delivery of their ECoC.

The compendium is subdivided into chapters corresponding each to a specific key area for which recommendations have been made. Each paragraph included in these chapters is a "recommendation" or a "lesson in delivery" deriving directly from the ex post evaluations. However, for the sake of clarity or ease of reading, some recommendations of the ex post evaluations have been slightly rephrased or regrouped, but the changes have been kept to a minimum so as not to alter the original meaning.

At the end of each chapter of the compendium, web-links lead to the "post-scripts" included in the ex post evaluations. These post-scripts capture lessons drawn on various key aspects connected with the implementation of European Capitals of Culture.

Finally, we also invite interested cities to read the full evaluation reports on our website at (in the boxes corresponding to each ECoC city):

> https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/culture-cities-and-regions/designated-european-capitals-culture

1. GOVERNANCE ISSUES AND DELIVERY BODY

Establishing institutional arrangements in good time

While it is quite common for successful ECoC bidders to enter the development stage of their ECoC project with a very broad set of activities and aspirations, this should be accompanied by a detailed timescale, setting out when more concrete details will need to be finalised and arrangements for the provision of more regular feedback on progress. In case a wide variety of partners is involved in an ECoC's bid, potentially with different initial aims and aspirations, it is important that, through local leadership or an intensive approach to partnership building, they rapidly come to a shared understanding of the ECoC's ambitions or how it would be delivered in practice. It is also reasonable to ask bidders, at an earlier stage of the process, for a more concrete idea of the eventual institutional form for delivery. Failing to do that in good time may result in condensing the period of programme development or reducing the time available for critical complementary activities such as the development of international marketing and commercial revenue generation strategies.

Finding the best legal status for the delivery agency to ensure it can act rapidly and smoothly

Experience shows that for the delivery agency to be able to work with local and international cultural operators, it is necessary to have an agile structure that can act immediately and respond to changing circumstances. Against this backdrop, structuring the ECoC delivery agency as a public entity may increase the risk of administrative and bureaucratic burdens slowing down its activities, as the tenders and sub-contracts it will have to issue will most probably be regulated by laws and rules established for public administrations and not for entities having to deal largely with the private sector.

Building a stable, effective team at an early stage in the development period

Developing a team very early on within the implementation stages of the ECoC project is vital. Although team members might well leave, having a dedicated group of individuals involved throughout the whole process is critical in terms of encouraging the continuity and clarity of the ECoC programme and its activities. Maybe looking beyond the team that was involved in the original bid and, second, looking outside of the municipality for the best recruits is also worth consideration. Moreover, there is also a need to scale up the team early enough so as to allow timely development of the content of the cultural programme, as well as to facilitate the international communication of the programme (e.g. to tour operators planning for the ECoC year) and the recruitment of corporate sponsors (who wish to see what they would be sponsoring and what the benefits to them would be).

Allowing for changes in the staff composition of the delivery team

The preparation of an application for the ECoC title requires a particular set of skills to be in place. However, the development of the cultural programme (and the associated communication and marketing activities) by necessity requires change to the team, when the emphasis changes from strategy development, partnership building and idea generation to capacity-building, practical planning and delivery. Continuity can be ensured with some key individuals remaining in post.

Having clear and transparent governance arrangements

Governance arrangements for the ECoC project need to be clear and transparent. Ambiguity leads to lack of clarity of ownership and leadership and provides a very difficult environment within which officials and cultural operators have to work, leading to reduced efficiency and effectiveness. Delivery agencies need to be provided with the right mechanisms for taking decisions and for funding activities; since ECoC are time-limited, project-based events, such mechanisms are likely to be different to those used for normal 'mainstream' funding of cultural bodies. These mechanisms need to provide sufficient flexibility and discretion to take decisions without recourse to the political machinery of local or national government. Delivery agencies also need to be insulated – through strong boards – from over-exposure to party political debates in order that they can get on with the technical tasks of implementing a programme of cultural activities.

Providing for political support

An ECoC delivery agency and its staff, however committed and talented, can only operate within the parameters set at the political level. Linked to this, there is a need for the staff of the delivery team to have strong backing from the main political players, in order for the team to remain stable in its composition and method of operation. Political support is often key at both city and national levels to help with the approval of funds and budgets for the ECoC, the secondment of staff (which often come from the city authority) as well as the wider profile of the programme throughout both the development and implementation stages of ECoC. However, the artistic choices and content of the ECoC generally need to be free of political intervention, which is better done by cultural rather than political operators.

