



EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

Novi Sad

European Capital of Culture 2021

First Monitoring Meeting

Report by the panel of independent experts

Brussels

October 2017

Introduction

This report follows the meeting in Brussels on 10 October 2017 between the panel and Novi Sad, one of the three European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) in 2021¹. Novi Sad was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2021 in January 2017 on the basis of the panel Selection Report²; its bid-book is available on the Novi Sad website³. This monitoring report is addressed to the Novi Sad 2021 Foundation and will be published on the European Commission's website⁴.

Attendance

The panel members:

Sylvia Amann (Rapporteur), Cristina Farinha 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 (Chair) and Dr Suzana Žilič Fišer, appointed by the European Commission 2017-19

Alain Hutchinson, nominated by the Committee of the Regions 2016-18

For Novi Sad:

Dalibor Rožić, Novi Sad City Council Member in charge of culture

Nemanja Milenković, CEO

Tamara Zelenović Vasiljević, Deputy CEO

Jovan Trkulja, Artistic Director

Dušan Kaličanin, Programme Director

Dušan Vuković, Head of Marketing and Communication Sector

Darko Polić, President of Working Group in charge for Infrastructure and Novi Sad 2021 Board member

Lazar Jovanov, Head of Participation and Education sector

Milica Rašković, Participation and Education Sector team member

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-2021-final-selection-report_en.pdf

³ <http://novisad2021.rs/en/bidbook/>

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

Vuk Radulović, Head of International Relations

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture), from the European Union External Action and from the Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union.

Report from Novi Sad 2021

The Organisation submitted a detailed and comprehensive written report and annexes in advance of the meeting. The report outlined the activities of the Foundation since October 2016, when Novi Sad was recommended as the European Capital of Culture 2021 in a candidate country.

At the meeting Novi Sad 2021 made a presentation which included the following points:

- Mr. Nemanija Milenkovic (CEO) highlighted that Novi Sad already benefitted from increasing investments and tourism flows since its designation as ECoC. There is also an increased awareness about culture among economic stakeholders. State, province and city provide stronger support so culture became one of the priority topics. The ECoC was declared a project of national significance. The CEO also referred to the new culture of dialogue and participation that the ECoC process has brought to the city. Considerable investments were already made to build up the Novi Sad 2021 Foundation and related staffing.
- The City Minister of Culture, Mr. Dalibor Rozic, added that the implementation of the cultural strategy was being started and that the related action plan was a real turning point for the cultural development of Novi Sad. There is a dedicated focus on the independent cultural scene, notably new specific calls to finance some NGOs' infra-structural expenses. A Culture Forum gathering public authorities and representatives from the cultural sector, including NGOs, was also created, fostering dialogue.
- The selection of the legal status of a foundation is beneficial. The staffing process is based on open calls while a balance between local and international staff is being carefully sought for.
- One of the main challenges of the cultural operators and institutions in the city is the evident lack of international cooperation. Artists in residence programme and intensified cooperation with other ECoC cities have been so far ways to further mobility, but will be complemented by other methods such as mobility calls or a capacity building platform through international cooperation.
- Capacity building is crucial for the cultural development of Novi Sad. The joint training initiative initiated with other ECoCs (Rijeka 2020 and Timisoara 2021)⁵ – the Lab for European Project Making – involving 10 local cultural managers is a starting point to enhance project management capacities and international

⁵ And also joined by Matera 2019, Plovdiv 2019 and Elefsina 2021 as associate partners.

connections in Novi Sad. There is also a project to improve the local contemporary circus scene.

- The delegation highlighted further the cooperation between Novi Sad and Osijek (unsuccessful candidate ECoC city for 2020 in Croatia). Three projects in the area of culture as a catalyst for peace are under preparation, including a Peace and Reconciliation Centre.
- The Head of the participation and education department stressed that the participation and involvement of locals was crucial for the Novi Sad 2021 ECoC. Central elements are the Culture Stations. More than 2.000 citizens were already involved and a wide range of proposals for cultural and public space development have been made.
- Divan (a platform for citizens' discussion and participation) and the volunteer service are other formats for involvement. A platform for volunteering should be established already with OPENS – Novi Sad 2019 European Youth Capital as a testing project for the ECoC 2021. The implementation of the "New Places" project is also being based on questionnaires and debate with local population.
- The hospitality programme development is another important focus of the Novi Sad 2021 Foundation. The related international exchange includes the intention to have a Faro Convention Network meeting to take place in coming years.
- The infrastructural programme includes a wide range of transformations and renovations. Mr. Darko Polic, leading the established Working Group for Infrastructure and seating in the Foundation's Board, is in charge of ensuring a smooth process between the city investments plan and the related requirements of the ECoC.
- The communication strategy will include a whole set of external communication as well as audience development tools. In 2018, local television will produce documentaries on heritage in Novi Sad – a contribution to the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018.
- The recently appointed artistic director and programme director are in charge of analysing and implementing the bidbook and its flagship projects. The approach presented will include an analysis of topics not yet sufficiently covered with potential follow-up calls for projects. The business with festivals was mentioned as an example of a potential field of intervention.
- It is planned that 20% of the selected projects will start in 2018. There is an ongoing reflection to see whether the flagship projects may be clusters of 4 to 5 single projects selected from existing project proposals.
- The evaluation of the ECoC will be carried out by the Evaluation Manager and his team consisting of researchers and professors, mainly from the University of

Novi Sad and other European Universities. The revision of the indicators is currently under way. The complete set of indicators should be available by end of 2017.

