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

Ex Post evaluation of the 2010 European Capitals of Culture (Essen for the Ruhr, Pécs, Istanbul)

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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 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 2010 European Capital 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 three European Capitals of Culture (hereafter "ECOC"): Essen for the Ruhr, Pécs and Istanbul. It then compared findings and reached conclusions valid for all three.

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. European countries, which were not Member States could also apply, with no pre-defined chronological order: 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 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[4] 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,

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1 OJ L304 of 3 November 2006

2 Resolution of the Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs regarding the annual organization of the 'European City of Culture' of 13.06.1985 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/Notice.do?val=117538:cs&lang=fr&list=117540:cs,117539:cs,117538:cs,118564:cs,&pos=3&page=1&nbl=4&pgs=10&hwords=&checktexte=checkbox&visu=

3 Decision 1419/1999/EC (OJ L 166 of 1.7.1999). Amended by Decision 649/2005/EC (OJ L 117 of 4.5.2005). http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1999:166:0001:0005:EN:PDF http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2005:117:0020:0021:EN:PDF

4 Decision 1622/2006/EC (OJ L 304 of 3.11.2006). http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:304:SOM:EN:HTML

which ends up by the Panel making a recommendation on awarding a pecuniary 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 Culture Programme. For 2007-13 it makes available a maximum of € 1.5 million each year per ECOC. Cities up to the 2009 title received it as a grant cofunding part of their programme. Cities as from the 2010 title have been submitted to the monitoring phase and received the EU financial support of € 1.5 million through the Melina Mercouri prize.

2.2. 2010 European Capitals of Culture

The selection of the 2010 ECOC fell under the selection procedures set by the 1999 Decision. Germany and Hungary were entitled to host the ECOC in this year. Germany proposed Essen for the Ruhr and Görlitz; Hungary proposed Pécs. In addition, Turkey proposed Istanbul and Ukraine proposed Kiev. On the basis of Article 4 of Decision 1419/1999/EC concerning the participation of non-EU countries in the event, only one city from non EU countries could hold the title for a given year.
The selection process took place in 2006. The European selection panel issued a report recommending Essen for the Ruhr, Pécs and Istanbul for the 2010 title, while making recommendations to help them achieve the proposed objectives. In 2006 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[5] of the ECOC in 2010. The evaluation aimed at assessing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability 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. Given the fact that each ECOC only bears the title for one year, conclusions and recommendations concerning the cities were given in the form of "lessons learnt" in order to help future ECOC in their implementation.

3.2. Methodology

The three ECOC were evaluated individually, drawing in part on evaluations commissioned by the ECOC themselves. Data was gathered at two levels: a small amount of data at EU level; and more extensive data from the ECOC themselves. The key sources included the policy and academic literature at European level; the original ECOC applications, studies and reports commissioned by the ECOC, events programmes, promotional materials and websites; quantitative data supplied by the ECOC on activities, outputs and results; interviews of managing teams for each ECOC; consultation of key stakeholders in each ECOC; and visits to each city. Conclusions relating to the ECOC Action in general were based on the evidence and conclusions emerging from all three 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-

[5] Framework service contract n°EAC/03/06

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 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 introduction of such objectives into the ECOC Action has both shaped and reflected broader trends in cultural policy.
However, 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 2010 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 2010 ECOC was converted into a set of workable objectives and the changes to those objectives during the development phase. The three ECOC embraced the objectives of the Action and customised them in line with their own particular contexts and priorities. All three 2010 Capitals planned diverse cultural programmes and associated activities (e.g. communications, volunteering, etc) that would support the objectives of "developing cultural activities", "promoting the European dimension of and through culture" and "social and economic development through culture".

3.3.3. Efficiency of Governance

Consideration was given to 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, 2008 and 2009 ECOC, the evaluation of the 2010 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 carefully customised to the political and cultural context of the city.
The 2010 ECOC illustrate these points in very different ways. Essen for the Ruhr developed an efficient and effective governance structure and thus demonstrated how the main challenges can be met, even in the complex situation where a large agglomeration is involved. In Pécs, the management of an event of this scale proved to be very challenging and a number of difficulties were faced. First, two different organisations were established to manage the budget, which resulted in a lack of clarity over the responsibility for artistic direction; responsibility for allocating funding tended to remain with the public authorities and the managing agency enjoyed only a limited degree of autonomy. Secondly, the selection of an Artistic Director and the leadership of the development of the cultural programme proved to be challenging and there were changes in the individuals responsible for the development of the programme and the institutional set-up. These difficulties were compounded by changes at the political level in Pécs during the development phase. As a result, the decision-making process was complicated and lengthy and it was not until the end of 2008 that the governance arrangements became settled and attention could turn to the development of the cultural programme. However, by this stage it was already too late to mobilise many cultural operators and realise some of the original project ideas. Despite these challenges, the final cultural

