



**EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE**

**Selection of the European Capital of Culture  
in 2019 in Bulgaria**

**The Selection Panel's  
Final Report**

**Sofia  
October 2014**

## Introduction

This is the report of the selection panel for the competition for the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2019 in Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian Ministry of Culture (the “Ministry”) is the national authority in charge of organising the competition.

The competition is governed by:

- Decision 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019 (the “Decision”)<sup>1</sup>,
- Rules of Procedure – “Competition for the 2019 European Capital of Culture title in Bulgaria” (the “Rules”) signed by the Bulgarian Minister of Culture (as the managing authority) and published on the Ministry’s website<sup>2</sup> on 28 May 2013.

The Ministry appointed the 13 members of the selection panel on 5 December 2013. In line with the Decision (article 6) seven were nominated by the European Union institutions (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions) and six were nominated by the Ministry in consultation with the European Commission.

The competition is in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and final selection. The Ministry issued a call for applications to all Bulgarian cities on 18 December 2012. Eight cities submitted applications by the deadline of 18 October 2013: Burgas, Gabrovo, Plovdiv, Ruse, Shumen, Sofia, Varna and Veliko Tarnovo.

The selection panel met in Sofia on 10-12 December 2013 for the pre-selection meeting. It appointed Mr Steve Green as chair and Associate Prof Svetlana Hristova as vice-chair. All members of the panel signed a declaration of non-conflict of interest.

The panel recommended that the Ministry invite four cities (Plovdiv, Sofia, Varna and Veliko Tarnovo) to progress to the final selection. The panels’ report is published on the websites of the European Commission<sup>3</sup> and the Ministry<sup>4</sup>.

The Bulgarian Minister of Culture accepted the panel’s recommendation on 16 January 2014 and the Ministry invited the four cities to submit revised applications (the bidbooks) with a deadline of 21 July 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32006D1622>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ecoc2019bulgaria.eu/images/content/4/Rules\\_bg.pdf](http://www.ecoc2019bulgaria.eu/images/content/4/Rules_bg.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/documents/ecoc/2019/preselection-report-bulgaria\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/documents/ecoc/2019/preselection-report-bulgaria_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ecoc2019bulgaria.eu/content/ДОКЛАДИ\\_13.html](http://www.ecoc2019bulgaria.eu/content/ДОКЛАДИ_13.html)

All four cities submitted their revised applications by the deadline.

Between the invitation to submit and the final selection meeting the following steps took place:

- The mandate of panel members Dr Manfred Gaulhofer and Sir Jeremy Isaacs expired on 31 December 2013 and they were replaced by Dr Suzana Žilič Fišer and Dr Ulrich Fuchs.
- All four cities met with the panel's chair in February to seek clarification of the recommendations in the pre-selection report. Two cities at each meeting.
- The rules were slightly amended, with the agreement of all four cities, to clarify typography of the bidbook and to extend the Q&A session to 90 minutes.
- The Minister of Culture held a meeting on 19 August with the mayors from the four cities. All four said they were satisfied with the arrangements and agreed to abide by the recommendation of the panel.
- A delegation of the panel (Steve Green, Svetlana Hristova, Suzana Žilič Fišer and Maria Kashukeeva) visited all four cities from 29 August to 3 September, 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.

### **Selection Meeting**

The final selection meeting took place in Sofia on 4-5 September 2014. One member was absent due to illness. All attending members re-signed statements of non-conflict of interest. Representatives of the Ministry and the European Commission attended as observers. The observers took no part in the panel's deliberations or decision.

Each city made a 30 minute presentation followed by 90 minutes in a Question & Answer session. All four delegations were led by their Mayor. The four candidates agreed the order of the presentations in advance. In each Q &A session the panel sought clarification on the objectives, the European Dimension, the City and Citizens (including legacy) and the capacity to deliver (governance, finance and staffing). A selection of the particular questions asked of each city is given in the next section.

