



EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

Selection of the European Capital of Culture in 2024 in Austria

The Expert Panel's report Pre-Selection Stage

**Vienna
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Introduction

This is the report of the expert panel (the “panel”) for the pre-selection phase of the competition for the European Capital of Culture in 2024 in Austria.

The Austrian Federal Chancellery, Division Arts and Culture (the “Federal Chancellery”) 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 2014¹ as amended by Decision (EU) 2017/1545 of 13 September 2017² (the “Decision”) and by the “Rules of procedure – Competition for the 2024 European Capital of Culture in Austria” – (the “Rules”) adopted by the Federal Minister for the EU, Arts, Culture and Media and published on the Federal Chancellery’s website³.

A panel of 12 independent experts was established for the selection process in line with Article 2 of the Rules. Ten members were appointed by the European Union institutions and bodies (European Parliament, Council, Commission and the Committee of Regions). Two members were appointed by the Federal Chancellery.

The competition takes place in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and selection. The Federal Chancellery issued a call for applications on 9 June 2017. Three applications were submitted by the closing date of 31 December 2018 by:

Bad Ischl, Dornbirn and St. Pölten

Panel Meeting

The panel met in Vienna on 29-31 January 2019. The panel elected Mrs. Cristina Farinha as its chair and Mr Dominik Nostitz-Rieneck as vice-chair. All panel members signed a declaration of no conflict of interest and confidentiality.

At the meeting, each candidate presented their case (in 30 minutes) and answered questions from the panel members (in 45 minutes).

At a press conference in the premises of the Permanent Representation of the European Union in Vienna on 31 January 2019 the chair of the panel announced the panel’s recommendation that the Federal Chancellery invites the following cities to submit revised bids for final selection (in alphabetical order):

Bad Ischl, Dornbirn and St. Pölten

Next Steps

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

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

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32017D1545>

³ <https://www.kunstkultur.bka.gv.at/documents/340047/637829/Rules+of+Procedure.pdf/8ab7296a-424e-4d62-95ca-b3af95423d09>

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

The deadline for submission of revised applications is **13 October 2019 24 hrs.** The final selection meeting will be held in Vienna most probably during the first week of November 2019. The date will be confirmed by the Federal Chancellery to all shortlisted cities on the same day.

Four members of the panel will pay a one-day visit to the shortlisted cities shortly before the meeting to obtain more background information. Representatives of the European Commission and the Federal Chancellery will accompany the panel members as observers.

Thanks

The panel members would like to take the opportunity to thank all those involved in this pre-selection phase of the competition. During the bidding process, the Federal Chancellery organised a series of workshops aimed at helping potential candidate cities to understand better the criteria of the ECOC initiative and to reflect on the role culture and Europe can play in their development strategy. This is a good practice and the panel hopes this experience will inspire other Member States when launching their respective ECOC competition. In particular, the panel noted that the three cities have used the opportunity of the bidding process to reinforce their respective cultural strategies, to highlight the relevance of their commitment to the European project as well as the role of culture in their overall socio-economic development. This is already a significant potential legacy of the ECOC competition.

The panel thanks all three bidding candidates and everyone who contributed to their bids; the European Commission for their advice and the Austrian Federal Chancellery and its staff for their excellent administration.

The panel would also like to express its wish that for the announcement of the final selection for the ECOC 2024 title in Austria, a press conference be organised by the Federal Chancellery. This has been so far a common practice in all selections of European Capitals of Culture in Member States of the European Union. This would also be a way for the Federal Chancellery to formally recognize and endorse the commitment of the bidding cities in Austria to cultural development and European integration by means of the competition for the European Capital of Culture title.

In addition, a first insight regarding the potential budgetary contribution to be expected from the national level for the ECOC 2024 in Austria could considerably ease the planning process for the budget of all three bidding cities for the final selection phase. This approach would equally ensure a common framework for evaluating the budget of all three bidding cities by the Panel.

Furthermore, the Panel wishes to express the wish that all pre-selection bid-books will be published without further delay.

