



Tartu

European Capital of Culture 2024

First Monitoring Meeting
Report by the ECOC Expert Panel

Virtual Meeting, September 2020

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
Directorate Culture and Creativity
Unit D2 – Creative Europe

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Introduction

This report follows the virtual meeting on 22 September 2020 between the Panel and the team of Tartu, one of the three European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) in 2024¹. Tartu was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2024 in Estonia on 22 October 2019 by the Ministry of Culture of Estonia on the basis of the recommendation included in the Panel selection report²; its bidbook is available on the Tartu 2024 website³. This report is addressed to the Tartu 2024 Foundation and will be published on the European Commission's website⁴.

Attendance

The Panel members:

Paulina Florjanowicz (Chair), Dessislava Gavrilova and Pierre Sauvageot, appointed by the Council of the EU 2019-2021,

Jelle Burggraaff (Rapporteur), Beatriz Garcia, Jiří Suchánek, appointed by the European Commission 2020–2022,

Sylvia Amann, Cristina Farinha and Agnieszka Wlazel, appointed by the European Parliament 2018–2020,

Alin Adrian Nica, appointed by the European Committee of the Regions 2019-2021,

Anu Kivilo and Mikko Fritze, appointed by the Estonian Ministry of Culture.

For Tartu:

Mayor Tartu / Tartu 2024 Foundation Supervisory Council Chairman,

Tartu 2024 Foundation CEO,

Tartu 2024 Foundation CFO,

Tartu 2024 Programme Coordinator,

Tartu 2024 Communication & PR Manager,

Tartu 2024 Regional Coordinator,

Tartu 2024 Programme Line Manager – Tartu with Earth.

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/ecoc2024-estonia-selection-report.pdf>

³ <https://www.tartu2024.ee/arts-of-survival>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) and the Ministry of Culture of Estonia.

Report from Tartu 2024

The Tartu 2024 Foundation submitted a comprehensive progress report in advance of the virtual meeting. It outlined in detail the activities of the organisation since the selection meeting in Tallinn on 28 August 2019. Before the virtual meeting, Tartu 2024 delivered a 25-minute long video as a substitute for the regular presentation that could not take place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The video comprised an opening statement by the Mayor of Tartu, followed by a presentation of the progress made in various areas by several members of the team and the Creative and Supervisory Council.

The main video message of the Mayor referred to the COVID-19 outbreak and how this has made the leading theme "Arts of Survival" more relevant than ever. The CEO stressed, though, that the pandemic had not affected the long-term plans of Tartu 2024 significantly. This was followed by the Tartu 2024 Creative Council explaining how the Car-Free Avenue initiative, implemented during the summer, served as a test for large-scale events and smaller pilot projects. Subsequently, the Supervisory Council stressed the cooperation set up with 76% of the cultural managers in Southern Estonia. The Regional Coordinator elaborated on this cooperation and explained how 2021 would be dedicated to preparing a regional open call for additional programme in Southern Estonia. The Tartu 2024 Programme Line Manager "Tartu with Earth" provided information about the programme development process, the second Southern Estonian Cultural Managers' Survey and the contacts with other ECoCs. The Creative Council explained the structure of the programme development process and the future role of the Creative Director. The topic of outreach and the five different audience groups that Tartu 2024 wants to involve more in cultural events was touched upon by the Programme Line Manager "Tartu with Europe". This was followed by an overview of the events that the team had participated in to generate interest towards the projects. Regarding budget, the CFO elaborated on the contracts sealed with the Tartu City Government and the Ministry of Culture for the financial coverage of activities taking place in 2020 and the confirmation of the budget that will be made available for 2021. Concerning partnerships, the team referred to the goals that had been set and the initial negotiations that started earlier this year. However, there had been a delay in the beginning of the fundraising campaign, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Marketing & Communication Manager explained how the biggest aim of 2020 had been to involve 19 Southern Estonian governments to ensure cooperation and funding. In addition, the number of visits to the website and audience on social media has grown as new initiatives like a Twitter account in English and a monthly newsletter for Estonian speakers have been launched. The video concluded by summing up the milestones as listed in the progress report.

Discussion

During the subsequent discussion, the Panel sought clarification on some issues and offered experience and advice. Topics discussed included the following:

Long-term cultural strategy

- The Panel inquired about **how the capacity-building programme - Kultuurikompass – was contributing to the ambitions** of Tartu 2024 and how this was captured via the monitoring & evaluation plan. The team explained that the themes selected for the Kultuurikompass forums were based upon the topics the cultural

operators had indicated as being important to them. The outcome of the second Survey to Cultural Managers, aimed at learning more about what was going on amongst institutions and organisers, was also used as an input for the topics that were being discussed during the forums. In this way, the survey directly relates to the capacity-building programme.

