



EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

**The European Capital of Culture
in 2020 in Ireland**

**The Selection Panel's
Final Report**

Dublin

September 2016

Introduction

This is the report of the selection panel (the “panel”) for the competition for the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2020 in Ireland.

The Irish Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (the “ministry”) is the managing authority of the competition.

The competition is governed by:

- Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 (the “Decision”¹)
- Rules of Procedure – “Competition for the 2020 European Capital of Culture title in Ireland” (the “Rules”) signed by the then Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht on 24 June 2015 and published on the ministry’s website².

Selection Panel

The selection panel consists of 10 members appointed by the institutions and bodies of the European Union (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions) in line with article 6 of the Decision. The ministry did not exercise its right to nominate up to two members.

The panel appointed Steve Green as chair and Suzana Žilič Fišer as vice-chair. All members of the panel signed a declaration of non-conflict of interest and confidentiality at both meetings of the panel.

Pre-Selection

The competition is in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and final selection. The ministry issued a call for applications to all Irish cities on 17 December 2014. There were four applications submitted by the deadline of 17 October 2015.

The panel met in Dublin on 12-13 November 2015 for the pre-selection meeting. The panel recommended that the ministry invite three cities (Galway, Limerick and Waterford for the Three Sisters) to progress to the final selection. The panels’ report is published on the website of the European Commission³ and the ministry⁴.

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

² <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/arts/culture/european-capital-of-culture/>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2020-ireland-preselection_en.pdf

⁴ <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/selection-of-the-european-capital-of-culture-in-2020-in-ireland.pdf>

The Irish Minister of Culture accepted the panel's recommendation and the ministry invited the three cities to submit revised applications with a deadline of 17 June 2016.

All three cities submitted their revised applications ("bidbooks") by the deadline.

The following steps took place between the pre-selection and final selection meetings:

- The mandate of panel member Anton Rombouts expired on 31 December 2015 and he was replaced by Alain Hutchinson.
- All three cities met with the panel's chair via video-conference to seek clarification of the recommendations in the pre-selection report.
- Two members of the panel (Sylvia Amman and Cristina Farinha) visited all three cities in July 2016, spending one day in each. They were accompanied by observers from the ministry and the European Commission. The panel members reported back to the full panel at the selection meeting.
- The ministry announced that the government would make a contribution of €15m to the successful candidate.

Selection Meeting

The final selection meeting took place in Dublin on 14-15 July 2016.

Representatives of the ministry and the European Commission attended as observers. The observers took no part in the panel's deliberations or decision.

The candidates appeared before the panel in alphabetical order. Each city made a 45 minute presentation followed by 75 minutes in a Question & Answer session. Delegations had up to ten members.

The chair of the panel announced the panel's recommendation at a press conference after the meeting in the presence of the Minister of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Assessments of the candidates

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

Contribution to the long term cultural strategy of the city

European dimension

Cultural and artistic content

Capacity to deliver

Outreach

Management

National context

2020 will be the third time Ireland has hosted an ECOC after Dublin 1991 and Cork 2005. The criteria for an ECOC have changed considerably since these ECOCs. They now embrace a deeper and wider scope of the role of culture both in a city and in European Union development. A particular new requirement is for a city to have a formal medium term cultural strategy. This ensures the ECOC is an element in the progress of a city and not a one-off event. It enhances the importance of sustainable legacy.

The panel noted that all three cities have a vibrant, although very different, cultural offer with a special emphasis on high quality festivals. The selection of an ECOC is based on the programme set out in the bidbook, not the current cultural offer in a city or “business as usual”. The panel recognised three strong bids reflecting different situations in the three areas.

The panel appreciated the announcement that the Irish government will contribute €15m to the eventual ECOC. This advance notice enabled the three candidates to work on a level playing field at this stage. It also enables the title holder to plan over the four year period to the ECOC year.

The Panel’s Decision

The panel was presented with three different bids from three different cities facing their own challenges and each with its own approach to the six criteria. All bids had many strong points as well as weaknesses. The panel was looking, according to the Decision, at the programme specifically designed for the ECOC year. The strength of three candidates presented the panel with a challenging task.

After the presentations the panel debated the merits of each city against the criteria and then in the final discussion the applications were weighed up against each other.

Each panel member weighed their own interpretation of the criteria against the three bids with their bidbooks, presentations and answers, augmented by the feedback from the visits.

The panel did not reach a consensus on a single candidate. The competition rules therefore required a secret ballot. Each panel member had one vote. All three candidates were on the ballot paper. The rules stated that a candidate needed a simple majority to be selected. In the event of no candidate achieving a majority on that first ballot then a subsequent ballot would take place.

In the first ballot six members, a majority, voted for one candidate.

Accordingly the panel recommends that the ministry designates, as a European Capital of Culture in 2020, the city of

Galway

Panel Assessment

The following city assessments record the main comments of the panel according to the six criteria. In Galway's case the panel makes recommendations both in the assessment and in the "transition to implementation" section.