To evaluate the bids the panel considered how candidates:

- met the objectives of the ECOC programme set out in Article 3 of the Decision and the criteria defined in Article 4 : the “European Dimension” and the “City and Citizens”
- and how the candidates demonstrated the capacity to ensure the implementation of the event, notably the governance, the proposed budget, the staffing plans, the support of local and regional authorities and the business

sector (as these are connected with the credibility and sustainability of the proposed projects).

After the meeting the chair of the panel announced the panel's recommendation at a press conference attended by the Minister, the Mayors of Plovdiv, Varna and Veliko Tarnovo, the Deputy Mayor of Sofia and members of the bid teams of the candidates.

## **The candidates' applications**

### **Varna**

In their bidbook<sup>5</sup> Varna presented their programme under the title "A port of inspiration – building trust through culture". This concept was driven by recognition of their geographic position on the Black Sea and an understanding that trust, in politicians, in society, in businesses, was at a low point. There are three strands to the programme:

- Encounters with artists
- Encounters with the future
- Encounters with the sea.

The bid has the full support of all political parties, of neighbouring municipalities and a cross-section of the private sector in the city and region. The city is currently spending slightly under 3% of its annual budget on cultural activities. It has successfully used EU funding to improve its cultural infrastructure and intends to bid for similar future funding.

Varna is developing its cultural strategy; the ECOC, the panel was informed, would be consistent with that strategy.

The proposed budget for operational activity is €68m of which the main items are €37m for programme, €11.5m for communications and marketing and €12.5 for staffing and administration. The main funding sources are expected to be the city of Varna with €31.5m, the national government €22.5m and the private sector €5.5m.

Varna presented its case to the panel through a 30 minute film based around the three strands and the city's plans to manage the project. The narrator highlighted the major events, 2 every month; projects within each strand were used as illustrations.

In the Q & A session the panel explored issues including the extent of the involvement with other countries around the Black Sea, the cities' candidacy for the European Youth Capital 2017, how it intends in practical terms to build or earn trust, the legacy after 2019, the balance between the existing high level of cultural offer in the city and the ECOC

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<sup>5</sup> [http://issuu.com/varna2019/docs/v2019\\_bid\\_book\\_eng/1](http://issuu.com/varna2019/docs/v2019_bid_book_eng/1)

programme and how the programme gives the cities' citizens a deeper understanding of the diversity of cultures within Europe.

## **Plovdiv**

Plovdiv presented their application<sup>6</sup> under the theme of "Together". This resulted from an analysis of their city, one of the most multi-cultural in Bulgaria. They perceived a risk of their city developing in separate silos and "Together" is seen as the mutual direction of progress for the city and its citizens. The strategic aims include plugging into Europe, to reduce the brain drain by opening up new horizons in cultural entrepreneurship and creative industries.

The programme is structured around four platforms:

- Transform
- Fuse
- Revive
- Relax

The bid has the full support of all political parties. The city in the two last years has spent just over 4% of its budget on cultural activities. There has been investment in cultural infrastructure, using EU funding, and more cultural investment projects are planned.

The city council has approved a cultural strategic plan 2014-2024 and a touristic development plan for 2014-20. The ECOC, the panel was informed, was fully in line with these plans. The bidbook outlined the key elements of the strategy and referred to appropriate selected projects in the ECOC programme.

The proposed operational budget is €22.3m with the main items being €14.7m for programme expenditure, €5.3m for marketing and €1.8m for staff and administration. The main funding sources are the city €7.3m; the national government €10m and the private sector €3.5m. The city will seek additional funding from various EU programmes, including structural and regional funds but has not included these in its projections.

Plovdiv's presentation to the panel explained how the bid had evolved and its relationship to the emerging cultural strategy in the city. Alongside the main platforms there would be a strong capacity building strand to develop managerial skills in the cultural sector. There was a particular emphasis on the projects with the Roma communities (20% of the city's population) with a stark statement that to be a Roma in Bulgaria can be horrifying. There were ideas for projects to address the memory of the socialist period using cultural projects including the renovation of the Kosmos cinema which also added local social development objectives. The panel was presented with a folder of expressions of support from the business community and others.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://issuu.com/plovdiv2019/docs/plovdiv2019app/1?e=9603413/8712061>

The questions from the panel included exploring the degree of citizens' engagement with the bid, how the city intended to break or limit the cultural centralisation in the country and the migration both to Sofia and abroad, whether the programme had enough high profile events to attract visitors and how realistic were the holistic approaches to Roma communities.