Artistic and Cultural Programme

- The Panel asked if any adjustments to the programme would be made to help improve the situation of the entertainment industry that is affected by COVID-19 and what the message of Tartu 2024 was towards the sector in this respect. The nightlife strategy that the team had already worked upon during the bidding phase has been picked up again. The situation of the nightlife sector will be mapped, but it will not be easy to solve problems very quickly. There are different support programmes from the government and the city to help the sector. The message that is communicated is that the preparatory work towards 2024 can help support the sector in the coming years. An example of this is the Car Free Avenue initiative that had very positive effects for the local sector.
- In light of previous recommendations concerning the need for a more provocative and experimental programme, the Panel wanted to know **what would change in the digital strategy and in the aims of the programme** after COVID-19. The team explained how the current situation had shown how art could be accessible and how not. Although exhibitions of the Tartu Art Museum and the Estonian National Museum can be visited digitally for example, people miss real life experiences of culture. It remains unclear how the audience will react to the new situation. Many would wish more face-to-face formats again, but restrictions could force the sector to further stress digital offers. The team is also in touch with Bad Ischl and Bodø to discuss the digital approach to the programme, as all three ECoCs are located in remote places.
- The Panel asked questions about the **difficulties the team faced with establishing international partnerships** and inquired if a strategy had been developed on how to establish such partnerships. The team explained that the programme was built up on three criteria, of which the transnational one was the most important. Each project should consist of an international collaboration, focusing on topics that are relevant for both the region and Europe. The COVID-19 pandemic has, however, prevented projects from establishing these contacts. The team is aware that they can put more effort into facilitating international connections, mapping and ensuring they are put into practice. An example of what the team has done to support the local sector in this regard is organising a meeting between Estonian cultural attachés abroad and a number of project developers.
- The Panel inquired about the team's **approaches to cope with the new normal in the cultural and artistic programme and about plans to ensure that the cultural stakeholders and creative companies can survive** and are still in place to help implement the programme in 2024. The city has developed support programmes for the cultural sector. Financial support is available for cultural operators to find new (digital) solutions to organise events. The national government is currently discussing this topic as well, after it had already made funding available for the cultural sector for

the loss of revenue in spring. In order to adapt their projects to the current situation and develop their plans accordingly, cultural operators are encouraged to organise pilot projects next year. The team will follow this line of programming until the final project plans are submitted to the Creative Council for evaluation. This will be at the end of a six-step development process in spring 2021. At this time, it will also be clear what the projects as presented in the bidbook will look like in reality.

- The Panel asked questions about the **limited presence of artists in the current stage of programme development and the possibility to give a carte blanche to creators**, to keep some surprise in the final programme. Furthermore, there were questions about whether **Estonian artists and organisations would establish long-term relations with European institutions and networks and how major projects with well-known international artists would be included** in the programme. Artists are not listed, as Tartu 2024 seals contracts with cultural organisations with a legal personality to develop projects. The team expects them to incorporate artists in the projects. White spots in the programme will be identified by summer 2021, which can be filled up by creators with new ideas. The team continues with the flagship projects that are mentioned in the bidbook and trusts upon the artists involved to develop these proposals into major projects. The team also moves ahead with big names and projects that attract large audiences, but due to the uncertainties that the COVID-19 pandemic brings, it cannot be more concrete at this moment.

- The team also elaborated on the **development of artistic residencies**. It explained that the head of the longest running residency programme in Estonia had agreed to map the current situation of already existing residencies. On this base new residencies programme will be created by March 2021.

- The team explained that in case Tartu gets **to host Manifesta 15 in 2024**, for which it would submit an application in November 2021, it had agreed with the Ministry for Culture that funding for this event needed to be found outside the ECoC budget. The team and all partners involved are aware that the biennial and the ECoC should support instead of overshadow each other.

- The Panel inquired about how the team **would prevent the artistic vision of the programme from becoming overshadowed by its educational and research elements and the tendency to focus on problems projects want to tackle**. The ECoC programme is also about raising awareness, which is why the team contemplates on the impact projects should have. This is why the focus is now more on the educational elements. In the future, there is room for the Artistic Director to work on the artistic side of the programme.