Galway

Context

Galway presented itself as two contrasting elements, the city and the county. The bidbook claims the city has an exemplary success story in innovation in tourism, technology and culture. 24% of the city's residents are non-nationals and the city has twice the national average of 20-24 year olds. On the other hand the county and islands have been in decline for many years, with depopulation and a shift in rural values. The bidbook recognised that old certainties have been replaced and stated that "leaders of church and state are judged to have betrayed the trust of their people". Since preselection the bid has formed additional partnerships with a number of neighbouring counties. Mapping of the cultural sector in 2015 shows there are 300 documented artists in Galway. The creative industries in the "West" generate €534m per annum and account for 3.4% of the area's employment. The audio visual, TV and film industry is worth over €72m to the economy with over 600 people employed. Galway is a UNESCO City of Film and holds the European Region of Gastronomy title in 2018.

The bidbook is available online in English and Irish at <http://galway2020.ie/en/about/galway-2020-bid-book/>

The bid was presented, as at preselection, under the banner of "Making Waves". It has three key themes: Migration, Landscape and Language. The proposed programme is grouped in four project suites: "Launching and Landing", "Weigh Anchor", "Ship to Shore" and "Forward Motion". Over-arching these four suites are four flagship programmes: "An Artist in Every Place", "Hope it Rains", "Small Towns, Big Ideas" and "Window on the World".

Cultural Strategy

The city's cultural strategy, built around the seven strategic aims of the Agenda 21 framework, was developed after extensive consultations, "speak-outs" and sets out a 10 year vision 2016-2026. The panel noted the clear analysis of the economic and social links in the strategy placing the cultural sectors in a wider developmental context. The strategy also integrates with the city and county's economic, tourism and marketing plans. There was a clear and honest appraisal of the current weaknesses in the cultural sector which the strategy

seeks to alleviate. The panel noted that the strategy is available online.⁵ The comprehensive mapping process in 2015 means the strategy, and the ECOC, can be based on evidence.

The panel welcomed the attention given in the bidbook to specific “Defining legacies”. These set out a clear prioritisation within the many possible outcomes of an ECOC. Of especial note were the legacy ambitions concerning Europe, a key feature of an ECOC. The panel also commended the aspiration to move to a more risky, innovative and bold cultural offer in the city, showing how an ECOC can transform the status quo. The bid missed an opportunity to highlight at least the main objectives of change rather than simply seeking “an increase”.

The panel noted the evaluation programme and its 10 year lifecycle including European wide conferences in 2018 and 2026. The allocation of 1.5% of the operating budget towards evaluation is sound. However the panel is concerned that the emphasis on a university led evaluation with its longer term timetable has overlooked the need for more urgent feedback during the ramp up years for informing the ECOC management.

The panel recommends

**Galway discusses this long term evaluation approach with that of the University of Limerick outlined in their bidbook to develop a combined project, with a possible bid to Horizon2020.*

** a programme is developed to provide key feedback to the senior management during the ramp up years.*

European Dimension

As noted above the panel appreciated the defining legacies attributed to the inter-relationship with Europe. These set a tone for the ECOC. The proposed programme engages with key themes including rural depopulation, recognition of diversity and integration, isolation due to technology for those not connected and linguistic diversity. . The panel noted the increase in projected partnerships with cultural operators across Europe since pre-selection. The panel considers that there is still more needed to deepen the European connexions. The panel noted that there was a weakness in enhancing local citizen’s awareness of the diversity of cultures across Europe. As 30% of the programme has yet to be determined there is ample opportunity to improve the understanding of local citizens with the diversity of European cultures. The relations with other ECOCs are strong and project based indicating productive conversations.

The inclusion of the counties of Mayo and Donegal have strengthened the scope for projects based on lesser used languages and a range of projects are planned with partners in areas facing similar language issues. There are interesting interactions planned with

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Leeuwarden2018 and Donostia San Sebastian2016 on lesser used languages and with Rijeka2020 in their “24 Neighbourhoods” project.

The panel recommends:

- *A significant part of the remaining 30% of the programme increases Galway citizen’s understanding of the diversity of cultures in Europe. This should be the key driver for the creative director in selecting new projects.*

Artistic programme

The panel liked the dynamic approach to “Making Waves”. Its aspiration to challenge and transform the cultural offer of the city, as well as its contribution to other sectors of urban development is strong. It indicates to the panel the intention not to rest on the laurels of the existing, and successful, festival offer in the city. The concept is authentic to a city on the Atlantic Seaboard.

The panel notes the simplification of the programme structure since pre-selection; it will be easier to communicate and encourages partnerships between organisations not used to new ways of collaboration. The panel noted how the ECOC programme runs in parallel with the urban development plans.

The panel noted several projects with high potential which integrate European themes in a culturally apt manner. “Hope It Rains” tackles climate change, “Mirrored Pavilions” addresses the issue of sustainable energy and “Small Towns, Big Ideas” takes the focus to rural areas. The latter could provide a large springboard for greater European partnerships and discussions on rural areas across Europe. Projects such as “Hy Brasil” and “Gilgamesh” will attract attention for visitors beyond the existing festival and tourist offer. The panel recommends a review of the managerial capacity and budgets to ensure these ambitious projects can be delivered. The panel recalled from pre-selection the problems the city has in retaining skilled managers. The programme proposes interesting links between culture and health and well-being based on existing experience and know-how.

