

Procedure file

Basic information	
COD - Ordinary legislative procedure (ex-codecision procedure) Decision	2005/0102(COD) Procedure completed
European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019 Repealed by 2012/0199(COD)	
Subject 4.45.02 Cultural programmes and actions, assistance	

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	CULT Culture and Education		16/06/2005
		PSE PRETS Christa	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)	2751	25/09/2006
	Education, Youth, Culture and Sport	2689	14/11/2005
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Education, Youth, Sport and Culture	FIGEL' Ján	

Key events			
30/05/2005	Legislative proposal published	COM(2005)0209	Summary
29/09/2005	Committee referral announced in Parliament, 1st reading		
14/11/2005	Debate in Council	2689	Summary
23/02/2006	Vote in committee, 1st reading		Summary
10/03/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading	A6-0061/2006	
04/04/2006	Debate in Parliament		
05/04/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
05/04/2006	Decision by Parliament, 1st reading	T6-0128/2006	Summary
25/09/2006	Act adopted by Council after Parliament's 1st reading		
24/10/2006	Final act signed		

24/10/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		
03/11/2006	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

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Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CULT/6/28581

Documentation gateway

Legislative proposal	COM(2005)0209	30/05/2005	EC	Summary
Committee of the Regions: opinion	CDR0251/2005	16/11/2005	CofR	
Amendments tabled in committee	PE367.851	10/01/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee	PE368.035	30/01/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading	A6-0061/2006	10/03/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading	T6-0128/2006	05/04/2006	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2006)2095	11/05/2006	EC	
Draft final act	03611/3/2006	24/10/2006	CSL	
Follow-up document	COM(2009)0689	23/12/2009	EC	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2010)0762	17/12/2010	EC	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2011)0921	20/12/2011	EC	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2013)0013	23/01/2013	EC	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2014)0010	21/01/2014	EC	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2015)0074	02/03/2015	EC	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	COM(2015)0166	21/04/2015	EC	
Follow-up document	COM(2015)0580	26/11/2015	EC	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2017)0193	27/04/2017	EC	Summary
Follow-up document	SWD(2017)0135	27/04/2017	EC	
Follow-up document	SWD(2017)0137	27/04/2017	EC	
Follow-up document	COM(2018)0235	25/04/2018	EC	Summary
Follow-up document	SWD(2018)0140	25/04/2018	EC	

Follow-up document		COM(2019)0266	11/06/2019	EC	Summary
Follow-up document		SWD(2019)0203	11/06/2019	EC	Summary
Follow-up document		COM(2020)0386	18/08/2020	EC	
Follow-up document		SWD(2020)0165	18/08/2020	EC	
Follow-up document		COM(2021)0493	27/08/2021	EC	
Follow-up document		SWD(2021)0232	27/08/2021	EC	

Additional information

European Commission

[EUR-Lex](#)

Final act

[Decision 2006/1622](#)
[OJ L 304 03.11.2006, p. 0001-0006](#) Summary

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

PURPOSE : to establish a Community action entitled "European Capital of Culture" for the years 2007-2019 in order to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens.

PROPOSED ACT : Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTEXT : the European City of Culture was launched by the Council of Ministers on 13 June 1985.

Until 2004, the European Cities of Culture had been selected on an intergovernmental basis whereby Member States unanimously selected cities worthy of hosting the event. Decision 1419/1999/EC amended the procedure for selecting the cities from 2005 onwards, known as "European Capitals of Culture" (ECOC). The ECOC is now decided by the Council on the basis of a Commission recommendation, which takes into account the view of a jury of seven independent members. The Decision includes a list of EUR-15 Member States setting out the chronological of entitlement from 2005 to 2019. The ten new Member States, which joined the EU on 1 May 2004, were not included in this list. The Commission, therefore, submitted a proposal to amend Decision 1419/1999/CE to enable the new Member States to propose an ECOC from 2009. This proposal was adopted on 13 April 2005. As a result, from 2009 onwards, there will be two European Capitals of Culture each year (one from the EUR-15, one from the new Member States).

CONTENT : the ECOC action is generally viewed very positively by the general public. Nevertheless, the implementation of the designation process, as laid down in Decision 1419/1999, revealed a number of weaknesses. This proposal deals with making amendments on the following issues:

- the competition between cities: the Commission has opted for a system which encourages Member States to organise competition at national level between interested cities.

- the role of the selection panel: The Commission proposes establishing a "mixed" selection panel consisting of 7 experts designated by the European Institutions, of which one taking the Chair, and 6 experts designated by the Member State concerned, in agreement with the Commission. The 7 experts should be appointed in turn for 3 years by the Council, the European Parliament, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions in accordance with the criteria laid down by this proposal. The overall composition of the panel should ensure adequate balance between local and national interests and guarantee the "European" dimension ahead of the national selection decision.

The Member State concerned should launch a call for submission of applications 6 years before the event is due to begin, and organise an information day for potential candidates.

The selection panel should meet 5 years before the event to agree on a short-list of candidates. It should prepare a report on the candidates' programmes and make recommendations to the candidates short-listed. The panel should meet 9 months after the first selection meeting in order to prepare a report on the programmes of the short-listed candidates, and, on that basis, recommend a city for nomination as ECOC.

On the question of monitoring, the Commission proposes establishing a "European monitoring panel" (EMP) for the period after the designation of the ECOC until the start of the event. It would focus on the European dimension of the programme and contribute, wherever necessary, to ensuring the European added-value of the programme. This European monitoring panel will be composed of only the 7 members of the selection panel designated in turn by the European Institutions.

On the European dimension, the ECOC programme of activities should include events/actions which highlight the European dimension and offer European added value. The following aspects should be emphasised :

- a European dimension, which should foster multilateral cooperation between cultural operators at all levels, highlight the richness of cultural diversity and bring the common aspects of European cultures to the fore;

- a citizenship dimension, which should raise the interest of the citizens living in the city and from other countries and be an integral part of the long term cultural development of the city.

- the question of timing: The selection process should start six years before the event is due to begin (pre-selection / selection / nomination). The Council should be in a position to designate the ECOCs four years before the event;

- the participation of third countries: On the basis of the ECOC study, the Commission proposes a maximum of two ECOCs per year. This approach is in line with the March 2005 Decision which integrates the new Member States. More than two ECOCs per year would harm visibility of the event. Therefore, the reference to the nomination of an ECOC by third countries has been dropped.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS :

This proposal has no direct financial implications. The financial aspect in relation to the ECOCs is dealt with in the framework of the Culture 2000 and future Culture 2007 programmes. At this stage, the Commission's proposal for the Culture 2007 programme would allow up to a tripling of the Community contribution to each individual ECOC as compared to the current programme.

