



EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE

# **Selection of the European Capital of Culture in 2023 in Hungary**

## **The Selection Panel's Final Report**

**Budapest  
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## Introduction

This is the report of the selection panel (the "panel") for the competition for the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2023 in Hungary.

The Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary (the "Ministry") is the managing authority of the competition which is governed by Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 (the "Decision") and by the "Rules of procedure – Competition for the 2023 European Capital of Culture title in Hungary" (the "Rules") signed by the Hungarian Minister of Human Capacities on 20 February 2017 and published on the Ministry's website .

The competition is in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and selection. All information on the procedure including history and updates can be found on the Ministry's website.

## Selection Panel

A panel of 12 independent experts was established for the selection process in line with Article 2 of the Rules. Ten members of this panel were appointed by the European Union institutions and bodies (the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions). However, the member designated by the Committee of the Regions dismissed from the panel in September 2018 and could not be replaced in due time for the final selection meeting. The Ministry decided to appoint two national experts.

The panel appointed Mrs. Aiva Rozenberga as chair and Mr. Csaba Kaél 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 round

The Ministry issued a call for applications to all Hungarian cities on 20 February 2017. There were seven applications submitted by the deadline of 20 December 2017: **Debrecen, Eger, Gödöllő, Győr, Székesfehérvár, Szombathely and Veszprém.**

The panel met in Budapest on 13 – 15 February 2018 for the pre-selection meeting. The panel recommended that the Ministry invite three cities (**Debrecen, Győr and Veszprém**) to progress to the final selection stage. The panel's report is published on the website of the European Commission .

The Minister of Human Capacities accepted the panel's recommendation and invited the three cities to submit revised applications with a deadline of 9 November 2018.

All three cities submitted their revised applications ("bid-books") by the deadline.

A delegation of the panel (Ulrich Fuchs, Pauli Sivonen, Tamás Fejérdy and Csaba Káel) visited all three cities between 10 and 12 December 2018, spending one day in each. They were accompanied by observers from the Ministry and the European Commission. The delegation reported back to the full panel at the selection meeting.

## Selection Meeting

The final selection meeting took place in Budapest in 13 and 14 December 2018. 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 30 minutes presentation followed a Question & Answer session of 60 minutes. Delegations had up to ten members and they were all led by their Mayor.

The Chair of the panel announced the panel's recommendation at a press conference after the meeting on 14 December 2018 in the presence of the Deputy State Secretary in charge of cultural relations and developments, Mrs. Anikó Kruzsai Herter.

## National context

2023 will be the second-time Hungary hosts an ECoC after Pécs in 2010. The criteria for an ECoC have changed considerably since then. They now embrace a deeper and wider scope of the role of culture in the city and European development. A particular new requirement is for a city to have a formal cultural strategy including the ECoC project. This ensures that the ECoC is an element in progress of a city and not a one-off event. It therefore 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 however based on the programme specifically set out for the ECoC year in the bid-book, not the current cultural offer in a city or "business as usual". The panel recognized three strong bids reflecting different situations in the respective areas.

The panel expects the relevant Hungarian authorities to announce soon the Government's financial contribution to the ECoC project so that the winning team can start working immediately without budget uncertainty.

## 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.

## Debrecen

Debrecen, Hungary's second largest city and former capital, presented its bid under the banner of "Sharing Horizons", which is a development of the theme from the first bidding phase. The bid presents Debrecen as a city in a radical transformation process, where multicultural change is boosted by a strategic approach of the municipality, international investors and an increasing number of international students. Culture – with a focus on European collaboration – should become the catalyzer of this transformation process. With the ECoC title, Debrecen would receive a "European scholarship" to become a more open and progressive city and region. Debrecen aims to impact the whole county and involve the surrounding region and cross border partners.

The "Sharing Horizons" concept is presented as a strong metaphor for freedom, open-mindedness and interaction, and originates from the geographical location of the city. The bid is facing the stereotype of being "flat" or "boring" resulting from the county's profile (i.e. the Puszta steppe). The "Horizons" concept is meant to open a renewed regional and European dialogue. It is based on three main programme areas, which – it is hoped – will lead to a mindshift.

The Space dimension is dealing with the topics of mobility and landscape with a logical impact on sustainability. Knowledge, know-how and communities are key components of

the Mind horizon. The last programme area is dedicated to the phenomenon of Time originating from history and heritage into the investigation of future scenarios.

The bid-book is available at <https://www.2023debrecen.hu/en>

### Contribution to the cultural strategy

Debrecen adopted a cultural strategy for the period 2018–2030 in December 2017 as an important element in the long term vision of a sustainably growing and dynamic city, which is a regional leader. The main challenges identified – such as the lack of human resources, the mis-balance regarding the financing of cultural operators and the difficulty to reach international visibility – helped to set up the main goals of this strategy. The latter defines three key tools: capacity building, mindshift and network building.

