



EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE

Selection of the European Capital of Culture  
for the year 2022 in Lithuania

The Selection Panel's report

Pre-Selection Stage

Vilnius

July 2016

## Introduction

This is the report of the selection panel (the “panel”) for the pre-selection phase for the competition for the European Capital of Culture in 2022 in Lithuania.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania (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”)<sup>1</sup> and
- Rules of procedure for the 2022 European Capital of Culture title competition in the Republic of Lithuania (the “Rules”) signed by the Lithuanian Minister of Culture on 30 June 2015 and published on the ministry’s website<sup>2</sup>.

The competition is in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and selection. All information on the procedure including history and updates can be found on the ministry’s website<sup>3</sup>.

A panel of 10 independent experts was established for the selection process in line with Article 2 of the Rules. The members were appointed by the European Union institutions and bodies (the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions). The ministry decided not to exercise its right to appoint up to two national experts.

In response to the Call for submission of applications for the Union action “European Capital of Culture” for the year 2022 in the Republic of Lithuania, signed by the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania on 20 July 2015 six cities submitted an application by the closing date of 24 May 2016:

**Anykščiai, Jonava, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Plungė, Rokiškis**

## Panel Meeting

The panel met in Vilnius on 20–21 June 2016. The panel elected Agnieszka Wlazel as its chair and Alain Hutchinson as vice-chair. All panel members signed a declaration of no conflict of interest and confidentiality.

Representatives of the European Commission (the “commission”) and the ministry attended as observers. These observers took no part in the panel’s deliberations or decision.

At the meeting each candidate, in alphabetical order, presented their case (in 30 minutes) and answered questions from the panel members (in 60 minutes). Each delegation consisted of up to ten members.

At a press conference on 21 June 2016 the chair of the panel announced the panel’s unanimous recommendation that the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania invite the following cities to submit revised bids for final selection (in alphabetical order): **Kaunas, Klaipėda**

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<sup>1</sup> [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG)

<sup>2</sup> <http://old.lrkmlt/go.php/lit/IMG/4>

<sup>3</sup> <http://lrkm.lrv.lt/en/international-cooperation/european-capital-of-culture-2022>

## Next Steps

The ministry will arrange for the formal approval of the shortlist based on this report (Article 8 of the Decision). The ministry will then issue an invitation to these cities to submit revised applications for final selection.

The shortlisted cities should take into account the assessments and recommendations of the panel in this report.

The deadline for submission of revised applications is 28 February 2017.

The final selection meeting will be held in Vilnius on 29 March 2017.

Two to four members of the panel will pay a one-day visit to the shortlisted cities shortly before the selection meeting to obtain more background information. Representatives of the commission and the ministry will accompany the panel members as observers.

## Thanks

The panel members would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in this pre-selection phase of the competition.

In particular the panel noted that this is the first time cities in Lithuania have developed cultural strategies. This is already a significant potential legacy of the ECOC competition. The panel encourages all cities, not just those short-listed, to continue with the expansion and implementation of their cultural development strategies.

The panel thanks all six bidding candidates and everyone who contributed to their bids; the European Commission for their advice and the Minister of Culture and his staff for their excellent administration.

The panel appreciates the ministry decision to provide clear indication about potential national contribution to the ECOC's co-financing.

## Assessments of the candidates

In their assessment of the candidates the panel noted the general and specific objectives in Article 2 of the Decision and the requirement for the application to be based on a cultural programme with a strong European dimension created specifically for the title (Article 4).

The panel assessed each bid against the six criteria in Article 5:

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

- Management.

In the following commentaries, which follow the panel notes the main elements of their discussions and specific recommendations are made to assist the preparation of the ECOC final bidbooks.

The panel noted that several bidding cities have not yet published their bidbooks that would endorse public's engagement and discussion on city's cultural development. The panel strongly recommends that all bidding cities, most especially, both shortlisted cities publish their bidbooks online. This is now standard practice for final selection. The final bidbooks can go online at the start of the selection meeting. The panel's final report will cross-reference to the url of the bidbook.

The panel emphasises that their assessments of the candidates was based on the proposed programme set out in the bidbook 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.

## General remark

The panel would like to note that it would have improved the understanding of the presentations if the power point slides showed had been written in English - as in most cases there was no interpretation provided for the slides.

## Anykščiai

Anykščiai's bid was presented under the banner "Speaking City". The aim is to build on the city's nationally recognized image as the centre of writing culture and literature in Lithuania.

The city was bidding together with the Utena region embracing six municipalities: Zarasai, Utena, Ignalina, Visaginas, Molėtai and Anykščiai.

The panel considered that the bidbook is substantially less developed than would be expected at this stage of an ECOC competition. Anykščiai has clearly reflected on its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities during the process of preparing the bidbook. The panel welcomed the honesty of the bid book and the presentation; they form a good basis for the future cultural development of the city.