In accordance with the financial statement provided in the Culture 2007 programme proposal, Community interventions linked to the European Capital of Culture shall be financed under Strand 1 of the programme. This strand is divided into 3 sub-actions and the European Capital of Culture shall be financed under the last of these sub-actions entitled 'special actions' which shall have a financial reference amount of EUR 69,36 from 2007-2013 in commitment appropriations (technical and administrative assistance and human resources excluded). It should be noted that this sub-heading will also finance other actions (and not just the interventions for the European Capital of Culture).

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

Pending the opinion of the European Parliament, the Council agreed a general approach on a decision establishing the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007-2019.

The decision is aimed at replacing the previous decision, which established the event from 2005 to 2019. Experience has shown that in spite of the positive impact of the event in terms of media resonance, development of culture and tourism and recognition by inhabitants of the designated cities, there is room for improvement, particularly as regards:

- § competition between cities (Member States should organise competitions at national level between interested cities);
- § the composition of the selection panel: 6 experts will be designated by the Member State concerned;
- § the 7 members nominated by the European institutions will be appointed for 3 years;
- § guidance and monitoring, which is to be carried out by an advisory panel;
- § European added value (selection criteria: European and citizenship dimensions);
- § extension of the time allowed for planning;
- § the award of a monetary prize for quality of the project.

Cities designated for 2009 : in accordance with Decision 1419/1999/EC, the Council designated Linz (Austria) and Vilnius (Lithuania) as European Capitals of Culture for 2009.

Members of the 2010 selection panel : the Council appointed Mr Claude Frisoni (Luxembourg) and Sir Jeremy Isaacs (United Kingdom) as Council representatives for the European Capital of Culture 2010 selection panel. The two candidates were proposed by the Luxembourg and United Kingdom delegations at the last meeting of the Council on 23 May 2005. The decision will be entered in the minutes of the Council's meeting and, thereafter, the Presidency will inform the Commission about the Council's designation of the members for the selection panel. It is recalled that, under Decision 1419/1999/EC, each year the Commission forms a selection panel composed of seven leading independent figures who are experts on the cultural sector. The panel then issues a report on the designation of the cities as Capitals of Culture. Under Decision 2000/C9/013, each of the two Member States holding the Presidency during a given year nominates a leading figure with a view to their appointment by the Council as its representatives on the selection panel for the following year.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

The committee adopted the report by Christa PRETS (PES, AT) amending the proposal for a decision establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019. The amendments were the fruit of a compromise negotiated with the Commission and Council with a view to completing the procedure at first reading:

- it was specified that, during the proposed monitoring phase after the designation, care should be taken "to fulfil the criteria laid down for the cultural programme", and expert advice and assistance should be provided;
- arrangements should be made for future enlargement phases, so as to clarify the situation of countries currently negotiating their accession and ensure that they are treated equally. The relevant article should therefore specify that cities in Member States "and in countries acceding to the European Union after 31 December 2006" should be entitled to be designated as European Capitals of Culture. Provision should be made for including Romania and Bulgaria in the Annex establishing the list of countries entitled to nominate a European Capital of Culture;
- one amendment specified the composition of the selection panel, proposing that, of the 13 members, two should be from Parliament, two from the Council, two from the Commission and one from the Committee of the Regions, with the remaining six being nominated by the Member State concerned in consultation with the Commission;
- the role of the monitoring and advisory panel should also be clarified;
- the proposed prize which may be awarded to the designated cities by the Commission should be in honour of Melina Mercouri. It should be in the form of a financial allocation and be awarded in full at the latest three months before the start of the relevant year.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

Parliament adopted a legislative report by 584 votes in favour, 22 against and 19 abstentions on the system for choosing 'European Capitals of Culture' and monitoring their progress. The report drafted by Christa PRETS (PES, AT) makes a number of changes to the Commission's proposed reforms of the system. (Please refer to the summary dated 23/02/2006).

It should also be added that, as regards the selection panel, the seven members nominated by the European institutions shall be appointed for a period of three years.

Moreover, an amendment calls for the European Parliament to forward an opinion to the Commission not later than three months after receipt of the nominations of the Member States concerned as opposed to two months as proposed by the Commission.

On the issue of monitoring and advisory panel, this shall be established to monitor the implementation of the objectives and criteria of the action and provide capitals with support and guidance from the time of their designation to the start of the European Capital of Culture event.

The panel shall consist of the seven experts nominated by the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions. In addition, the relevant Member State may nominate an observer to this panel. The cities concerned shall issue progress reports to the Commission three months before the meetings of the panel.

The Commission shall convene the panel and the representatives of the city concerned. The panel shall be convened on two occasions to give advice on, and to take stock of, the preparations for the event with a view to helping cities to develop a high-quality programme with a strong European dimension. Its first meeting shall take place at least two years before the event; its second meeting shall take place at least eight months before the event. After each meeting the panel shall issue a report on the state of preparations for the event and any steps to be taken. The reports shall pay particular attention to the European added-value of the event and the recommendations laid down in the reports of the selection and the monitoring and advisory panels. The reports shall be forwarded to the Commission and to the cities and Member States concerned. They shall also be published on the Commission's website.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

PURPOSE: to establish a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Decision No 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019.

BACKGROUND: the European City of Culture was launched by the Council of Ministers on 13 June 1985. Until 2004, the European Cities of Culture had been selected on an intergovernmental basis whereby Member States unanimously selected cities worthy of hosting the event.

Decision 1419/1999/EC amended the procedure for selecting the cities from 2005 onwards, known as 'European Capitals of Culture' (ECOC). The ECOC is now decided by the Council on the basis of a Commission recommendation, which takes into account the view of a jury of seven independent members. This Decision includes a list of Member States setting out the chronological order of entitlement from 2005 to 2019 in accordance with Decision No 649/2005/EC (see [COD/2003/0274](#)).

With the arrival of 12 new Member States, a new system had to be put in place, made formal by the present Decision.

CONTENT: a study into the results achieved by the European City of Culture event until 2004 showed that it had a positive impact in terms of media resonance, the development of culture and tourism and the recognition by inhabitants of the importance of their city having been designated. However, the action still needs to be improved, particularly with regard to its long-term effect on the cultural development of the city and region concerned.

As a consequence, the European Parliament and the Council decided to set out a new designation process of the European Capitals of Culture in order to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual understanding between European citizens.