programme of Pécs 2010 was far more extensive than the city's cultural offering in previous years.
Concerning Istanbul, an executive body "Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency" was set up by law in 2007 to implement the ECOC programme. This agency enjoyed the strong political and financial commitment of the national government, as well as a significant degree of autonomy at least at the outset. Whilst the agency was successful in implementing a very extensive cultural programme and marketing campaign, certain features of the governance arrangements proved problematic and led to the overall impact of the ECOC being less than anticipated. As the government became the supplier of 95% of the funding, the state bodies exerted increasing control over the ECOC to the frustration of the independent cultural operators, several of whom resigned their positions within the agency in 2009. The resulting loss of a clear artistic vision resulted in weak co-ordination between the cultural programme and the marketing campaign, with the latter not tending specifically to promote the former.
Regardless of these difficulties, the ECOC title remains highly valued, generates extensive cultural programmes and achieves significant impacts. Cities make very explicit commitments at application stage regarding financial resources. However there is a need to ensure that ECOC fulfil their own commitments made at application stage, including in terms of communication: at selection stage, Essen for the Ruhr presented itself as a city candidate for the title and involving Ruhr in its programme. However, despite the Monitoring and Advisory panel's recommendations, the title Essen for the Ruhr 2010 shifted to Ruhr 2010 in the communication strategy of the event. In addition, at least one city in the Ruhr region (Dortmund) appropriated the title by presenting itself as "Dortmund European Capital of Culture 2010" in some cases.

3.3.4. Efficiency of ECOC mechanisms at EU level

A key consideration was the efficiency of the selection, monitoring and financial processes operated by the European Commission.
The mechanisms applied by the European Commission to the selection of the 2010 ECOC were those specified by Decision 1419/EC/1999. Germany and Hungary were free to determine the basis on which they would nominate a city (or cities) for the ECOC title. Both Member States organised a competition to select proposals before forwarding them to the European institutions. They defined the criteria and arrangements for these competitions independently from the European Commission. Whilst the competitions were successful in attracting a high number of applicants, with 16 in Germany and 7 in Hungary, they did not ensure that all applications were developed with the European criteria in mind. Moreover, whilst Germany nominated two cities to the European selection panel – allowing the panel a choice – Hungary nominated just one, allowing the panel only the choice to accept or reject the application of Pécs.
Whilst all three ECOC did ultimately prove relevant to the EU level criteria, future ECOC selected according to the new procedures introduced by Decision 1622/EC/2006 (i.e. those from 2013 onwards) may prove to be more relevant to the EU level criteria.
The 2010 title-holders did, however, represent the first ECOC to be co-financed and monitored according to the new processes set out in Decision 1622/EC/2006. In these three cases, the evidence from the research suggests that the new processes have played a part in strengthening the ECOC, including their focus on the European dimension. They report that informal contact with members of the monitoring and advisory panel has proved a valuable complement to the formal monitoring meetings and reports. All three also reported that receiving the EU funding in the form of a prize had created a lower administrative burden than would a traditional grant, as it was the case for the previous titles. The ECOC Action generates high demand from candidate cities, substantial investment in the cultural programmes and in the cities more generally and has a high profile in the media and with the

public. It is doubtful that any other policy mechanism could have achieved the same impact for the same level of EU investment in terms of financial resources and effort.

3.3.5. Effectiveness in developing cultural activities

All three of the 2010 ECOC implemented much more extensive cultural programmes within their territories than would have taken place in the absence of ECOC designation: 5,500 cultural events were implemented in Essen for the Ruhr, 4,675 in Pécs and 10,000 in Istanbul. Together they accounted for more than 20,000 events attended by at least 20 million people across the two larger ECOC (Essen for the Ruhr and Istanbul).[6] The cultural programmes of all three ECOC stretched across the full twelve months of the title year. Overall, the ECOC Action as a whole can be said to have been successful in its objective of developing cultural activities.

The evidence from the three ECOC also suggests that these cultural programmes have been more innovative, diverse and high profile than would have been the cultural offering of each city in the absence of ECOC designation, with more events and performances from artists of international renown than would usually be the case. Essen for the Ruhr and Istanbul placed particular emphasis on the commissioning and performance or exhibition of new art works, including by local artists and cultural institutions, while Pécs placed relatively more emphasis on existing activities.