## **Sofia**

Sofia presented their programme in their bidbook<sup>7</sup> under the concept of "Sharing Sofia". This was driven to secure a clear cultural dimension to the city's citizens (including the 700,000 with little or no current access to culture; Sofia is the fastest growing low income city in Europe), to renew the cultural sector, to be more visible on the European cultural map and to nourish creativity and retain talent. The bid involves close working with cities in the South West region.

The programme is designed around three seasons, each with three sub-themes of sharing:

- Past Imperfect (heritage, memories, routes)
- Present Continuous (spaces, secrets, green)
- Future Reflective (possibilities, creativity, dreams)

The bid has the support of all political parties and the region's authorities. The city in recent years is spending 3.25% to 3.5% of its budget on cultural activities. There has been investment in cultural infrastructure and projects, using EU funds and more projects are planned in the next few years. The panel was presented with a folder with letters of support from the national and city business community.

The city council adopted a cultural strategy in 2012: "Sofia Creative Capital, 2013-2023". The panel was informed that the ECOC bid was in line with this strategy.

The proposed budget is €89.6m. The main elements are €68m is for programme activity, €12.4m for marketing and €8.8m for staff and administration. The main funding sources are the city €27m, national government €26m, regional partners €3.8m, sponsors and tickets €14m. The budget also includes €17m from EU programmes and structural funds.

Sofia's presentation was structured as an imaginary report back set in 2020, after a successful ECOC in 2019. The ECOC had increased tourists and Sofia's media profile, there was an increase in cultural activities, there had been a change in the attitudes of sponsors and the city had hosted European arts networks events, Sofia had learnt to look at urbanism in a new way after 50% of the events had been held in open spaces. During the presentation there was a particular emphasis on the independent arts sector. The presentation team outlined the forecast budget and said that the city will underwrite the funds required if the national government did not provide the expected forecast amount.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://issuu.com/sofia2019/docs/sofia\\_2019\\_eng\\_application\\_2\\_final/1?e=4802735/8727204](http://issuu.com/sofia2019/docs/sofia_2019_eng_application_2_final/1?e=4802735/8727204)

During the Q & A session the panel sought clarification on the involvement and support of the South West Region and its cities, the role of independent artists, the active inclusion of vulnerable social groups and marginal urban zones, Sofia's concurrent bid for European Capital of Sport 2017, working with the national cultural institutions in Sofia, whether there was a "Plan B", projects with the Roma minority, how the bid team saw the added value of an ECOC title over and above existing cultural plans and how EU structural funds would be used to fund operational projects.

### **Veliko Tarnovo**

The programme<sup>8</sup> put forward by Veliko Tarnovo was under the title "Creating Happiness". The bid has broadened its focus since the pre-selection phase, moving beyond the abstract concept of "Happiness" to a programme of clear steps to make it happen. The bid's objectives include a re-positioning of the city's image as an innovative, creative city alongside its strong heritage (and related tourism) image, to widen and deepen networks within the city and across Europe and to develop the happiness concept with others worldwide tackling the same concept. Over 65% of the city's GDP comes from tourism, culture and education.

The city's cultural strategy is in development. The panel was informed that the ECOC bid was consistent with the likely strategy.

The programme is structured around five themes:

- Cultural fortresses
- Cultural open gates
- Cultural routes
- Happy – Nes (t) s
- Cultura Ex-machina

The bid has the support of all political parties and the regional authorities. The city has been allocating between 13% and 9% of its budget to culture in recent years. This is commendably and remarkably high compared to the other candidates and to other Bulgarian cities.