The new method of designation which includes all amendments suggested by the European Parliament at first reading, shall be based on the following principles:

Applications: cities in Member States and in countries acceding to the European Union after 31 December 2006 shall be entitled to be designated as European Capitals of Culture for one year, in the order set out in the Annex. The designation shall apply to one city in each of the Member States appearing in the list. The chronological order given in that list may be altered by mutual agreement between the Member States concerned. As a result, from 2009 onwards, there will be two European Capitals of Culture each year (one from the EUR-15, one from the new Member States). According to the indicative order of entitlement, Romania and Luxembourg are nominated for 2007.

Submission of applications: a call for submission of applications shall be published by each of the Member States concerned no later than 6 years before the event in question is due to begin.

Criteria for the cultural programme: the cultural programme shall fulfill the following criteria, subdivided into two categories, 'the European Dimension' and 'City and Citizens': as regards 'the European Dimension', the programme shall: a) foster cooperation between cultural operators, artists and cities from the relevant Member States and other Member States in any cultural sector; b) highlight the richness of cultural diversity in Europe; c) bring the common aspects of European cultures to the fore. As regards 'City and Citizens' the programme shall: a) foster the participation of the citizens living in the city and its surroundings and raise their interest as well as the interest of citizens from abroad; b) be sustainable and be an integral part of the long-term cultural and social development of the city.

Strengthening the competition element: Member States are called on to organise competition between interested cities at national level. Each of the Member States concerned shall nominate one city to be European Capital of Culture and shall notify the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions, no later than four years before the event is due to begin.

Improving the role of the selection panel: each selection panel shall consist of 13 members, seven of which shall be the persons nominated by

the European institutions. The remaining six members shall be nominated by the Member State concerned in consultation with the Commission. The Member State concerned shall then appoint the selection panel. The panel shall designate its chairman from among the persons nominated by the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions. The overall composition of the panel should ensure adequate balance between local and national interests and guarantee the "European" dimension ahead of the national selection decision.

Establishing a "monitoring panel" to evaluate, in particular, the European added value of the programme. This European monitoring panel will be composed of only the 7 members of the selection panel designated in turn by the European Institutions. In addition, the Member State concerned may nominate an observer to this panel.

Extending the planning time: the Member State concerned should launch a call for submission of applications 6 years before the event is due to begin, and organise an information day for potential candidates. The selection panel should meet 5 years before the event to agree on a short-list of candidates. The panel should meet 9 months after the first selection meeting in order to prepare a report on the programmes of the short-listed candidates, and, on that basis, recommend a city for nomination as ECOC.

Mercouri Prize: on the basis of a compromise obtained by the European Parliament, a pecuniary prize in honour of Melina Mercouri shall be awarded to the designated cities by the Commission provided that they meet certain criteria and have implemented the recommendations made by the selection and the monitoring and advisory panels. The prize shall be awarded in full no later than three months before the start of the relevant year.

Evaluation: 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. It 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.

Repeal and transitory measures: this Decision replaces and repeals Decision No 1419/1999/EC from 2007. That Decision shall however continue to apply in the case of cities which have been designated as European Capitals of Culture for 2007, 2008 and 2009 and a transition period has been provided in the case of ECOC for 2010, 2011 and 2012, unless the city in question decides to base its programme on the criteria set out in the new Decision.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 23/11/2006. This Decision shall apply from 1 January 2007, with the exception of the article relating to the submission of applications, which will apply from 23 November 2006.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

The Commission presents its report on the ex Post evaluation of the European Capital of Culture event 2007 (Luxembourg and Sibiu) and 2008 (Liverpool and Stavanger), in accordance with Decision n° 1622/2006/EC establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019. The evaluation exercise for 2007 and 2008 has been merged. The report puts forward the Commission's position on the main conclusions and recommendations of the external evaluation of 2007 and 2008 European Capital of Culture.

The external evaluation: with regard to the relevance of the action, the evaluator found that whilst all four ECOC were relevant to the objective of developing cultural activities, this was most apparent in Stavanger. In the other three ECOC, this was seen through the lens of other overall aims, i.e. building a cross-border region (Luxembourg GR), raising the international profile of the city (Sibiu), and urban regeneration and inclusion (Liverpool). All four ECOC were relevant to the objective of promoting the European dimension of and through culture, primarily through their objectives of fostering co-operation with cultural operators, artists and cities in other Member States. All four ECOC were also relevant to the objective of pursuing economic development through culture, primarily through using the ECOC to improve the image of the city (the GR in the case of Luxembourg) and to the objective of pursuing social development through culture through widening access to culture.

The evaluation noted that whilst all four were effective in achieving impacts related to economic, tourism and urban development objectives, it is not clear whether there is a limit to the extent that the ECOC concept can continually drive urban regeneration. In the future, it may therefore be that there are efforts to recover the purely cultural objectives of the early years of the ECOC, or that the concept needs to be revisited. On social inclusion, the report notes that the social dimension of the 2007 and 2008 ECOC has consisted primarily of widening access to culture, rather than of cultural inclusion or social inclusion per se.

The Commission agrees with the overall gist of the recommendations by the evaluator, the main points being as follows:

Efficiency of Governance: the Commission should recommend all ECOC to commission evaluations of the impact of their cultural programmes and associated activities.

Efficiency of ECOC mechanisms at EU-level: future evaluations should consider: the efficiency, effectiveness and impartiality of the selection and monitoring processes introduced by the 2006 Decision; and the continued value of the ECOC "brand", as viewed both by the title holders and by the wider world (media, cultural sector bodies and the general public). In the event that the value of the brand is perceived to be diminishing, the Commission should explore alternative approaches and compare their relative merits with those of the ECOC.

Effectiveness in achieving economic, urban development and tourism impacts and in supporting social development through culture: in forthcoming debates, the European Commission should explore the extent to which the ECOC concept (and culture more generally) can (continue to) and should be used to stimulate: (a) urban regeneration and economic development or whether to return to an approach that is more about culture as an end in itself; and (b) the genuine social renewal of cities and outreach to all citizens, as opposed to merely widening opportunities for culture to already existing audiences; (c) or whether to retain the flexibility for cities to strike their own balance

Conclusion: the Commission is aware that the strength of each ECOC is rooted in its diversity and cultural uniqueness and will ensure that cities have enough latitude to implement the objectives of the Action. It notes that most ECOC already have evaluation schemes covering all or parts of their cultural programme and will recommend overall evaluations at local level. In order to promote the circulation of good practices, the Commission has supported a policy grouping where the comprehensive evaluation model developed by Liverpool 2008 is being further adapted to the needs of future ECOC. The Commission will also have a closer look at the way structural funds are used and can be used by ECOC. It is pleased to note that new selection, monitoring and financing procedures set by Decision 2006 already go in the direction recommended by the evaluation findings. The Commission is well aware of the ECOC "brand": it provides guidance on its use through the ECOC guide to candidate cities and will continue to monitor its use and the value of the brand.