Capacity to Deliver

- The team elaborated on the **urban/rural governance model** and how the region was involved in every level of decision-making. Southern Estonia is represented in both the Supervisory and Creative Councils. In addition, the already established Forum of Regional Municipalities can give advice to the Creative Council. The Tartu 2024 Foundation has contact persons in each and every of the partner municipalities and the

municipality leaders are part of the Leaders Forum in which important decisions are made. The ECoC cooperation and financing model for 2021-2025 has been set up and is in voting now. From January 2022 onwards, there is a possibility for the region to apply with projects to be incorporated into the programme.

Outreach

- Focusing on how the COVID-19 crisis hit tourism and the consequences that are expected to last, the Panel inquired **if and how the strategy to attract international audiences had been adjusted**. The team is still creating the specifics of how to attract international audiences in the coming years. The focus will be on attracting tourists from mainly Scandinavia, the Baltic States, Germany and Russia. The team will be working together with the projects that are responsible for the delivery of the artistic content. Cooperation will also be set up with Estonian and regional tourist agencies. The strategy will be a mixture of real life and online marketing on which the team hopes to be more specific in the future for 2022 and 2023. As the situation concerning COVID-19 is still unclear at the moment, the team does not go for 'alternative plans' yet.
- The Panel also inquired about **the engagement with the Russian-speaking minority**. Although one project in the programme development process engages with this group, the team acknowledged that additional work needed to be done here and that they should reach out to Narva in this regard. Tartu itself has a twin city in Russia and there are connections between artists in Russia and Tartu. It needs rethinking, though, how this group will be represented in the programme. What has already been agreed upon is that the programme will be developed in two or three languages, which opens up the possibility of organising events in Saint Petersburg for example.
- The Panel asked for details about the newly introduced **Platform for Future Ideas**. The team is aware that a large extent of the programme is educational and looks for options to link the educational components of projects with the artistic side. The Platform serves to facilitate this link between education, art and science.

Management

- The Panel also wanted to learn more about the **postponement of the appointment of the Artistic Director, whether she/he would have sufficient time to develop the remaining part of the programme and why she/he had not been put on equal footing with the CEO**. The team is happy with the projects in the bid and wants to end the development process of these projects first, before engaging with an Artistic Director. By summer 2021, it will be clear what the white spots are in the programme, which the Artistic Director would have to fill. The team is confident there will be enough time for this. The CEO is the sole Member of the Board, as the Foundation wants to have a lean and clean management structure where one person is the final decision maker.
- The Panel inquired about the **concrete actions taken to attract EUR 1,5 million from the private sector**. The team started in January and already found many entrepreneurs wanting to support Tartu 2024, not only financially but also with services

that are needed such as hotels, transport, events etc. Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team was close to signing a first contract. Although the situation has changed, the interest from the entrepreneurs remains and the team expects to be able to close private partnerships from 2022 on. A strategy has been made to divide the EUR 1.5 million into parts, which also gives entrepreneurs the option to step in with smaller amounts of money.

- The Panel also asked questions about the survey dealing with **the cooperation between the cultural operators and Tartu 2024 Foundation and what plans emerged as a follow up to the survey results**. The team explained they felt they had achieved progress in this field as they started from zero. In the coming years, they want to increase cooperation with more cultural managers at different levels.

Milestones

- The Panel inquired about the **selection process and role of the international experts**. They will be recruited from different fields and will give advice to the development of the programme.
- The team explained that concerning **supporting social and green entrepreneurship**, all of the projects had to respond to established criteria, to which the ecological criteria had been added. Connections with a private company have been established to develop a strategy for the development of green events. Communication plays an important role in this regard, as the team would like to communicate that the ECoC contributes to the reduction of climate change.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Panel acknowledges the good progress made so far by Tartu 2024 and draws attention to the following conclusions and recommendations:

- The Panel appreciates the stability of the delivery structure and the political support and national recognition the ECoC receives. This has enabled the team to undertake much work that follows the order of the initial plans as stipulated in the bid. For the next monitoring meeting, a reflection needs to take place on how these plans need to be adjusted to the new situation and the capacities that should be added to the team.
 - **Recommendation 1:** With the Foundation having been established and the new CEO in position, it is important to speed up preparations and to take a more proactive approach. The COVID-19 pandemic has put many things on hold and a clear vision and strategy is needed now on how to work in new circumstances and how to deal with the long-term social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic especially on the art sector. Therefore, the Panel recommends a more in-depth analysis of the current

and future impact on the Tartu 2024 plans, notably spanning detailed contingency planning.