The proposed operating budget is €20m of which the main elements are €14.5m is for programme activity, €4m for marketing and €1.5m for staff and administration. The main sources of funding are city €8m, national government €5m, private sector €4m, regional partners €1m and EU €2m. The EU figure excludes possible future income from regional development funds and competitive programmes such as Creative Europe.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://issuu.com/pixel.studio/docs/vt2019-bid-book-en/1>

In their presentation Veliko Tarnovo explained the significant changes to their approach and work since the pre-selection phase. Their goal was to change citizen's mentality through cultural activism and increase civic participation using culture as an engine of growth. There was a need to re-balance tourism towards "overnighters" compared to day trippers. They saw culture in a broad context, for example between generations and by respecting the environment. The presentation's concept was focused on the simple, and eternal, values and factors such as happiness, bread, kids, family and an international community creating artistic practices and lifestyles in a small Bulgarian city, the historic capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom.

The panel sought clarification on a number of issues. These included the engagement with artists and the artistic aspects of the bid, the inter-relationship of heritage and the contemporary, the role of the local cultural centres, the chitalishtes, the "Volvox" concept, the use of "fortress" term, the relationship with other cultural routes such as the Council of Europe's, the reduction in budget from the pre-selection phase.

### **The Panel's Evaluation**

The panel was impressed with all four applications. They proposed four different approaches to the title of European Capital of Culture. All four contained promising projects within their programmes which the panel considered in tune with contemporary European trends in urban regeneration and the re-appropriation of cultural memories through the arts. All made significant attempts to meet the criteria of the competition as well as meeting local objectives. The panel appreciated in particular the close relationship all four candidates had established with their Italian counterparts. The panel thanked them (and the many citizens involved) for their considerable efforts in preparing the bids which extended from their bidbooks, through the visits to the presentations and the answer session.

### **Varna**

The panel appreciated the long-term programme of cultural development in the city and the plans to use the ECOC title to enhance the existing offer. It is a successful city based on tourism with a strong mainstream festival-based cultural offer with considerable engagement with international artists and performers. There was clear community support for the programme (although there was less evidence of the active engagement with minority and vulnerable citizens) and the bid-book set out the objectives for the city. The panel noted with enthusiasm of the volunteers in helping with the recent flood relief. Specific projects which impressed the panel included the plans to convert the former Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship Monument into a Black Sea Centre for Inter-Cultural Dialogue, the projects the "hot summer of the Cold War" and "adventures in plattenbau". The panel considered that the European Dimension was nevertheless under-developed compared to the expectations at this stage. It was not clear how Varna was positioning itself in a European rather than Bulgarian context. It would have liked to have seen more co-operation and co-production

projects involving artists and cultural institutions from the Black Sea countries. The proposed projects with the Italian shortlisted cities based around a “Month of the Italian City” were limited in scope. The panel had concerns about the unrealistic budget of some of the key projects and whether the high number of new venues would be completed in time. The panel also had concerns over the longer term recurrent sustainability given the number of projected new cultural venues. The panel felt that the bid had not clearly differentiated the tourist development aspects (a valuable by-product but not a prime objective of ECOCs) from the projects aimed at meeting the city and citizens criteria especially increasing the awareness of citizens of the diversity of European cultures.

### **Plovdiv**

The panel appreciated the honest appraisal of the challenges facing the city. At a strategic level Plovdiv positioned itself in common with many other European cities of both seeking (successfully) inward investment and yet having a concurrent “brain and skills drain”. The cultural strategy is holistic and includes a focus on education, creative industries, cultural tourism as well as the arts sector itself.

The proposed programme is coherent. It fixes onto the cultural strategy and the city challenges in a well-designed manner. The four key themes are clear and effective and will be easy to communicate to audiences and citizens. The programme is ambitious, it has risks and it will need strong management.

The Plovdiv bid is actively seeking views and experiences from the rest of Europe: an approach welcomed by the panel. This was noted, for example, in its partnership plans with Biennials in Istanbul, Thessaloniki and Bucharest. The panel welcomed the range of projects with schools and young people including those under the (awkwardly named) CABADPLO (Capacity Building and Audience Development Strategy) schemes. These aim to foster skills, abilities, processes and resources of local and regional organisations.