Political decision-making is an essential ingredient of any ECoC. However, the political process needs to take place early on in the development process so that an agreed set of activities can then be implemented. Getting caught up in party politics on an on-going basis can be severely damaging for the prospects of an effective ECoC.

Ensuring national buy-in and involvement

Past ECoC evaluations show that national level involvement (particularly from the national Government) is key to ensure profile and budget for the cultural programme in some ECoC. The ECoC monitoring panel and the original ECoC bidding process are right to highlight when national involvement is lacking, and cities applying for or granted ECoC status need to ensure they follow through with their original arrangements on this matter to truly get the most out of the ECoC year.

Further reading

Lessons in delivery on "Defining a European Capital of Culture" and on "Putting in place an effective delivery body" (report on 2007-2008 ECoC, p. 99) https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/capitals-culture-2007-08-evaluation_en.pdf

2. CULTURAL PROGRAMME, EUROPEAN DIMENSION AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Developing a coherent artistic vision at an early stage

A clear and coherent artistic vision and ethos must be developed at an early stage and retained throughout the development and implementation of the ECoC. It should permeate the entire cultural programme but also the associated activities, notably marketing and communication.

Ensuring the right balance between control/political ownership and artistic independence

It is perhaps inevitable that the primary funders of an ECoC will wish to retain a large degree of control over its development and implementation, with the corresponding risk that the artistic considerations of the ECoC are stifled or even side-lined. There needs to

be understanding, dialogue and compromise on both sides. Artistic players will need to be realistic about the constraints that the political environment may impose on the artistic freedom of an ECoC; they must be ambitious but not overly-idealistic. The political and institutional partners will need to focus on the achievement of broad strategic goals and may need to accept a loosening of day-to-day control and a degree of risk; they must also be open to introduction of new, innovative and perhaps unconventional methods of management and delivery.

Strong artistic direction and effective programme implementation is likely to require the delivery agency to be given very significant freedom to operate, in terms of artistic autonomy and discretion over expenditure. This loss of control poses very significant risks, particularly for public bodies that invest significant financial and political 'capital' and thus requires those bodies to have confidence in the team appointed. Such freedom is likely to be a pre-requisite for attracting the very best international talent to commit themselves to taking responsibility for an ECoC.

Keeping the enthusiasm and commitment of the cultural stakeholders

It is challenging to ensure enthusiasm and commitment from a wide range of stakeholders from the application to actual delivery of the title year, especially when decisions on the distribution of funding are being made. However, significant attention should be given to finding ways for open communication towards cultural operators at local level and engaging them throughout the whole process is very important for the development of the cultural programme. In this respect, involvement of people with significant experience and reputation within the culture sector is beneficial. This would create the potential for developing trust from cultural organisations in the artistic quality of selected projects especially at the time when limited information is available on how the cultural programme will look like.

Similarly, there is also a need to avoid any perceived lack of transparency regarding project selection. There is wide interest from the culture sector, wider public and media on how the programme is shaping, the progress to date and other issues related to the preparation to host the title. It may be challenging but prove useful for the delivery agency to communicate on why there is only limited information available at a given time.

Considering publishing open calls to trigger off new unexpected projects

An open call for applications can help identify creative individuals and organisations that might not otherwise be known to the main public bodies that fund culture; where such individuals are given the resources and the possibilities to think creatively and act imaginatively, they can bring a creativity and originality to a city's cultural offering, although it has to be accepted that risks must be taken.

Considering developing a separate funding instrument to involve 'newcomers' into the ECoC

In all ECoC, small, inexperienced and/or amateur operators face significant barriers to participation. Relatively few of such operators respond to the open calls for projects and

even fewer are successful. It might be useful for ECoC to devise a separate funding instrument specifically for these types of operators. This might take the form of restricted calls, which provide funds for capacity building, and project conception/development, as well as for project implementation. Hands-on technical assistance will also be essential.

Complementing, instead of duplicating existing culture

It is better for an ECoC to design a programme that complements and adds real value to what already exists, instead of trying to compete with existing cultural activity found in the city. An ECoC that adds 'more of the same' type of culture and is focussed on simply increasing the amount of culture in a city is less powerful that one that fills gaps or tries to approach culture in a different way to what has gone before. In doing this, an ECoC can add an extra layer and dimension that was not there previously. This is particularly true when the ECoC is found is a city that already has a large existing cultural infrastructure /offering.