The (very general) Anykščiai Culture Strategy 2015-2025 is in place and its related objectives are somewhat interlinked with the ECOC aims. Those are copied from the general criteria for ECOCs and are neither elaborated nor adjusted to the city's local specificities. Impacts, however simple, are well defined. Evaluation is linked to the objectives and includes the European dimension. The city is aiming to become part of the UNESCO Learning city network. The ECOC legacy and vision for the development of the city via culture are not sufficiently demonstrated.

A strong will to become more connected on European level is visible (e.g. through literature, twin towns, collaboration with Pilsen). The proposal has some interesting European topics, for example the intention to combine a focus on literature with literacy challenges. Nevertheless the European

dimension of the bid is under-developed. The panel found that the statement that 100% of the projects will have international partners lacked credibility. Until now the city has developed small number of international cultural collaboration projects, and did not go beyond its comfort zone and its, already existing, partnerships with countries, such as Poland and Belarus. This bid however did not explore further the city's geographic position and existing relations, notably with Russia, Belarus and other bordering countries. Cooperation with other ECOCs, apart from Pilsen, and European networks were not devised.

The proposed programme has four directions: 1. Meet the Literature: Monuments and Moments; 2. Engaging Narratives of the Places; 3. Literate Community – Transforming Minds; 4. Site Specific and the Creator's Style. The panel was uncertain whether the concept emerged as a result of a broad consultancy with the cultural sector. With the exception of literature the other art genres are less visible. There are some interesting elements especially in literature and different forms of art therapy; storytelling festivals, calligraphy projects, plans for residencies, links with ICT, and connecting Lithuanian polyphonic songs with contemporary professional music. The panel felt that a clear strategic narrative and European vision is missing. The panel considered the programme is, for an ECOC, too locally driven: a traditional approach is not balanced with contemporary arts. An element of the criterion is that the programme needs to be attractive to a broad international audience; this was not evident.

The ECOC candidature has the support of the city. The agreement with the Development Council of the Utena Region is to be signed at a later stage. The city's tourist and cultural infrastructure is adequate for the size of the city, but will represent a major challenge for hosting the event of the ECOC's size.

The proposed budget is €10,595 m of which 60% would be allocated for programme expenditure. The city will contribute with less than 20% of the overall public sector's share of the budget.

The proposed operating budget is reasonable for the size of the city although on the low side for an ECOC, which needs to reach out across Europe. The panel was not convinced about the fundraising strategy. Few ECOCs have managed to raise 15% of their operating costs from the private sector. Whilst the bidbook did contain some interesting ideas for fundraising (e.g. souvenir packages) it did not give enough confidence that this level could be achieved. The plans for capital expenditure relating to the ECOC programme lacked specificity and appeared overambitious.

The bid acknowledges the need for capacity building of the cultural sector, but lacks a concrete plan in terms of contents, target audiences and schedule. The art incubator proposal was not further planned neither, thus it lacks a strategy to retain and attract talent to the city.

The engagement of the local population and the cultural sector is limited. The audience development seems to be instrumental as built around product/service development and dissemination activities. Lessons of critical thinking in schools as well the idea to involve private companies and their employees in the ECOC are good and should be further developed.

The panel has concerns over the proposed management and governance structure. It is not clear where decision-making authority rests and what is the role of the artistic director. The marketing

strategy is underdeveloped. A clear, feasible and attractive communication vision, as well as international marketing tactics, are missing.

## Jonava

The city of Jonava – a small industrial and commercial town close to the highway St. Petersburg – Warsaw has presented its bid under the title "Jonava. Awake to Create".

The strategy of Jonava district Council until the year 2026 has been approved; the ECOC is part of it. The objectives and outcomes of the strategy are not specified and success is too generally defined. The district's strategy lacks the degree of specification of economic, social and cultural impact that the panel would expect.

Some elements for evaluation are mentioned. However baseline studies, to be done only in the year of the title, are planned too late. There is a lack of indicators concerning European dimension.

The proposed programme is unsatisfactorily developed, especially with the criterion requirements of the European dimension and intercultural dialogue. Some of the themes referred to could form a basis for a programme having potentially a European interest, for example, the work of the refugee centre, Jewish culture and reconciliation and the mid-summer tradition, yet these were not further explored. The international cooperation is insufficiently planned, as existing town twinning arrangements cannot be the sole basis for the ECOC European dimension. The proposed cooperation with other ECOCs is underdeveloped. The practical potential of the collaboration with European artists with the name of Jonas or Janina was not clear in the bidbook or presentation; the panel was not confident it could result in a strong and inclusive programme concept. The project lacks of clear plan for building interest of broader European audience – especially in tune with the "Jonas and Janina" concept, as it may not relate easily to all those not named as such, and the programme did not find other points of dialogue.

The panel felt the programme was under-developed at this stage and in most areas lacked a contemporary approach. There was not a clear over-arching artistic vision bringing the local traditions (especially celebrations of equinoxes) into the present. The programme lacks cohesion being too fragmented by thematic months. Additionally the concept of "Republic of Jonases" suggests branding of the city being the project's main objective, a view reinforced as the city already uses this as a visitor attraction. The combination of professionals from the art scene with amateurs is a valuable concept, but is not sufficiently elaborated.