The panel welcomed the use of pilot projects to test the concepts and operational capacity and the use of a “pota or pot of gold” where currently under-developed ideas are parked for possible future development.

A major feature of the programme is the “Windows on the World” strand which aims to make Galway the first virtual ECOC. The panel admired the ambitious and forward looking approach and the attention it is drawing from major European and American operators from Ars Electronica (Linz), MIT Media Lab (USA) to the Google Cultural institute (London). This could be a ground breaking initiative in the ECOC context. The panel appreciated the idea that virtual and augmented reality could revolutionize the ways in which people from other parts of the world can remotely experience and participate in Galway’s cultural programme.

The panel has a concern that the technological elements, which are both promising and challenging, may become more important (and expensive) than the cultural content. It recommends that an additional senior director be appointed, reporting to the Artistic Director, to drive the content in addition to the planned communications-focussed post. The choice of partners is crucial to ensure sound artistic as well as technological quality.

The panel recommends:

- *There is a re-evaluation of the managerial capacity and budgets of the major projects before approval is given.*
- *A senior artistic director is appointed to lead the cultural content of the technology based projects.*

Capacity

The bid has the full support of both the city and country councils and their chief executives.

The city has a track record of hosting major festivals and events in the city. The use of non-conventional sites to host projects was appreciated. This may need to be more wide ranging than currently expected, for example if there is an increase in tourists and visitors to the rural and island areas as a result of the ECOOC title.

There is a limited number of capital projects planned. It is unlikely that any delays will impinge on the ECOOC programme.

The panel recommends:

- *an in-depth review of the capacity in the rural areas as a reappraisal of the planned capacity building programme*

Outreach

There is strong evidence of community engagement and high motivation. This is demonstrated in the projected programme with its focus on accessibility and inclusiveness. The panel welcomed the development of a cultural inclusion toolkit in an area with increasing immigration. The volunteer programme has already attracted a high number of active members.

Audience development was outlined in the bidbook but the panel expected more in the detail of how it will be delivered and its own ambitions. These appeared rather local at the moment.

The plans to make all venues accessible (and with a wide definition of accessibility needs is noted) are positive and create a legacy. The panel also noted the commitment to ensuring child protection safeguards will be followed. The panel felt that more needs to be done with inclusion of the traveller and new Irish communities.

The panel recommends:

- *an early development of the delivery plans for audience development and social engagement. Both require time to implement with multiyear projects.*

Management

The proposed budget for the operating programme is €45.750m. The main allocations are €33,398 for programme expenditure, €5.490m for marketing and €6,862m for administration. The overall amount is the same as pre-selection with now less for programme expenditure and more for staffing and administration costs. The public sector funding is secure with €12m from the city and county and €3.5m from the region. The forecast is for €3m to be raised from EU programmes, a policy explained as “a prudent and cautious approach”. The panel agreed that a cautious approach was required for EU project funding as several of the major projects are dependent in varying degrees on successful and competitive applications. The panel recommends the ECOC seek support from the Creative Europe desk in Ireland and specific expertise for other EU funding opportunities. The budget forecasts €6.750m from the private sector or slightly under 15% of the total. This has been achieved only in some previous ECOCs. The panel, as at pre-selection, applauded the local business community which has agreed a 3% increase in business rates to be ring-fenced for the ECOC. This will raise around €1m a year. The panel noted the creation of the Business Engagement Team within the ECOC company and a Business Leadership team of key figures from the business community.

The City council intends to increase progressively its expenditure on culture as part of its cultural strategy. The aim is for a 15% increase in the combined city and council annual budget (€695,000) by 2021.

The governance of the ECOC has been considerably developed from the pre-selection phase (where it was a weak point). A not-for-profit company has been established to deliver the ECOC. The panel noted that two directors will be from outside Ireland. The panel welcomes the intention to have a specific working group for legacy as this is one of the main responsibilities of the Board; the panel recommends it should be chaired by the chairperson of the Board.

The panel was not supportive of the intention for the Board of Directors to be responsible for the day to day running of the ECOC. The Board of an ECOC, meeting quarterly, operates at a strategic level, holding the staff accountable, facilitating top- and high-level relationships and acting as Ambassadors, fund-raisers and promoters. It is not an executive body making management decisions. The CEO is responsible for the day to day running with the senior staff.

The panel noted that the two senior staff of the company, the CEO and Creative/Artistic director will be recruited by the Board through an open international call. The panel appreciated the recognition that the incoming Creative/Artistic director will need to work within the objectives and indicative projects in the bidbook.

The panel appreciated the arrangements to manage the transition from the bid-team within the Council to the fully working independent Board and its senior staff.

The panel was disappointed that the bidbook gave limited information on the staffing of the ECOC company below senior level.