Embedding European co-operation into the ECoC's cultural programme

European co-operation needs to be embedded as far as possible into the ECOC's cultural programme. This can be achieved through the application of specific selection criteria in the process of selecting projects; such criteria would require co-operation with cultural operators in other countries as a condition of funding. However, the use of selection criteria may in fact deter smaller, less experienced cultural operators from being involved in the ECOC, so the delivery agency may need to provide additional support, for example, in signposting smaller organisations to larger ones that may be able to help them overcome barriers to European co-operation.

Linking international operators to local cultural operators

It is important to link international operators to local artists and cultural operators in the city, for example, in the context of co-productions and residencies. This not only enables the programme to have more of a local 'flavour' and seem less 'imported', but it also serves to build the capacity of the local sector. Again, the delivery agency may need to be a key role in linking local organisations to international artists and cultural operators visiting the city.

Actively pursuing widening participation in culture

It is important to ensure that all communities are able to benefit from the ECOC, given the high levels of public investment following designation. To do that, ECoC need to specifically set out to widen participation in culture by targeting under-represented groups rather than simply 'hoping' that these groups would take part in the programme. Purposely and explicitly setting out to attract groups that would otherwise ignore culture should be considered by future ECoC in terms of the type, geography and scope of the cultural offer they put on. This can be achieved for example by instigating parallel programmes of outreach arts activity within poorer neighbourhoods and communities in the city, in partnership with other service providers, and developing volunteering programmes to provide other practical opportunities to participate in the ECoC year.

Planning preparatory periods for community activities

In terms of community arts and development, one of the key challenges faced by many ECoC is the attitude amongst local residents that such ambitious aims would never be achieved. Experience shows that a long lead-in time is required before such community activities can really happen (at least one year and a half), in order to identify, build capacity and animate local groups. Above all, the experience shows that participation must be a process that is supported and sustained – and, where possible, expanded – beyond the title-year. Key to the process is decentralisation, with support customised to the circumstances of different neighbourhoods and provided with a sensitivity to local needs. Long and intensive negotiations may also be required with city councils, to help them understand the relevance of such projects. When the delivery agency decides to use local people for delivering an important part of the cultural programme, it is important that they take into account the wider effects of such a choice, as this model does have some connected key challenges, such as – for example – potentially lower quality thresholds or a lower visibility with international visitors.

Providing the practical and technical support to the city's cultural sector, in particular small or inexperienced operators

Hosting an ECoC is perhaps the best live 'learning process' that the cultural sector of a city can experience. To exploit the benefits of this process, there is a need to provide the city's cultural sector, in particular local people and independent operators, not only with finance but also – and above all – with practical and technical support in creating and producing cultural events, establishing international connections and undertaking communication & marketing.

Putting in place new forms of collaboration

For ECoC to develop extensive, innovative cultural programmes featuring a strong European dimension, encourage co-operation between operators and involve citizens typically requires operators in the public, private and civil society sectors to come together in new forms of collaboration; in cities where these sectors tend to operate relatively discretely, there will be a need to create new mechanisms, platforms and forms of dialogue that bring different stakeholders and operators together; there will also be a need on all sides for openness and a willingness to take risks, learn and adapt.

Further reading:

Post script "Reflections on the European Dimension" (report on 2009 ECoC, p.87) https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/capitals-culture-2009-evaluation_en.pdf

Post- script on "Fostering the participation of citizens" (report on 2011 ECoC, p. 68) https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2011-evaluation_en.pdf

3. FUNDING

Seeking for early confirmation of public funding, including from the National Government

Early commitment of funding by the main public authorities is essential as it lays the basis for an effective ECoC. It reduces risk, enables a strong team to be recruited and leaves that team free to focus on raising additional funding from other sources such as corporate sponsorship. Even where formal commitments can't be confirmed, there must be a way to make the political commitment necessary to providing stability. Delays in confirmation can have an adverse effect on the organisation of the cultural programme and communication activities. Ideally, National Governments should commit resources and political support for the ECoC concept at the application stage in advance of the selection of the title-holder – and regardless of the outcome of that process.

Putting in place a strategy for private sponsorship

Tiered levels of sponsorship, from principal supporters through to lower-value 'culture supporters' can help to widen the pool of potential sponsors and increase business engagement in ECOC. It is important to identify at least one high profile sponsor early on since this can provide an incentive for others to follow. It is also important to communicate clearly the ECoC concept to potential private sponsors so that the latter have a clear understanding of what the ECoC actually is.