All three ECOC explored various artistic themes and issues, which were in some cases innovative or avant-garde. However, in Pécs and Istanbul, difficulties in the governance of the ECOC meant that strong artistic direction was lacking for the cultural programme as a whole. Istanbul explored themes of contemporary interest and presented a diverse offering of modern and contemporary culture across different artistic disciplines, though it struggled to assert a coherent artistic theme across those disciplines. Meanwhile, Pécs had the overall aim of fostering co-operation with southeast Europe and positioning itself as a gateway to countries in that region. But in practice, its activities became more focussed on the development of new infrastructure (which may be difficult to finance beyond the year) rather than the exploration of artistic themes related to the overall aim of the ECOC.

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 post-script to the evaluation of the 2009 ECOC suggested that ECOC cultural programmes are made "European" through the inclusion of activities whose content, delivery mechanism, audiences or participants are European in essence. Looking at the 2010 ECOC, we can see that all three were European in that sense, though the approaches differed:

- *Content*: the three ECOC highlighted very different European themes in diverse ways. Essen for the Ruhr placed most emphasis on regional themes but explored them in a European context, particularly migration, identity and approaches to cultural education. Of the three ECOC, Essen for the Ruhr was perhaps most successful in ensuring that European themes permeated the entire cultural programme through making "A model for

[6] The attendance figure for Pécs was not available.

Europe' one of the three selection criteria for all projects. The European theme promoted by Pécs focussed on its potential as a "Gateway to the Balkans", with many cultural activities focussed on promoting a pan-Balkan culture. Istanbul originally aimed to present the city as a European centre for modern and contemporary culture which would "function as a bridge connecting Europe to its East" and there was some exploration of the role of culture and civil society in the context of Turkey's application for EU membership. However in practice, the original artistic vision was lost across much of the ECOC and ultimately the emphasis was more often on the historical rather than contemporary European heritage of the city.

- *Delivery mechanism*: all three ECOC included events featuring artists of European significance, though the predominant delivery mechanism for the European dimension was partnerships with cities in other countries. These were extensive in the case of Essen for the Ruhr, with cultural collaborations, exchanges and networking, with a total of more than 100 multilateral co-operation projects involving 83 000 participants. For Pécs, 270 projects involving artists from other countries and 52 projects with other ECOC took place, with co-operation being most important with cities in neighbouring countries. Collaborations between the ECOC and other cities was perhaps less structured and less extensive in Pécs and Istanbul than in Essen for the Ruhr, though there were a number of collaborations with artists and operators in other countries. Istanbul enabled many of its 39 municipalities to undertake transnational cultural co-operation for the first time; there was also a diverse range of artistic co-operations between the three ECOC themselves.

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

Essen for the Ruhr and Pécs aimed to develop arts and culture as one means by which to pursue the economic and social regeneration of former industrial areas, though both adopted quite different approaches. Istanbul did not particularly seek to use culture to pursue economic objectives, with anyway a likely economic impact. It sought to promote access to and participation in culture, particularly amongst those that would not usually enjoy such opportunities.

All three ECOC stimulated investments in cultural and other infrastructure that would not have otherwise taken place (€140 million were invested in Pécs and €64 million in Istanbul in 2010). In Pécs, the new cultural or refurbished facilities were at the heart of the ECOC and seen as key to the long-term development both of culture and of the city. Here, the ECOC also provided an impetus to investments in other infrastructure, such as the new motorway link to Budapest. In Istanbul, the ECOC provided the spur to extensive investments in the restoration of the city's wealth of cultural heritage sites. Some facilities were also refurbished in Essen for the Ruhr.

The experience of 2010 also shows that ECOC can help transform the image of cities or give them greater international prominence, although the extent to which this is necessary or feasible will vary.

In terms of direct impact on the economy through tourism, there is evidence of increased tourist visits in Pécs, Essen for the Ruhr and Istanbul +71%, +18.5%, and +11% respectively). Within all three cities the cultural and creative industries have been strengthened, though not as much as had been hoped for in at least two; in Pécs, the development of new facilities became the over-riding concern, rather than support for the cultural and creative industries. Similarly, in Istanbul the emphasis shifted over the development phase from the emergence of a modern and contemporary cultural sector to the restoration of heritage sites.

The experience of 2010 also shows the continuing potential of the ECOC to increase the participation of citizens in culture across very different contexts. All three ECOC included a diverse range of projects aiming to involve citizens who would not usually participate in or

access cultural activities. Common approaches to this objective across all three ECOC (indeed across many ECOC in recent years) include the decentralisation of activities across different neighbourhoods and in different or unusual venues across the city, as well as an overall ethos that emphasises values of tolerance and celebrates the diversity of cultures and ethnic groups present in the city. Volunteers also play an important role with1,165 in Essen for the Ruhr, 901 in Istanbul, 780 in Pécs.