The proposed budget is €12,7m. Although the breakdown of operating expenditures is optional at this stage most ECOCs applicants manage to give an outline. "Other expenditures" are very high (ca €8,75m) comparing to the programme cost of €1,56m, and very little is said about the nature of this budget item. A very high proportion of the proposed budget, €5,8m, will come from the city's cultural budget, which may negatively affect the regular cultural activities of institutions, NGOs and artists.

The candidacy has the Council of Jonava District Municipality approval. The support of other political forces in the city is not mentioned. The panel has concerns over the capacity of the city to manage a

project as large and international as an ECOC. This concerns ranges from tourism capacity, the size of local cultural infrastructures and the extent of the local cultural sector. The bidbook did not outline proposals to improve the management of the cultural and tourism sectors with a capacity building element.

The panel felt that the plans to engage with citizens only after pre-selection weakened the bid. The criterion is clear that citizens, as well as cultural and city managers need to be engaged in the full development of the bid. Early engagement also assists in gaining support for the ECOC. The creation of an audience development strategy was also left for the second phase of the competition.

The proposal lacked an organisational chart and clear management structure vision. The panel was concerned at the seemingly low importance and authority attached to the artistic director's role. The marketing plans are not specific enough and lack connection with the project's distinctive features.

Overall the panel felt that the bid had the makings of a sound local and regional cultural offer. However the panel did not see enough content in the outline programme or in its artistic vision to make an impact at European level.

## **Kaunas**

Kaunas presented their bid under the slogan "ConTEMPOrary Capital". A former fortress city, it seeks to create its identity as a city that is modern, progressive, and full of culture, science and innovation. It wishes to establish itself as a leading "City of the Nordic and Baltic Region". The bidbook has a good introduction, which clearly presents why the city wishes to become ECOC and the reasoning why it is a valid cultural project. This is a good starting point for an ambitious project. The panel appreciated the humorous style in which the bid book is written.

The cultural strategy of Kaunas City for the moment does not exist as a stand-alone document. Culture is included in several approved strategic documents. The panel would seek a much clearer view of the role of culture in these planning documents to be reassured that a long-term cultural strategy for the city is devised and approved, in which the ECOC is an engine, but not the final aim. The criterion requires a cultural strategy to be in place and approved at the time of the final bid submission.

The European dimension, capacity building and civic participation are integrated into the broader city strategy. However, the city currently lacks an urban development plan in which the ECOC project has a clear role.

The expected impacts of the ECOC project are too broad and should be better linked with the city's cultural and urban revitalization and development, and ECOC's actions. Evaluation plans and indicators are appropriate for the pre-selection phase. Some interesting elements are planned for evaluation e.g. measuring of happiness including a hedonometer art work. The legacy of the ECOC and its definition of success need to be further elaborated and advocated more consistently.

The theme of Europeanism from the perspective of Lithuania is well thought through and is a good starting point for the project's European dimension. Local challenges are matching European ones:

re-connecting and becoming European again (which was normal for Lithuania e.g. during the Hanseatic time); re-connecting memory and heritage to place (which is well-linked to migration and previous flows of people – mainly in the 20th century). Kaunas has a very specific history in the first and second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, above all in the inter-war period. The panel thinks that the Europe of today could learn a lot from this history by translating it into cultural projects. The European dimension chapter includes several good elements: systematic cooperation on all levels (UNESCO, twin towns, networks). The plans to connect with the neighbours, mainly Russia, are especially important. Collaboration with other ECOCs, apart from Esch 2022, should be further developed. It is planned that each project will have European partners and will be connected to European values. This will present a challenge. There are several good ideas to address the European and international audience in the artistic programme, e.g. Digital Windows to Europe, Café Europa, Café du Monde, an ECOC conference on temporariness. The marketing campaign will address relevant European topics.

The artistic concept “from temporary to contemporary” with four programme strands – Confluence, Confusion, Contemporary and Consciousness – is in itself interesting. The panel is however concerned about its lack of connection with urban and city development as a whole, as well as its potential exclusiveness and lack of connection with the city’s broader cultural milieu.

The panel is also concerned that although the bidbook sets out clearly the strategic weaknesses of the city (backwards looking mentality; a shrinking almost ghost town, a poor reputation, temporariness, a loss of public life and a public space) the proposed programme barely tackles them. In the cultural sector the panel noted that cultural institutions were said to be closed for a contemporary audience. These weaknesses present challenges for the proposed programme, which the panel would expect to be addressed through projects (notably multi-year longer-term proposals).

The bid sets out the ambition of learning, experimentation, cross-sectorial collaboration, openness and a platform for the young generation. This positive approach was welcomed by the panel and it expects them to be deepened and more visible in the projects.