It will promote the exchange of good practices and highlight the experience of ECOC as a "laboratory" for urban development through culture. As for the inherent tension between the instrumental use of culture for social and economic purposes and the intrinsic value of culture for the European citizen, the Commission is persuaded that successful ECOC provide good examples of ways of reconciling artistic quality with socio-economic development.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

The Commission presents its ex Post evaluation of the 2009 European Capital of Culture event (Linz and Vilnius), 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 puts forward the Commission's position on the main conclusions and recommendations of the external evaluation of 2009 ECOC.

The report sets out the background to the ECOC and recalls that EU financial support is provided by the EU's Culture Programme. For 2007-13 the latter makes available a maximum of EUR 1.5 million each year per ECOC. For 2009, the financial support took the form of a co-financing grant for specific projects covering part of the ECOC cultural programmes. Austria and Lithuania were entitled to host the ECOC in 2009 and they proposed Linz and Vilnius respectively.

The external evaluation: the evaluator considered the following issues:

- the relevance of the Action to Article 167 of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU;
- 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;
- 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;
- efficiency of the selection, monitoring and financial processes operated by the Commission;
- the effectiveness of each ECOC in implementing its cultural programme and its impact on the long-term cultural development of the city;
- the effectiveness in promoting the European dimension of and through culture;
- the sustainability of the activities of the ECOC and their impact on the cultural governance and long-term development of their respective cities.

Main recommendation from the evaluation and Commission's comments: 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 ECOC evaluation.

Efficiency of Governance: the Commission will recommend that all ECOC commission evaluations of the impact of their cultural programmes and associated activities.

Efficiency of ECOC mechanisms at EU-level: the Commission agrees that future evaluations should consider:

- the efficiency, effectiveness and impartiality of the selection and monitoring processes introduced by the 2006 Decision as well as their impacts on the quality of the event;
- the continued value of the ECOC "brand", as viewed both by the title holders and by the wider world (media, cultural sector bodies and the general public). In the event that the value of the brand is perceived to be diminishing, the Commission should explore alternative approaches and compare their relative merits with those of the ECOC.

Effectiveness in achieving economic, urban development and tourism impacts and in supporting social development through culture: the Commission will explore the extent to which the ECOC concept (and culture more generally) can (continue to) and should be used to provide incentives to cities to stimulate, for their long term development :

- urban regeneration and economic development or whether to return to an approach that is more about culture as an end in itself;
- the genuine social renewal of cities and outreach to all citizens, as opposed to merely widening opportunities for culture to already existing audiences;
- or whether to retain the flexibility for cities to strike their own balance

Sustainability: the Commission will continue to find ways to promote the sustainability of the impact of ECOC, based on the experience to date.

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. It 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. The Commission's guide for candidate cities has also been updated to include a section on evaluation. Furthermore, to mark the 25 year anniversary of the ECOC, the Commission organised a conference in March 2010 which focused on legacy and evaluation of the event.

Concerning the recommendation that future evaluations should look at the efficiency of ECOC mechanisms set by Decision 2006 and the recommendation that future debates should explore the various roles of the title the Commission has launched an evaluation on the new arrangements, which is due to be completed towards the end of 2010. Furthermore, an on-line public consultation is being launched in autumn 2010. These will both feed into the preparation of a Commission proposal for the initiative beyond 2019, which will seek to ensure that the initiative remains as attractive, relevant and effective as possible. These issues were also discussed at the 25 year anniversary conference mentioned above.

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 and will continue to do so.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

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.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

This Ex post evaluation of the 2011 European Capitals of Culture (Tallinn and Turku) is presented in accordance with Article 12 of Decision No 1622/2006/EC which requires that, each year, the Commission shall ensure the external and independent evaluation of the results of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) event of the previous year.

The report puts forward the Commission's position on the main conclusions and recommendations of the [external evaluation of 2011 European Capitals of Culture](#).

The Commission agrees with the evaluators overall recommendations, based on the considerations of the 2011 ECOC but also relating to the implementation of the ECOC Action as a whole. These confirm 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 cost-effective and efficient initiative. The Commission shares the evaluators overall assessment and accepts its recommendations.

The recommendations are largely in line with the Commission's 2012 [proposal](#) establishing a Union action for the European Capitals of Cultural for the years 2020 to 2033 which also takes into account recommendations of the 2010 evaluation in introducing a potential opening of the Action to candidate and potential candidate countries, as well as the obligation for the bidding cities to have a strategy for the cultural development of the city in place at the time of the application.

Lastly, it should be noted that the Commission organised, on 15 October 2012, an exchange of good practices among past, present and future European Capitals of Culture targeted more particularly at future bidding cities, and will maintain its efforts to encourage such positive exchange in the future.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

The Commission presents a report setting out the external evaluation of the results of the European Capital of Culture event in 2012 and the Commission's position on the main conclusions and recommendations of the external evaluation.

To recall, the two 2012 European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) were Guimarães (PT) and Maribor (SI).

European Capitals of Culture 2012: these two cities were entitled to host the ECOC in 2012 on the basis of the 2006 Decision, which introduced in particular a new EU funding mechanism for the ECOC in the form of the "Melina Mercouri Prize", to be awarded to designated cities before the start of the year, on the basis of the reports delivered by the monitoring and advisory Panel. This Prize was awarded for the first time to the 2010 titles and again to the 2011 and the 2012 titles.

In accordance with the transitional provisions of Decision 1622/2006/EC, the Government of Portugal decided in 2007 to recommend Guimarães for hosting the ECOC title in 2012 without organising a national competition. The Government of Slovenia decided to run a national competition to select the host city based on an open call for applications held in 2006 in which 4 cities participated and on this basis recommended the city of Maribor together with five partner cities.

Main conclusions: in general, the experience of 2012 highlights the significant challenges posed by the governance and management of ECOC and the role of political influences, organisational uncertainty and staff turnover. 2012 also highlighted the importance of the city and other authorities providing consistent support and showing strong backing and commitment so that any difficulties can be quickly identified and addressed.

At European level, the ECOC action continues to be very cost-effective when compared to other EU policy instruments and mechanisms, given the very modest EU funding available from the Melina Mercouri Prize. Although the Prize represented a relatively modest proportion of the overall ECOC budgets for both cities, the financial challenges facing each meant that it was highly appreciated in each case. In addition, the Prize has a strong symbolic value and recognises the progress made by the cities during the development phase.

The evaluation considers that the 2012 ECOC both succeeded in implementing cultural programmes that were more extensive, innovative and international (e.g. in terms of themes, artists/performers and audiences) than the usual cultural offering in each city. They explored new themes, highlighted the richness and diversity of each city's cultural offering, used new or unusual venues and reached out to citizens.