The panel recommends

- *a re-evaluation of the scope of the Board of Directors to ensure it operates at strategic and not operational level.*
- *Responsibility for ensuring legacy be added to the Board's responsibilities*

Summary

The panel recognised the considerable development since pre-selection with a resulting stronger all-round proposal. There was a clear interaction with the cultural strategy and the defining legacies were ambitious and potentially transformational. The programme concept of making waves is authentic and sets out the ECOC as a ground-breaking change initiative rather than simply celebratory. The programme, with city, rural and islands lines, resonates on a European scale of themes, although more can be done especially with the implications of rural life in Europe in the 2020s. Vigilance is needed in keeping the balance between the social and cultural ambitions and the European Dimension which is critical for an ECOC. The aspiration to be the first virtual ECOC is forward-looking and with strong content matching the technology could transform the pattern of ECOCs during the 2020s. The financial projections are sound, with the noteworthy decision of the business community to accept an increase in their business taxes. The area has the proven capacity to deliver large events and visitors, which will now spread throughout the year.

Limerick

Context

Limerick presented the city on a journey from being perceived as Ireland's "problem city" to being transformed and known as a cultural city. Being Ireland's first national City of Culture in 2014 achieved both a softening towards "culture" and a "real change in attitude"; it was a landmark year. The ECOC bid embraces the multiplicity of the city's population (12% are new-Irish) and opens it to Europe to question its sense of belonging.

The bidbook is available online at <http://www.limerick2020.ie/campaigns/article/the-bid-book>

The bid is presented under the theme of "Belonging". This is a development from the "Multiplicity" theme at pre-selection. This change was explained by the bid team: "it was felt that Multiplicity described what we are; Belonging as where we want to be". The

proposed programme is structured in three strands: “Home”, “Quest” and “Interface”. Parallel to the strands is a four-year capacity building project “Activate 2020”. The bid proposes the use of Limerick as a “living lab” that frames problem-solving research into issues relevant to the community.

Cultural Strategy

The city’s cultural strategy⁶ is consistent with the strategy for economic and urban development. It remains the same from the pre-selection phase and covers the period 2015-2030. The ECOC overlaps with the strategy in eight key areas. There is a particular emphasis on the cultural capacity building project “Activate 2020”.

The panel noted that there was little information on the projected social and economic impact of the ECOC especially given the two impact studies of Limerick2014. The panel noted the ambitious plans of the cultural strategy but were concerned that the proposed additional funding for culture in the city by the city (rather than by national organisations not under the control of the city) was not clear.

The panel was impressed with the intention to create a 10 year evaluation project, managed by the University of Limerick. Contact has been made with other ECOCs to join a consortium with a possible Horizon 2020 bid. The long term nature and the international partnership take this evaluation beyond the formal requirement. It is an interesting step ahead for ECOC evaluations. The panel recommends that the University of Limerick seek to combine this evaluation project with that of Galway for the benefit of ECOCs generally.

The panel however was less impressed with the lack of clear objectives or even success factors of the ECOC itself rather than descriptive outline of the more academic long term study. This put into question the intended key local and regional cultural legacies of the ECOC project beyond the ECOC year; the ones which drive the management team and Board. It was only during the Q&A that the panel learnt of the main objectives being a continuation of reputational change and jobs.

European Dimension

The panel noted the new concept of “Belonging”. It had the possibility of understanding in a European as well as local sense but as a universal concept the panel did not see a clear attachment or relationship with Limerick itself. The panel was less convinced that the proposed programme translated the concept into projects with European partners and themes. It was not evident in the bidbook how a visitor would experience, through the programme, “Belonging” in Limerick compared to any other city with a vibrant cultural festival. There were some projects which stood out in this context (The Wedding and European Minds). The range of projected partners was sound as was the geographic coverage. The panel would have liked more information on the range and topics of the “many conferences” which are planned; it was not certain that these would pick up some of the more general statements made about

⁶ Available at <https://www.limerick.ie/council/limerick-cultural-strategy>

the European Dimension (for example the special role of second and third cities in a country). There was a strong focus on literature and drama activities which gave an opportunity to explore the diversity of cultures in Europe (eg Take 5, Tiny Plays from Europe) This area was the most linked to cultural heritage.

The panel appreciated the steps taken to include the new Irish from other member states and to run an inclusive rather than parallel programme.

There is a good range of projects agreed with Rijeka2020. Several ECOCs are members of the consortium for “Lifting the Siege”; Pafos2017 is a partner in the Creative Europe co-funded project “School of Spectacle” and there are plans to work with others ECOCs.

Artistic programme

The panel felt the three strands (Home, Quest, and Interface) of the proposed programme were not strong or distinctive enough to identify variations in the programme for public understanding; they appeared as more internal working titles. The link with “Belonging” and the proposed “living lab” was not clear.

The panel noted with interest several projects including the “Lifting the Siege” and “The Wedding”. The panel considered there was a relative over-reliance for buying in major projects rather than developing new co-productions. The programme was based around monthly flagship events as higher profile spectacles. This approach clearly worked with the Royale du Lux in 2014 and a repeat performance will be a safe and popular option. The panel was not convinced that the emphasis on the monthly flagship spectacles would attract a wider, international, audience beyond the normal tourist levels.

There were a number of residency based projects which the panel welcomed (eg “Grand Central Residency”). The criteria for the open call for projects in 2017 are clear and consistent with an ECOC. There was little additional impact on the CCIs beyond the already planned development of Troy Studios; the programme did not seem to build on the 3,700 students studying creative subjects at higher education in the city.