Establishing appropriate funding mechanisms

There is a need to establish funding mechanisms that reflect the nature of the culture sector and the ECoC itself. Although the clarity and stability of funding commitments are of key importance, the process for accessing funding should also reflect the needs of the sector. In particular, many of those involved in the cultural programme are individuals or small organisations and do not have the capacity and resources to fund the projects themselves if there are delays in reimbursement.

Exploring the possibility of ERDF funding

The use of ERDF funding to support ECoC culture programme (as was the case in Guimarães) can be facilitated by linking ECoC vision and objectives to the key priorities of ERDF operational programmes during the early phases of programme development. This should include the involvement of regional ERDF managing authorities in early discussions on the budget for ECoC. It is also important to find ways to mitigate the negative effects that often stem from the rigid and time-consuming administrative procedures associated with ERDF funding but also practical issues such as delays in reimbursing project promoters, which can be a major problem for smaller organisations in the cultural sector.

Experience of some past ECoC (such as Pécs, Guimarães or Košice) also provides significant insights into the use of ERDF funding for the development of cultural infrastructure projects related to the ECoC. The main benefit of this approach proves to be the potential for the ECoC to help 'embed' the newly-developed infrastructure into the social and cultural life of the city, e.g. through facilitating cultural projects and events that encourage the use of the new buildings and refurbished spaces by a diverse public. The ECoC, through its publicity and communication activities, can also help raise the

interest of the media and the public in such developments and provoke a public debate around them. It can also provide a clear deadline for the completion of developments and thus also a clear focus for all stakeholders involved. However, the incorporation of large infrastructure projects into the ECoC illustrates a number of practical challenges that will need to be taken into account by future ECoC. First, the timescales for planning infrastructure projects and preparing the cultural programme for the ECoC title year are different. Second, separate institutional arrangements are generally required for managing ECoC and ERDF funding, creating the need for effective co-operation between the two.

Taking into account the impact of national funding regulations

In some countries, national funding rules and regulations for the use of the European Structural Funds relating to non-commercial/profit making uses of infrastructural investment projects may present a challenge to ECoC, for example when they put the emphasis on stimulating creative industries (as opposed to culture per se) and the development of more diverse income streams for culture. For future funding regimes to be supportive of this type of cultural sector investment, further dialogue and negotiation with the national Ministry of Culture is then required. Realistic financial analysis and planning for major cultural infrastructure projects is also of critical importance, which takes into account such constraints. It could also be said that further policy dialogue would be helpful to discuss measures to better incentivise private sector investment in culture and the arts, for example via the taxation system.

Small cities should not be deterred by having only a small budget

The experience of some recent ECoC shows that a comparatively small city with a comparatively small budget can still host a very strong and meaningful ECoC which people hold positive views on. A smaller budget might mean less in the way of activities, legacy and even impact but experiences show that a city can still make a real difference to its cultural operators, the local population and the city overall through hosting an ECoC. Smaller cities should therefore not be put off bidding for ECoC and those who award cities ECoC status should not simply choose the 'biggest' and most 'high profile' cities when making their decisions.

Further reading:

Post- script on "Financing an ECoC" (report on 2013 ECoC, p. 107) https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2013-full-report.pdf

4. EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Measuring the impact

The amount of evidence on the impact of ECoC is still relatively limited. The level of data on attendance figures, spend of visitors, satisfaction levels as well as wider economic impacts of the ECoC seems to be partial at best. Future ECoC should consider the generation of 'impact' data useful for a number of reasons. This includes providing

evidence of the achievement of their objectives, understanding the real 'difference' the ECoC has made, understanding how and where opportunities could have been maximised as well as helping to articulate to a wider audience (including the sceptics) the power that culture can have on a city. In this respect, ECoC title-holders should also gather and analyse "big data" relating to their cultural programmes.

Developing an evaluation strategy at an early stage

Undertaking research into various types of impact as well as the process by which they have come about should start at an early stage. Starting early allows a strong baseline situation to be established and for the "story" of the development and implementation of the ECoC to be observed and recorded as it unfolds.

Monitoring

The need for regular and recognised progress in the development phase (in order to pre-empt some of the problems frequently encountered during implementation of the project) means that it may be desirable to consider annual implementation plans or more regular reporting milestones than those set out under the strengthened monitoring procedures [of the Commission] within the proposed new legal basis for ECoC [Decision 445/2014/EU].