The evaluation stresses the importance of fostering the participation of citizens in order to make the initiative a success.

Recommendations : building on the strengths of the current scheme which is overall working well, the report proposes a number of improvements that may be summarised as follows:

- the reinforcement of conditionality for the payment of the Melina Mercouri Prize, relating the Prize to the cities' progress in delivering the commitments made at application stage with clearer and stronger conditionality criteria making the grounds on which the Commission can refuse the payment and postponing the payment until into the title-year so that the Commission can make its decision on a more informed basis;
- the introduction of a more explicit and comprehensive set of selection criteria with the view to increasing the transparency and fairness of the procedure, related to the contribution of the ECOC to the long-term strategy of the city, and the need or broad political support, governance or the feasibility of the funding strategy;
- encouraging the two ECOC of the same year to seek to develop links and common projects as part as their cultural programmes this can sometimes be a challenge when the two cities are geographically distant or have only few cultural and historical links;
- encouraging ECOC to undertake own research and studies on the results and impacts of the title year, translated into an obligation for cities to carry out an evaluation to better measure the achievement of their objectives.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

The Commission presents an ex post evaluation of the 2013 European Capitals of Culture, which are Koïce (SK) and Marseille-Provence (FR).

The report is presented under article 12 of Decision No 1622/2006/EC, 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, are presented to the European Parliament, and the Council.

2013 European Capitals of Culture: the 2013 ECOC are the first ones to be subjected in full to the new selection arrangements introduced by the Decision. According to these arrangements, the competition is managed by the relevant authorities of the Member State concerned, usually the Ministry of Culture.

In Slovakia, nine bids were received, from which four were short-listed in December 2007. The panel then recommended Koïce as European Capital of Culture in September 2008. In France, eight applications were received and four cities were shortlisted in January 2008. The panel finally recommended that Marseille-Provence be awarded the title in September 2008.

In May 2009, the two cities were formally designated as European Capitals of Culture for 2013 by the Council of Ministers of the European Union. The Melina Mercouri Prize of EUR 1.5 million was awarded to the two cities.

Main conclusions of the external evaluation: the evaluation confirms that many of the findings from previous reports, especially those pertaining to the overall relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the ECOC action are still valid. These findings have been updated with new information gathered during the 2013 evaluation wherever possible. The evaluation shows that the selection process introduced by the Decision No 1622/2006/EC ensured that the applications of both eventual ECOC title-holders set out objectives and approaches that were coherent with the legal basis. The two ECOC implemented cultural projects and activities that were consistent with the essence of their applications and therefore in line with the strategic and operational objectives of the ECOC action.

The ECOC concept also continues to be of relevance to the objectives of local policymakers and stakeholders. The experience of 2013 shows that the ECOC action has made a positive contribution to developing the range and diversity of cities' cultural offerings, enhancing social development, promoting the cities' international profile, and supporting their economic development (in particular through support for tourism and the creative economy).

In terms of management, the evaluation indicates that the 2013 ECOC were the first ones formally subject to the selection process introduced by the Decision No 1622/2006/EC. Evidence suggests that the new process enabled two high quality applications and two interesting, innovative ECOC to be selected. For Marseille-Provence this related to the further development of the European dimension in the final programme, while Koïce took on board recommendations on legacy planning and the need to reach new audiences.

The European dimension of Marseille-Provence 2013 particularly highlighted the location of the city on the Mediterranean, as a place of meeting and dialogue between different European cultures and their Mediterranean neighbours. Koïce's final programme placed less emphasis on the European dimension.

In terms of impact on tourism, it is the evaluators view that both ECOC made a clear contribution to developing the creative economy and the tourism offer in their respective cities. Both had a positive effect on the cities' national and international profiles and attracted significant numbers of additional visitors. Hotel stays and international tourist visits increased respectively by 9 and 17 % on the previous year in Marseille while overnight stays increased by 10 % in Koïce, which was included in the Top 10 destinations for 2013 in a famous tourism guide.

In terms of sustainability, the evaluation notes the impact in terms of new refurbished cultural facilities, improved capacity and greater expertise within the cultural sector as well as better networking and co-operation within the sector and links with other sectors. Evidence of lasting improvements in the cultural vibrancy of cities is perhaps strongest in the case of Koïce, thanks to the numbers of continuing projects and the establishment of a new timetable of recurring events and festivals. Marseille-Provence 2013 did, however, have a positive impact on the level of (international) collaboration and networking amongst local cultural operators.

Measures taken by the Commission following the external evaluation: based on the strong points of the current programme, which works well on the whole, the report proposes certain improvements that may be summarised as follows:

- a revised Guide for cities intending to bid: the Commission published on its website a revised guide for cities preparing to bid, as well as a guide on how to strategically use the EU support programmes, including Structural Funds, to foster the potential of culture for local, regional and national development and the spill-over effects on the wider economy.
- guidelines for the cities' own evaluations: the Commission issued guidelines for the cities' own evaluations of their ECOC year, which are largely based on the expertise resulting from the external and independent evaluations of the ECOC produced since 2007 and provide cities with a set of common indicators as well as common guidelines in the form of a list of questions cities should ask themselves when deciding to bid or planning their evaluation procedures. The guidelines encourage cities to carry out longitudinal evaluations;
- dialogue: the Commission will continue its dialogue with Member States and stakeholders about the value of investing in the arts and culture as a way to encourage investment in the sector;
- 30th anniversary of the ECOC scheme: the Commission will use the opportunity of the anniversary in 2015 to further increase the visibility of this EU action, notably as part of its next European Culture Forum in the autumn 2015. This will help to highlight and to disseminate examples of good practice from ECOC, including in the use of the EU Structural Funds or private sector investment.

The Commission will also prepare an internal action plan addressing the recommendations in the evaluation report. A follow up of this action plan will be done in 2016.

Lastly, the Commission intends to develop the approach to the evaluation of ECOC in order to ensure more and better data and to better measure the efficiency and impact of this EU action

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019, the Commission presents an ex post evaluation of the 2014 European Capitals of Culture (Umeå and Riga).

To recall, Sweden and Latvia were designated to host the ECOC in 2014. The panel finally recommended that Umeå and Riga be awarded the ECOC title in September 2009. In May 2010, the two cities were formally designated as ECOC for 2014 by the Council of Ministers of the European Union.

The evaluation explores the implementation of the two 2014 ECOC throughout their lifecycle, from their early inception through to their sustainability and legacy, and considers the impact of hosting the title in the two cities. In particular, it assesses their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability, draws individual and general conclusions emerging from these two ECOC and considers implications for future ECOC title-holders.

