



Selection of the European Capital of Culture in 2024 in Estonia

**The Expert Panel's report
Selection Stage**

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E-mail: eac-unite-D2@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

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Introduction

This is the report of the Expert panel (the “panel”) for the selection phase of the competition for the European Capital of Culture in 2024 in Estonia.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Estonia (the “ministry”) is the managing authority of the competition, which is governed by Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 (the “Decision”)¹ and by the “Rules of procedure – Competition for the European Capital of Culture 2024 in Estonia” – (the “Rules”) adopted by the ministry and published on its website².

A panel of 12 independent experts was established for the selection process in line with Article 2 of the Rules. Ten members were appointed by the European Union institutions and bodies (European Parliament, Council, Commission and Committee of Regions). Two members were appointed by the ministry.

Pre-selection round

The ministry issued a call for applications to all Estonian cities on 29 November 2017. There were three applications submitted by the deadline of 1 October 2018: Kuressaare, Narva and Tartu.

The panel met in Tallinn on 22-23 October 2018 for the pre-selection meeting. The panel recommended the ministry to invite two cities (Narva and Tartu) to progress to the final selection stage. The panel’s report is published on the website of the Commission³.

The Minister of Culture accepted the panel’s recommendation and invited the two cities to submit revised applications with a deadline of 1 August 2019.

Both cities submitted their revised applications (“bid-books”) by the deadline.

A delegation of the panel (Sylvia Aman, Anu Kivilo, Mikko Fritze and Jiri Suchanek) visited both cities on 26 and 27 August 2019, spending one day in each. They were accompanied by observers from the ministry and the European Commission. The delegation reported to the panel at the selection meeting.

¹ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG

² <https://www.kul.ee/en/european-capital-culture-2024-will-be-estonia-again>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/library/ecoc-2024-estonia-preselection_en.pdf

Panel Meeting

The panel met in Tallinn on 28 August 2019. Since pre-selection, the three members of the panel designated by the Council of the EU and the one member designated by the European Committee of the Regions have changed in accordance with Article 7, paragraph 3, of the Decision. The panel elected Beatriz Garcia as its chair and Anu Kivilo as vice-chair. Due to force majeure, one of the panel members - Dessislava Gavrilova - was unable to attend. Representatives of the ministry and the European Commission attended the meeting as observers. The observers took no part in the panel's deliberations or decision.

All panel members signed a declaration of no conflict of interest and confidentiality.

At the meeting each candidate, in alphabetical order, presented their case (in 30 minutes) and answered questions from the panel members (in 75 minutes). Delegations had up to ten members and they were both led by their Mayor.

The Chair of the panel announced the panel's recommendation at a press conference after the meeting on 28 August 2019 in the presence of Mr. Tõnis Lukas, the Estonian Minister of Culture.

National context

2024 will be the second time Estonia hosts an ECoC after Tallinn in 2011. The criteria for an ECoC have changed considerably since then. They now embrace a deeper and wider scope of the role of culture in the city and European development. A particular new requirement is for a city to have a formal cultural strategy including the ECoC project. This ensures that the ECoC is an element in the progress of a city and not a one-off event. It therefore enhances the importance of sustainable legacy. The selection of an ECoC is based on the programme specifically set out for the ECoC year in the bid-book and not the current cultural offer in a city or "business as usual".

The panel recognized two strong bids reflecting different situations in the respective areas and a considerable step-change between proposals at pre-selection stage and those at the final selection. The panel noted that both cities have further used the opportunity of the bidding process to reinforce their cultural strategies as well as the role of culture in their overall socio-economic development. This is already a significant potential legacy of the ECoC competition. The panel encourages both cities, to continue with the development and implementation of their strategies.

Assessments of the candidates

The panel assessed each candidate against the objectives of the ECoC programme (Article 2 of the Decision) and the six specific criteria in Article 5:

- Contribution to the long-term cultural strategy of the city,
- European dimension,
- Cultural and artistic content,
- Capacity to deliver,

- Outreach,
- Management.

The panel emphasizes that its assessments of the candidates were based on the proposed programme set out in the bid-book and presentation session. A city's history, its recent and current policies, and cultural offer may form a basis for a programme but play no part in the selection process.

Narva

Narva presented their bid under the banner of "Narva is next". The city has partnered with the entire region of Virumaa, signing cooperation agreements with 16 municipalities of two counties and a Memorandum of Understanding with Rakvere (ECoC 2011 candidate).