Assessments of the candidates

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

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

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

The panel noted that not all the candidates had fully completed the formal approval of their cultural strategy at city council level. One of the most important features in the Decision for ECOCs from 2020 on is the requirement that cities have a formal and explicit cultural strategy. This is to ensure that the ECOC is grounded in a medium-term transformation of the city and its cultural life rather than a one-off festival.

In the commentaries that follow, the panel notes the main elements of its discussions as well as related recommendations for each of the three shortlisted cities. There are also common recommendations that apply to all three shortlisted cities. The panel emphasises that its assessments of the candidates were based on the proposed programme set out in the bid-book and presentation session. A city's history, its recent and current policies, and annual cultural offer may form a basis for a programme but play no part in the selection process.

Bad Ischl

The candidacy of **Bad Ischl 2024** is placed under the motto of "SALT.WATER" and proposes highlighting four dimensions of the topic: "The Power of Tradition", "Impact of (Hyper-)Tourism", "Flow of Retreat" and "Strengths of Counter Culture".

Traditions are understood in the meaning of blessings and challenges related to a rich past. The region benefits also from considerable tourism inflow as well as hyper-touristic phenomena of which the small municipality of Hallstatt has become the symbol. Finally, "Flow of retreat" addresses new forms of recreation while "Counter Culture" is meant in the sense of an engagement for new and open forms of cultural expressions. This latter topic is also anchored in the long tradition of social movements in the Salzkammergut region.

The proposed operational budget is € 21 million (base budget). Investments are planned for € 54,5 million.

The city and the surrounding area, which involves municipalities from three different Austrian federal States, form together the cultural region of Salzkammergut. They have already joined forces for a regional cultural strategy - taking up to 2030 (under final preparation) - and now submit a common bid for the title of European Capital of Culture 2024 in Austria. The pre-selection bid book was not yet published.

According to the panel, a common regional cultural strategy based on the cooperation of 24 municipalities as well as on a decentralised network of cultural institutions and NGOs is an interesting and forward-looking approach. It has the potential to become a model for many rural areas with small urban centres in Europe. However, evidence needs to be provided that formal commitment of all involved municipalities and federal States is reached before the submission of the final bid-book.

Given that, with its application for the ECOC 2024 title, the region aims to address hyper-tourism – a pressing challenge of some of the sites in the area – and to develop innovative and more sustainable tourism models, the finalisation of the long-term cultural strategy requires substantial involvement of relevant local tourism stakeholders. An innovative cultural and tourism strategy is required in order to ensure sustainable impact

and positive change in the region. Special attention needs also to be dedicated to the specific long-term cultural development of Bad Ischl, the city that anchors the candidacy. In this respect, to be fully in line with the criterion on the “contribution to the long-term strategy” in Article 5 of the Decision, the city council of Bad Ischl (leading the ECOC application) has to endorse and formally approve the above-mentioned regional cultural strategy before the submission of the final bid-book.

The proposed monitoring and evaluation frameworks build on the key elements of the draft long-term strategy, which is a positive element. The elaboration of baselines in the course of the year 2019 is an appropriate way forward.

The proposed artistic and cultural programme is well rooted in the local fabric of cultural associations, institutions and the community radio initiative. The four programme strands dispose of a good potential regarding the shaping of the whole region's image and are based on commonly identified needs. These topics are also of relevance for many European regions, providing therefore opportunities for wide-range and Europe-wide cooperation and exchange of good practices, notably with other ECOCs.

Critical elements in the artistic programme consider the lack of more ambitious approaches anchored in contemporary arts and design involving international curators and European artists. According to the panel, the early involvement of an artistic director should strengthen the artistic vision and related European outreach. The motto Salt.Water could be clarified to include all four components of the programme and can be considered as a starting point for a more in-depth reflection on how the main messages of the cultural programme can be translated into a widely understandable cultural vision.

Projects related to difficult moments in the past (especially the time of WWII) should be developed based on the highest European standards on remembrance policy and lost art during WWII, involving directly related expertise from Austria and abroad.

The updated programme for the final bid-book should also include further reflexion on the digital world, more and diverse projects embracing the internal cultural diversity of the region and answer open questions on how the existing cultural infrastructure can be modernised and become an integral part of the programme.