The proposed programme was too centred on contemporary art rather than building bridges between traditional and modern, diverse sectors and art forms. The strands are, in general, too broad; the message and the objectives for each of them are not clearly visible. The panel particularly appreciates the Confusion strand, which is dealing with a blocked memory as parts of Kaunas’ history are being swept away. The architecture inspired projects provide an opportunity for citizens’ engagement although they could benefit from being approached from a wider European rather than purely local perspective (e.g. on Modernist architecture) and the focus should be on their relevance in today’s Europe. The strand includes innovative elements (e.g. workshops, labs, DIY). The Confluence strand focuses on creative and cultural industries, especially design. This strand within a city policy could contribute to bringing Kaunas on the map of European cultural and creative industries (CCI). However, in order to succeed beyond a one-off design approach, it will need a strong and sustainable CCI policy at the city level. The city needs to map its creative sector so that its strategic direction can be based on evidence and market opportunities. The digital approach across the programme is rather conventional and not forward-looking for a project in 2022. The highlights of the programme are relatively unoriginal and the selection criteria for projects are missing. Overall,



the artistic programme should be narrowed down and deepened; moreover clear priorities should be identified.

The proposed budget is €30m, with respectively €12m and €4m from the city's and district's funds. The panel welcomed the intention to use crowdfunding platforms and would like to see more details on the related approach and impact on the ECOC budget in the final bidbook.

The ECOC candidacy enjoys unanimous political support from the major political parties in the city and the budgets are voted. The political support on the regional level (metro region) is not mentioned.

Suitable cultural infrastructure is available and considerable renovation is planned. The panel found difficult to consider the capital infrastructure plans in the absence of a formal urban plan. The panel is concerned that the sheer scale of these cultural infrastructure restoration plans might overshadow and constrain the ECOC project. This is confirmed by the considerable amount dedicated to capital expenditure. In any case, it is necessary to have a previous architectural plan of uses and a feasibility study to ensure the balance of the investment, the final programme of cultural uses and their subsequent funding plan. It is not clear if restoration will follow the innovative path of cultural heritage use and if contemporary projects will find their place in those renovated premises as the bidbook diagnosed a lack of space for contemporary art spaces and workshops for residencies.

The New Cultural Tempo School opening in 2017 is a good start for capacity building. It needs more detail on its training approach rather than appearing to rely on visiting experts. The panel would have liked to see concurrently a more strategic approach to developing relationships with cultural institutions and a strategy to build the sustainable capacity of contemporary artistic, cultural and creative organisations and professionals.

The communication strategy based on three principles: Digital, Diverse, Dialogic was outlined in the bid book. The strategy includes tactics, which are diverse but mostly standard and not inclusive. The approach to audience development was considered as a sound starting point (Mobile Museum, ideas to change museums' work; Centuryans projects, collaboration with schools). However, the panel would expect more concrete plans in the next stage as structural and strategic approach to outreach is not visible.

The panel had concerns over the proposed governance and management structure. There is a lack of partnership building, fundraising, educational programmes and capacity building in the managerial structure. The panel was concerned about the authorities of the Director and the number of artistic directors/curators. The panel welcomed the intention that at least 50 % of Kaunas ECOC 2022 team members will belong to the young generation (Centuryans aka Millennials). The participation of existing cultural institutions and the social fabric of the different city's neighbourhoods should be guaranteed in the final project and management structure.

Overall the panel felt the application was moving in the direction to meet the challenges faced by the city. In the second phase the bid will need to ensure that its focus on the challenges in the city can be matched with the European dimension criterion. The panel thought the bid had energy with strong potential elements in international co-operation (beyond showcasing).

## Klaipėda

The city of Klaipėda presented their ECOC candidature together with Neringa and Palanga under the preliminary slogan “By the Wind”. In 2017 the same partnership will hold the title of the Lithuanian Capital of Culture (LCOC).

The strategic goal is “Formation of the cultural identity of Klaipėda, integrated into the Baltic Sea region cultural space”. Several strategic documents are in place including approved Culture Change Guidelines for 2015–2020. Current plans are to extend the Guidelines after the evaluation of LCOC, which is logical but too late for the panel to understand the proposed ECOC’s sustainability and focus. The criterion requires a cultural strategy to be in place and approved at the time of the final bid submission.

The evaluation framework is on a good way as the bid team has a university as a partner and is clearly aware of both the standard ECOC evaluation framework, as well as good baseline data context in Lithuania. The impact is too briefly outlined and needs some further reflection. The panel has concerns over the concrete legacy aspirations.

