

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

2005/0102(COD) - 20/12/2011 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents its ex post evaluation of the 2010 European Capital of Culture event (Essen for the Ruhr, Pécs, Istanbul), in accordance with Decision 1622/2006/EC establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) event for the years 2007 to 2019.

The report is based on an external evaluation 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. The EU provides **financial support** through the Culture Programme. For 2007-13 it makes available a maximum of EUR 1.5 million each year per ECOC. Cities up to the 2009 title received it as a grant co-funding part of their programme.

Main points of the evaluation

Efficiency of ECOC mechanisms at EU level: the mechanisms applied by the 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 for the ECOC title. Both Member States organised a competition to select proposals defining the criteria and arrangements for these competitions independently from the 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.**

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. All three also reported that receiving **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.

Governance: the report discusses problems with all three cities, and notes that 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.

Sustainability: 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:**

- 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.

Main recommendations: 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- keep the ECOC action primarily focussed on cities, but allow the flexibility for cities to involve a wider area as at present;
- 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.

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.

It notes that most ECOC already have evaluation schemes covering 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.

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 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.