Main conclusions: the Commission concludes that the programmes implemented by the two 2014 titleholders were innovative and consistent with the objectives of the ECOC action. They reflected its European dimension, involved many local residents and stakeholders, brought culture to new audiences (through specific tools and strategies), raised the interest of citizens from abroad (albeit to a lesser degree than expected in Riga) and are likely to lead to some legacy (even in the absence of formal sustainability plans).

The evaluator stressed the following points:

- the two host cities saw the ECOC more as a cultural event strengthening and internationalising their cultural offering as well as promoting the cultural diversity and common cultural features of Europe, rather than an economic or social programme. However, Umeå and Riga also used their ECOC status to tackle other aspects of their respective city's development strategy, such as urban and regional development, employment, enterprise, tourism as well as general social cohesion policies;
- the delivery mechanisms set up to implement the ECOC generally worked well in both cities, although the lack of progress that both 2014 host cities made in attracting private sector funding through either direct support, sponsorship or advertising was noted;
- both cities delivered an extremely high volume of cultural activities in 2014 (in total, just under 500 in Riga under the motto "Force Majeure" and just over 1,000 in Umeå under the slogan "Curiosity and Passion"). Both ECOC also managed to design a wide ranging cultural programme which included a strong mix of cultural genres delivered throughout the whole year;
- both programmes worked hard to provide cultural content that appealed to a wide variety of different audiences, putting on performances and activities that can be classed as being popular, alternative or innovative in nature. It appears that respectively 71% and 76% of residents in Umeå and Riga attended an ECOC event while overall 1.6 million people attended ECOC activities in the Latvian capital.

The Commission notes, however, that deeper assessments of the extent of the benefits produced against the costs incurred will be useful to confirm the impact of the programme. It is now the responsibility of both cities to invest in research so as to better understand how they have optimised cultural, social and economic benefits and be able to demonstrate the impact of the title-year for the development of the city, thereby justifying the value of public spending.

In order to better capture such impacts, it would be useful for the two cities to have longitudinal evaluations, notably to confirm the efficiency of the public spending in the ECOC from a cultural, social and an economic points of view, and using a broader range of evaluative data to support the conclusions.

Recommendations: the report highlights a number of recommendations that emerge out of the evaluators' considerations of the two 2014 ECOC. These recommendations are mainly useful for and therefore addressed to future ECOC, highlighting the need for:

- political support at both city and national levels to gain stability;
- building a stable and effective team at an early stage in the development period;
- going beyond culture and connect the ECOC action with other aspects of the city's strategy including enterprise, social inclusion and physical development;
- the title-holders to generate "impact" data such as attendance figures, spend of visitors, satisfaction levels as well as wider economic impacts;
- actively pursuing wider participation in culture through dedicated strategies as well as the need for developing longer term plans to sustain their cultural offer beyond the title-year itself.

Lastly, the report recommends that the Commission develop a compendium of all recommendations from current and future ECOC evaluations and make these available to candidate cities to help them learn from past lessons and good practice. The Commission recognises the relevance of all these recommendations and will follow the evaluators' suggestion to produce a compendium.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

This report presents the ex post evaluation of the 2015 European Capitals of Culture (Mons (BE) and Pilsen (CZ)).

It aims to communicate the findings of the external evaluation of the 2015 European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) and the actions that the Commission will put forward in follow up to them.

Characteristics of the cities selected: in accordance with the Decision No 1622/2006/EC, Belgium and the Czech Republic were entitled to host the ECoC in 2015.

The overall theme of Mons 2015 was "where technology meets culture" and the ambition was to put the city on the European map as a symbol of economic restructuring based on a successful alliance between culture, tourism and new technologies.

The motto of Pilsen 2015 was "Open up!" and expressed the city's ambition to use its ECoC year to open itself up towards Europe and other external influences.

Main conclusions:

1) Relevance of the ECoC action and the two 2015 ECoC: according to the findings of the evaluation, the two host cities saw the ECoC mainly as a cultural event strengthening and internationalising their cultural offering as well as promoting the cultural diversity and common cultural

features of Europe. The ECoC year included a cultural programme that was more extensive, more innovative and more European in nature compared to the usual cultural offer in the two cities. The evaluation highlights that Mons and Pilsen also used their ECoC status to tackle other aspects of their respective city's development strategy. As a consequence, many of the activities delivered in 2015 were highly relevant to the two cities' overall political agendas.

2) Efficiency: overall, the ECoC action was implemented efficiently at EU level. Both cities also benefited from the monitoring arrangements at EU level and from the informal support given by the monitoring panel and the European Commission. At the same time, the very modest funding directly provided by the EU (in the form of the Melina Mercouri prize) can be said to have had a considerable leverage effect by stimulating the two cities but also their respective regional and national authorities to invest considerable sums in their ECoC programmes (approximately around EUR 72.8 million in the case of Mons and EUR 18.2 million in the case of Pilsen) and in associated infrastructure developments (EUR 143.5 million for Mons and EUR 48.6 million for Pilsen).

3) Effectiveness: the ECoC action in 2015 has proved effective against the objectives set for it at EU level, as well as the objectives set by the cities holding the title. The action has achieved an impact that would not have arisen through the actions of Member States alone. Their designation as ECoC attracted additional resources, including from private sponsors (more than EUR 2 million in the case of Mons and EUR 1.175 million, i.e. 6,4% of the total budget in Pilsen). It also attracted greater media coverage. Furthermore, the ECoC title enhanced local pride in the city and an increase in national and international tourist visits: a five-fold increase in tourist visits registered in Mons tourist office during 2015 and a total of 1.4m visitors in Pilsen.

The ECoC title gave the two cities the opportunity to strengthen local cultural organisations, encouraged them to work with one another more than they did previously and helped capacity building. These benefits would have been unlikely to arise to the same extent in the absence of ECoC designation; in that sense, the ECoC action has generated clear European added value.

4) Sustainability: both 2015 ECoC genuinely thought and planned for sustainability and legacy. They were both keen to ensure that ECoC lasted more than one year in terms of its benefits and impact. In both cities, another long-term legacy has been around how the programmes have attracted a new type of audience to experience and enjoy culture.

Main recommendations: the Commission concludes that the programmes implemented by the two 2015 titleholders were innovative and consistent with the objectives of the ECoC action: they reflected its European dimension, involved many local residents and stakeholders, brought culture to new audiences through specific strategies (in particular in Mons, to a lesser extent in Pilsen) and have a planned legacy both physical (new cultural venues) and intangible (in the form of a biennale in Mons, and in the form of increased capacity and cultural offer in both cities).