The panel felt that the European dimension was under-played even for a pre-selection stage. It lacks a deeper reflection on specific themes of European importance and values (for example the idea of cultural route between East and West is not developed). The cross-border collaboration with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine is potentially a positive element towards this criterion but the panel felt that other aspects of European dimension, especially those beyond the immediate neighbourhood, were immature. Partnerships with twin cities and existing city’s partner network (including Eurocities), as well as with Baltic countries are mentioned but not further elaborated. The cooperation with the European cultural networks is not explored and cooperation planned with other ECOCs is very preliminary with criteria for cooperation too narrowly focused on historic ties. The proposed programme is lacking elements that will attract the European audience. The panel felt that the European dimension in the programme is rather old fashioned (e.g. European literature days) and lacks balance between mere presentations on one hand and inter-cultural interchange and creation on the other hand. The proposed programme does not, at this stage, meet the criterion’s need to increase the city’s own citizens’ awareness and understanding of the diversity of cultures in Europe.

The programme, built around the theme of maritime cultural identity and divided into four directions – “Changing identity”, “Workation”, “Vibrant Community”, “Future Culture”, all of them including “Culture Lighthouses” projects – lacks clear artistic vision and narrative. The panel considers the programme more targeted at tourism than at deepening cultural and artistic exchange. The proposed programme, with a strong focus on history and conventional ideas, would reinforce the present perception of the city rather than using the ECOC to transform the city’s identity, cultural sector and audience. Plans to use new technologies and connecting contemporary art and heritage are not developed. A more balanced approach would have improved the bid. The related information provided is mostly strategic and technical, but not artistic. The panel appreciated a good involvement of the local artistic scene and cultural institutions and, especially, the “bank of ideas” that could be an instrument for additional process-oriented approach in programming.

The proposed budget is €32m with €15m from the city contribution, which is appropriate. The panel welcomed the fact that the city has increased the funding for culture and also plans to continue this policy. There are good prospects for private sponsorship, and the city is already active in EU programmes. Crowdfunding has been successfully used for public activities in Klaipėda and will be used as a fund raising tool.

The project has the support of the partner cities, the Curonian Spit National Park and Klaipėda University. The cultural infrastructure is presented (except capacities of the venues) and a strong plan for further development is in place. The panel is concerned that the extensive capital investment planned could change the focus of the ECOC away from the artistic programme and international collaboration.

The capacity building programme for cultural and community managers and officials is not described in the bid book. The relevant AiR plans, capitalising on the international prestige of Nida's art colony, would gain from being articulated with a strong capacity building programme, for the benefit of, most especially local operators and organisations. The Culture Factory incubator project articulated within the creation of wider creative industries platform and development goals is interesting but lacks a suitable strategy that ensures an adequate environment to boost this sector. Some relevant connections with partners from diverse countries were referred to but their aim and content were not explained.

The panel appreciates the fact that accessibility and inclusion are among the strategic goals and are visible in the marketing strategy. The involvement of almost 600 people directly and indirectly in the preparation of the application is one of the biggest strengths of the bid. However plans on how this good local involvement will be systematically continued are too modest. Some promising ideas for audience development are presented. The panel noted positively the "Culture users' card" system that will form the base for data collection and evaluation. First target groups are defined but the audience development strategy is currently too generic.

The organizational chart of management does not enable suitable artistic guidance. The selection criteria for the directors are unsatisfactory. The marketing strategy is basic and communication channels and tactics are too general without being linked to the project vision. The slogan weakly stimulates public interest.

Overall, the panel felt that the bid was stronger in the development of the existing traditional cultural offer rather than taking a radical forward-looking step and encouraging the development of its own contemporary artistic offer and European profile. The programme is visibly suited for the city and its partners to enhance a touristic development whereas an ECOC seeks to significantly develop the cultural and creative sectors at local level with clear cultural, creative and social outcomes. The panel was encouraged by the commitment and approach of the local authority and its recognition of the role of culture in the city's development. The proposed programme with further strategic analysis and sustained civic engagement could clearly contribute to the advancement of the ECOC partner municipalities. The panel felt the bid book and presentation were promising to head in the right direction to meet the challenges of ECOC organisation.

## Plungė

Plungė, together with Telšiai, Raseiniai and Rietavas, presented their bid under the banner of “Four Seasons Adventure!”. The city of Plungė is strongly anchored in the local cultural and linguistic diversity and cultural traditions. The development of tourism activities is in the heart of the bid.

The long-term cultural strategy is in place; some good but basic elements were provided. Cultural identity building is one of the pillars of the cultural strategy of the city. The panel noted in the bidbook that the city’s main objective is to preserve the local traditional culture and “maintain nationality” (the main focus of the cultural budget). It is not fully clear if and how the ECOC is directly anchored in this cultural strategy. Evaluation and monitoring is very underdeveloped: e.g. indicators regarding the European dimension are missing; impact assessment should not be done by the municipality itself or “groups of locals” but by specialized cooperation partner (e.g. university) or sub-contractor.

The European dimension was considered under-played with an imbalance between traditional local and regional presentations compared to creating sustainable international partnerships to develop new artworks and content. The team was in touch with former ECOCs, Leeuwarden 2018 and Vilnius 2009, as well as is planning to work with the Luxembourgish candidate. At this stage the bid is more a culture-oriented regional development project than an ECOC plan. The sole focus on heritage is too narrow an approach to common European themes. It would not meet the criterion’s need to increase the city’s own citizens’ awareness and understanding of the diversity of cultures and societies in Europe.