Contribution to the long-term cultural strategy of the city

The cultural strategy covering the period up to 2030 was unanimously approved in June 2019. The main challenges were identified and the role of the ECoC project in the city development is clearly visible in the document. However, the role and strategy for urban development as well as the support and development plans for the cultural and creative industries (CCI) were not sufficiently specified in the bid-book. In general, the panel thought that the document provided a good but only starting point for Narva's cultural development. The panel felt that the strategy was still too generic and universal, and that the document did not fully respond to Narva's complex personality and needs.

Nevertheless, the panel appreciated that the Narva City Strategy, updated in September 2018, positioned culture as one of the critical factors for creating a conducive living and working environment; and that the Ida-Virumaa Regional Strategy for 2019–2030 backed Narva's bid and emphasized six priority areas in the field of culture.

The plans to strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector, including developing long-term links between the cultural, economic and social spheres, are well drafted. The panel appreciated the gear towards current approaches in the cultural field, internationalization and innovation e.g. through the Accelerate Europe sub-programme and Mining the Future labs. However, it remains unclear how Narva would benefit of this high-level acceleration programme. The CCI in Narva are only at an emerging stage.

International experts are planned to be involved in the ECoC evaluation and expected success factors are accompanied with indicators for the monitoring process, which is a positive element. The Key Performance Indicators included in the bid-book are however not clear enough due to the lack of baseline data. While cultural impact success indicators are satisfactorily formulated, others, for example those connected to CCI and urban development, are not clearly defined.

European dimension

The bid-book highlights the main European theme to be addressed by the ECoC – Narva as a collaboration hub between East (Russia) and West (Europe). The ECoC plans to promote European values in an intercultural setting at the EU borders and to explore the

European–Russian dynamics through dialogue, co-creation and the embrace of cultural innovation.

The panel appreciated the ECoC ambition to champion conflict prevention through cultural diplomacy; however, the city's capacities in this regard were not clearly demonstrated. Although the intention to promote cultural diversity in Europe, as well as intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding within the EU is clearly mentioned in the bid-book, the panel felt that this dimension, which is an important objective of the ECoC action, was somehow predominated by the stronger accent put on the EU-Russia relationship.

The other (less prominent) aims mentioned in the bid-book, such as fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, achieving climate goals through greener and cleaner industries, enhancing gender equality and empowering women, as well as promoting inclusion of communities, are all important, in line with Narva's strategies and also common to other cities and regions across Europe.

The panel appreciated the professional approach regarding European topics and involvement of partners (mostly from Russia and the European Capitals of Culture's circle), which are relevant to Narva's themes.

Narva has a real competitive advantage - due to its geopolitical position - in terms of international communication to generate a broad interest as well as a valid communication approach to international artists and creatives. Furthermore, several project ideas have the potential to attract international audiences, especially from neighbouring regions (including St. Petersburg), while there are also plans to develop instruments to make this possible (such as partnerships and the Cultural Visa). However, the reason for a wider interest of the very rich cultural and artistic scene of Russia to engage in a smaller place like Narva became not fully clear.

Cultural and artistic content

According to the panel, the ECoC provided a clear strategy for the development of its cultural programme based on three strands: "The End of East and West", which explores the European–Russian relationship through cultural diplomacy; "Untold Stories", a pillar of identity empowerment; and "Manufacturing Futures", testing, exploring and actively making the future with relation to socially conscious enterprises working in craft, design, fashion and across the arts.

The variety and range of activities proposed are satisfactory. The programme is focused and presents an attractive story line. Promising ideas are presented in the bid-book, for example for the opening of the ECoC-year (DIVE in - opening with festival of sauna) and "Two castles one story" theatre series. Several interesting artistic topics and projects - such as: the disinformation/critical thinking project, Russian literature and exchanges between Russia and Estonia, "Women's Voices", "Living archive", "The Waterfront", land art, waste project - have a qualitative artistic touch and are also clear assets in the programme. The panel appreciated the idea to develop a "virtual old town", but thought Narva could have been more ambitious in what concerns the digital dimension of its overall ECoC project. While the projects are certainly of interest, the panel had however some doubts in terms of feasibility.

The ECoC encourages the sustainability in the sector by strengthening existing events and introducing new processes. However, the city has currently a limited cultural scene and the programme does not include enough local/regional cultural and artistic partners.

There are some NGOs and cultural institutions mentioned with which cooperation is envisaged, but it is not clear whether the cooperation includes the conception and implementation of the cultural programme or whether these are just general partners of the ECoC.

The capacity to combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions is less visible in the programme. There are some interesting plans e.g. Kreenholm Biennial, as an international platform for interdisciplinary innovation with art and culture at its centre, but the possibility to achieve some of the ambitious goals, e.g. the number of visitors expected for the new Biennial, is questionable. Moreover, the programme does not visibly include mixes of cultural forms of expression or the use of traditional art forms as it is more future-oriented. Finally, indicative programme budgets are too generic.

