



**EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE**

Rijeka

European Capital of Culture 2020

First Monitoring Meeting

Report by the panel of independent experts

Brussels

March 2017

Introduction

This report follows the meeting in Brussels on 8 March 2017 between the panel and Rijeka, one of the two European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) in 2020¹. Rijeka was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2020 in Croatia in August 2016²; its bid-book is available on the Rijeka 2020 website³. The report is addressed to the Rijeka 2020 organisation (2020 LLC) and will be published on the European Commission's website⁴.

Attendance

The panel members:

Sylvia Amann, Cristina Farinha (Chair) and Agnieszka Wlazel, appointed by the European Parliament 2015-17

Ulrich Fuchs, Aiva Rozenberga and Pauli Sivonen, appointed by the Council of the EU 2016-18

Beatriz Garcia, Jiří Suchánek and Dr Suzana Žilič Fišer (absent), appointed by the European Commission 2017-2019

Alain Hutchinson, nominated by the Committee of the Regions 2016-2018

Ivana Katuric, nominated by the Croatian Ministry of Culture

For Rijeka 2020:

Irena Kregar Šegota Development and Strategic Partnerships Director

Emina Višnić CEO

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (DG EAC) and from the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

¹ The European Capitals of Culture action is governed by Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council for the titles 2020 to 2033, which provides for three formal monitoring meetings between designated cities and the panel. See: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG

² See selection report at https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2020-croatia-report_en.pdf

³ <http://www.rijeka2020.eu/rijekas-bid-book-for-the-title-of-european-capital-of-culture-2020/>

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/capitals-culture_en.html#engl_ba

Report from Rijeka 2020

The Organisation submitted a detailed and comprehensive written report in advance of the meeting. The report outlined the activities of the Organisation since June 2016, date of the official nomination by the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

At the meeting Rijeka 2020 made a presentation which included the following points:

- Irena Kregar Šegota introduced the new CEO, Emina Višnić, who took office in January 2017. They said that the progress report gave Rijeka 2020 the opportunity to make a self-reflection about the project's current situation and challenges ahead.
- Rijeka 2020 benefits from an unabated, strong and wide political support, which will not be questioned by the outcomes of the local and regional elections in May 2017. The City and the County support is also clearly present in financing activities and providing other types of practical support. At national level there are no indicators that would show the lack of political support though the Government is new and modes of concrete material and other practical support are still to be defined
- Work has fully started since January 2017. The bidding team is now part of the delivery team – with some members in new positions, and the level of commitment is still very high. The team will be enriched up to 30 staff members before the end of the year. In this context, the call for Culture Director is currently open while the General Affairs Director position will be open towards the end of the year. Middle management will also be reinforced.
- On a less positive note, progress has been slower on the programming side. According to the Organisation, there hasn't been enough time so far to communicate properly with all relevant stakeholders and to exchange views with a wider audience. Nevertheless, pilot programme actions are ongoing, and a draft programme action plan is planned for summer 2017. Also, sponsorship demands more time investment than foreseen. Finally, the brand management and visual strategies need to be refined.
- On the other hand, there is a very good interest from local and national media, with which partnerships are starting to develop. Big companies have also expressed an interest in the project, though talks about sponsoring will still take some more time.
- Rijeka 2020 is also considered as a good opportunity to positively influence the idea of the city as a touristic destination, while the growth in Rijeka's university population is seen as an opportunity for audience development, voluntary work and fulfilling staff positions.
- The governance was explained, including the current partnerships being built with the University of Rijeka, as well as with other municipalities and local organisations. In

particular, two councils will be created: the Council of Citizens and the Programme Council, which will both have an advisory role.