The panel was not certain about projects intending to meet more social objectives through culture or their sustainability. The “Lifting the Siege” event will be spectacular but the panel would have expected more details on longer term, multi-year projects especially in the areas of social exclusion. The continued existence of the fence between communities was not a positive factor in a project called “Belonging”.

Capacity

The bid has the full support of the city council and chief executive. The implementation of the wider cultural strategy is confirmed. The council, together with Arts Council Ireland, intends to increase its cultural budget from 6.8% to 7.5% in 2020, an increase of a little over €1m. It was however not clear on the balance between these two funding sources; the panel could not see the specific intention of the city.

The panel was content that the city has as adequate cultural infrastructure of formal and informal spaces. As part of its cultural strategy the city is investing in new cultural buildings, including the Digital Skills Academy (planned for 2017; the panel had concerns over its target audience), the almost completed Tory Film Studios and a library/culture centre (which is only in feasibility study stage). The plans for the Georgian Quarter were less clear. The panel did not have concerns that any delay in these projects would adversely affect the proposed programme.

Outreach

There is clear evidence of enthusiasm generated by the bid team in the development of the programme.

The panel noted that the Kitchen Table approach to engaging with citizens had developed into Giant Kitchen Table meetings. The panel felt the active engagement of the Kitchen Table appeared reduced in the second stage as there was little hard evidence of outcomes of the recent meetings.

The plans to involve targeted groups were expressed in outline. The panel appreciated the inclusion of asylum seeking communities and the new Irish. Overall however the panel felt whilst the contacts had been extensive there was a lack of concrete projects and programmes or plans for integration into projects in the programme.

The panel noted the “Activate 2020” capacity building programme. It resulted from extensive analysis of the artistic and cultural sectors and identified gaps in the HR infrastructure in those sectors in Limerick. It is a key part of the cultural strategy, underpinning longer term development. It is now better structured and focussed than at pre-selection with fewer, but still several, general aspirations.

The panel welcomed the audience development strategy in its analysis, structure and the outlines of projects. It appreciated the linkage between the strategy and the programme. It felt that more information on how the strategy would be implemented (eg for the hospitality sector). The audience development programmes of the cultural sector and institutions and festivals were underplayed. The panel also felt that the co-operation with schools, youth groups and HE students was underdeveloped. Given 50% of Limerick’s population is under 30 this was a surprising omission.

Management

The proposed operating budget is €37m. This is allocated €22.96m to programme activities, €7.1m to marketing and €5.9m to administration. A further €1m is held in reserve. This revised budget is €2m higher than at pre-selection with most of the increase going to programme activities. The city has confirmed its contribution of €8.3m. In addition it will provide €2.3m worth of grants, staff secondments and facilities. The operating budget includes €1.5m from EU programmes. Funding from the private sector is expected to provide €7.925m or 21% of the total. This is higher than ECOCs have achieved. The bid-team explained that they already have commitments from the private and philanthropy sectors of

50% of their target. Ticket sales are expected to raise €1m. The panel was concerned that relatively little was planned for the early ramp up years reinforcing the concern that little is planned for multi-year projects which are so important for many social and collaborative actions.

A special purpose company has been established to deliver the ECOC. Although it is a wholly owned subsidiary of Limerick council it will be fully independent of the council. This is an improvement on the proposals at pre-selection. The panel was uncertain over the role of the advisory group and its role in developing the programme; the relationship with the authority of the artistic director was not clear.

The panel noted that the senior staff of the company, including the CEO and Artistic Director will be recruited by the Board through an open international call.

The bidbook indicated the progressive build-up of employees in the ECOC company.

Summary

The panel appreciated the general development of the project since the pre-selection stage. The inclusion of over 170 partners from Europe demonstrated a positive approach to the European Dimension. The financial and management plans were solid (except for the slow build-up of projects). The change from “Multiplicity” to “Belonging” was forward looking although there are concerns it could become a marketing slogan rather than a driving artistic concept. The “Activate 2020” capacity building programme could lead to a sustainable legacy of cultural management. The programme was designed to appeal with its open major events during the year; this appeared an over-reliance. The panel was less certain at this stage over the degree of engagement of citizens (rather than their undoubted enthusiasm) in the development which had been a strong point at pre-selection. The bid appeared more top down than at pre-selection. The panel could see the benefit of the ECOC towards its objective of continuing or maintaining or enhancing the city’s reputational change but less so in its aim of sustainable job creation beyond the already planned development centred on Troy Studios.

Waterford for the Three Sisters

Context

The Three Sisters presented their bid as a partnership between three smaller cities in a rural area of 354,000. By working together they hope to leverage more than a single city of their size. The ECOC is their first partnership. Since pre-selection the three cities have developed both a regional cultural strategy and a regional tourism strategy and more cooperative ventures are in the pipeline. The region is below the Irish average in many areas, the bidbook gave a very good summary of leading key facts including the economy, health, tourism and the cultural and creative sector. The strategic intention remains the same as at preselection: to be a European pioneer and role model for peripheral and relatively rural regions.