The capacity building plans – with the Creative Cultural Academy at their core – can be considered as positively ambitious, but there is a need for a clear vision regarding the tools and outputs with the view to increasing the number of well-educated, creative and internationally experienced cultural managers. The University of Debrecen could potentially be a good partner for the future development of this Academy, no matter the result of the ECoC competition. Impact on the development of creative industries could also be considered as a strong point of the bid. The mapping done is an asset, even if the implementation process is at a very early stage. Moreover, the establishment of a new Creative and Cultural Development Agency with a close cooperation with the Economic Development Centre for the legacy period is a promising point. Legacy activities with concrete projects are well structured.

The strategy seems to be linked well with the ECoC actions, and expected success factors are accompanied with good indicators for the monitoring process (at this stage of the project). The monitoring and evaluation functions are set to be independent from the governance of the ECoC project, which is a positive element. International experts are planned to be involved in this process. There are four milestones for the monitoring and evaluation process, that are quite generic, but this seems to be set reasonably with due consideration to the different phases of the project. Whereas success indicators are well formulated as said before, some of them could have been described in more detail. Though the role of the University should be described more precisely, the overall research and preparatory work for monitoring and evaluation can be considered as a strong and promising point of the bid.

### European dimension

The cultural programme of Debrecen is designed to resonate with ideas of exchange and dialogue with European partners, looking into the future without ignoring the past. It highlights common values, history and heritage while celebrating unique differences in the local, regional and continental contexts. The process of sharing that is embedded in the slogan expresses the principle on which the European dimension should be constructed. Concrete topics that are touched in the bid include: sustainability in Europe, mobility and integration, tolerance and dialogue between cultures and religions as well as new visions for a stronger Europe.

The “Missing Twins 2023” (project with UK cities that had planned bidding for the ECoC 2023 competition in the UK, which was ultimately cancelled due to the country’s decision to leave the EU), Ukraine, Georgia, Serbia, as well as the 2024 ECoC candidates from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Banja Luka and Mostar) and Norway (Bodø) are strong elements of the European dimension.

90% of the projects listed in the bid-book are having confirmed international partners, which is a high number reflecting a very positive ambition. Connections with cross-border partners and other ECoC cities are one of the strongest elements of the whole bid. Nevertheless according to the panel, the international aspect is too much represented by top-down institutions, and strengthening the role of NGO sector is certainly an aspect to be further developed. Outreach towards both local and international audiences is not very innovative, but have good dynamics and the strategy described seems to be realistic.

Projects like “Horizon Festival” and “Heights and Mounts” have a big potential to engage large audiences also and to have legacy.

### Cultural and artistic content

The design of the programme structure highlights the connection to the local development strategies and heads towards the city's transformation into a more open and culture-driven city. Concrete projects and examples are presented to achieve this target, in particular “The Missing Twins 2023”, “The Travelling Ox”, “Horizon Festival” and cultural forums (“A Soul for Europe Debrecen Forum”, “The Future Academy” etc.) while many others have parameters to become successful international projects.

The bid defines six key areas of the programme aiming to open new horizons: Landscape, Mobility, Knowledge and Know-how, Communities, Past and Future. One of the strong points is the motivation to engage the other competing cities Győr and Veszprém to deliver one of the key bid-book projects. Also the “Missing Twins 2023” project is a good reflection on the difficult situation for UK citizens and the whole country. An interesting artistic residency programme is also planned.

The programme is well structured and includes many strong projects in every strand, which are well anchored in the specific local context. Though it targets different audiences, the concept as such could include more intensively the NGO sector and address the local features and city's weaknesses in a more ambitious way.

Furthermore, the programme as such lacks a more coherent artistic and cultural vision. A narrative which would translate the major change expected from the ECoC project is missing, while the six pillars are a bit generic and are described more like topics. However, as already mentioned above, the programme includes many strong points and projects and it deserves to be further developed regardless of the outcome of the ECoC competition.

The selection process for concrete programme projects was organized from the idea phase in 2017 on three levels – with citizens, the cultural scene and a consulting college – which is a relevant way for ensuring participation. Additionally, the panel also considers the mini-grant scheme as a good proposal. One of the biggest challenges is described as finding a balance between the focus on Europe and the internationalization of the city's cultural life while not leaving aside local artists and organizations which have a central role in keeping the vibe alive. However the overall impression of the panel was that the role of the local cultural community was not sufficiently strengthened.

### Capacity to deliver

The mayor described the city as a sleeping beauty and confirmed in the presentation that the bid, including the city's financial contribution, has the unanimous support of the major political parties in the city, and that the city as such is ready for a mindshift. Indeed, on 23 February 2017, all political parties and organisations in the General Assembly signed a joint declaration of support. The Hajdú-Bihar County also supported the application of Debrecen together with the Association of Cities and Villages.

There is an appropriate cultural infrastructure available in the city, in addition to considerable, but feasible, renovation plans.

The majority of the bid is dedicated to improving soft elements, which makes the ambition regarding the capacity to deliver much easier to achieve. The bid presented an ambitious but reasonable development plan.

The geographical location – which could be considered as a disadvantage – is transformed into the ambitious but feasible goal to become a cross-border center not only for the north-eastern part of Hungary but also for neighboring countries. Very solid transportation connections make this plan achievable from a technical point of view. The current capacity of local accommodation is exceeding 7.000 beds and as accommodation infrastructure is being developed, this aspect is deemed satisfactory and shows how the tourism business is on the rise in Debrecen.