The proposal addresses several topics of high European relevance such as the democratisation of culture, hyper-tourism and the role of rural areas with the potential to reach out - through the European Capital of Culture title - to a considerable part of the European population.

The cooperation with present and past ECOCs is under good and appropriate preparation. However, much more concrete agreements and cooperation projects as well as commitments with European artists and European cultural networks are expected to be presented for the final selection. The approach to address common European history has the potential for a wide-range of exchange of experience, debate and cooperation.

The pre-selection bid-book underlines the spirit of involvement of local stakeholders in the preparation phase. The open call resulting into one hundred project proposals is definitely a positive element. The commitment of cultural stakeholders is convincing. Further efforts are however expected regarding the involvement of the wider range of nationals from different countries and cultural communities present in the region.

The audience development strategy is at an initial stage. Outreach efforts should go far beyond the cooperation with schools. Related approaches like the cultural “buddies” and initiatives for the silver agers are promising but need further refining and development. Audience development strategies should carefully balance the needs of local audiences with those of cultural tourists.

The proposed management settings are based on common practices in many European Capital of Culture structures – an appropriate starting point. However, the approach to involve so-called personnel in-kind is not convincing in the current setting. This part-time

involvement of many people might result in an excessively diverse organisation structure with unclear responsibilities. The panel expects for the next step a clear structure and a clear plan for the delivery organisation's personnel. The budgetary framework is challenging regarding the overall proposed amount with a base budget and an enhancement budget. The final budget should be presented based on concrete plans without including potential alternative figures. On the income-side, it needs to demonstrate a solid public financial framework, with special attention to all three regional authorities – namely Upper Austria, Styria and Salzburg.

Marketing plans are still at an initial stage. Some promising ideas such as the kiosk travelling in the region and disseminating information on the European Capital of Culture lay a solid foundation for the further development of internal and international marketing plans.

The proposal is in line with the required framework for a European Capital of Culture regarding accessibility and accommodation. The analysis concerning the appropriateness of the cultural infrastructures in the region should be more systematic in order to build on solid investment plans and could include mappings. Local political support and cooperation is strong but needs to be complemented by further political backing from the three regional authorities concerned.

Summary: Bad Ischl presented a solid proposal for the pre-selection round of the competition for the European Capital of Culture 2024 title in Austria. Strong elements include the common regional cultural strategy involving many relevant local cultural stakeholders and the municipalities, to be however finalized before submitting the final bid-book. The programme outlines build on concrete needs for the cultural development of the region and addresses topics of wide European relevance. Major challenges to be addressed are the artistic quality of the programme, the full involvement of local tourism stakeholders for a common commitment as well as the further commitment of the three regional authorities concerned. Inclusion of projects addressing the “dark moments” of history is definitely a big asset, which can ultimately contribute to the European dimension of the proposal. It however requires the contribution of qualified European expertise on these issues. Therefore, there is a need for the considerable potential for Europe-wide cooperation to be fully explored.

Dornbirn

Dornbirn plus 2024 presents its bid under the motto “Outburst of Courage” in order to address a perceived mono-dimensional attitude of the local population, which is oriented towards economic values and the preservation of previous achievements.

With three programme strands, the bidding team proposes new paradigms that should become more relevant, such as experimentation and the acceptance of failure. “Polis Mind” is the strand of the programme aiming to strengthen local neighbourhoods and local cultural identity. With “Reality Disruption”, immersive digital projects as well as disruptive arts interventions are planned in the whole agglomeration. The programme strand “No Frontiers” is based on pilot actions and will investigate how real and virtual borders can be overcome. It includes also teaching activities on European issues and EU funding.

In addition, four seasonal highlights will involve the whole region as part of the ECOC.

The ECOC project includes Dornbirn as well as the cities of Hohenems and Feldkirch and the region of the Bregenzerwald. Cross-Border agreements with the Swiss city of St. Gallen and the German cities of Lindau and Friedrichshafen have also been concluded.

The proposed operational budget is € 33 million. No cultural investment is foreseen in the framework of the ECOC. A cultural strategy for the city of Dornbirn is in place since 2015

and is planned to be extended to the year 2030 spanning the territory of the city. The bid-book for the pre-selection phase was not yet published.