Further reading

Post- script on "Measuring impact" (report on 2012 ECoC, p. 68) https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2012-first-evaluation_en.pdf

5. COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING

Engaging with the media at an early stage and proactively

This requires the use of positive and accessible language to explain the plans of the ECoC, as well as regular communication via a diversity of channels (specifically targeting the media, cultural sector stakeholders, potential corporate sponsors and the general public). However, it is also important to understand the limits of what can be achieved through media engagement (which may differ by country), and to tailor actions accordingly; it is unfortunately common for media outlets to be predisposed towards negative reporting of ECoC or actively seek controversy.

There is therefore a need for the delivery team to recruit communication staff at an early stage to cover tasks such as developing a communication strategy, appointing contractors (in some cases), recruiting other staff and building partnerships with other stakeholders, including tourist bodies, sponsors and the main cultural institutions.

Giving consideration to the nature and timing of information provided

Communicating effectively with/through the media requires careful consideration to be given to the nature and timing of information provided and to the interests of each type of media. Local media will give coverage throughout the life of an ECoC (from nomination

through the development phase to the end of the title year) but requires a continuous flow of news to communicate. National media may prove problematic where they are not accustomed to giving extensive coverage to the cultural life of a provincial city; their interest may take longer to awaken. The international travel writers and cultural correspondents are used to covering different ECoC each year and will typically aim to start gathering information about the title holder and its cultural programme around 3-6 months before the start of the title year. They will typically report on forthcoming events in the months leading up to the title-year or in the first few weeks of the title-year, which requires some events to be confirmed in advance. Media interest in general may be slow in the development phase but intensifies during this period and then can prove difficult to manage.

Confirming and communicating key events as early possible and presenting the overall cultural programme several months before the title-year

International media and international tour operators usually require at least some of the more important events to be defined well in advance. Tour operators typically promote packages in the year before the title-year, meaning that key events need to be confirmed up to eighteen months or more before the title year. Ideally, ECoC should confirm at least the 'big ticket' events about 18 months before the title year so that tour operators can sell packages and international journalists can provide coverage. The overall cultural programme should ideally be communicated four to six months or more before the title-year.

Drawing on bodies already responsible for communication and tourism promotion

The marketing and communication campaign of a year-long cultural programme to local, national and European audiences by a newly-created delivery team represents a challenge for all (even well-resourced) ECoC. It can also very quickly exhaust the budget available to any ECoC. The ECoC team, by itself, will simply not have the expertise, experience and financial resources necessary to this task. A constructive working relationship with the various bodies responsible for tourism promotion is essential, both in the territory covered by the ECoC (not least to make best use of the existing network of local tourist offices) and beyond, particularly in the international market, which typically requires extensive expenditure to reach the desired audiences (it is for example important for the ECoC delivery team to try and convince the national government to give clear direction to the national tourism board, embassies and cultural institutes abroad regarding their roles and responsibilities with regards to ECoC promotion). This is not only a way to cut the costs of marketing and communication, but also to facilitate links with international media that can then report on the city and its ECoC.

Protecting the ECoC brand

The ECoC is one of the best known and most prestigious EU initiatives, which attracts interest from international media, audiences and cultural stakeholders. In that context, communications that are intended primarily for a local or national audience can be amplified much more widely to the international level by virtue of the prominence offered by the ECoC title. Whilst this can and does serve the interests of title-holders – by

creating a stronger international profile – it also creates the responsibility to ensure care in any communications made.

Ensuring a consistent branding of ECoC

For external audiences, including potential international visitors, it is important to unify the marketing of the ECoC around one brand. The ECoC delivery team, city agencies, and national tourism board should agree upon this brand (and ideally the ECoC brand) and the ground rules well in advance of the ECoC year. There is a need for coordinated promotion so as to avoid different tourism brands running alongside each other.

Making hard choices in the promotion of an extensive cultural programme

The sheer volume of events included in most ECoC programmes mean that numerous and diverse communication activities take place at any one time during the title-year. Whilst this is a sign of exciting cultural programme, it highlights some lessons to learn. First, there is a need to prioritise the communication of certain events and to differentiate between the key events that would be of most interest and those that are of smaller scale. Second, it may be best to emphasise different events in different media, different formats, etc. Third, there is the risk of saturation and, consequently, competition between different events in the same territory.

Considering hospitality across the city

Creating an effective 'welcome' for tourists and visitors requires a comprehensive approach that considers hospitality across the city – not just the catering and hotel sectors, but all institutions and businesses that may have contact with visitors, e.g. public transport operators, shops, taxis, etc.