Capacity to deliver

The ECoC project has the support from Narva's current mayor and City administration, and the bid-book also indicates that it has the community and political support at regional and national levels. The regional authorities, and especially the strategic partner in Lääne-Virumaa, Rakvere, are committed to a common goal. However, the early 2019 administrative and political mistrust casts a shadow on the strength of this political support for the future so the panel considered that there was overall an element of fragility.

The panel was not totally reassured that Narva had or would have an adequate and viable infrastructure to hold such a large-scale event as an ECoC. There are still some question marks regarding existing and future cultural infrastructures even though the bid-book includes an ambitious plan for capital investments. Even if some weaknesses in this regard were addressed in an acceptable way, e.g. regarding the deficient accommodation capacities, the panel was in general concerned about Narva's capacity to deliver, including its accessibility.

Outreach

The panel has doubts about the involvement of the local population and civil society in the preparation of the application. On a positive note, the panel appreciates that the early 2019 candidacy crisis showed the commitment, ownership and involvement of some segments of civil society (especially the youth) during a complicated phase of the project. Moreover, the bid-book points out that a large number of public meetings (public outdoor events, town hall meetings, roundtables, debates and workshops), surveys and feedback forms on different subjects related to the candidacy. However, the corresponding involvement did not become visible in the bid-book, during the visit or during the hearing. Consequently, it was not clear for the panel which elements of the ECoC had been shaped by the population and the NGOs in Narva and the region.

Good ideas for the involvement of the local population in the implementation of the ECoC action were developed. Those include open calls (also organized during the preparation period), capacity building for future programmers (to reach out to different audiences), budget for micro-initiatives, Collaborative Art Space (CARS) for kids, ArtLIFT - leadership programme for local youth, and partnerships building with "gate keeper" institutions (social services, criminal rehabilitation officers, unemployment offices, health services and housing estates). Good examples were also provided addressing accessibility, programmes with vulnerable communities, interventions and residencies within the vulnerable communities to explore solutions and encourage their active citizenship. The

bid-book provides proof of a good understanding of the existing problems that vulnerable communities have to cope with and proposes concrete solutions to mitigate the risks. Moreover, Narva 2024 planned to build up a large network of volunteers, involving all age groups, which is also a positive element. The panel appreciates the plans to set up an Impact Accelerator for Sustainable Development involving the citizens.

The audience development strategy is built on a valid problem analysis and a good understanding of (simple but important) art participation challenges. This provides good directions for actions that underline the need to build understanding and aspirations as well as increase participation in co-creation. Art engagement in schools is in place already, however it is more curriculum driven, which is a limiting factor. The ECoC intended to start to explore the real benefits of "prescribed culture" in schools and its impact on the behaviour and cultural consumption later in life, which is still an understudied issue. The ECoC treats schools as an entry point for families and local communities. The Cultural Visa (though its feasibility is far from granted) and programmes in three languages will help to bring regional audiences. The strategy set on three main pillars (Programme development, Institutional strategy, Youth engagement) is thorough and convincing.

Management

The proposed budget is €20m, with €10m expected from the National Government, €7m from the City and €1m from other municipalities in the region while €1,2m would come from private sources. This, in general, seems feasible; however, it was not clear if for example the budgets were voted by local authorities. The bid includes good background for thinking about attracting funds however many elements are not fully coherent with the content and the panel could not fully assess the feasibility of such actions due to lack of precedence or secured financial involvement at the preparation stage. The strategy for attracting EU funds is coherent. The contingency planning is realistic, but taking into account the proposed shares of financial contributions (to match the maximum national contribution) there is a risk that the ECoC dimension can be reduced in case of fundraising difficulties from either public or private sources. The confirmed capital investment in Narva before ECoC is extensive reaching €73 809 997.

The ECoC 2024 managing foundation is to be co-created by Narva and Rakvere and all the important stakeholders are included in the decision or supervision of the project, which is positive. However, the state of administrative preparations to establish the foundation is unclear which is a considerable weakness having in mind the ambitious starting point (recruitment) and the principles of management of such structure (involvement and responsibilities' sharing of two cities are not clear). Moreover, interaction with the cultural department of the city and the share/split of content production with the cultural sector is not yet defined; therefore, the feasibility of the management plans is uncertain.

The procedures and the criteria for the appointment of the general and artistic directors and their fields of action are extensively - and convincingly - covered. However, the rush procedure for both appointments raises doubts of capacity to deliver.