The existence of a long-term cultural strategy for the city of Dornbirn is a good starting point, but the wider region covered by the ECOC project (i.e. the cities of Hohenems and Feldkirch as well as the Bregenzerwald) should be incorporated either in this strategy or in another strategic document to be adopted jointly. The absence of such a document is a considerable shortcoming if the ECOC project is to act as a sustainable cultural development endeavour for the whole region, as proposed in the broad project aims.

This proposal also aims to make common effort to safeguard the industrial heritage of the region – e.g. the industry museum under discussion -, which is however for the moment not related to the implementation of the European Capital of Culture. Furthermore, the bid-book does not explain how the ECOC project and culture in general will co-develop and impact the city's and region's urban development vision. Related expected major changes in the three main cities remain unclear.

The proposal lacks a convincing translation of the needs identified into corresponding actions. Moreover, according to the panel there is also a need for the bid to be based on a more substantial feedback from a wider variety of inhabitants.

Initial capacity building elements are presented in the bid-book, which is a positive element. But they require a wider coverage and further detailed planning. Anchoring the strategy in the local cultural heritage and thus exploring its potential for the benefit of the entire community would definitely strengthen the proposal.

Evaluation and monitoring approaches are innovative. However, the concrete feasibility has to be demonstrated by the presentation of related concrete action plans. On the good side, the existing objectives for cultural development of Dornbirn contain several relevant elements including working conditions for artists.

The proposed cultural programme includes strong artistic elements as well as innovative ideas. It involves the main city and region partners with interesting flagship projects. The first programme outlines for the opening of the European Capital of Culture reflect artistic and cultural potential.

The proposal equally strongly emphasises a supposed need for provocation. This welcomed approach needs to be further discussed and refined, taking into account the need for artistic interventions to be explained to and understood by the local population in order to generate the expected change of mentality and more openness. Current state-of-the-art cultural programme developments build on co-creation and the involvement of all segments of the population, which is a positive element. They require a new "out of the box" approach from cultural programmers and curators replacing the "for them" attitude by the new "with them" guiding principle.

The will to address further the digital world reflects on one of the main transformation areas of the 21st century.

The programme parts involving the Jewish Museum in Hohenems have the potential to contribute further to debates and exchanges on both local and European levels.

The European dimension of the bid at pre-selection stage is well addressed regarding the wider cooperation with other ECOCs as well as the existing international connections of the team.

Some main topics highlighted for further European exchange such as migration or rural-urban integration are of European relevance. However, the proposal does not provide evidence of a wider involvement of all the cultures present in the region, notably, the substantial Turkish community, in the preparation process and implementation plans. Historical facts highlighted in the bid-book regarding tolerance towards Islam must be addressed and verified in relation to the wider European context.

The overall European vision and narrative also require further specification. In this respect, the intention to involve cities from the neighbouring countries and the related letters of intent are a good starting point. As a next step, networking with cultural partners from these countries and a common elaboration of cooperation projects are needed. Finally, further reflection is required on how to attract a broader European and international audience.

Workshops and other outreach activities were organised during the preparation phase in order to exchange with stakeholders. However, successful outreach strategies imply strongly involving the local population and reflecting on their specific needs – a challenge still to be further addressed. Without a strong support from the local population, the achievement of a sustainable impact will be very difficult. The considerable share of population with migration background or foreign nationality must be specifically considered in this context. The audience development strategy is at a very preliminary stage and requires specific planning based on the concrete needs of the different main target groups identified for the region.

The proposed organisational structure is not coherent with the described plans, especially regarding evaluation and monitoring (i.e. no position is formally identified with this task) as well as the independence of the artistic director. The income-side of the budgetary framework is not on a solid ground: in particular, the planned 15 % of budget coming from private sources is very ambitious while the local economy is described as being rather oriented towards sports sponsoring. In addition, the regional authority is not yet committed to co-financing the ECOC project.

Communication plans are more accurate including multilingual offers and a concrete co-operation with the regional tourism structures. However, proposed messages are very negative. An approach with positive messages could have a greater mobilisation potential.