The recommendations addressed to the cities include the need to ensure continuation of people and cultural structures, the need to think carefully about new cultural buildings, and the need to confirm and communicate key events as early possible. The evaluator also encourages small cities not to be deterred from bidding for the ECoC just because they have a relatively small budget.

The report recommends that the Commission continue with the action but that it revises the guidelines for evaluation for the cities, and the application form and progress report requirements, in order to ensure that cities provide baseline data on the situation prevailing at the time of application and during preparation.

The evaluator also recommended undertaking more extensive publicity related to the award of the Melina Mercouri prize, as well as research into the long-term impacts of the ECoC.

The Commission considers that these recommendations are feasible and will add value to the current implementation of the action.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

This Commission report constitutes the ex-post evaluation of the European Capitals of Culture 2016 (Donostia San Sebastian and Wroclaw).

According to Decision 1622/2006/EC, Spain and Poland were the two Member States designated to host an ECC in 2016:

Donostia San Sebastian's candidature was entitled 'Cultura para la convivencia' (Culture for coexistence) and had a strong local connotation: it was drawn up on the basis of the city's recent past, scarred for decades by terrorist activities. The focus was on promoting qualitatively different projects dealing with sensitive issues such as violence or terrorism in order to help citizens reconcile with their past.

Wroclaw's candidature was based on the overall concept of cultural metamorphoses which served as a metaphor both for the historical transformation of the city and for current processes of cultural and social change (including globalisation, immigration, EU enlargement and the growing role of digital communications). The slogan of the programme was Spaces for beauty because the intention was to create spaces within which to restore the presence of beauty in public life and daily habits.

Main conclusions: according to the Commission, the programmes implemented by the two winning cities for 2016:

- were innovative and consistent with the objectives of the ECOC Action as regards Union's contribution to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States. Hosting the ECOC also contributed to economic and social developments in the two cities, particularly within the urban context;
- reflected its European dimension (in particular Wroclaw, to a lesser extent Donostia San Sebastian as the ECOC in the latter was much more focused on local residents);
- involved local residents and stakeholders (in San Sebastian 60% of projects involved local people in some ways and there were 10 493 hours of volunteer time while Wroclaw designed activities aimed at specific groups), on the other hand, local cultural operators experienced a remarkable network expansion: almost 80% of the organisations involved in the year cooperated with other organisations;
- both used national and EU funds (e.g. European Regional Development Fund) to implement cultural programmes of high artistic quality and of considerably greater size than usual;
- brought culture to new audiences through specific strategies (such as "Waves of Energy in Donostia San Sebastian and MikroGRANTY in Wroclaw);
- may lead to legacies both physical (in the form of new or refurbished cultural and logistic infrastructures, as it happened in Wroclaw) or intangible (by creating a space and vehicle that helped communities talk about, understand and come to terms with past differences

and helping the city and its residents coexist with one another in the future, as it happened in Donostia San Sebastian) although a proper legacy planning is lacking in Donostia San Sebastian.

The ECOC Action is relevant and complementary to a variety of EU policies and programmes, impacting not just cultural stakeholders but also those related to employment, enterprise (as an instance, 14% of firms from the cultural and creatives sectors in Wroclaw were involved in the ECOC, i.e. about 450 out of +3 000 firms, while 52% of them felt that they had derived commercial benefits from the ECOC and 40.7% reported an increase in turnover during 2016) or tourism (an extra 50 000 international tourists stayed in Wroclaw's hotels in 2016 compared to 2015).

Recommendations and perspectives: on the basis of the report, the Commission concludes that ECOC Action remains relevant at EU level as well as greatly valuable for host cities, and generates extensive cultural programmes with positive outputs and impacts. This confirms that the winning cities are implementing cultural programmes that are broader and innovative than their usual annual cultural offer, with a strong European dimension and involving local citizens as well as international visitors.

Another issue arising from the external study partly in line with the findings of previous ECOC evaluations is the lack of baseline data. The co-legislators recognized this difficulty. In adopting [Decision No 445/2014/EU](#), which will apply to the ECOC titles 2020 to 2033, the European Parliament and the Council decided to displace the burden of the evaluation from the Commission to the title-holders as the latter are the main funders and beneficiaries of the ECOC Action, and are better placed to collect all the data necessary.

After eight similar annual evaluation exercises - each covering two different ECOC cities - the external study includes only a limited number of recommendations which complement the recommendations made in previous years and endorsed by the Commission, in particular the need to:

- establish institutional arrangements in good time,
- build a stable and effective delivery team benefitting from a strong political support,
- ensure national buy-in and involvement,
- ensure the right balance between control and artistic independence,
- keep the commitment of cultural stakeholders,
- embed European co-operation into the cultural programme while also actively pursuing widening participation in culture,
- plan legacy at an early stage.

The Commission agrees with the evaluator's overall recommendation that the ECOC Action should continue, and Decision No 445/2014/EU already foresees such a continuation until 2033. It will also explore how big data can be better addressed in its guidelines for evaluation as also recommended by the evaluator.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

The Commission presents its ex-post of the 2017 European Capitals of Culture (Pafos and Aarhus).

Its purpose is to assess the achievements of the two ECOC 2017 programmes in the relevant year, to establish a comprehensive understanding of the overall performance and to put forward conclusions, recommendations and lessons for future European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) title-holders, applicants and EU institutions.

Relevance and efficiency of the ECOC Action and the ECOC 2017

According to the findings of the evaluation, the two host cities have elaborated and implemented cultural programmes which were consistent with and relevant to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union as regards Union's contribution to the "flowering of the cultures of the Member States". Hosting the ECOC also contributed to economic and social developments in the two cities.

Pafos

Although Pafos's programme (Linking continents bridging cultures) was narrower in scope than most past ECOC programmes (largely due to the small size of the city), it succeeded in emphasising the cultural heritage of Pafos in a European context, the (need for) interconnections between people within the city and beyond, as well as the need for intercultural dialogue. It has also helped both local and foreign audiences to learn more about Cypriot culture and become more familiar with other cultures and traditions.

Aarhus

Aarhus articulated a programme (Lets Rethink) with sharp long-term objectives, highlighting the diversity of European cultures and coherently interacting with the wider city development strategy; it focused on further increasing awareness and visibility of the city, attracting domestic and international tourists, improving its cultural infrastructures, increasing audiences and proactive citizens' participation in cultural activities. The programme also had an important regional dimension in the context of the newly created Central Denmark Region.