The marketing strategy is very good and in line with the ECoC missions. It targets all possible types of audience (local, regional, national, European and international - mostly Russian) with specific aims and messages and communication channels for each of them. The Communications and Marketing team will include a separate International Communications Manager, a Russian Communications Manager and an Outreach Manager, who will be responsible for local communications.

The team preparing the bid embraces the ECoC vision, is fully committed and proved to be capable of such a task. Solid capacity building programme to raise capacities of different sectors and engaging international advisors incorporating previous ECoCs' know-how are a good delivery strategy.

Summary

The panel would like to stress that the overall idea of giving a voice and visibility to a city located at the border with Russia and on the outskirts of the EU is very interesting and that Narva could have been in many ways a thought-provoking ECoC. Overall, the panel felt that the bid had the makings of a sound cultural offer with an artistic vision able to make an impact at the European level. The geopolitical position of the city is Narva's biggest asset but also a challenge. The Narva 2024 team managed to transfer this opportunity into a well-built and convincing programme, as well as into good outreach and communication strategies.

Yet, the panel remained with the question of the ECoC ownership. The involvement and profile of the local/regional artistic and cultural institutions and NGOs in the preparation - and therefore future delivery - of the programme's concept was not clear enough. The strategies to overcome key weaknesses in the capacity to deliver an event of the scope and scale of an ECoC were not convincingly presented, especially having in mind the (limited) size and conditions for growth of the local cultural sector. Furthermore, the partnership with Rakvere and involvement of the whole local and regional stakeholders in Narva's preparation for the ECoC delivery did not emerge very convincingly from the bid-book, and still less in the presentation.

Tartu

Tartu 2024 presented its bid under the title "Arts of Survival". The city involves 19 municipalities of Southern Estonia (located close to the Russian and Latvian borders), which signed a Treaty of Support for Tartu 2024 on 29 April 2019.

Contribution to the long-term cultural strategy of the city

The KU30 cultural strategy of Tartu was passed unanimously by the City Council on 28 June 2018, so already during the pre-selection phase, which is a sign of good and timely planning. The strategy is very robust and based on a solid assessment of the current situation. It encompasses three major themes: Generations, Community and Environment. The ECoC programme lines reflect those themes, making therefore the connection with the strategy very obvious, which is a very positive element as both the ECoC project and the strategy will reinforce mutually.

The panel appreciated that the implementation of the strategy had started with some measures already in phase of implementation. For example, a new funding system for cultural projects was established offering more diverse opportunities for organizations to apply for grants: calls for smaller-scale projects being open several times a year and 1 to 3-year grants being available for larger projects. The new system also includes grants for mobility, as well as investment and development measures for cultural organizations. The intentions to bring together culture, education and environment and develop a focus on social and green entrepreneurship are very relevant, though not yet reflected onto a clear implementation plan involving collaboration of all stakeholders. The plan for capacity building (Kultuurikompass) includes a few important elements building on a solid

study and experience sharing. Although those plans are positive, the panel missed more innovative, forward-looking, collaborative and interdisciplinary approach in this regard.

The impact indicators are measurable and split in three categories (ecological/urban, social and cultural/economic) and link both to the cultural strategy and Tartu 2024 main lines, which is also a positive element. The panel felt, however, that Tartu is missing a real vision of what success means in terms of its urban transformation project. The artistic and outward looking European dimension are not reflected in the performance indicators.

The ECoC evaluation is well anchored in existing city monitoring as well as connected to the Smart City initiative, which is an advantage. The concrete means of gathering data are convincingly described. A special Social Studies and Outreach Manager will be responsible for implementing the monitoring and evaluation plan in close connection with different departments from the city government and the university.

European dimension

The programme is based on crucial European (and world) themes, such as spreading more eco-friendly lifestyles in European cities and tackling intergenerational dialogue and mental health issues. The overall ambition - which is to redefine the cultural identities of smaller cities and rural areas for a greater impact in Europe - has in its very essence a strong European dimension. The ECoC also plans to build bridges between East & West within the EU, which is a very much-needed approach and a laudable endeavour in the current context characterized by increasing tensions and the risk of a divide between the various parts of the Union.

The underlying idea of Tartu is to present Europe through interaction and co-creation with European individuals, which is an interesting approach featuring a strong intercultural dialogue. However, it is not clear how such a tactic will also highlight the diversity of European cultures (an important element of the European dimension criterion) and build a bridge linking individual artists working with local inhabitants with a more general European concept.

The bid-book highlights the Tartu's need and intention to break the city's "splendid isolation and smug insularity". To do that, Tartu 2024 will encourage and broker European partnerships featuring European artists, curators and public intellectuals in all three main lines of its programmes. Consequently, the programme includes an impressive number of partnerships, including - but not limited to - collaboration with Estonian neighbouring countries, i.e. Russia and the Baltic region.