- The Rijeka 2020 organisation will be overseen by a Supervisory Committee and a General Assembly. In addition to the formal bodies of Rijeka 2020, a Strategic Council, which is necessary for all capital investments and the legacy of the project, should be developed at a strategic level.
- With regards to the organisation's senior management, it will comprise a CEO, an Artistic Director, and four Directors (General Affairs, Culture, Communications and Marketing, Development and Strategic Partnerships).
- On the European Dimension, there is already a strong cooperation with Galway 2020 regarding programme partnerships and exchanges, as well as the preparation of several projects to be submitted for EU funding. Projects are also being developed with other ECoCs, in particular with regards to capacity building schemes (Lab for European Project Making in collaboration with the ECoCs 2019 and 2021). Rijeka has also joined the ECoC network's application submitted under the network strand of Creative Europe. Links are also developed with several European networks as mentioned in the bid-book, notably NEMO, ENCC, EUNIC or Intercultural Cities. As an example, ENCC has included a member of the ECoC staff in their exchange programme for 2017.
- About legacy, Rijeka 2020 explained that all activities proposed looked for a legacy dimension. In this respect, the excellent cooperation with the city and the county administration, in particular with the departments contributing to the ECoC, is fundamental. A strong CCI sector is also sought for and funds for a CCI incubator in the city have been planned within Rijeka Agglomeration, as part of ITI mechanism. As a post ECoC strategy for culture, the city has joined the Pilot Cities programme.
- The objectives for legacy also include infrastructure projects, which are under the responsibility of the city administration. The team presented the status of the infrastructure projects currently being developed linked to the ECoC project.
- The milestones for the first semester 2017 include a plenary meeting with the local cultural scene, the securing of funding for 2017, the opening of the Tourism and Cultural Centre in Opatija, the open call for monitoring and evaluation, the work-plans and strategic documents drafting. In the second part of the year, milestones include the opening of the first part of the Museum of Contemporary Arts and the opening of RiHuB (creative incubator). The results of the applications for EU Structural Funds and the ITI mechanism will also be known in 2017.

Discussion

During the subsequent discussion the panel sought clarification on a number of issues and offered experience and advice. Topics discussed included the following:

- The panel commented on the difficulties of combining the philosophy of the project and the reality checks about implementation. It asked Rijeka 2020 about the balance between weaknesses and strengths as well as the resources currently at their disposal, including in terms of documentation gathering for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Rijeka 2020 stressed the importance of continuity of staff from the bidding phase for ensuring that the commitments were fulfilled. Regarding monitoring and evaluation, the plans are ambitious. It will include not only figures but also qualitative criteria and contribute to the overall debate on the value of culture. There is a need for a multidisciplinary team. The collaboration with the University will be crucial in this respect, and a call will be published in May to select the agency that will carry out the exercise.
 - **Recommendation 1:** The panel recommends that Rijeka 2020 should develop ways and indicators (qualitative and quantitative) to capture the value and narrative of their ECoC project.
- The panel asked about the budget for 2017 and the projections up to the ECoC year. In this regard, it drew the attention of Rijeka to the fact that 2020 should be a special year and that sufficient budget should be devoted to the programme in 2020. The Organisation explained that around 65% of the budget for 2017 was already secured, but that the financing of the national Government was still pending, though the team was confident on a fruitful collaboration with the Government. On the overall budget, meetings with various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Culture, took place, and the Organisation was rather confident. However, the budget for the next years cannot be confirmed yet and is 90% pending. Also applications for European funding have been made with some positive results, though approval for infrastructure projects are still pending. Finally, Rijeka 2020 explained that in the ramp-up years they would be implementing smaller scale projects with high impacts.
 - **Recommendation 2:** The panel emphasised the importance to secure as much funding as possible, in particular ahead of upcoming elections. In addition, European funding relates to a competitive selection process and requires sound alternative financial plans in case of not being successful.
- Still on funding, the panel inquired whether staff members specifically worked on securing funding. Rijeka explained that there were two people in house as well as an external consultancy for fundraising. A mapping exercise of available funds is being carried out for available funding and projects are being developed to be submitted to different funding sources.

- **Recommendation 3:** The panel recommends paying sufficient attention to sponsorship issues, developing an appropriate strategy and engaging a specialist in private fundraising.
- The panel asked about the staff recruitment foreseen for this year. In particular, the panel wanted to know whether an audience development manager would be recruited this year as several capacity-building projects in the field of audience development were foreseen. Rijeka 2020 explained that the Manager for capacity building would be in place very soon for the capacity building projects and added that projects in audience development could happen only once programme development (the main priority for 2017 alongside fundraising) was stabilised.
- The panel asked about the infrastructure projects. In particular, it inquired about the 30 % of the funds that should come from the City, and whether these projects could be jeopardized by the upcoming elections. Rijeka answered that the decision to bid was unanimously approved, and so was the budget allocated to the ECoC. Regarding the infrastructure projects, they have passed all the necessary checks and are pending upon the Ministry of Regional Development's approval, with no particular reasons for them not being approved. The panel found that the information provided for the infrastructure projects was not very clear and it was difficult to relate to the information already contained in the bidbook. Equally, the information about the applications for EU funds was not clear enough. The panel was also concerned about the planned schedule
 - **Recommendation 4:** The development of infrastructure projects should not be further postponed, as this would mean delays in the delivery of the buildings with a potential negative impact on the implementation of the ECoC. As long as all necessary checks have been passed, the works can already start as associated costs are eligible retroactively. Concerning infrastructure it is necessary to present the clear and realistic scenario, especially taking in the consideration the ITI mechanism and the fact that all other cities have their deadline in 2022 and Rijeka infrastructure should be finished by 2020.
 - **Recommendation 5:** The responsibility and tasks of Rijeka 2020 should be clearly defined in this respect. The infrastructure projects should be the responsibility of the City Council or the relevant public authority. They should not be under the responsibility of Rijeka 2020, whose task is to define and implement the ECoC programme. Rijeka 2020 should have clear information on the status of the implementation of these projects as far as they concern the implementation of the ECoC project. In the same line, Rijeka 2020 should not substitute the tourism board functions, though sound communication channels should be established between the City and Rijeka 2020 regarding infrastructure and tourism.