## Outreach

The civic engagement with online consultations, boxes for ideas and regular meetings with representatives of the institutional sector, as well as the work of the NGO coordinator are all appropriate approaches.

The plan for citizens' involvement is well structured and described, from the community mapping through the consultation process, development of the bid into projects implementation.

There are some very promising projects like "Culture Taxi", "Inclusion and Resistance" or "My Horizon" that could bring good impact in terms of outreach. One of the strong elements to be mentioned is the "Craft for Life" project supporting young, talented artists from Roma communities. The tools – including participatory budgeting, microgrants, cooperative projects with schools – are in place and promising. The panel appreciates the Debrecen team's plans to engage young people and have activities for the different "disadvantaged" target groups. Also the digital engagement for all the ages and other targets groups described in the bid is an aspect to be highlighted.

However, one of the weaker points relates to audience development that is more about accessibility and education than focusing on a real mindshift. The audience development approach lacks strategic, structural and sustainable elements.

## Management

The proposed budget for covering the operating expenditure doubled from the pre-selection phase and it is now €40,3m, with €11,8m from the city's budget, €20m from the National Government, €3m from the University of Debrecen and €4m from private sector. Due to national regulations, a regional contribution is not expected.

The target regarding EU funding at €1,5m is considered low. The Creative Europe programme was identified as one of the main challenges of the region and mentioned as a potential tool for a cultural shift. Interreg funding is also mentioned for several projects and, together with Erasmus+ and other EU funding, creates a solid base for co-financing cultural projects.

The fundraising and sponsoring strategy is inspired by good examples of past ECoC cities and seems to be realistic. The team is positive to achieve the rather ambitious target of €4m from the private sector.

However the role of the University requires a clearer description. On one side it is providing €3m in form of programme contribution (which is a welcomed development) and on the other side it acts as a partner of the independent evaluation and monitoring team.

The city tends to spend a reasonable 11% of its annual budget for cultural activities. In general, the operating budget is well distributed in terms of timing and in split between programming, communication and wages.

The Debrecen 2023 Non-Profit Ltd. organization has been in place since 2016 and the organizational chart provided in the bid-book gives a clear and understandable structure regarding the team and the other connected bodies. The governance of the ECoC has been considerably developed since the pre-selection phase. The chart also openly described the main weaknesses of the project with clear directions on how they could be overcome. Yet the role of the artistic board and the project leadership was not clear.

The communication and marketing strategy is in place and it is based on the project slogan "Sharing Horizons". One stronger communication point regards the intention to open Hungary via languages and digital communication (including VR, AR etc.) involving local citizens, surrounding areas and other countries with an impact on Carpathian countries. Practical aspects like the internal communication and the importance of proper work with providers of local services (taxi drivers, restaurants etc.) are a good starting point. However, the marketing and communication build on too conservative ideas as the "Sharing Horizons" narrative is a little bit generic.

## Summary

The panel felt this was a solid bid. Debrecen made a huge improvement from the first phase of the bidding process. The project moved into a good direction to meet the challenges faced by the city. The programme emerges from a shared vision from the city administration and the cultural sector.

The European dimension intentions are positive, especially with the interactions with the ECoC network and cross-border cooperation. The capacity building programme will provide a sustainable legacy in terms of improved cultural management. The proposed artistic programme has stronger and weaker elements but missing a more coherent artistic vision. For instance the mobility programme area could tackle some more contemporary topics such as migration. Both the capacity to deliver and outreach are on a very good level and hopefully will be used by the city for future development and the sought after mindshift.

## Győr

The city of Győr presented its ECoC candidature together with many regional partners under the title "FLOW".

The city's cultural profile is related to its rich historical traditions with many remarkable buildings, increasing tourism flows, a vibrant cultural life with well-established cultural institutions, and a strong involvement of the public and also business sectors.

The "Flow" multi-layer concept is described as a natural phenomenon: flow as the real or virtual opportunity to transmit information, and flow as a key concept of a positive philosophy. The narrative is based on the flow of people (wars and migration), the flow of positive philosophy where we are inspiring each other, the flow of information allowing to summarize or reposition ourselves and also the flow of nature with an accent on rivers.

The ECoC programme includes three main strategic packages, each of them broken into four categories that were already indicated in the pre-selection phase. Reflecting a real flow, the programme is not rigid but instead is said to be flexibly organized.

Three main programme packages are: WAY, CITY and DIALOGUE.

The bid-book is available at <http://2023Győr.hu/home/>

## Contribution to the cultural strategy

The city of Győr adopted recently two strategies, a Cultural strategy for the period 2018–2029 in December 2017 and the Creative Győr Strategy in November 2018, which shall support each other and ensure the city's long term development. The creative strategy is a document that is meant to strengthen the position of the city as a place where people want to live and where creativity and innovation are part of everyday life. In this way, the city intends to support not only its prosperous economy and developed industry but also its educational, cultural, social, and art institutions, the daily life of its community, and the future of its youngest generation. This strategy identifies four main pillars: middle-class participation, community, creativity and radiance. Links between these strategies and the ECoC project are visible but could have been more specific and better defined in terms of success indicators.