The bid-book also includes a strategy on how - and in which fields - to develop mutually meaningful partnerships with other past, present and upcoming European Capitals of Culture. More particularly, the partnership with Turku (ECoC 2011 in Finland), Kaunas (ECoC 2022 in Lithuania) and Veszprém (ECoC 2023 in Hungary) for important ECoC issues connected with capacity building is a welcomed development.

Tartu's overall strategy to attract European and international audiences is based mostly on standard marketing tactics, which is a good but still insufficient starting point. The panel was not fully convinced that such an approach can make the ECoC in Tartu visible at the European scale, though it is very clear from the projects included in the bid-book (such as "Performa Borealis", "Sound our Souls", "Surrealism 100" or "Lake Peipus Arts Route") that the programme - addressing urgent and very topical issues that mobilize

more and more citizens across the Union - has the potential to attract people from all over Europe and beyond.

Cultural and artistic content

The Arts of Survival concept seeks to make “nature matters more in humanity, humanity matters more in arts, arts matter more in Europe and Europe matters more in the world for the sake of human survival on a surviving planet”. The final bid-book includes three programme strands that are more focused than at pre-selection stage: “Tartu with Earth” (tackling biodiversity and ecology through cultural means in urban planning), “Tartu with Humanity” (using arts and crafts to reinforce creative education and community action) and “Tartu with Europe” (rewriting city narratives in smaller European cities).

The themes are very much in line with the city’s cultural strategy and well connected with some of the most important challenges that humankind is facing today, such as unsustainable use of resources, climate change, war in our vicinity or the increase in mental health problems in a digitally connected world. The panel appreciated the idea that each programme line would feature one flagship project in the city and the other in the surrounding region. However, the panel felt that there was a risk that the educational and research elements of the programme overshadowed the artistic vision. Similarly, though the themes on environmental issues are fundamental, they are not always clearly supported by corresponding art works. Furthermore, the diversity of themes might negatively impact the clarity of the general vision and the overall coherence of the artistic programme.

The involvement of local artists and cultural organizations in the conception and implementation of the cultural programme is clearly visible and a strong asset of the bid. The programme is well rooted in the local heritage, both natural and cultural. Projects such as the “Lakes Peipus Arts Route” provide an opportunity to exploit the potential of local traditions, as well as its geography to establish creative hubs for new art. There are many projects on different themes with a direct implication of local (and Estonian) artists and organizations as well as related good practices with international reputation.

The number and the variety of activities and events included in the bid-book is good, as well as their split between the various thematic lines. The bid-book however tends to focus more on the problems to tackle than on the artistic way to tackle them. The idea of an extensive use of artistic residencies is of clear added value for content creation and international exchange but it might drive the ECoC too much into just community art direction, which was not identified as the driving (and the best) tactic to achieve Tartu 2024 goals. The transversal, transnational and transgenerational criteria identified to develop the cultural programme are quite relevant and potentially a good tool, but the way they will be translated into the artistic offer is not sufficiently visible for the time being.

The programme is well rooted in the local and regional heritage, while also including strong links with nature. Although, the panel appreciated projects such as for example the “Wild Bits” exhibition, the elements that combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions are less visible. There is an obvious desire to link tradition and creation, and present more provocative and experimental forms - that the panel welcomes, but the bid-book does not provide enough specific examples. Notably, the digital dimension lacks clear forward-thinking and provocative features having in mind the high potential existing

in the ICT field in Tartu and its potential to link with the sustainability goals. Finally, indicative programme budgets are too generic.

Capacity to deliver

The application benefits from a broad and strong political support and the unabated commitment from the local and regional authorities, which is a clear asset. It also has political support at a national level. On 27 June 2019, the cultural strategy was updated and voted on to reflect the funding for the period of 2020–2023 so the financial commitment for the preparation phase is confirmed. It is indicated that the strategy will be further updated and implemented together with the yearly adoption of the city's budget, which is very positive. The panel appreciates that local authorities of different levels were involved in developing the bid-book and the future legal framework for the Tartu 2024 implementation phase. The 19 Southern Estonian local municipalities that have joined Tartu's bid, signed the Treaty of Support for Tartu 2024, which enshrines further their collective cooperation with the ECoC project.

Tartu already has a very solid cultural infrastructure and the plans for capital investment, including improvements in the fields of culture and natural heritage, are quite convincing. It is not clear why the renovation of Tartu Elektriater Art House Cinema, which seems relevant for many ECoC events, is only foreseen for 2023-2024. The investment in infrastructure and the creation of the City Culture and Community Centre have the potential to provide a solid basis for the ECoC legacy.