The programme is built around four seasons and four routes of Samogitia cultural tourism: historical, sacred, arts-music, modern. The proposed direction is inward looking, aiming to reveal the traditional art, reproducing ethnic traditions of Samogitia region and offer leisure / entertainment activities. The panel did not see enough content in the outline programme or its artistic vision (or lack thereof) to make an impact at European level. There is very little focus on creation and innovation. The programme is eminently suited for the city to boost a touristic development whereas an ECOC seeks to significantly develop the cultural and creative sectors in a city with clear cultural, creative, social and European outcomes.

The panel noticed positive development of the city budget for culture, but a very small budget for an ECOC year. The proposed budget is €6m for operating expenditure, with city contribution of €1,455m. €7,753m is planned for capital expenditure (ERDF projects), which indicates a (too) strong focus on capital expenditure. The financial contribution from other cities and the region is not provided. The panel considered the proposed budget to be low for a project as complex and large as an ECOC; it would be unlikely to make an impact at a European level.

It is not clear if all partner cities have expressed the political support for the ECOC project as the latter has diverse needs and objectives comparing to cultural tourism development, which is politically supported. Capacity to deliver is questionable – the city lacks sufficient cultural and tourism capacity (especially insufficient accommodation). The size of local cultural infrastructures as well as critical mass regarding local artists and the culture sector community is unknown. The panel was concerned that the city would not have the capacity to manage a project as large as an ECOC. Moreover capacity building, especially targeted at cultural sectors, has not been described.

The related involvement of the cultural sector (except institutions) and local population was also underdeveloped. The bid lacks an approach to both audience development and capacity building in the cultural (and tourism) sector.

The managerial structure is unclear with overlapping competences and unclear role of the creative director. Plungė has already appointed general and artistic directors whose dedication (time) capacity for the project is questionable. Risk assessment is missing.

The marketing budget is high (20%), reinforcing the view that the bid is primarily a tourist project. The marketing strategy provides quite detailed standard information for tourists (and investors).

## Rokiškis

The city and region of Rokiškis presented together their bid under the banner of “Deliver a dream – create European fairy tales!”. The region claims to be the Lithuanian leader in restoration of cultural heritage. Three cities/districts in the region have previously received the title of Lithuanian Capital of Culture and Rokiškis will become Capital of Culture of Lithuania in the year 2019.

The Rokiškis strategic development plan (including culture) was adjusted in 2016 up to 2022 and some regional strategies are also approved. The planning documents include elements linked to the ECOC but it is not fully clear, if the ECOC is anchored explicitly in the cultural strategy.

Some basic elements regarding evaluation are available: an internal staff member in charge and certain baseline data from a survey. The evaluation plan lacks detail, for example, on the definition of indicators and targets. Co-operation with a university or external consultants would secure evaluation’s professionalism and objectivity.

The forecast impact is clear with more jobs in cultural institutions and in the tourism/entertainment industry. The aim is to fight against emigration from the region and to attract back the former emigrants.

The panel felt the bid book was less a bid for an ECOC title but more a regional investment programme in a theme park and tourism development with related training and cultural activities. The proposed main project – the theme park – lacks local and regional ownership and co-creation involving the local population and culture sector. Related decision making provisions are unclear and the small share of 20% of the capital owned by regional stakeholders will neither allow guiding the project content-wise nor economically (e. g. type of jobs created for the local population and related salaries).

An aim of the European dimension provided in the bidbook is to create “a tale about our – European and unity fairy tale, a tale of a united Europe, constantly creating a fairy tale where all are equal, tolerant, and communal lives in a creative environment”. The panel found the concept unoriginal and disconnected from current topics, legacies or cultural expressions of European importance.

There was a good approach to regional cross-border collaboration as regional partners formed a special European Partnership programme, which links them to seven European regions. If further

elaborated and upgraded by collaboration with Eastern Partnership countries, this could have formed an interesting base for the European dimension. Primarily contacts with Riga, Leeuwarden, Luxembourg (city) as well as with other small cities (twin towns) in Europe are mentioned. The project did not reveal to have enough content to attract wider European audiences (however the ideas on how to inform European audiences were satisfactory for this stage).

The cross-border projects are potentially a positive element towards the European dimension criterion but the panel felt that the other strands of the programme were less developed with international partners or inter-cultural dialogue. The programme dominated by light events and folklore providing entertainment for cultural tourism lacked notably a clear artistic vision. The panel was not in favour of the European fairy tale park being in the centre of the programme but it welcomed the idea of the European laughter celebration. Additionally, the panel recognised that, despite residencies planned, the programme was not open to contemporary art and innovation. The proposed strong focus on fairy tales and heritage missed the opportunity to link e.g. heritage crafts projects with cultural and creative industries to upgrade to contemporary products and services and reach diverse audiences.

The related involvement of the cultural sector (except institutions) and local population was underdeveloped. The bid lacks a deep approach to audience development.