The cultural, social, urban and economic impacts of the ECoC project are briefly described, however providing clear performance indicators. Definition of success, including the idea of the city being perceived as a meaningful place in the inhabitants' lives and the rise in their European self-awareness, is a good approach.

The city is one of 168 cities included in the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (CCCM) produced by the European Commission. This CCCM monitoring process will be used as a base for the ECoC assessment. Regarding evaluation and monitoring, the bid also proposes to establish two bodies, namely the Evaluation Panel and the International Evaluators' Circle including international experts with expertise in ECoC projects. Biannual reports are to be published between 2019 and 2025. The monitoring and evaluation procedure is described in quite a reasonable way but not sufficiently in detail

to allow a concrete assessment related to success indicators, independence of the process and other key elements.

### European dimension

The city of Győr is planning to capitalize on the Flow concept in seeking solutions for deepening and expanding European integration. One concrete project expressing the European dimension is the existing “Festival of Five Churches” showcasing how architectural heritage may be utilized respectfully and yet in a future-oriented way. The idea is to change the stereotypes of Judeo-Christian culture and – through the festival – to provide an opportunity to discuss ways to learn about the cultures of the others. Some other strong elements of European dimension are also visible especially in the music field.

The Győr team also showed a strong willingness and ambition in respect to the number and quality of partners for the artistic programme. Arts institutions, philharmonic orchestra or umbrella associations like YOUROPE play an important role in the process of internationalization. The bid also mentions well-known artists or companies as part of the core structure of the artistic programme such as Sasha Waltz, Fetsum Sebat, Transe Express Company and many others. The organization also counts on Thematic pathways with artistic action teams both in digital and analogue or traditional direct way, which is an interesting but at the same time quite a demanding activity. Cooperation with other ECoC cities is described in a concrete way while other types of cooperation are presented in a more abstract and generic way.

The European dimension was expressed much better during the presentation than in the bid-book. As a whole, the panel felt that the European dimension was lacking a clear European narrative going beyond simply mentioning some promising European topics or projects that would still need to be further developed. The involvement of cross-border regions, notably in neighbouring Austria and Slovakia, was also little developed, despite the good intentions mentioned.

### Cultural and artistic content

The ECoC programme includes three main strategic packages, each of them broken into four categories that were already indicated in the pre-selection phase.

The structure of the programme is designed in an ambitious way, but with a clear structure. The three main programme packages are: WAY, CITY and DIALOGUE.

The WAY programme package aims to present European routes crossing Győr, described as a learning process from the past to a distant future. The CITY programme package aims to foster fruitful discussions and thinking together through creative forums, missions and opportunities. The DIALOGUE programme package represents the pure flow of knowledge and information and aims to help nations and communities learn to know from one another and thus come closer to understanding our shared European culture.

The thematic pathways are an interesting concept bringing artists from Hungary and other countries to one spot with audiences both in alternative and public venues. Several exhibition projects shall tour European cities and be hosted by European partners or Hungarians Institutes of culture, which could bring a very positive impact on the development of international relations and promotion of the Hungarian culture. The participation of the local audiences and artists directly in creative process is clearly a positive element. For instance the large scale flow exhibition between Debrecen and Nuremberg has clear vision and dynamics and could also bring interesting communication opportunities if well connected to digital part. The panel appreciates a big amount of international partners even though their participation is most probably at some cases intended but not arranged.

The CITY programme package addresses the inhabitants of Győr, from all targets groups and engages Győr's cultural, educational, social, Roma and other institutions. The plans are to provide grant funding for several projects for district communities for mapping their neighborhood and history. There are also mentoring projects highlighting musicians with native Győr Roby Lakatos bringing on spot gypsy music both in and out of the city.

National pride, participation and heritage is well combined in the “Signs in the city” project using symbolism like flags and banners. Many interesting workshops are embedded in the programme.

The DIALOGUE programme package will generate discussions and debates in the year 2023, in various branches of the arts and in culture in general, establishing frameworks and forums. In the years leading up to 2023, on the other hand, dialogue will be key in preparing the implementation of the European Capital of Culture programme in Győr, involving different target groups. The main projects are linked for instance with baroque not only from the traditional historical perspective but also presenting this period of the city’s history as an inspiration for future technological advancement. This results in various projects covering conferences, mini exhibitions, garden tours, sedan-chair race to “Barock”, a rock festival. Moreover, a contemporary art festival, musical festivals, a theatre festival and many other projects are listed in this programme area.

According to the panel, the programme concept has certain dynamics, with some potential for reaching out to European audiences. On the other hand the historical elements are more developed and the programme is missing stronger attractions or surprising flagship projects.

### Capacity to deliver

The ECoC project has the clear support of the mayor and the unanimous support of the major political parties in the city. It is also linked to national development strategies. The mayors of Sopron, Dunajska Streda and other cities expressed their support to the Győr bid. Also the business and educational sectors support the candidacy.