Outreach

The bid-book convincingly describes how the local population and civil society were intensively involved in the process (more than 350 meetings at the time of pre-selection), with a stronger focus, during the selection phase, on the Southern Estonian region. Public brainstorming sessions with various segments of the local population and NGOs were organized to collect ideas and map the needs of the local/regional communities. There will be open calls and hackathons in the future to further develop the programme, which is a promising way to keep collective ownership of the ECoC project alive during the preparatory period. It is also planned that each programme line ends with an 'anchor' project, which is characterized by a high level of community engagement.

Partnerships with e.g. the Estonian Chamber of Disabled People and NGO Hoolekandeteenused (Social Services) are planned on how to involve people with disabilities as volunteers. Moreover, Tartu intends to involve schools, universities, cultural institutions and social care NGOs in order to create shared paths for arts, STEAM education and transgenerational interaction.

The focus of the Tartu 2024 audience development strategy is on a few relevant but quite general target groups: teenagers and students, elderly people, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. The idea to involve youth and elderly in developing ideas for projects for their peers is good but the main tactic of audience development seems to be the creation of educational opportunities and free entrance. This is positive but too basic an approach. Some other ideas - e.g. all projects providing events for both international and multilingual as well as local monolingual audiences - are interesting and promising, but at this stage, it is not very clear how such ambitious and well-intentioned aims will be supported and achieved. Schools will be involved through existing programmes e.g. 'hobby schools'. Regional audiences will be reached by targeted communication. There is, however, no clear connection between the aims and

programme lines of the ECoC and audience development ideas. The role or involvement of cultural institutions in audience development is not defined. The academic capacities of Tartu 2024 are a clear asset and a strong potential in terms of audience engagement, but they could be more connected to the ECoC project. The audience development strategy for international audiences is not yet developed.

Management

The proposed budget is €24,5m with €10m expected from the National Government, €10m from the City and €1,5m from other municipalities of the region while €1,5m come from private sources. The EU fundraising strategy and the existing expertise in crowdfunding are assets. The private financial engagement presents interesting models based on the experience of the ECoCs in Mons 2015 and Leeuwarden 2018. The confirmed capital investment in Tartu before ECoC reaches €32 957 555, which seems quite reasonable.

The ECoC will be governed by an independent Tartu 2024 foundation (Sihtasutus or SA in Estonian), which will be established by Tartu City Government in the autumn 2019. There are good and realistic plans in terms of regional governance, including a coordinator for Southern Estonia in the team and his/her collaboration with the umbrella institution - LAG Tartu Rural Development Association, which is also responsible for the Southern Estonian LEADER groups, is planned. The staffing plan is, in general, good. However, several positions are missing and division of areas of responsibilities are sometimes blurred. The establishment of three Forums (one for the mayors of regional municipalities, one for private sector business professionals and one for cultural experts) is per se appropriate approach, but their role and connection to, and level of influence at, Tartu 2024 is not clearly articulated. The Supervisory Council is balanced between the city, the universities and the national government but no representative from the cultural sector is planned in that body which is a weakness. The share/split of content production with the cultural sector is not yet defined.

The procedures and the criteria for the appointment of the general and artistic directors and their fields of action do not fully reflect the needs of the European Capital of Culture project. Early staffing is planned with the exception of the artistic director that will be hired in summer 2020. Therefore, it is not clear how programme preparations are going to be continued until this appointment. The artistic director is moreover not put on an equal footing with the general director, which can accentuate the imbalance between the general and artistic issues.

The section on marketing presents a good overview of structural actions but misses a clear narrative and information about communication content reflecting Tartu's mission and differentiating Tartu 2024 from other cultural events in Europe. The description, at this point, remains quite abstract with a few practical references provided, especially as far as international coverage is concerned. The budget allocated is sufficient.

Summary

The panel's opinion is that this is a solid bid. The Arts of Survival concept tackles important European, and global, challenges. The cultural programme has clear thematic lines that are translated into related preliminary outlines of flagships and exemplary projects. The panel appreciates the plan to run some projects before the ECoC year as they will create momentum and lead into a sustainable longer-term legacy in line with the cultural strategy. The programme is well rooted in the local heritage, both natural and cultural. It provides an opportunity to exploit the potential of local traditions, as well

as geography to establish creative hubs for new art. Yet, showcasing the diversity of European cultures and securing high artistic quality is less visible in the programme.

The programme clearly emerges from a shared vision from the city administration and the cultural sector. The panel appreciated that the implementation of the cultural strategy has already started. The candidate already possesses a very good infrastructure and the plans for some capital investment, including improvements in the fields of culture and natural heritage, are convincing. There are good and realistic plans in terms of regional collaboration and governance and the ECoC team has the capacity to overcome identified managerial structure weaknesses.