- **Recommendation 6:** The attendance to future monitoring meetings of relevant representatives of the city of Rijeka should be considered.
- The panel inquired about the 27 Neighbourhoods flagship and the “blocked memory” projects (under the Seasons of Power flagship) – which is a difficult issue to tackle and should be connected with outreach activities. Rijeka 2020 explained that they were working with specific institutions for co-production to reach difficult groups. Work to sensitize and to engage citizens was already done during the preparation of the bid-book and will be continued. However, a clearer strategy is still to be developed. This applies also to programming, for example, where a general strategy exists but specific actions plans still need being developed.
- The panel reiterated its concerns (already expressed at selection phase) on the capacity of the projects in the bid-book to attract wider European audiences and asked whether measures had been taken to remedy this shortfall. For the moment Rijeka 2020 is exploring options and gave as an example of a project with a strong potential, their Klimt project, which was trying to develop new and creative approaches.
- The panel asked about the plans for marketing and communication, the collaboration with the tourism board and the promotion in tourism fairs and international fora. The panel expressed its surprise about Rijeka 2020 not being visibly present in the Rijeka's municipality or tourism board websites
 - **Recommendation 7:** The panel recommends developing a specific strategy for international communication with all relevant stakeholders at local and national level as a matter of priority and, where necessary, engaging a person with the adequate skills. Digital communication should also be enhanced. For local, national and international communication and marketing Rijeka 2020 should rely on the City and its tourism board while focusing on programme development for the ECoC year. The websites of the City and the City's tourism board should include information on the ECoC project and have links to the Rijeka 2020 website.
- The panel wanted to know more about the cooperation between Rijeka and other Croatian candidate cities. Rijeka explained that this collaboration was one of the strategic goals of the project but that it proved difficult, as most of the teams were not in place anymore. Collaboration has to be made with the different City Councils and this is also pending on the upcoming elections. Some contacts have been made with Pula, and this item is a priority on Rijeka 2020's agenda.
 - **Recommendation 8:** The panel recommends enhancing the efforts to collaborate with the other Croatian candidate cities, city councils and their cultural sector with a project-based approach.

- The panel inquired about the relationship and the coordination with the different City Council departments. Rijeka 2020 confirmed that regular meetings were held with all the departments related to the delivery of the ECoC and that the Organisation had well-developed contacts. Rijeka 2020 mentioned, however, that more needed to be done to engage the lower level of the administration with the project, most probably through more informal contacts. They also confirmed that the person in charge of culture within the City Council was fully engaged in the project.
 - **Recommendation 9:** The panel recommends enhancing the links with the city departments and ensuring that the ECoC becomes a high priority in the agenda of the City. The acceleration of the implementation of the RIHUB could generate additional positive effects to this regard.
- The panel asked about the involvement of university students in the ECoC. Rijeka 2020 explained that communication activities about the ECoC were being carried out at the University and vice-versa, the organisation was kept updated on the activities of the University. The project "27 Neighbourhoods" includes also the university campus. Placements for cultural studies within Rijeka 2020 or other cultural organisations in the city are being organised.
- The panel inquired about the role of the Council of Citizens and the Programme Council in the organisation chart. Rijeka 2020 acknowledged that the roles were still to be clearly defined. In particular regarding the Programme Council, its role should be further defined by the Programme Director once the position is filled. The idea is that this Council could help filling in the gaps in the programme. In any case, both Councils will be advisory bodies.
 - **Recommendation 10:** The panel recommends using a participatory approach to the definition of these bodies, and not only for the appointment of their members.

Next Steps

The panel acknowledges the great work carried out by Rijeka 2020 since its nomination and appreciates the strong awareness of the team about the work to be done. The panel is confident that the delays will be resolved in the short term. Though delays are present, these stem from the late nomination of the city. The panel puts itself at the disposal of Rijeka 2020 for any questions, through the Commission services.

The Commission will call for a second monitoring meeting in mid-2018.

The panel would like to thank Rijeka 2020 for a very informative and interesting meeting and looks forward to the next developments of the European Capital of Culture project.