The bidbook is available at <http://www.threesisters2020.ie/re-imagining-region-three-sisters-2020-bid-book/>

The bid was presented under the banner “Re-Imaging the European Region; Culture, Community and Sustainability”. The programme has, as at pre-selection, two connecting themes: “Cumar” and “Arrivals”. The programme itself is structured in 7 streams: “Ambition”, “Kinship”, “Flourishing”, “Openness”, “Adventure”, “Arts, Health and Wellbeing” and “Creative Region Development”.

Cultural Strategy

The three councils have approved the regional cultural strategy, 2016-2025 with the theme of “Better Together”⁷. It has four pillars: a regional model for partnership (capacity building and growing the festivals), the creative and cultural economy, culture-led regional development and urban and regional regeneration. The ECOC Culture Company will lead the implementation. The ECOC programme fits into the over-arching strategy. The panel welcomed the use of “demonstration projects” to test various aspects of the ECOC programme, to collect evidence based data and to start the capacity building task. In particular the panel liked the mapping of the cultural and creative sector before the ECOC programme was developed. The panel had a concern on the implementation of the strategy if the ECOC title was not awarded given the reliance on the ECOC Culture Company.

The bidbook set out a clear listing of general outcomes of the ECOC in economic, social and cultural areas. They did not seem as radical as the intention with the regional strategy not where the role model aspiration would appear. The outcomes had a general cross over to the outputs in the evaluation plan.

The panel noted that the bidbook did not set out a clear view of success or of priority areas. There was a lack of clear objectives rather than lists of indicators and areas to compile data. The bidbook commented on the well-known problems of cultural evaluation but the panel felt that these should not be a barrier to attempting to state clearly at the outset the key objectives of an ECOC. There is a wealth of information available on the impact, or not, of ECOCs which could have been used to help identify the priority objectives of the ECOC in concrete terms.

The plans for the actual evaluation process were considered sound. In particular attention had been paid to the dissemination of the results of the evaluation beyond the academic community. The bidbook did not set out plans for monitoring progress of the ECOC during the ramp up years to enable management to vary their plans.

European Dimension

⁷ Available at

http://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/Your_Council/Council_Meetings/Kilkenny_County_Council_Ordinary_Meetings/2016-Council-Meetings/The-Three-Sisters-Regional-Cultural-Strategy.pdf

The panel welcomed the ambition of the bids' approach to the European Dimension with the aim for establishing 1,000 new relationships adding to the strategic aim of being seen as role model in Europe for small city/rural areas. These are challenging aspirations and despite the strong enthusiasm of the bid team the panel was not fully convinced the programme would deliver.

The proposed programme included many partnerships with cultural organisations in Europe, with an emphasis on commissioning, invitations and some co-productions. The panel would expect more at this stage of direct links with partners rather than through intermediaries. The programme demonstrated several key European themes (eg in projects such as "Sounds from a Safe Harbour" (lesser used languages) "Sunny South East" (coastal cities in difficulty and tourism) and "Between Bridges" (refugees and migrants). The bid has established a good project relationship with Rijeka2020 but partnerships with other ECOCs are at this stage limited to MOUs rather than mutually agreed project areas.

The panel felt more could have done to identify regions and areas in Europe similar to the Three Sisters. Co-operation with them would have developed the European Dimension and helped meet the objective of being a role model at European level. Ideas including the use of the ECOc in cultural diplomacy/relations and working with the Committee of the Regions were raised but with little detail.

Artistic programme

The panel noted the well-structured eight year management cycle proposed for the programme and delivering its legacy. The programme still has seven strands and as at preselection the panel has concerns that this may be too wide and too awkward to communicate. The proposed programme appeared to be wide in scope. The existing festivals formed the main attraction.

The panel saw considerable strengths in the strand around the cultural and creative industries, driven by the co-location of national cultural organisations, and well suited for a dispersed area. Most notably the crafts and design ecosystems are well-developed and could be seen as a role model in Europe. The arts, well-being and health pillar also demonstrated a positive approach in broadening the use of culture and creative professionals. The panel welcomed the social impact which could be derived from the "An Inclusion Town" with its multi-year approach (a feature of the bid) to social problems rather than an event driven project.

The region currently has festivals of undoubted quality with strong programmes attracting an international audience. For the ECOc however the panel was not able to identify how their 2020 editions would be different from their normal offer. The potential for new festivals was raised but with the exception of the possible "Ferry Fest" there was little information.

The panel liked the inclusive nature of the "Bring Your Own Chair" opening event and the "Culture bank" for new ideas. It was clear that the local cultural operators had been involved in the programme development. Several projects linked heritage with innovation including

the minority language based “Re-Mapping” which has strong European partnerships and legacy potential.

The panel had the view that the artistic programme was more directed to the local population than a wider European audience. There were many interesting themes studying local society and culture, in many cases from surprising and intellectual angles, but the programme lacked, outside the existing festivals, clear flagships with ambitious European partners.

Capacity

The bid has the full support of the three city councils and their chief executives.

The bid recognised that the area does not have the formal cultural infrastructure of major cities but it has shown that it can manage both large international events and small scale local activities. A new feature of the three city partnership is the working together of arts organisations. The panel was satisfied that the infrastructure was adequate. There are few building related projects and delays to these are unlikely to impinge on the delivery of the to the ECOC

The bid recognised, after an in-depth review, that the region needs to upgrade its cultural management and accordingly the bid outlines a comprehensive strategy of cultural capacity building. The panel would have appreciated more concrete information on the plans as well as the full overview.