The Panel's Decision

The panel was presented with two different bids from two different cities facing their own challenges and each with its own interpretations of the ECoC criteria. The bids had many strong points as well as some weaknesses. The panel was looking, according to Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council, at the programme specifically designed for the ECoC year.

After the presentations, the panel debated the merits of each city against the six criteria and then in the final discussion the applications were weighed up against each other. Each panel member weighed their own interpretation of the criteria against the two bids with their bid-books, presentations, questions and answers, augmented by the feedback from the visits.

Both cities received votes, but the panel reached consent on a single candidate in the first round.

Accordingly, the panel recommends that the Ministry designate, as the 2024 European Capital of Culture in Estonia, the city of **Tartu**.

Designation

This report has been sent to the Ministry and the European Commission. Both will publish it on their websites. In accordance with Article 11 of the Decision, the Ministry will designate Tartu to hold the title of ECoC 2024 in Estonia based on this report. It will then inform the European Parliament, Council, Commission and Committee of the Regions. This formal designation enables Tartu to use the title "European Capital of Culture 2024".

Melina Mercouri Prize

The panel recommends that the European Commission award the Melina Mercouri Prize to the designated city based on this report. However, the payment of the €1,5m Prize is deferred until 2024, in line with Article 14 of the Decision. It is conditional. The ECoC Expert panel will make a further recommendation to the European Commission in late 2023 at the end of the monitoring process on whether to make the payment.

The conditions for the payment are as follows (Article 14):

- The ECoC honours its commitments made in the application;
- It complies with the criteria;
- It takes into account the recommendations contained in the selection and monitoring reports;

- There has been no substantial change to the programme and strategy set out in the bid-book;
- The budget has been maintained at a level capable of delivering a high-level programme and at a level consistent with the bid-book;
- The independence of the artistic team has been appropriately respected;
- The European Dimension has remained sufficiently strong in the final programme;
- The marketing and communications strategy and material clearly reflect it is a European Union action;
- Plans for monitoring and evaluation are in place.

Reputation of an ECoC

A city awarded the ECoC title receives considerable international attention from the selection recommendation and extending well beyond the ECoC year. It has a responsibility to uphold the reputation of the ECoC brand for the benefit of those previous titleholders and future ones. City administrations should be aware that decisions taken (and not just in the cultural sector) may attract formal media and social media attention far beyond they are used to handling. This adds a special and new aspect to decision taking in the city over wide full range of issues much beyond culture only.

The monitoring phase

Once an ECoC has been designated, it enters the “Monitoring Phase” (Article 13 of the Decision). Under the auspices of the European Commission, the panel will work with the ECoC to ensure the quality of the ECoC brand and to offer advice and experience.

The **bid-book** at final selection becomes the *de facto* contract between the designated city, on the one hand, and the Expert panel, the Ministry, the European Commission and its own citizens, on the other hand. It has an important role in the payment of the Melina Mercouri Prize. The panel will expect a close alignment with the bid-book during the preparation phase and during the ECoC year. Significant variations from the bid-book should be discussed with the panel, through the Commission, in advance of decisions being made.

There are three formal monitoring checkpoints (normally autumn 2020, mid 2022 and autumn 2023) when the ECoC will meet with the panel under the auspices of the Commission. Prior to each meeting the European Commission will invite the ECoC to provide progress reports. The Commission, after consultation with the panel, will indicate areas that specifically need to be addressed in the reports.

In addition, the panel may decide, with the agreement of the European Commission, to visit the city to observe progress.

The panel’s reports after all three meetings will be published on the Commission’s website. The ECoC may decide to publish its own progress reports in the interest of transparency.

The panel's recommendations

The designated ECoC now moves to a transition period from a set-up suited to a bid campaign to the more formal ECoC delivery structure that is independent of local city administration. The panel expects Tartu to develop cooperation with other bidding cities and the wider artistic and cultural community in Estonia. The ECoC in Estonia in 2024 provides a national opportunity, which will reflect internationally not only on Tartu but also on the country as a whole.

The panel will expect the first progress report in autumn 2020 to take into account the recommendations and comments in the assessment of the bid as well as the recommendations below.

The recommendations refer to the content of the proposed programme:

Cultural strategy

- The work continues on the implementation of the cultural strategy and further arrangements are made for integration between policy areas (culture / urban development / innovation and creative industries). All documents are published to ensure transparency.
- Stronger connections between the cultural sector and the city administrative staff are secured with involvement of both in the capacity building activities; long-term links between the cultural, economic and social sectors in the city are being developed.
- The ECoC 2024 impact assessment is detailed with monitoring tactics, the baseline figures are defined and first attempts to outline the specific targets are made. KPIs include European sources of information like Eurostat for example.