There is strong political commitment from all cities. The budgets (both operational and capital) provided in the bid book are unclear and the presentation added additional confusion to this point. The size of local cultural infrastructures as well as critical mass regarding local artists is unknown. The panel was concerned that the city would not have the capacity to manage a project as large as an ECOC although capacity building activities for the creative staff and for students are planned. The region's geographical position (2.5 hours by car from Kaunas) would challenge the arrival of other than regional audiences. Moreover, accommodation potential is unsatisfactory and the absorption capacity for ECOC, or for the Fairy Tales Park, is not sufficient.

There was little information on contingency planning and how to cope with the identified different threats.

The organizational structure is multi-layered and unclear. Although having regional partners in a Regional Programme Board is a plausible idea, decision-making as well as keeping quality and consistency of the programme will be extremely difficult. It is not clear who will take responsibility for overall artistic content and quality. The criteria for staff selection are not provided.

The marketing and communication strategy is under-developed being too general in the bid book for the pre-selection stage. The marketing budget is very small (10%).

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations apply to the two shortlisted candidates.

The panel considers that the shortlisted cities need to develop their bids for the final selection in order to reach the required level of quality for such a demanding event as an ECOC. There is a considerable step-change between proposals at pre-selection stage and those at final selection.

The panel will expect significant changes in the final bid books to reflect these recommendations.

The shortlisted candidates are advised to study carefully the six criteria in the Decision and the comments in the assessments above.

In particular the cities should note that the criteria are different to those used to select Vilnius for its ECOC in 2009.

A study of the evaluations of recent (since 2013) ECOCs may also be of value. These are available on the European Commission's ECOC pages.

## **Elections**

The panel is aware that municipal elections will take place before the ECOC 2022. Therefore, clear support from all major political parties to city's cultural strategy and the bid book, including the financial commitments, is of great importance.

Cities which have not finally approved their cultural strategy by the submission date will be disqualified under criterion 1.

## **General**

The bid-book at final selection becomes the de facto contract for the designated city; it sets out the artistic vision and the key objectives, projects, directions, financing and management of the programme. Close concurrence with the bidbook is a factor when the monitoring panel will recommend the payment of the Melina Mercouri prize.

In the final selection bid book candidates must cover all the questions in Annex 1 (the "application form") in the call for applications. The panel expects a considerably more developed section on the proposed artistic vision, the programme and the European dimension.

The selection panel (and the subsequent monitoring panel) has a responsibility to protect the long term brand of the European Capital of Culture programme. Candidates should be aware that with the level of international attention now being given to ECOCs that policy decisions over a wide area (not just cultural) may affect the reputation of the city, and in turn the ECOC image. The panel would expect to see candidates being aware of this and taking steps to minimise international and national negative images of their city through policy changes rather than marketing/PR.

## **ECOC and Cultural Strategy**

The panel will expect a tighter focus in the next bid books. In the next bid books, cities should indicate the priorities of their strategy, their target outcomes and how resources will be changed over the next few years (rather than broad changes in the total budget allocated to culture).

A city's cultural strategy will normally be wider in scope than the objectives of an ECOC. Bid books should indicate more clearly which priorities of the broader cultural strategy the ECOC is seeking to contribute to.

An ECOC is a transformational opportunity for a city.

The pre-selection bid books set out in general terms the objectives of why a city is seeking the title. The panel would expect a more focussed (and shorter) explanation, which can link to the

programme vision, themes, the programme, and through evaluation, to the outcomes in the subsequent legacy. There is considerable literature and research available for cities to see the range of cultural, economic and social benefits of an ECOC.

The final bid book should focus on the priority objectives for the ECOC (rather than those for the entire cultural strategy) and provide relevant list of indicators. One of the priority areas should refer to how the ECOC will meet the three elements of the European dimension criterion.

Consideration should be given to the monitoring arrangements during the ramp-up period, 2017–2021, which can inform management on a timely manner to take action. Shortlisted cities may wish to involve management consultancies in addition to the more academic approach currently proposed.

### **European dimension**

The panel felt that this criterion was under-developed. The panel would wish to see a greater deepening and widening of programmes to ensure a more relevant European dimension. That a city is in Lithuania, in Europe, has a vibrant existing cultural offer and will market itself in Europe is not in itself a strong interpretation of the European dimension. An ECOC enables a city to promote itself internationally but that is only half the story.

The European dimension has a two-way direction. An equal focus is on seeking to broaden the understanding and awareness of the city's own citizens on the diversity of cultures in Europe and linking through cultural and other projects with citizens in other countries. It is this focus on other cultures, which primarily differentiates an ECOC from a national city of culture. An ECOC offers the opportunity for a city and its citizens to learn from others in an open way. One important legacy area is the creation of new and sustained partnerships between a city's cultural players and those from other countries.