This requires a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach that enables not only the necessary skills to be acquired, but also an attitude of hospitality, including: a prominent and centrally-located ECoC information centre and box office; wide availability of information about the ECoC (and for visitors more generally) not just at the usual tourist locations, but in shops, businesses and public transport hubs across the city; and training and information for the staff of relevant local businesses and public services – giving them the information, practical skills and 'mindset' to offer the best welcome and effective 'signposting' for the visitors that they make encounter in their everyday work.

Being realistic around the attraction of foreign visitors

It is sometimes hard for ECoC cities to attract foreign visitors specifically to attend ECoC projects. A city needs the right conditions in place – including a high profile cultural programme, a strong marketing strategy and a strong transport infrastructure (ideally with a nearby airport) – for it to attract a meaningful number of visitors from abroad. All of these ingredients come at a financial cost and it is only the 'bigger' ECoC that may truly see a step change in foreign visitors as a consequence of them hosting the year. Many foreign visitors will not automatically visit the city simply because it has ECoC status. If cities are to realistically use ECoC to establish themselves on the foreign visitor 'map', then it needs to be recognised they will have to invest heavily in meaningful

marketing activity and a high profile cultural programme to make this goal become a reality.

Further reading

Post- script on "Effective promotion of a European Capital of Culture" (report on 2014 ECoC, p. 80) https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2014-report_en.pdf

6. LEGACY

Planning legacy at an early stage

Sustainability needs to be considered at an early stage and 'built-in' from the outset. Whilst the year before the title-year and the title-year itself are inevitably very busy, legacy planning cannot be left until the completion of the ECoC. Such planning cannot be left to the staff of the delivery agency, as they are typically very busy during the title-year and many move on early in the next year, meaning a loss of expertise. The key players in legacy planning will inevitably include the local and/or regional public authorities and where steps are not taken at an early stage, the danger is that legacy planning – and the corresponding commitment of resources – becomes hostage to short-term political considerations, not least when elections are due. What is needed is for the key strategic partners to initiate the process at an early stage and devote appropriate resources to that task; this may in fact require individuals that are separate from the immediate delivery of the ECoC and who are given the time and space to develop a strategy, garner support and put practical actions in place. In particular, there is the need for a city holding the title to have a well-developed legacy strategy that puts in place a number of structures and importantly, practical actions that help to stimulate a longer term approach to culture in the city, beyond the year itself.

Creating a legacy body and ensuring continuation of people and cultural structures

The creation of a sustainable legacy typically requires the key stakeholders to come together around a long-term vision and strategy and to establish a structure for the ongoing governance and co-ordination of culture in the city, often involving the creation of a specific legacy body. Having people and organisations remain in place is as important for the sustainability plans of a city as having cultural buildings or a sustainability strategy in place. Every effort should therefore be made to ensure key people and delivery bodies remain in place following the ECoC title-year. Where possible, opportunities should be created to retain members of the delivery team within the cultural governance of the city.

Thinking beyond culture

Although ECoC should firmly remain a cultural programme, there may be a 'missed opportunity' if the ECoC programme is not linked with other aspects of the city's strategy, including enterprise, social inclusion and physical development. Those developing ECoC programmes should try to be as ambitious as possible in terms of using

the opportunity to stimulate wider economic growth, more jobs, a stronger creative sector as well as developing new or improved cultural facilities in the city. Involving stakeholders active in economic, social and physical policy as well as just cultural policy therefore needs to be a consideration during programme design.

Instead of opting for overly safe themes, ECoC title-holders can decide to focus on key issues and challenges found in their city. Cities are sometimes places of poverty, inequality and conflict between communities and ECoC programmes can partly deal with these issues rather than ignoring them. It can also ensure that the ECoC is directly related to the problems and issues which the city and its residents face rather than putting on an ECoC that could be found in any city and that could be targeted at anyone.

Thinking carefully about new cultural buildings

It is often preferable to have a new cultural facility or building in place as part of the ECoC year. In particular, new buildings often cement the legacy of the year. However, a new cultural building is not always the vital ingredient of a successful ECoC and care needs to be taken in ensuring that the building does not replace or detract from a full and colourful cultural programme. Future ECoC may need to make hard decisions if budgets are limited on either having a cultural building or a stronger cultural programme. Stakeholders should not necessarily be disappointed if the city finishes the year without a new gallery or museum to show for it.

Further reading:

Post- script on "Leaving a legacy" (report on 2010 ECoC, p. 97) https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/capitals-culture-2010-report_en.pdf

Post-script on "Contribution to the long-term strategy" (report on 2015 ECoC, p. 112) https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/ecoc-2015-evaluation_en.pdf



Publications Office
of the European Union