It was clear to the panel that the bid had engaged citizens from many backgrounds in the city. There was a strong commitment and participation of the social, economic and cultural fabric of the city in a well-balanced top-down and bottom-up process which are crucial to the city and citizens dimension. The Kosmos cinema project derives from community activism and interleaves architectural heritage with community engagement and memory of socialist period.

The panel was impressed with the approach taken with the Roma, a core part of Plovdiv society. The strong support of community leaders in artist-led projects integrates social development with cultural diversity (as required in the ECOC criteria).

The European Dimension was covered in all three of the criteria’s elements. Of particular note were projects to use the Cyrillic alphabet and the Roma culture, both

linking to the criteria covering common aspects of European culture and its cultural diversity. The projects with the shortlisted Italian cities were well developed and detailed.

It has a realistic (and prudent) budget forecast with room for further development. It takes a conservative line to possible EU funding at this stage. The panel appreciated the attention given to the legacy in 2020 and beyond. The bid contained good support for creative industries development. The panel noted that the programme engaged with national and local institutions and NGOs. The panel retains concerns over the management capacity; it appreciated the honesty of the bid artistic director who will stand down for the implementation phase as this requires different skills.

## **Sofia**

The panel acknowledged the comprehensive and detailed bidbook. It noted the importance attached in the city's cultural strategy to the development of opportunities for the independent arts sector and welcomed the evidently effective progress currently being made. This came through strongly as the main theme in the presentation and indeed of the bid as a whole. The panel noted the ambitious plans for cultural infrastructure projects, again primarily for the benefit of independent artists and intended to be supported by EU funds (e.g. the Undergara and Zone Culture projects). The programme was extensive and intensive but seemed to the panel to lack a clear focus which united the multi-stranded concept in a European context. The added value of an ECOC was not easily seen, given the current successful strategy implementation for the independent sector. There was little sense of Sofia seeking to learn how to "share culture" and arts as processes of co-creation.

The panel considered that the European Dimension was unclear and could have been more explicit in the bidbook and presentation. As with all bids (and most cities current cultural offers) there were artistic visits and European arts network events. However the European Dimension criterion covers more than this; there was little clarity in a broader European context based on subjects and themes. A convincing exception was the project to create a centre for translation for the lesser used languages which the panel welcomed.

The projects with the shortlisted Italian cities were well developed and detailed. The panel would have welcomed a greater emphasis on developing the artistic participation of citizens in the marginalised quarters of the city, matching one of the key challenges identified by the city. The panel had concerns over the level of interaction and involvement of the bid with the general cultural sectors, audiences and with the major national cultural institutions in the city.

The panel was disappointed with the approach taken to Roma projects. The Roma are not really a "target audience" as noted in the bidbook; they are a considerable element

of Bulgarian society and European cultural diversity. The panel welcomed the steps being made to distance the Sofia Development Association from the city council as recommended by the panel at pre-selection. Overall the ECOC bid project seemed to complement different strategies for the city rather than connecting culture as a strategic driver for the city and increasing a sense of Europeanness which is one of the main criteria to achieve a good European Dimension. The panel had concerns over the size of the budget notably in its very high relationship to the city's recent expenditure on culture; the use of EU structural funds for programme expenditure was not made clear enough nor was the certainty of this funding.

### **Veliko Tarnovo**

The panel appreciated the strategic objectives of the city and its desire to diversify its tourist offer. Developing a strong reputation as a centre for contemporary art production and creative industries is an ambitious objective and one shared by many European cities. The bid also sought to better integrate the large student population into civic life, again a pan European issue. These gave the bid a good strategic level entry into the European Dimension. The panel noted the steps taken to bring an international audience to the city through the first world conference of local community cultural centres. The panel noted the steps currently underway to develop the use of culture in social development in the plattenbau estates working with European partners.