The current situation of cultural infrastructure in the city is positive and so is the intention to decentralize from downtown area to the periphery. Youth community scenes, new meeting spaces, the Design Incubator Centre and other investment projects are very promising elements resulting from the analysis of the needs and expectations done by the city. Transportation and accessibility have very high standards. Accommodation capacities and a remarkable increase in overnight stays give a very solid base for the future development of cultural tourism.

One of the most visible and interesting investment projects is the City Event Park together with the Festival Reception area. These venues are intended to create a new, youthful and creative inner-city alternative in Győr. Despite a very relevant starting point, the project misses a clearer feasibility and sustainability strategy.

### Outreach

The outreach strategy shows good will and according to the bid local inhabitants were involved in co-creating Győr’s future. The participation of the local cultural sector with weekly meetings and feedback for programme ideas is also a positive approach. However, the structure and systematic approach are not well visible from the description in the bid-book, contrasting with the presentation that was very vivid, full of energy and positive engagement.

### Management

The proposed budget for covering the operating costs is €25m, with €9,6m from the city’s budget, €8m from the National Government, €4,8m from the EU and €2,5m from the private sector. Due to national regulations, no regional contribution is expected. Győr presented rather ambitious targets in terms of EU funding with €4,8m (not including Melina Mercouri Prize). In general, the operating budgets are well distributed in terms both of timing and content.

The strategy and concrete projects for EU funding are reasonable and well described. On the other hand, the fundraising strategy for private sponsorship is rather generic.

The organization structure provided in the bid-book provides a good overview of the management structure. The positions are described in a detailed way and the independence of the artistic director is underlined, which is a positive element.

The city's strengths and weaknesses are touched in a very honest way, which is much appreciated. The communication and marketing strategy is in place with a slightly revised slogan "We are the flow". Yet, the chapters dedicated to communication and marketing are written in a very theoretical way with a very vague definition of target groups and success indicators. The communication strategy is therefore rather generic and missing a clear and European narrative.

### Summary

The city of Győr prepared a solid bid-book. Overall, the panel felt that the bid was stronger in the development of the existing (traditional) cultural agenda rather than taking a radical forward-looking step and encouraging the development of a contemporary artistic offer. The European dimension was satisfactorily translated into the programme and have the potential to increase the city's international profile. The programme is in line with the ambition of the city and its partners to enhance the city development, whereas an ECoC should seek to significantly develop the cultural and creative sectors at local level with clear cultural, creative and social outcomes also on the European level. The involvement of regional partners is one of the proposal's main strengths.

The panel noticed the imbalance between the oral presentation and the written bid-book. Although the Flow concept is described as a flexible process, the presentation was lacking a clear leadership and consistency with the bid-book project. Finally, the outreach, communication and marketing parts of the project would have deserved more concrete steps and further development.

The panel would like to acknowledge the energy and the team spirit during the presentation and hopes the energy of the cultural sector in Győr could be further used for the city's social and cultural development.

## Veszprém

According to the bid-book, Veszprém is the 16th biggest city in Hungary. The Balaton region acted as a meeting point between East and West during the long period in the 20th century when Hungary was under the influence of a totalitarian regime.

Veszprém is a city of great history, good food and wine as well as festivals – mostly during the summer time. Culture is considered to be more of a tourism product in the region. The city is struggling to transform the cultural excellence which is present during the summer weekends into an engine for creativity and a source of inspiration for the locals all year around, and the ECoC will be instrumental in this respect.

The bid was presented, as at pre-selection phase, under the banner of "BEYOND". The programme is carried out jointly by Veszprém (as the leader) and the Balaton region with its protected and NATURA 2000 areas, its UNESCO Geoparks and cultural landscape as UNESCO World Heritage nominees. The bid has the ambition to build a sustainable network of cultural operators of all kinds and sizes for the ECoC year and beyond.

The bid-book is available at <http://2023Veszprém.hu/en/>

### Contribution to the cultural strategy

The cultural strategy for 2018–2030 was formally endorsed by the Veszprém City Council in December 2017. The strategy describes the major challenges the city is facing in terms of culture as well as the connection with the ECoC project. The main underlying principle is the Design-Driven City Concept, i.e. providing new tools based on the design thinking methodology. A strategic vision and a series of pilot projects for 2019 and 2020 are in place.

One of the main assets are the solid regional cultural cooperation plans, translated into a new cultural treaty that includes a joint owned programme, the fact that the ECoC managing entity will work under the banner of Veszprém-Balaton 2023 Lda and the prospects for a future Balaton Culture Council foreseen for the legacy.

The strategy underlines the need for finding out more about local audiences – not only bringing new audiences, but finding who the audiences are and what kind of expectations they have. The cultural strategy also defines cultural, social, economic, ecological and urban impacts to be achieved in a very ambitious but at the same time quite humble and realistic manner.