Capacity to deliver is well developed regarding accessibility and accommodation facilities. There are existing cultural infrastructures. However, the plans for a new industrial museum are not sufficiently taken into account. The involvement of the main cultural institutions from the regional capital Bregenz is also crucial for a successful implementation of the European Capital of Culture in Dornbirn plus. Political commitment and support at regional level is another pre-condition for success.

Summary: Overall, Dornbirn presented a bid-book including innovative artistic elements, several relevant European topics as well as ambitious and innovative evaluation plans with frontrunner potential if successful. The panel felt the programme concepts and activities under development are dynamic and ambitious. Major shortcomings are a lack of an integrated regional (and cross-border) long-term cultural planning, an absence of an urban development vision for all involved cities and a missing support from the regional authority as well as the regional capital city so far. Common industrial heritage, more concretely the new museum for industry, is neither developed in connection with the European Capital of Culture concept, nor presented as part of an integrated regional approach. Finally, the needs and interaction with the local population require further attention and related planning to allow for widest possible participation and readiness for a dialogue.

St. Pölten

The candidate from the region of Lower Austria “**St. Pölten**” wishes to reduce temporal, spatial and social distances under the overarching motto “Europe at home”.

St. Pölten has been a regional capital for only 30 years and aims at shaping its profile as a cultural centre including an integrated approach with the surrounding area. Partners from the region of Lower Austria are involved in the candidacy.

Three main programme areas have been defined. "Rescaling temporal distances" is meant as a bridge between the past and the future and addresses migration as well as the heritage from the time of National Socialism. One of the related key questions is how history could be made more vivid today. "Rescaling spatial distances", the second programme strand, aims inter alia at building-up exchange networks and at better involving commuters into cultural activities. It brings also discussions on the relationship between the digital and physical spaces to the fore. Finally, the "Rescaling social distances" focus will involve children in a lasting art lab and address also questions on fundamental rights as well as freedom of expression.

The cultural strategy for the city is under preparation and it is planned to be finalised in 2019. An overall operational budget of € 60 million is proposed, complemented by capital expenditures of € 21 million. The pre-selection's bid-book is available under this link: <https://www.st-poelten2024.eu/en/news/bidbook1-en>

The finalisation of the cultural strategy for the city of St. Pölten must be ensured before submission of the final bid-book in order to cope with the requirements of the ECOC competition. The overall vision of St. Pölten and the cooperating region to create its own cultural profile is per se a valid approach, but a related convincing and specific concept is not yet visible. More attention should be paid to the process of analysing the specificity of the local identity and social structure of the community (i.e. what does it actually mean to be from and live in St. Pölten?)

Further clarification is also needed regarding the wider strategic involvement of the existing cultural institutions and infrastructures in the region as well as the (cooperative) relationship to nearby major cultural cities like Vienna or Linz. Furthermore, it must be ensured that the cultural strategy develops not only with a touristic focus but also with a clearly cultural dimension.

A major asset of the proposal is the intended strong involvement of the universities and the realisation of corresponding innovation promotion formats. Further links between the cultural, economic and social sectors could be better described. The monitoring and evaluation plans require further and more detailed elaboration.

The three thematic pillars of the cultural and artistic programme constitute a relevant thematic framework. However, the concept of the three dimensions of "distances" under the motto "Europe at home" does not translate clearly enough into specific topics, which are therefore still to be developed for St. Pölten and the region. The programme would also benefit from including projects located in the regional territory.

There is a need to elaborate further the artistic vision of the ECOC project, as it is under-developed in the pre-selection bid-book. The involvement of an artistic director for the preparation of the final bid could provide the necessary inspiration for the required visionary thinking.

The open climate for cooperation that was created in the preparation phase is a clear asset with the potential to generate long-term effects. The structure proposed for implementing the cultural and artistic projects seems very rigid. It must be ensured that a flexible framework allows that very different projects and related implementation models can be realised and that the settings are in place to stimulate legacy after the now proposed last project phase "display".

The proposed European dimension remains too generic and a clear European vision is still to be developed. Cooperation with neighbouring countries, city-to-city-exchange in networks led by St. Pölten and contacts with European Capitals of Culture are a good starting point for more profound cooperation formats involving also a considerable number of cultural institutions and artists from other European countries.