- With regard to legacy, the CEO Mr. Nemanja Milenkovic formulated the overall objective of Novi Sad 2021 as the building of bridges for sharing values and a new hope for Europe. This is to be seen in Novi Sad wider 3P legacy concept (People, Places and Processes) and Rule of Precondition explained in the progress report.

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 acknowledged the efforts made by Novi Sad 2021 with regard to the first cultural strategy for the city, in which the ECoC should have a role. Especially the infrastructural and urban development elements become already visible. City branding is one of many long-term objectives, which was stressed by the delegation of Novi Sad during the presentation. However, the panel seizes the opportunity to underline that the ECoC is a much more strategic initiative which involves a long-term cultural planning beyond branding. It was also said that the evaluation team included the University of Novi Sad – an important step forward as local universities are important pillars for many ECoC evaluation and monitoring teams. In the panel's view, it must however be ensured that ECoC evaluation standards are carefully reflected and that data collection activities are realised in a comprehensive archiving system starting already in the first ramp up years.
 - **Recommendation 1:** The panel recommends that Novi Sad equally addresses all strategic objectives for a sustainable cultural development of the city including cultural, social, economic and urban development impacts.
- The panel asked about the preparation for the cultural and artistic programme of Novi Sad 2021 as no clear artistic vision and related priorities were presented by the team. It raised concerns regarding the process of programme preparation: the artistic and programme directors – only recently appointed – plan to revise entirely the bid book. New programme objectives were stated. The panel reminds the team that the preparation phase of the final ECoC programme 2021 must build on the original bid book and project list. The programme director mentioned festival business as an example of a possible direction for the programme development; according to the panel, such a new focus bears the risk of a too event-oriented approach harming potentially the artistic and cultural quality and integrity of the overall programme.

- Still on programme development, the panel asked for more information regarding the cultural and creative industries. The proposed activities including a mapping, a stakeholder process and the follow-up action planning are promising.
- The European dimension in the programme needs further development. The panel draws the attention of Novi Sad to the need to develop a broader concept of European dimension, going beyond the cooperation with other ECoCs. Such a concept will be required for the next preparation steps. At the same time, the collaboration with other ECoCs should be continued in order to fully benefit from cooperation opportunities and know-how transfer. The panel recognised especially the positive and promising cooperation efforts with the Croatian city of Osijek and the related reconciliation potential. This is a theme that could attract the interest of a broad European public and would thus serve as a good base for a potential flagship project.
- The panel noted the efforts to internationalize the implementation of the cultural programme. It however stresses that sustainable connections to Europe need more efforts than just ensuring that the team of Novi Sad is networked with other ECoC teams. The programme needs more active participating of concrete cultural operators, especially from the independent scene. Building these connections should be one of the main focuses now.
- The panel further pointed out that an ECoC programme normally comprise a set of projects directly run by the delivery team, or co-produced with partners or just labelled by the ECoC. The programme proposed so far is not fully clear with regard to these project categories. An updated report should therefore cover these elements.
- The panel furthermore stressed the need of a considerable investment in capacity building in order to ensure the widest possible impact of the ECoC project as well as its professional implementation.
 - **Recommendation 2:** The main message on building bridges should be clarified and the activities clearly built on. It should be furthermore ensured that the team is able to pitch the Novi Sad 2021 programme with clear statements based on understandable and easy-to-communicate messages.
 - **Recommendation 3:** The European dimension in the programme needs further development using a broad vision regarding a variety of cooperation partners, methods and exchange.
 - **Recommendation 4:** The panel emphasises that the programming process for Novi Sad 2021 must be based on the original bid book and have a clear focus and artistic vision and related strong messages for internal and external communication.