Various monitoring stages are planned with key milestones before the ECoC year (2019, 2021), during (2023) and after (2024). The bid provides a good indicators' list but fails to define targets in a specific and measurable way. The evaluation programme will be done by the Monitoring and Evaluation Centre (MEC) that will be set up along the ECoC team. The Centre will do analysis and research work and ensures coordination between the various partners during the management process. Members of the MEC are: Faculties of the University of Pannonia (Business and Economics, Modern Philology, Social Sciences), Focus Group Lab (University of Pannonia) and a private research company. According to the panel, if managed properly, this could be a successful model, similar to the ones implemented in some previous ECoC.

### European dimension

During the communist period, Lake Balaton was one of those few locations where people from the Eastern and Western parts of Europe were able to meet. Using this backdrop, Veszprém 2023 intends to address several questions that are very much topical in today's Europe such as: How to create a meeting place where people can step beyond the toxic debates that seem to be currently dominating European discussions? How to transform tension into play? How can exploring controversies and conflicts open new perspectives? Themes to discuss will also include forced and voluntary migration as well as the new roles for rural areas, which have both a very clear European dimension. There are some very promising projects such as "Republic of Freedom" for instance that could bring some answers and strengthen or restore the current position of Hungary – and Veszprém – as a core part of Europe and the European Union. Taking on board Hungarian cultural expats is also a strong idea, even stronger and more interesting when it is linked with their personal stories and discussing the reasons why they decided to leave their home country.

Maintaining the relations with UK 2023 candidate cities Leeds and Milton Keynes is also a positive element, with a clear European dimension. According to the panel, though cooperation with other ECoC cities is described in quite a generic way, there are definitely some positive dynamics and the number of connections is more than satisfying at this stage.

### Cultural and artistic content

The artistic vision of Veszprém 2023 is about investing in communities and building new structures so that the area becomes a new cultural meeting point, for the sake of the Balaton region and Europe. The programme is well structured based on three pillars. Each pillar seeks to interpret the concept of BEYOND in ways that address a different aspect of the overall vision for the future.

TRACK CHANGE is about creating a future vision of the city. Stepping beyond the track the city is on right now, means taking steps towards a new profile for Veszprém in Europe. The ambition is to create new directions for local traditional cultural strengths in music and performing arts, and putting Veszprém firmly on the European stage.

The Balaton region has very solid tradition in festivals of music and dance. Projects like "Soundscape", "Just dance!", "Metamorphosis of a troll" and many others are very interesting. The list of the international artists and partners included in the bid-book is very promising and is also a token of cultural quality.

EXPOSURE starts a new dialogue. It uses the region's unique history of being a meeting point of cultures and ideas to introduce otherness – the notion of difference, which challenges homogenous regions. There are strong ideas like using ferryboats and the water as a stage and offering ten days of performances as a result of an international artistic collaboration, with migration, travelling and moving (on) as the key themes.

Veszprém plans also to implement cultural activities in the international context including Africa. The cooperation between European Capitals of Culture and cultural expressions from other continents is per se a good and valid approach. However, the proposed project aiming inter alia at organising performances of African musicians in the local zoo ("Kora, Djembe and the Elephant's Trumpet") lacks intercultural understanding and requires complete revision.

The BEYOND CHARM AND ISOLATION pillar reflects on the negative trends of an emptying countryside – a common phenomenon in Europe. This programme package brings many strong elements in terms of opening up. The closing event on a beach during winter time is a project that might become symbolic for the whole year if produced well.

In general the programme is very well structured, brings new fresh energy and also engages the local cultural scene, which is a necessary basis (but also one of the major challenges) for a successful ECoC. Intercultural sensibility needs to be further addressed. However, even if the aim of extending the summer peak season into the low seasons is quite obvious from the bid, there is still a need to develop some long term projects with the potential to attract larger audiences.

### Capacity to deliver

The mayor confirmed during the presentation that the bid, including the city's financial contribution, has the unanimous support of the major political parties in the city, and that the city is ready to change. Also the support of surrounding cities and the whole region is visible.

One key asset in terms of capacity to deliver is the team preparing the bid, which shows creativity and a good level of self-confidence.

The cultural infrastructure currently available in the city and the region together with the investment projects mentioned in the bid-book provide a more than solid ground for the long term cultural development of the region. The panel reminds the city that the infrastructural projects should be under the direct responsibility of the city and not the ECoC team. As many of the projects are planned to be delivered in 2022 and 2023, Veszprém needs to strategically plan for possible shifts in the schedule and venues' capacities or develop alternative plans.

Creative industries are in early stage of development but the bid presents positive dynamics and a strategic approach towards supporting progress in that respect.

Both the number of beds and transportation facilities have potential to host large audience.

### Outreach

The panel appreciates that the bid-book reflects the citizens' viewpoint as an extensive survey in Veszprém and the region served as a check-up of the cultural climate.

Participation is a key value in an ECoC programme and there is strong evidence of community and cultural operators' engagement in the bid with a high level of motivation. This is demonstrated in the programme's focus on accessibility and inclusiveness, smartly connected with the European dimension.