The Central European perspective is important and should play a prominent role, but efforts must go far beyond in order to provide the proposal with a clear Europe-wide perspective.

Cooperation with writers and researchers committed to the European cause is a valuable element on which further European cooperation can be built.

St. Pölten aims also at becoming a model for other European cities. In this respect, a stronger focus on exchange of experience would have the potential of reciprocal learning between European cities.

Furthermore, the potential to attract the European and international audiences visiting nearby Vienna (and to a minor extent Linz) should be carefully investigated. "Europe in the world" is an interesting headline in the pre-selection bid-book, which would benefit from being filled with concrete actions and content for the selection phase.

The initiative "Kulturhauptstart" provides valuable input for the development of the European Capital of Culture project in St. Pölten. The involvement of the civil society is strong and convincing. Very positive developments can also be expected from the children's art lab. As a next step, innovative projects from other European Capitals of Culture and the wider European framework should be involved for the state-of-the-art development of this important children-oriented endeavour.

Considerable efforts are required for an in-depth involvement of the different minorities, migrants and nationalities present in the city and region.

The audience development strategy is still at a very initial stage and needs further attention.

Management settings are appropriate for the first phase of the bidding process. For the next preparation activities, enlarging the team to include further artistic competences as well as strategic cultural positioning could be an asset. Addressing the gender issue in cultural structures is a positive and forward-looking approach.

The proposed budget for operational expenditures is high, which should be further justified. Investments presented so far are limited to the city of St. Pölten and include no integrated planning with the wider region. A more strategic approach would be required in this regard.

Marketing plans are still in a preliminary stage. Further reflection is needed for the identification of relevant target groups and visitor segments including taking further into account the potential from nearby Vienna.

The political commitment is strong and convincing. The cooperation between the city and the region as well as beyond political parties is an interesting model in the Austrian context. The political support is complemented by a strong backing from the local population in favour of the project.

Accessibility and accommodation facilities are in place. The plans for the new cultural infrastructures should be further elaborated and streamlined with the overall cultural profile and artistic vision of the project.

Summary: The bid of St. Pölten at pre-selection stage provides a solid political and management framework. It builds on a strong commitment from local cultural stakeholders, the civil society as well as the population. Major challenges are the development of a specific cultural profile and a more elaborated artistic vision – both anchored in a corresponding clear European narrative. The proposed regional concept should be translated into a programme, an organisational structure and a legacy for the region. The European cooperation must be considerably developed further and should involve a wide range of different institutional partners and artists from the neighbouring countries as well as cover the wider EU territory.

Recommendations

The following recommendations apply to all shortlisted candidates.

The panel considers that all shortlisted cities need to develop their bids for the final selection in order to reach the required level of quality of such a demanding project as the European Capital of Culture. There is a considerable step-change between proposals at pre-selection stage and those at final selection. The panel will expect significant changes in the final bid-books to reflect these recommendations.

The shortlisted candidates are advised to continue studying carefully the **six criteria in the Decision** and the comments in the assessments above. A study of the evaluations of recent (since 2013) ECOCs and monitoring reports of recently designated ECOCs may also be of value. These are available on the European Commission's ECOC pages.

General

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

In the final selection bid-book, candidates must cover all the questions in the selection questionnaire included in Annex 1 of the call for applications. For the next and final stage of the competition, the panel expects a considerably more developed section on the proposed artistic vision, the programme and the European Dimension.

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

ECOC and cultural strategy

All three preselected cities are again kindly reminded that a long-term cultural strategy formally approved has to be in place before the submission of the bid-book for final selection.

The panel will expect a tighter focus in the bid-books of the final round. In the next bid-book, cities should indicate the priorities of the cultural strategy, its target outcomes and how resources will be changed over the next few years. A city's cultural strategy will normally be wider in scope than the objectives of an ECOC. Bid-books should indicate more clearly which priorities of the broader cultural strategy the ECOC is seeking to contribute to. The expected legacy of the ECOC should also be envisaged.