The panel considered that although the city had identified its challenges and put them into a European context the programme was not extensive enough to achieve them. It appeared under developed at this stage, perhaps reflecting the change of direction from the pre-selection to selection phase. Given the obvious and important cultural heritage of the city the panel would have expected, given the objectives of becoming a centre of contemporary arts and architecture, a more innovative, risky and challenging project. The panel appreciated project ideas such as Augmented Realities and Technological Boundaries which indicated the direction explicit in the objectives but underrepresented in the whole programme.

The panel considered the European Dimension to be limited both in its engagement with a wide range of cultural operators and artists in Europe and in addressing the common European themes which had been identified. For example the project to link former capitals of countries/regions was imaginative but would need to be rooted in their contemporary situation and experience rather than their historic past. As noted above the city had identified itself with European themes but the panel felt that the programme did not subsequently take them forward in a clear way. The proposed projects with the Italian shortlisted cities were limited in scope at this stage.

Within the city and citizens criteria the panel was less certain about the practical legacy and the degree of engagement with a wide range of citizens in the bid preparation.

The panel had concerns over the proposed horizontal management approach. Whilst adequate for bid preparation experience has shown this is not an appropriate or effective management style to manage such a major event as an ECOC. The proposed project budgeting did not appear in line with most ECOCs (e.g. with an unrealistic low budget for the opening and closing events compared to some projects, for example a medieval folk-festival).

### **The Panel's Decision**

Following the presentations and Q &A sessions the panel reviewed the candidates against the criteria of the ECOC Decision and their capacity to deliver. The panel was presented with four different bids from four different cities facing their own challenges and each with its own interpretations of the criteria. Each of the bids had its strong points as well as weaknesses. It was clear that each city both during their years of bid preparation and since the pre-selection meeting have worked considerably not only on the bid but also on enhancing the cultural offer in their city. The bidbooks made this clear, as did the pre-meeting visits. The panel was looking, according to the Decision, at the programme specifically designed for the ECOC year.

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

The rules of the competition required a secret ballot with the winning city requiring a simple majority. Each panel member had one vote. In the ballot 8 of the 12 members voted for Plovdiv. As this was a majority according to the rules, the panel recommends to the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture that they nominate, as the European Capital of Culture in 2019, the city of

### **Plovdiv**

The panel strongly commends the bids of Sofia, Varna and Veliko Tarnovo and hopes they will build on the energy, commitment and momentum of their bids and seek to undertake as much of their programme as possible. The panel notes that all four candidates promised in their bidbooks to co-operate with each other and often mentioned a "Plan B". As well as the benefits to each city, 2019 offers an opportunity to Bulgaria as it hosts its first European Capital of Culture.

### **The next steps: designation**

This report has been submitted to the Ministry and the European Commission. Both will publish it on their websites. The Ministry will formally nominate one city to hold the title of

ECOC in Bulgaria in 2019 based on this report. By the end of 2014 the Ministry will duly inform the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions of its nomination. The European Parliament may forward an opinion, based on this report, to the European Commission within three months of receiving the nomination.

The Council of the European Union, upon a recommendation of the European Commission drawn up on the opinion of the European Parliament and the justification in this report will formally designate a city as the ECOC 2019 in Bulgaria. This is expected in May 2015. Only then may the recommended city call itself “European Capital of Culture 2019”.

### **The next steps: the monitoring phase**

Once an ECOC has been designated it enters the “Monitoring Phase” (article 10 of the Decision). The Monitoring Panel (the seven members of the selection panel nominated by the European Union institutions) will work with the ECOC to ensure the quality of the ECOC brand and to offer advice and experience.

The European Commission will invite the ECOC to provide progress reports and attend three meetings of the panel in Brussels:

- Autumn 2015 an “informal” meeting
- Autumn 2016 the first “formal” meeting. The panel’s report will be published
- Spring 2018. At this meeting the panel will decide whether to recommend to the European Commission that the ECOC be granted the Melina Mercouri Award. Its report will be published.

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

The Melina Mercouri Prize is awarded by the European Commission on the basis of the report issued by the Monitoring Panel after the second monitoring meeting. The Prize is not automatic and is dependent on the ECOC meeting the objectives of the ECOC action set out in the Decision and how it has implemented the recommendations of the Selection and Monitoring Panels.