The aims, principles and ideas for audience development are clear, promising and in line with the whole project mission. The panel appreciates the idea that local action groups will work as mediators, or focus on inclusion and triggering genuine, long-term local impacts. The definition of four target areas makes the whole approach feasible, specific and interesting to monitor and disseminate in the future. The fact that Veszprém is being destined by the Hungarian Tourism Agency to be chosen as the "children friendly tourism destination" pilot city can provide further opportunities for impact on the European scale.

### Management

The proposed budget for covering the operating costs is €31,7m, with €11,1m from the city's budget, €12,7m from the National Government, €2,8m from other municipalities in

the region, €1,2m from the EU (with the exception of the Melina Mercouri Prize) and €3,8m from the private sector.

Veszprém decided to present a rather modest target in terms of EU funding with the ambition to reach €1,2m. The establishment of an ECoC-specific tender team able to apply for all EU calls that are relevant to the programme in order to help all partners to be in a position to receive EU funding is per se a very interesting proposal. However a proper capacity building programme needs to be implemented for programme partners in order to manage projects co-financed in particular from the EU Structural Funds.

In general, operating budgets are well distributed both in terms of timing and content.

The governance of the ECoC has been considerably developed from the pre-selection phase. The panel noted that the management structure was based on good ECoC practice and that the staff organization chart with employment schedule and recruitment description is well developed.

The communication plans include some innovative ideas. However, the marketing and communication team will face the challenge that the word "BEYOND" has no clear translation in the Hungarian language. The brand and target groups have solid ground in the bid and marketing and communication strategy could further build on this base.

### Summary

The panel feels that the bid is very professional and further strengthened by engaged and heartfelt presentation. The programme emerges from a shared vision from the city administration and the local cultural sector. The regional approach is very ambitious and promising with the potential for a strong legacy in the form of a future innovative joint regional governance. The intentions in terms of European dimension are positive, especially as far as interactions with European cultural networks, ECoC cities and other partners across the continent are concerned. The capacity building programme will provide a sustainable legacy in terms of improved cultural management. The proposed artistic programme is strong, but needs to take account of the intercultural context in all programme elements. The panel appreciates the plan to run some projects between 2019 and 2022. This will not only create momentum but also lead into a sustainable longer term legacy in line with the cultural strategy. The panel believes that the Balaton region will be a great host for the ECoC project and can help to lead the whole country towards European integration and values.

## 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 interpretations of the ECoC criteria. The bids had many strong points as well as some weaknesses. The panel was looking, according to the Decision, at the programme specifically designed for the ECoC year.

After the presentations the panel debated the merits of each city against the six 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 bid-books, presentations, questions and answers, augmented by the feedback from the visits.

All three cities received votes, but the panel reached consent on a single candidate in the first round.

Accordingly, the panel recommends that the Ministry designates, as the 2023 European Capital of Culture in Hungary, the city of Veszprém.

## Designation

This report has been sent to the Ministry and the European Commission. Both will publish it on their websites. In accordance with Article 11 of the Decision, the Ministry will designate Veszprém to hold the title of ECoC 2023 in Hungary based on this report. It will then inform the European Parliament, Council, Commission and Committee of the Regions. This formal designation enables Veszprém to use the title “European Capital of Culture 2023”.

## 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 however deferred until 2023, in line with Article 14 of the Decision. It is conditional. The ECoC Expert panel will make a further recommendation to the European Commission in 2022 at the end of the monitoring process on whether to make the payment.

The conditions for the payment are as follows (Article 14):

- The ECoC honours its commitments made in the application;
- It complies with the criteria;
- It takes into account the recommendations contained in the selection and monitoring reports;
- There has been no substantial change to the programme and strategy set out in the bid-book;
- The budget has been maintained at a level capable of delivering a high-level programme and at a level consistent with the bid-book;
- The independence of the artistic team has been appropriately respected;
- The European Dimension has remained sufficiently strong in the final programme;
- The marketing and communications strategy and material clearly reflect it is a European Union action;
- Plans for monitoring and evaluation are in place.

### Reputation of an ECoC

A city awarded the ECoC title receives considerable international attention from the selection recommendation and extending well beyond the ECoC year. It has a responsibility to uphold the reputation of the ECoC brand for the benefit of those previous title holders and future ones. City administrations should be aware that decisions taken (and not just in the cultural sector) may attract formal media 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 wide full range of issues much beyond culture only.

### The monitoring phase

Once an ECoC has been designated it enters the “Monitoring Phase” (Article 13 of the Decision). Under the auspices of the European Commission, the panel will work with the ECoC to ensure the quality of the ECoC brand and to offer advice and experience.

The bid-book at final selection becomes the de facto contract between the designated city, on the one hand, and the Expert panel, the Ministry, the European Commission and its own citizens, on the other hand. It has an important role in the payment of the Melina Mercouri Prize. The panel will expect a close alignment with the bid-book during the preparation phase and during the ECoC year. Significant variations from the bid-book should be discussed with the panel, through the Commission, in advance of decisions being made.

There are three formal monitoring checkpoints (normally autumn 2019, mid 2021 and autumn 2022) when the ECoC will meet with the panel. Prior to each meeting the European Commission, on behalf of the panel, will invite the ECoC to provide progress

reports. The Commission, after consultation with the panel, will indicate areas which specifically need to be addressed in the reports.