- **Recommendation 5:** The panel invites the Novi Sad 2021 Foundation to submit an updated project list including the three main categories (own productions, co-productions, labelled projects). A special focus should be dedicated to the flagship projects including a broad range of local and international participation.
 - **Recommendation 6:** Further reflection is needed with regard to the selection criteria of projects. It must be ensured that the projects are in conformity with the overall programme objectives, main messages and original bid book. The good practice of other ECoCs such as Timisoara 2021 could serve as a good example for the related efforts of the Novi Sad team.
 - **Recommendation 7:** Partnering with local cultural institutions needs to be much more developed in order to ensure sustainability of the ECoC 2021 project and to enlarge the scope and outreach of the cultural programme. The representativeness of the independent sector in programming bodies needs to be ensured and related strategic partnerships built-up.
 - **Recommendation 8:** The capacity building efforts in Novi Sad should be considerably enlarged to cover the largest part of the independent cultural sector as well as the cultural institutions in the city and the Novi Sad 2021 team.
- The panel asked about the capacity to deliver and was ensured that Novi Sad currently benefitted from as strong political support at local, regional and national levels. An ECoC/City Interface for infrastructural projects is in place and operational. The proposed preparation plan for infrastructure is convincing. The concept of new places has a potential for sustainable positive change in urban quarters.
 - The panel briefly discussed the first outreach strategies with the team of Novi Sad and had the overall impression that audience development efforts were not sufficiently developed and comprehensive. They must go far beyond the development of cultural tourism, and the proposed CultTour platform can therefore only be one element of a much wider outreach plan. A comprehensive audience plan requires the wide involvement of different target groups beyond volunteers. Furthermore, enhancing participation from the local population will require capacity, partnership building and time. The consultations of public spaces' development in 2017 are a positive element which should be continued.
 - **Recommendation 9:** A clearer audience development and engagement strategies including collaboration with schools should be developed in 2018.

- The panel raised several questions regarding the governance and management of the Novi Sad 2021 ECoC. Positive developments include the establishment of a share-point for internal management information as well as the appointment of a public procurement specialist and related transparency rules (publishing of all tenders on the Novi Sad 2021 website). However, the structure in place needs further focus as well as sound information flows and decision making. The proposed committees and councils need to have clear roles. The existing share-point for management information should develop into a real knowledge centre. It must be furthermore ensured that the whole team has access to all relevant information. Based on the first interface between the City and the Novi Sad 2021 on infrastructure, the City-Foundation relations must be integrated in an updated organigram.
 - **Recommendation 10:** A systematic visualisation of the different platforms, panels and boards including information flows and decision making process is required to ensure a sound management of Novi Sad 2021. An updated organigram is therefore required, with the view to considerably reducing considerably current complexity.
- The panel asked about the staff available in the Foundation and their responsibilities. It found out that the splitting of tasks (e. g. between the artistic director and the programme director) were not yet fully clear. Furthermore, heads of departments dispose of no information regarding their dedicated budget for the upcoming year. Provision should be made in order to rapidly integrate new staff members and to invest in related team building activities. The development of the team's skills is equally important, including communication and pitching abilities.
 - **Recommendation 11:** The internal management requires improvement regarding a more accurate description of tasks of team members and a clear attribution of budgetary frames for 2018.
- The budgetary framework for the Foundation is favourable and all co-financing bodies have confirmed their commitments. The principles of co-financing and long-term cooperation established for co-production projects are very positive. The panel was reassured that no budget cuts were planned. Some expenditures were shift to later ramp up years, but not reduced with regards to the original budget presented in the bid book. However, delays in receiving payments from the regional level should be tackled. The panel was pleased to understand that sponsors had already shown interest in investing in Novi Sad 2021.
- The panel sought clarification regarding the EU fundraising strategy. The Novi Sad 2021 Foundation still lacks a systematic overview on all potentially available EU funds. According to the panel, there is too strong a focus on the Danube Transnational Programme. The approval of the Citizens for Europe project is welcomed although its nature and contribution is of too small a scale for the budget needs of an ECoC. Opportunities from the pre-accession funds should be further screened. The panel recognised that the access to EU funds for a non-EU

Member State such as Serbia was more complex. The sponsoring activities are not yet fully developed. Related efforts should be reinforced.

- **Recommendation 12:** The elaboration of an EU fundraising strategy as well as a strategic sponsoring plan will enhance budgetary stability of Novi Sad 2021.
- The plans for external communication are at a starting point and need to be considerably developed for the next progress report. A more strategic approach to communication is needed to ensure that the ECOC project goes beyond pure city branding. The slogans related to the bridges themes require to be revised.

Next Steps

The panel acknowledges the progress made so far by Novi Sad 2021 since its nomination and appreciates the efforts to build up the Foundation as well as a solid financial framework. It especially draws Novi Sad 2021's attention to the required efforts with regard to

- the cultural and artistic programme,
- the integration of all team members in the related development efforts as well as
- the need for a more substantial cooperation at the local as well as at the European level.

The panel therefore invites Novi Sad 2021 to submit by end of March 2018:

- an updated cultural programme including the planned flagship projects. This document should also include a related budgetary overview, and
- a document referring to all panel recommendations from both the selection and monitoring reports including plans on how to address them. The team is invited to use the numbers of recommendations stated in the respective documents.

The panel puts itself at the disposal of Novi Sad 2021 for any questions, through the Commission services.

The Commission will call for a second monitoring meeting in mid-2019.

The panel proposes a monitoring visit of panel representatives to Novi Sad in mid-2018.

The panel would like to thank Novi Sad 2021 for a very informative and interesting meeting and looks forward to the next developments of the European Capital of Culture project.