The Prize is monetary, currently €1.5m and if all conditions are met, is awarded three months before the start of the ECOC year (in September 2018 for 2019)

### **The next steps: the panel’s recommendations**

The panel makes these recommendations to the recommended city. The monitoring panel will expect a progress report on these in autumn 2015.

Experience has shown that successful ECOCs use the first year after selection to establish all the governance, management and administration structures and systems. This allows the

subsequent two years to focus on programme development in time for the full programme to be in place by mid-2018. The panel would expect:

- The Foundation to be legally established and the Board appointed.
- The Board to understand its role as strategic not executive, facilitative not obstructive, ambassadorial and financially accountable. The expectation is that politicians and political appointees will be in the minority of the Board.
- The recruitment through open competition, as set out in the bidbook, of the senior posts of Chief Executive and Artistic Director together with the Finance and Marketing Directors. All posts should be filled by early 2015. The senior management organigram needs revisiting; to clarify the CABADEPLO post's position and to consider giving the Artistic Director a more significant oversight of the marketing function.
- A staffing plan should be developed. The ambitious and risky nature of the programme requires strong leadership and management from this team, supported by the Board.
- The internal administrative systems to be in place and operating (including finance, human resources, legal (project contract arrangements), data privacy, intellectual property rights, criteria and systems for calls for projects, the marketing, branding strategy and plans and the external auditing arrangements.
- A start to the monitoring and evaluation process including the collection of base-year qualitative and quantitative data. A noticeable trend in recent ECOCs (e.g. Aarhus2018) is for evaluation to be in progress and open during the development period to record progress being made towards objectives. This runs in parallel but ahead of the standard evaluation which takes place after the ECOC year. The evaluations should include references to the two main ECOC criteria, the European Dimension (e.g. how Plovdiv citizens become more aware of the diversity of European cultures as a result of the ECOC) and the city and citizens (e.g. how citizens feel more engaged in civic decision making).
- To continue discussions with the national government over its contribution to the ECOC (and possibly to the other three candidates) so that long term planning can take place in a reasonably secure financial context.
- A working relationship between the ECOC Foundation and the appropriate senior staff in the Council administration (in many departments) to be established.
- Given the acknowledged prudent budgeting of the ECOC steps should be taken to review the financial forecasts. This should include exploring EC funding, as outlined in the bidbook. A specialist fundraiser function (seeking funds from all sources) may be of use in the early years.
- An ECOC should undertake a re-assessment of the projects in the bid-book in this first foundation year. The bid-book, its programme and objectives, will remain the principal focus: it is the de facto contract to hold the title. Evaluations should be based on the aspirations set out in the book. However a re-think of the impact and extent of flagship projects is frequently carried out. The Monitoring Panel will watch carefully for any significant changes.

- The ECOC should retain the momentum and engagement with citizens and cultural operators in the city through meetings and events (e.g. around Europe Day in May 2015) in line with the city and citizens objective.
- The European Dimension needs a constant refresh and enhancement. Previous ECOCs often find difficulty in meeting this criterion as the programme develops in detail. This trend should be resisted and the European Dimension kept to the forefront.
- The Adata island project is both challenging and risky. It has the potential to be the major “flagship” project in the programme with an international appeal. However it needs careful and specialist management to succeed. The panel recommend a thorough re-analysis of the project to ensure it meets its potential.
- Given current trends the impact of the digital media will be very strong and even more important. The management team should expect to develop a stronger cultural digital presence (beyond marketing and promotion).

### **Thanks**

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

Mr Steve Green – Chair

Prof. Assoc. Svetlana Hristova – Vice Chair

Dr Ulrich Fuchs

Ms Maria Kashukeeva

Prof. Kamelia Nikolova

Mr Jordi Pardo

Mr Norbert Riedl

Mr Georgi Toshev

Dr Lyudmil Vagalinski

Prof Dr Elisabeth Vitouch

Dr Suzana Žilič Fišer

Prof. Ivaylo Znepolski

Mrs Anu Kivilo (absent)