European dimension

- The scope and quality of activities promoting the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens as well as highlighting the common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history are secured, deepened and developed.
- The cooperation and communication with neighbouring Russia and Latvia and ECoC titleholders is strengthened and actions to generate an interest in other parts of Europe are promoted.

Cultural and artistic content

- The programme involving local and regional stakeholders is very demanding. An open communication towards dozens of programme partners needs to be done in a transparent and professional way in order to create one big ECoC team.
- Innovative, experimental and digital programme elements are strengthened to ensure the ECoC 2024 meets the needs of the XXI century.

- The artistic programme out of the existing cultural events needs to be further developed.
- The production capacity of the foundation in terms of programme implementation should be reviewed and addressed.

Capacity to deliver

- The urban development plans affecting the ECoC delivery are clarified. The Tartu 2024 team has clear information on the status of the implementation of these projects.
- The accommodation capacities, also those in the region, are revised and addressed to fully support participation (of diverse public) in all elements of the ECoC programme.

Outreach

- Work continues to ensure social innovation in line with ECoC mission and vision.
- ECoC audience development strategies and plans for local, regional and international audiences are developed. A special focus to be dedicated to reach out to European and international audience.
- Involvement of the young generation (beyond formal cooperation with universities and schools) is further developed to increase its scope.
- Audience development and community engagement are included in capacity building activities involving all relevant partners.

Management

- An earlier appointment of an artistic director, with his/her independent role, is needed and his/her high-level position needs to be secured.
- Information about the registration of the Tartu 2024 organization and its statutes are publicly available.
- Clarification of the ministry's financial involvement is necessary and the funding timeframe and conditions allowing smooth implementation of the ECoC need to be agreed with all stakeholders as soon as possible.
- The ownership of strategic areas spaces is clearly defined and clear information on what will be integrated and what will not be included in the programme is communicated.

- The strategies and copyright issues of the Arts of Survival concept including authorship rights of related merchandise and services are developed and publicly communicated.
- The communication message (including a European dimension) is clearly articulated for use by the ECoC team and other relevant stakeholders.
- Issues of security are addressed.
- Issues of data protection are addressed.

The bid-book sets out several actions to be taken in before 2024 – these timeframes should be met. Experience has shown that successful ECoCs use the first year after selection to establish all **the governance, management and administration structures and systems**. This essential role needs to run concurrently with the first stage of the project in 2020–2021. Recommendations in this section are based on the experience of previous ECoCs.

The panel would expect:

- The relationship between the Supervisory Council, Fora and the staff of the Tartu 2024 organization to be clearly delineated and made public.
- Members of the Supervisory Council to understand their role as strategic, not executive, facilitative, ambassadorial and financially accountable. The supervisory Council as presented in the bid-book, is too centered on political representatives. The expectation is that politicians and political appointees will be in the minority within the Supervisory Council and that representatives of civil society and art sector (perhaps also from abroad and/or with former ECoC experience) will be included. Members of the Supervisory Council have a special responsibility to focus on the legacy objectives.
- The senior staff is recruited through open competitions.
- The General Director issues, with the approval of the Supervisory Board, financial regulations for the Tartu 2024 organization:
 - An external organization is appointed to undertake annual audits and to approve the annual accounts of the organization.
 - Arrangements are made for the publication of the Annual Accounts and the Annual Report to ensure transparency.
- Internal management and administrative processes are in place. These will include human resources, legal aspects (e.g. project contract arrangements, data privacy,

and intellectual property rights), the criteria and systems for calls for projects, the marketing and branding strategy.

- An internal communications strategy is developed and implemented. This covers communications within the Tartu 2024 organization, between the organization and the city (and regional) administration, between the organization and the Ministry of Culture and between the organization and the European Commission.
- A detailed staffing plan up to 2025 including involvement of volunteers is created.
- The organization ensures that in all its (on and offline) marketing and communications there is recognition that the ECoC is a European Union action.

Thanks

The panel wishes to place on record its thanks to the Minister, the staff of the ministry, ably supported by DG EAC of the European Commission, for their efficient management of the competition.

Signed

Beatriz Garcia (Chair)
Anu Kivilo (Vice-Chair)
Sylvia Amann
Cristina Farinha
Paulina Florjanowicz
Mikko Fritze
Alin Nica
Pierre Sauvageot
Jiri Suchanek
Agnieszka Wlazel (Rapporteur)
Suzana Žilič Fišer

Tallinn

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