The bid recognised the current problems of non-car transport in the region. The panel welcomed the “Culture Bus” proposal to alleviate the problems.

Outreach

The panel was satisfied that there has been widespread consultation with the communities in the region and that these had contributed to the programme development. It noted that the volunteer programme was started in January 2016, although 80 active volunteers was rather on the low side.

The panel welcomed the objective of making all cultural spaces and buildings fully accessible by 2020, and appreciated the wide definition of accessibility. The bid book was less detailed about plans to engage with those who currently are not accessing culture.

The audience development approach was well set out in the bidbook at a descriptive level but underdeveloped at this stage. The panel felt that when compared to the mapping of creative industries there was a lack of evidence on which to base an implementation plan. Several broad concepts looked interesting, including “big data” options. The panel was surprised to find in the audience development plan an objective to develop cultural offers to attract visitors out of the summer season. This potentially key objective (and one shared by other ECOCs), was not evident in the indicative calendar or in the culture programme objectives.

Management

The proposed operating budget is €31m which is allocated €23m to programme activities, €4m to marketing and €4m for administration. These are the same as in the pre-selection phase. The bidbook indicates that these are prudent amounts with “the potential for an uplift of up to 20%”. The city and region have confirmed their contribution of €7.5m. The budget includes €2m from other national agencies (eg Tourism Ireland). The region is building up its capacity to bid for EU funding; an amount of €0.8m is included in the budget. Unlike the other two candidates the proposed budget already includes the €1.5m Melina Mercouri prize, which is conditional and normally excluded at this stage.

Private sector sponsorship is forecast to contribute €3m (10%) and the bid expects ticket sales to be €1.2m.

A not-for-profit special purpose vehicle company has been set up to deliver the ECOC. The panel was not clear on the role of the Culture Board and its relationship with the Artistic Director.

The panel noted that the senior staff of the company, including the CEO and Artistic Director will be recruited by the Board through an open international call.

The panel was not convinced that giving the ECOC company the responsibility for also managing the regional strategy implementation was sound. It has the effect of considerably widening the scope of the company; managing an ECOC in itself is a major task. It also calls into question the issue of sustainability of the cultural strategy after the ECOC. The panel would have appreciated more detail on the governance proposals especially given this proposed dual role of implementing the regional cultural strategy.

The bidbook did not give information on the proposed staffing build-up.

Summary

The panel felt that the strategic approach of three cities in a rural area combining to create a shared cultural strategy and ECOC bid was a positive development for ECOCs. The lack of a leading centre could provide an example for other future bidding areas. The panel considered that the bid had developed from the pre-selection and contained several strong points (eg the Arts, Health and Wellbeing and CCIs strands). The financial plans were satisfactory and the bid-team had both engaged with the community and recognised it had more to do. The use of multi-year projects showed the ECOC was not intended to be a single year arts festival; such projects will have more impact and sustainability in social and cultural areas. The panel considered that the proposed programme relied too heavily for its artistic impact on existing festivals (notwithstanding their quality). The ideas for the European Dimension were average but could have been developed further at this stage especially given the objective to be a role model for small town/rural areas. The benefits of the three cities working together were clear; the regional cultural strategy is sound but by merging responsibility for delivery with the ECOC delivery approach was a major risk both for delivery and for legacy.

Formal Designation of Galway

This report has been sent to the ministry and the European Commission. Both will publish it on their websites. In accordance with article 11 the ministry will designate Galway to hold the title of ECOC in Ireland in 2020 based on this report. It will then inform the European Parliament, Council, Commission and the Committee of the Regions. This formal designation enables Galway to use the title “European Capital of Culture 2020”.

Melina Mercouri Prize

The panel recommends that the European Commission awards the Melina Mercouri Prize to the designated city. The payment of the €1.5m prize is deferred until 2020. It is conditional.

The conditions are (article 14 of the Decision):

- The ECOC honours its commitments made in the application
- It complies with the criteria
- It takes into account the recommendations of this selection panel report and the reports of the monitoring panel
- There has been no substantial change to the programme and strategy set out in the bidbook; this includes plans for the legacies after the ECOC year
- The budget has been maintained at a level capable of delivering a high level programme and at a level consistent with the bidbook
- The independence of the artistic team has been respected
- The European Dimension has remained sufficiently strong in the final programme
- Marketing and communications have clearly shown it is a European Union action
- Plans for monitoring and evaluation are in place.

In late 2019 the monitoring panel will make a further recommendation to the European Commission on whether to make the payment based on these conditions.

Reputation of an ECOC

A city awarded the ECOC title receives considerable international attention from the panel’s recommendation and extending well beyond the ECOC year. It has a responsibility to uphold the reputation of the ECOC brand for the benefit of previous and future title holders. The city administration should be aware that decisions taken (and not just in the cultural sector) may attract formal national, international and social media attention far beyond they are used to handling. This adds a special and new aspect to decision taking in the city over a wide range of issues.