In addition, the panel may decide, with the agreement of the European Commission, to visit the city to observe progress.

The panel's reports after all three meetings will be published on the Commission's website. The ECoC may decide to publish its own progress reports in the interest of transparency.

## The panel's recommendations

The designated ECoC now moves to a transition period from a set-up suited to a bid campaign to the more formal ECoC delivery structure which is independent of local city administration. The panel expects Veszprém to develop co-operation with the other Hungarian cities, especially Debrecen and Győr. The ECoC in Hungary in 2023 provides a national opportunity which will reflect internationally not only on Veszprém but on the country as a whole.

The panel will expect the first progress report in autumn 2019 to take into account the recommendations and comments in the assessment of the bid as well as the recommendations below.

The recommendations refer to the content of the proposed programme:

### Cultural strategy

- The work continues on the implementation of the cultural strategy and further arrangements are made for integration between policy areas (culture / urban development / innovation and creative industries). All documents are published to ensure transparency.
- Stronger connections between the cultural sector and the city administrative staff are secured with involvement of both in the capacity building activities; long-term links between the cultural, economic and social sectors in the city are being developed.
- The ECoC 2023 impact assessment is detailed with monitoring tactics, the baseline figures are defined and first attempts to outline the specific targets are made. KPIs include European sources of information like Eurostat for example.
- CCIs enhancement supporting strategies/plans are developed with all relevant stakeholders involved: city council, university, business community, the sector professionals.

### European dimension

- Stronger focus is placed on current European issues.
- The scope and quality of activities promoting the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens as well highlighting the common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history, European integration and current European themes is secured and developed.
- The cooperation and communication beyond Central European countries is strengthened and actions to generate an interest of other parts of Europe are promoted.  
Cultural and artistic content
- The regional "lake" concept is unique and at the same time very demanding. An open communication towards dozens of regional programme partners needs to be done in a transparent and professional way in order to create one big Balaton team.
- The topic on African music and instruments needs to be completely revised taking into account the high quality of African music performances and instruments as

well as the intercultural context and sustainable intercontinental cultural relations between Africa and Europe.

- Innovative, experimental and digital programme elements are strengthened to ensure the ECoC 2023 meets the needs of the XXI century.
- Programme out of the main summer season needs to be further developed.

## Capacity to deliver

- The urban development plans affecting the ECoC delivery are clarified. The Veszprém 2023 team has clear information on the status of the implementation of these projects.
- Transportation to the region is not among the easiest ones, therefore precise agreement both with local and national transport companies is a must in order to prepare in time for visitors.
- The hotels capacities are sufficient. Reasonable price policy (potentially with programme packages) shall be communicated in order to motivate tourists come in low season.

## Outreach

- More work is done to ensure social innovation and full community engagement.
- ECoC audience development strategies and plans are developed.
- Involvement of the young generation (beyond formal cooperation with universities and schools) is further developed to increase its scope.
- Creative industries are considered not only as an economic engine but also for their capacity to motivate young people to come and live in rural areas.

## Management

- Information about the registration of the Veszprém 2023 organisation and its statutes are publicly available.
- The ownership of strategic areas / spaces is clearly defined and clear information on what will be integrated and what will not be included in the programme is communicated.
- The strategies and copyright issues of the BEYOND concept including authorship rights of related merchandise and services are developed and publicly communicated.
- The communication message (including a European dimension) is clearly articulated for use by the ECoC team and other relevant stakeholders.

The bid-book sets out several actions to be taken in 2019 and 2020 – these time frames should be met. Experience has shown that successful ECoCs use the first year after selection to establish all the governance, management and administration structures and systems. This essential role needs to run concurrently with the first stage of the project in 2019–2020. Recommendations in this section are based on experience of previous ECoCs.

The panel would expect:

- The relationship between the Supervisory Board, Board of Directors and the staff of the Veszprém 2023 organization to be clearly delineated and made public.
- Members of the Board of Directors to understand their role as strategic, not executive, facilitative, ambassadorial and financially accountable. The expectation is that politicians and political appointees will be in the minority within the Board of Directors. Members of the Board of Directors have a special responsibility to focus on the legacy objectives.
- The senior staff are recruited through open competitions.
- The General Director issues, with the approval of the Board of Directors, financial regulations for the Veszprém 2023 organization:

- o An external organization is appointed to undertake annual audits and to approve the annual accounts of the organization.
- o Arrangements are made for the publication of the Annual Accounts and the Annual Report to ensure transparency.
- Internal management and administrative processes are in place. These will include human resources, legal aspects (e.g. project contract arrangements, data privacy, and intellectual property rights), the criteria and systems for calls for projects, the marketing and branding strategy.
- An internal communications strategy is developed and implemented. This covers communications within the Veszprém 2023 organization, between the organization and the city administration, between the organization and the Ministry of Human Capacities and between the organization and the European Commission.
- A detailed staffing plan up to 2023 including the use of volunteers is created.
- The organization ensures that in all its (on and offline) marketing and communications there is recognition that the ECoC is a European Union action.

## 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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