Projects

442 core projects were implemented in Aarhus and 168 in Pafos, most of them going beyond the two cities usual yearly programming. Moreover, in Aarhus, 1200 international artists contributed to the programme and 79% of projects featured an international partner and/or a cultural exchange within Europe while in Pafos 29% of projects were international productions and a further 11% were collaborations between Cypriot and international artists. Both ECOC widened access to and participation in culture during 2017, although the evidence is stronger in Aarhus than in Pafos with a total audience of 3.3 million.

General conclusions

The Commission concludes from this report that the ECOC Action remains relevant at EU level as well as greatly valuable for host cities, and generates extensive cultural programmes with positive outputs and impacts which cannot, however, be fully assessed at the current evaluation stage as it is too early after the implementation of the ECOC year.

Overall, the available evidence suggests that ECOC remains an efficient EU Action providing good levels of returns at EU level for a relatively modest EU investment: the awarding of the title itself has a substantial leverage effect on the amount of funding that host cities dedicate to

designing and delivering the ECOC cultural programme, and it is a significant generator of interest and financing from a broad array of stakeholders, including regional and national authorities and private contributors.

The Commission also concludes that the programmes implemented by the two 2017 titleholders were consistent with the objectives of the ECOC Action. They also helped strengthen the cultural capacity of the local cultural and creative sectors and their links with other sectors. The ECOC raised the international profile of Aarhus through culture, whilst in both cities the ECOC helped make audiences for culture more international.

Financing

The absolute value of the Melina Mercouri Prize, which is the only direct monetary contribution that host cities receive from the European Union, is modest (EUR 1.5 million per ECOC) in comparison to the overall costs of an ECOC: the operating expenditure of the ECOC 2017 were of approximately EUR 66.7 million for Aarhus and EUR 8.5 million for Pafos. At city level, both Pafos and Aarhus established strong and successful delivery mechanisms and governance arrangements, and both used mainly national, regional and local but also to a smaller extent EU funds to implement cultural programmes of high artistic quality that add up to their yearly regular cultural activities.

Regarding monitoring arrangements, the Commission points out it has an ongoing discussion with the panel on how best to ensure that future ECOC honour commitments made in their applications, in particular their financial commitments.

Recommendations

A limited number of elements of improvement have emerged from the assessment, such as the need to:

- establish institutional arrangements in good time,
- build a stable and effective delivery team benefitting from a strong political support,
- ensure national buy-in and involvement, to ensure the right balance between control and artistic independence,
- keep the commitment of cultural stakeholders,
- embed European co-operation into the cultural programme while also actively pursuing widening participation in culture, and to plan legacy at an early stage.

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

This Commission staff working document sets out the findings and methodology of the ex post evaluation of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) Action for 2017.

Article 12 of Decision No 1622/2006/EC requires that the Commission ensures the external and independent evaluation of the results of the ECOC from the previous year. The purpose of the yearly evaluation, which the European Commission carries out since 2008, is to assess the achievements of the Action in the relevant year, to establish a comprehensive understanding of the overall performance and to put forward conclusions, recommendations and lessons for future ECOC title-holders, applicants and EU institutions.

This working document summarises the findings of the external evaluation of the implementation of the ECOC 2017, including the selection and monitoring procedures and the operational delivery by the two hosting cities, namely Pafos in Cyprus and Aarhus in Denmark.

The aim of the evaluation is not to lead to any change in the regulation governing the ECOC Action. Indeed those rules were changed in 2014 on the basis of an ad hoc interim evaluation of selection and monitoring procedures of European Capitals of Culture, but the new rules only apply for cities designated as ECOC for the years from 2020 to 2033. It is therefore impossible to use the outcomes of the evaluation of the two ECOC 2017 to draw conclusions on the new legal basis as this new Decision doesn't apply to these two ECOC title-holders.

Methodology

In order for results to be comparable with previous evaluations, the methodology for this evaluation closely followed the approach adopted in previous assessments of the Action, with focus being placed on research at city level and, in particular, on the gathering of data and stakeholders' views from both Pafos and Aarhus. The main evaluation sources included, inter alia: EU level literature; ECOC level literature from Pafos and Aarhus: original bids and applications, internal reports linked to the application, monitoring or evaluation processes; quantitative data: where available, evidence linked to each ECOC was collected in relation to budgets and expenditures, projects' numbers and types and an open public consultation.

Selection and monitoring

Cyprus and Denmark were entitled to host the ECOC in 2017. The selection is then in two phases: a pre-selection phase (candidate cities are reduced to a short-list) followed by a selection phase (one city is recommended for the title). A panel of thirteen members six of whom nominated by the Member State concerned and the other seven by European Union institutions and bodies (European Parliament, Council, Commission and Committee of the Regions) examined the bids from candidate cities.

In May 2013, the Council officially designated Pafos in Cyprus and Aarhus in Denmark on the basis of the panel's recommendation.

The monitoring process culminated with the panel making a positive recommendation to the Commission on awarding a EUR 1.5 million prize in honour of Melina Mercouri to both cities after the last monitoring meeting. The Melina Mercouri prize was therefore awarded and paid by the Commission (under the EU Creative Europe programme) to the two ECOC in the autumn 2016.

Main findings

Pafos

Although Pafos's programme (Linking continents bridging cultures) was narrower in scope than most past ECOC programmes (largely due to the small size of the city), it succeeded in emphasising the cultural heritage of Pafos in a European context, the (need for) interconnections between people within the city and beyond, as well as the need for intercultural dialogue. It has also helped both local and foreign audiences

to learn more about Cypriot culture and become more familiar with other cultures and traditions.

Aarhus

Aarhus articulated a programme (Lets Rethink) with sharp long-term objectives, highlighting the diversity of European cultures and coherently interacting with the wider city development strategy; it focused on further increasing awareness and visibility of the city, attracting domestic and international tourists, improving its cultural infrastructures, increasing audiences and proactive citizens' participation in cultural activities. The programme also had an important regional dimension in the context of the newly created Central Denmark Region.

Conclusions

The Commission concludes that the ECOC Action is highly valued by the hosting cities that can obtain positive impacts during the year, as well as during the preparation phase. The action also remains relevant at EU level. However, the long-term impacts of the two ECOC 2017 cannot be assessed at this stage, as it is too early after the implementation of the ECOC year.

The Commission also concludes that the programmes implemented by the two 2017 title-holders were consistent with the objectives of the ECOC Action.

However, the Commission considers that the scope and length of the yearly evaluation it carries out does not allow consideration of the long-term impact of ECOC. It is therefore willing to review such impact as part of the evaluation exercise foreseen in Article 16 of Decision No 2014/445/EU. This evaluation shall focus on placing all past European Capitals of Culture in a European context, allowing comparisons to be drawn and useful lessons to be learned for future European Capitals of Culture, as well as for all European cities.