Conclusion:

The human and financial resources necessary to achieving a critical mass of impacts vary according to the size and nature of the territory of the ECOC. Covering a very large territory (and/or population) will naturally require extensive resources, but future ECOC should give careful consideration to the nature of the impact that they wish to achieve. It is likely either to be concentrated in one particular area or to consist of effects such as enhanced networking and profile across the territory, rather than in a step-change in cultural vibrancy.

ECOC continue to provide social and economic benefits in terms of increased tourism, improved infrastructure, increased international profile and stronger cultural and creative industries. In that way, it is reinforced by and adds value to investments in cultural heritage and infrastructure made by the European Structural Funds.

However, such benefits do not necessarily and automatically accrue to the cities holding the title. The extent to which social and economic development is stimulated – and the nature of that development – continues to depend on the articulation of a clear development vision by the stakeholders as well as appropriate and co-ordinated activities that are implemented in concert with the cultural programme.

The ECOC retains great potential to widen the participation of citizens in culture across very different contexts, particularly where such activities emphasise tolerance and celebrate the diversity of cultures and ethnic groups present in the city.

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".[7] Across all three 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 across all three cities as a result of the ECOC, as well as better networking and co-operation within their cultural sectors. However, the evidence for sustained improvements in cultural governance varies. In Istanbul, whilst some instances of better governance will endure, the model introduced by the ECOC will come to an end once the agency ceases operation in 2011 and it is not certain that stakeholders will coalesce around a shared strategy. In Pécs, two legacy bodies have been created to manage the new cultural facilities in the long-run, though the municipality has yet to create its overarching structure to support cultural operators across the city. In Essen for the Ruhr, a number of ambitious long-term goals have been set and responsibilities have been transferred to regional partners such as Kultur Ruhr GmbH (the organiser of Ruhr triennale) and Ruhr Tourism GmbH.

Conclusion :

The ECOC Action creates a legacy in the host cities through new cultural activities that endure beyond the title year, improved networking and co-operation between stakeholders in culture, and new and improved cultural facilities.

Beyond these benefits, the creation of a sustainable legacy is more uncertain. It 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.

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[7] Decision 1622/EC/2006

4. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION

The Commission agrees with the overall gist of the recommendations by the evaluator, which are very close to the recommendations issued following the 2007-2008 and 2009 ECOC evaluation.
The Commission agrees that, in designing a new legal basis, it should for any possible continuation of the exercise after 2019 :

– ensure that the selection process requires all applications to be assessed against the criteria set at EU level, as set by the current Decision (see 3.3.4);

– given the experience of Istanbul 2010 and the fact that the current Decision no longer allows cities in non-Member States to apply for the title, consider whether the new legal basis should reintroduce this possibility (see 2.2);

– consider to what extent the awarding of a pecuniary Prize beyond 2019, as in the current Decision, is more efficient than providing a traditional grant for a part of the city programme as previously (see 2.1 and 3.3.4);

– keep the ECOC action primarily focussed on cities, but allow the flexibility for cities to involve a wider area as at present (see 3.3.3);

– emphasise the importance of fulfilling the criteria related to the long-term development of the city and consider giving explicit encouragement in the criteria to reward cities which have already developed a long-term cultural policy strategy (see 3.3.8).

5. THE COMMISSION'S CONCLUSIONS

The Commission concludes 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 highly cost-effective and efficient initiative. The Commission shares the evaluator's overall assessment and accepts its recommendations as formulated in the section above.
The Commission notes that most ECOC already have evaluation schemes covering all or parts of their cultural programme and will continue to recommend overall evaluations at local level. In order to promote the circulation of good evaluation practices, through the EU Culture Programme the Commission has supported a policy grouping which adapts the comprehensive evaluation model developed by Liverpool 2008 further to the needs of future ECOC.[8] The Commission's guide for candidate cities has also been updated to include a section on evaluation.
The Commission is preparing its proposal for the initiative beyond 2019, which will seek to ensure that it remains as attractive, relevant and effective as possible. It will take into consideration the conclusions and recommendations resulting from this evaluation, those on the 2007-2008 and 2009 titles, as well as the evaluation on the arrangements defined by Decision 1622/2006/EC and the public consultation in 2010 and 2011. Concerning sustainability, ensuring long-term effects from the event is already one of the criteria in the 2006 Decision and will continue to be a key consideration in the reflections of the prolongation of the initiative. Furthermore, the Commission already stresses the importance of

[8] http://www.liv.ac.uk/impacts08/

embedding the event as part of a long-term culture policy strategy in its documents, information sessions and other conferences and will continue to do so.