The monitoring phase

Once an ECOC has been designated it enters the “Monitoring Phase” (article 13 of the Decision). The monitoring panel will work with the ECOC to ensure the quality of the ECOC brand and to offer advice and experience.

The bidbook at final selection becomes the de facto contract between the designated city and its citizens, the monitoring panel, the ministry, the European Commission as well to the other

candidates. It has an important role in the payment of the Melina Mercouri Prize. The monitoring panel will expect a close alignment with the bidbook during the preparation phase and during the ECOC year. Significant variations from the bidbook should be discussed with the panel, through the Commission, in advance of decisions being made.

There are three formal monitoring checkpoints (spring 2017, mid 2018 and autumn 2019) when the ECOC will meet with the panel in Brussels. Prior to each meeting the European Commission, on behalf of the monitoring panel, will invite the ECOC to provide a progress report. These reports should indicate the major developments taken by the ECOC, updates of projects in the bidbook, a risk review and an outline work plan for the subsequent period. The Commission, after consultation with the panel, will highlight additional areas which specifically need to be addressed in the reports. These will include information on the implementation of recommendations by the selection and monitoring panels.

In addition the panel may decide to visit the city to observe progress.

The panel's reports of all three meetings will be published on the Commission's website. The ECOC may decide to publish its own progress reports. The panel recommends publication in the interests of transparency.

The panel's recommendations for transition from bid to implementation

The designated ECOC now moves to a transition period from a set-up suited to a bidding campaign to the more formal ECOC delivery structure which is independent of local city administration. The recommendations in the assessment above refer primarily to the content of the proposed programme. Recommendations in this section refer to the managerial and administrative aspects of an ECOC and are based on experience of previous ECOCs.

The monitoring panel will expect the first progress report, in spring 2017, to take into account the recommendation and comments in the assessment of the bid as well as the recommendations below. The bidbook sets out several actions to be taken in 2016 and 2017. These timetables should be met.

The panel expects Galway to develop co-operation with the other two cities. The ECOC in Ireland in 2020 provides a national opportunity. It will reflect internationally not only on Galway but on the country as a whole. During the writing of this report the panel was pleased to see comments by both Limerick and Three Sisters bid teams promising to work with Galway. Dublin has already agreed to partner Galway in various projects.

The panel recommends that discussions start in 2016 on the role national organisations may take to support the ECOC (eg Irish Embassies, the national tourist organisation, other ministries, the national arts council etc).

Experience has shown that successful ECOCs use the first year after selection to establish all **the governance, management, legal and administration structures and systems**. This essential role needs to run concurrently with the first stage of the project in 2016-17.

The panel would expect (page references are to the bidbook):

- The Galway2020 company to be fully operational with its Board members appointed (page 90-91)
- The panel recommends the Ministry is invited to have a representative on the Board. Its role is to ensure cooperation from various other ministries, national institutions and organisations.
- The relationship between the Board and staff of the company to be defined and made public.
- Board members to understand their role as strategic and not executive or day to day managers. As well as holding the agency staff accountable, Board members have roles as facilitators and ambassadors. The expectation is that politicians and political appointees will be in the minority of the Executive Board (and possibly not in position of chair).
- Board members have a special responsibility to focus on the legacy objectives.
- The Chief Executive Officer (general director) and Creative/Artistic Director are appointed by the Board and in place in early 2017 after an international open recruitment process (page 92-93).
- The senior staff of the company are recruited through open competitions and contracted to be in place by spring 2017.
- The CEO issues, with the approval of the Board of Directors, financial regulations for the company.
 - An external organisation is appointed to undertake annual audits and to approve the Annual Accounts of the Company.
 - Arrangements are made for the publication of the Annual Accounts and the Annual Report to ensure transparency and public accountability.
 - The reports of the independent review by the Insight Centre for Data Analytics at NUIG are made available to the monitoring panel and made public (page 91)
- Internal management and administrative processes are in place. These will include human resources, legal (e.g. project contract arrangements), data privacy, intellectual property rights, the criteria and systems for calls for projects, the marketing and branding strategy.
- The panel draws the ECOC's attention to the external evaluation of the 2014 ECOCs (on the European Commission's website) and in particular the importance of an early direct control of marketing and communication by the ECOC company.
- Close attention should be paid to the reports of the monitoring panel for future ECOCs (2018-2019) to identify possible similar issues with Galway's own development.
- Partnerships with ECOCs from 2017 onwards are developed including shared marketing, sharing of evaluation projects and research as well as operational projects.

- An internal communications strategy is developed and implemented. This covers communications within the company, between the company and the city administration, between the company and the Ministry of Culture and between the company and the European Commission. This could also extend to the other three candidate cities to assist collaboration.
- A detailed staffing plan up to and including 2021 including the use of interns, secondees and volunteers. There should be a clear distinction between the roles each employment category will perform so that unpaid interns and volunteers do not replace fully paid staff.
- The Board and staff ensure that there is recognition that the ECOC is a European Union programme. This goes beyond the use of the EU logo in all its marketing and (on and offline) and external communications (where the logo should be *prima inter pares* of other corporate logos). This will include an emphasis on Europe Days, on inviting speakers on EU issues etc.

Thanks

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

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Dublin September 2016