- **Recommendation 2:** Develop a staffing plan, with an organisational chart, including the staff needed for the delivery of the ECoC for the upcoming years and up until 2024. Be specific in the number of people that need to be hired and what their roles and responsibilities should be.
 - **Recommendation 3:** In addition to the companies that have shown interest in being involved as private partners in the project, also look for partnerships with companies that benefit from the current situation, e.g. the tech sector.
- The Panel welcomes the programme development process, which is a first good step to put together a cohesive programme with partners from the city, region, country and Europe.
 - **Recommendation 4:** The development of a clear and daring artistic vision, a strategy on how to turn individual projects into a cohesive programme and the adjustment of the programme towards the current situation, requires a reflection on the composition of the Programme Division. Moreover, with the mentioned topics “Arts of Survival”, including related social, health and environmental questions that are highest on the agenda, the Tartu 2024 project can transform into a platform for Europe-wide debate. In this light, the appointment of the Artistic Director is recommended as one of the first priorities, in order to allow the Artistic Director together with the Programme Line Managers to build up a cohesive artistic programme. In addition, a clear role description of the Programme Line Managers should be put in place, whilst the distinctive roles of the Programme Coordinator and the Artistic Director should be described.
 - **Recommendation 5:** It is important to communicate that the ECoC is an opportunity for the sector during the pandemic. The Foundation needs to demonstrate how they will support the local culture and creative industries as well as related service providers and what leading role they will play in this regard. As the team depends upon the production capacity of the sector in 2024, it is crucial the sector survives these difficult times. This is why the delivery of the entire programme cannot wait until 2024 and part of it should take place in 2021 and in the subsequent years leading up towards 2024.
 - **Recommendation 6:** The Panel appreciates how the Tartu 2024 team reacted to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic with the development of digital formats for projects; however, considerable more engagement is needed in this regard. Develop a strategy for audience development reflecting on the new circumstances and the potential need for new formats.

- **Recommendation 7:** As the programme should have a good balance between the local (diverse) cultural potential as well as the top international scene, it is crucial to give highest priority to the European dimension in the projects. Concrete partnerships with artists, cultural organisations and networks across Europe – going beyond the cooperation with other ECoCs – need to be set up and monitored in case projects are implemented by other organisations. An earlier appointment of the Artistic Director can help in this aspect. The COVID-19 pandemic should not prevent the team and cultural operators from establishing contacts and making schedules for cooperation also in the sense of “European solidarity”.
- **Recommendation 8:** The Panel recommends a clear definition and distinction of goals and mission between the ECoC and the potential hosting of Manifesta to avoid any overshadowing, confusion of narratives and saturation of resources. The intention to host Manifesta in 2024 reiterates the need for a clear artistic vision and leadership for the ECoC.
- The visibility and perception of the ECoC is positive in Estonia and there is a close cooperation with the local community in the city and Southern Estonia. The team needs to reflect on how to broaden this image beyond the national borders and how to involve different stakeholders from the city and region in this process.
 - **Recommendation 9:** It is important the team recognise the wide potential of the ECoC title, not limited to the neighbouring countries, and the need to go beyond Northern and Central Europe, covering the entire European continent. In relation to both artistic partnerships and audience attraction, it must build on common values and challenges. In addition to the already established contacts with other ECoCs and embassies, the team should reach out to e.g. international networks, their university contacts, well-connected institutions and persons from the rest of the country for advice and contacts.
 - **Recommendation 10:** With the cultural sector hit hard in Europe, the ECoC has a responsibility to show solidarity, understand the situation of their partners in Europe and try to help Europe move forward through, for example, offering artist-in-residencies to artists from countries that have been hit the hardest. This format allows maintaining a high level of security.
 - **Recommendation 11:** Besides the intended relevant relations with neighbouring Latvia and Russia, the team should also consider the cultural diversity already existing within the city and region and integrate and explore it for the programme and outreach purpose. The team should partner with the neighbouring Peipus Region and Narva for a special approach towards the integration of the Russian speaking population in the programme.

- **Recommendation 12:** Raise the visibility of Tartu 2024 to the international level. It is important to look Europe-wide in the work that needs to be undertaken, instead of focusing on the city and regional level only. Starting up an interregional dialogue can help in this regard.
- **Recommendation 13:** Include the hospitality sector and creative industry in the capacity-building programme.

Next steps

The Panel welcomes the relevant steps taken so far and remains available for questions and advice, through the Commission services.

The Commission will call for a second monitoring meeting in mid-2022.

The Panel would like to thank the Mayor of Tartu and Tartu 2024 for a very informative and frank discussion and looks forward to the next developments of the European Capital of Culture project.

(Signed) all attending Panel's members