The panel expects to see a significantly increased focus on European partnerships: co-productions, co-curations, conferences, networking as well as visiting artists/performers. Most recent ECOCs have included European and international partners in well over half their projects. Cities should encourage their cultural operators to be active participants in European cultural networks.

Most ECOCs feature multi-year projects which develop during the four years before the ECOC. There were few such projects in the bid books. The ministry is asked to consider ways the winning city can implement multi-year projects which require advance stability of funding.

The panel will expect more information on the proposed partnerships with the shortlisted city in Lithuania. The panel would also expect to see further collaborations with the ECOCs designated for 2016–2021.

One of the elements of the artistic criterion for the ECOC title is the ability to attract visitors from the rest of Europe. This attraction has to be in the programme and distinct from the normal tourist offers of the city and region to meet this criterion. The panel would expect to see proposed ideas in the ECOC programme in 2022.



## **Cultural and artistic programme**

The focus of the final selection is the operating programme between 2017, when the ECOC will be formally designated and, in particular, the ECOC year of 2022.

A city's previous cultural history and heritage and its recent and current cultural offer, may form a basis for this programme but plays no part in the decision.

Many ECOCs in recent years have used the opportunity provided by an ECOC to address difficult issues from their 20th century past, which still resonate today. The panel suggest candidates re-consider their approach to the appropriate topics from Lithuanian 20th century.

The panel will expect to see considerably more detail on the programme and its projects. The two cities should set out their artistic vision, the programme and projects more clearly; differentiating between partners who have indicated firm interest and those who are still only potential or possible partners. ECOC programmes normally cover a wide range of art forms and include the increasing development of creative interventions in social issues. An approximate budget should be shown for each major project for the panel to understand the relative balance of projects in the programme.

The highlights of the programme need to be designed to create unique, modern and innovative experiences, which can attract, also, the European audience. Projects selection criteria need to be provided.

The panel recommends a more focussed and detailed approach to digital cultural content (not just social media promotions and inter-actions) as integral parts of their programme. This was under-developed in all bid books.

Information on urban development and infrastructure programmes, cultural heritage restoration projects and new cultural premises is useful as background and context at pre-selection. The final selection will focus on the capital projects, which directly impact on the programme activities (e.g. a new cultural centre in a restored building which becomes a focal point for community arts projects contained in the programme). A timeline for these projects and the realistic estimate of completion should be given.

## **Capacity to deliver**

Candidates should re-confirm that their bid book, including the programme and the financial commitments, have the formal approval of the mayor, the city (and county if appropriate) councils and all political parties.

Candidates are reminded that the criterion for an ECOC requires a special programme for the year in addition to the normal cultural offer. The panel expects more information on the managerial capacity in the city/region to manage the depth and range of an ECOC.

## **Outreach**

The audience development programme is expected to be much further developed in the final bidbooks including online and offline measures and channels for all identified target groups.

The panel would expect to learn about the audience development policies of the main cultural organisations including the main independent operators. The role and contribution of universities (except for evaluation work) was underplayed in the pre-selection bidbooks.

The audience development programme requires further systematic planning regarding different target groups, the enhancement of their creativity as well as participation in cultural and artistic activities. Especially co-creation and crowd-based initiatives have proven to have considerable motivation potential. The involvement of the cross-border audience has the potential to generate further European added value. Furthermore, the audience development strategy needs an initial mapping and research as well as tools and methodologies in order to ensure an evidence-based implementation programme.

Special focus should be dedicated to those audiences, which are more difficult to reach but being crucial for a new “cultural climate” in an ECOC city (e. g. the elderly, disabled, people temporarily in the city). These are under-represented in the bidbooks at pre-selection. The bidbooks should cover the participation of schools, youth groups, volunteers etc. in the city.

## Management

The membership of and independence from city administrations of governing boards should be explained, with post holders (or positions) and the method of appointment. The decision-making role of the board should be explained.

The General and Artistic/Cultural Directors play a key role in all ECOCs. The selection, preferably through an open international call, of these posts before the candidates’ appearance at the final selection meeting, will be to their advantage. This is especially important for the Artistic Director as, unlike many such appointments, the artistic vision is already set out in the bidbook. The same applies if a candidate proposes a collective artistic leadership. It is acknowledged that the appointments may be conditional on the outcome of the competition.

If projects are planned to be funded from competitive EU programmes (e.g. Creative Europe) this should be indicated.

The final bidbooks should clearly indicate how potential capital investments crucial for the ECOC (those mentioned in the capacity to deliver criteria above) will be managed (management structures, state-of-play related to the EU-ESI-Funds such as the connection with the relevant Operational Programme, time line and public procurement).

The planned staffing arrangements from 2017 to 2022 should be outlined including secondments, interns and volunteers.

Signed

Agnieszka Wlazel (Chair)

Sylvia Amann

Cristina Farinha

Ulrich Fuchs

Steve Green

Alain Hutchinson (vice Chair)

Jordi Pardo

Aiva Rozenberga

Pauli Sivonen

Suzana Žilič Fišer

Vilnius

July 2016