An ECOC is a transformational opportunity for a city. The pre-selection bid-books set out in general terms the objectives of why a city is seeking the title. The panel would expect a more focused (and shorter) explanation that can link to the programme vision, themes, activities, and through evaluation, to the outcomes in the subsequent legacy. There is considerable literature and research available for cities to see the range of cultural, economic and social benefits of an ECOC.

The evaluation sections of the bid-books should be developed in the second phase and panel expects to receive ECOC indicators of success. The monitoring and evaluation should not be overwhelmed with (just) statistics and data gathering though. The final bid-book should focus on the **priority** objectives for the ECOC (rather than those for the entire cultural strategy). One of the priority areas should refer to how the ECOC will meet the four elements of the European dimension criterion. Shortlisted cities may wish to involve management consultancies in addition to the more academic approach currently proposed, without losing the valuable connection with Universities.

Cultural and artistic programme

The focus of the final selection is the **operating programme** between end 2019, when the ECOC will be formally designated and, in particular, the ECOC year of 2024.

A city's previous cultural history and heritage and its recent and current cultural offer, may form a basis for this programme but plays no part in the decision. Many ECOCs in recent years have used the opportunity provided by an ECOC to address difficult issues from their 20th century past that still resonate today. The panel suggest candidates to re-consider their approach to the appropriate topics from Austria's 20th century, its special related responsibility and use the opportunity to prepare for its future.

The panel will expect to see more details on the programme, its projects and partners. The cities should set out their artistic vision, the programme and projects more clearly; differentiating between partners who have indicated firm interest and those who are still only potential or possible partners. ECOC programmes normally cover a wide range of art forms and include the increasing development of creative interventions in social issues. They are also an ideal context for developing exceptional creations linked to the city's context and the chosen themes. An approximate budget should be shown for each major project for the panel to understand the relative balance of projects in the programme.

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

The cultural and creative industries (CCI) should be understood as transversal topic of the cultural and artistic programme, and must be linked to a related mapping and needs analysis of the sector. Capacity building should be a broad approach also encompassing the CCI.

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

European dimension

The panel felt that this criterion was promising but considerably under-developed. At this stage, the proposals are mainly looking on the surface of the challenges. The panel would wish to see a greater deepening and widening of programmes to ensure a more relevant **European dimension**. That a city is in Austria, in Europe, has (or can have) a vibrant cultural offer and will market itself in Europe is not in itself a strong interpretation of the European dimension. An ECOC enables a city to promote itself internationally but that is only half the story. The European dimension of an ECOC links to wider current social,

cultural and political debates. Selected cities must be able to handle those debates in an aspirational and sensitive way, as these topics obtain more visibility.

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

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

One of the elements of the artistic criterion for the ECOC title is the ability to attract **visitors from the rest of Europe**. This programme has to have its attraction and that is why it is something else than the usual tourist offers of the city and region. The panel would expect to see these attracting programme ideas in the bid for ECOC 2024. The panel advises to think thoroughly over building a strategic communication plan for the ECOC project, to define categories of international audiences with potential of reach-out by the ECOC as well as to make a connection between the programme and international marketing vision.

Outreach

The **audience development** strategy and programme are expected to be much further developed in the final bid books including online and offline measures and channels for all identified target groups.

The panel would expect to learn about the audience development policies of the main cultural organisations including independent operators and NGOs. The role and contribution of universities (except evaluation work) was not addressed sufficiently in all pre-selection bid books.

Special focus should be dedicated to those audiences that are more difficult to reach but being crucial for a new "cultural climate" in an ECOC city (e.g. minorities, the elderly, disabled and people temporarily in the city). These are under-represented in the bid books at pre-selection. The bid books should cover the participation of schools, youth groups, (international) students, volunteers etc. and the capacity building of the creative art sector to approach audience development from a long-term and strategic perspective.

Management

The **membership of and independence from city administrations of governing boards** should be explained, with post holders (or positions) and the method of appointment. The decision-making role of the board should be explained. Clear relationship between different bodies and advisory boards is expected to be outlined.

The **General and Artistic/Cultural Directors** play a key role in all ECOCs. The selection, preferably through an open international call, of these posts before the candidates' appearance at the final selection meeting, will be to their advantage. This is especially important for the Artistic Director as, unlike many such appointments, the artistic vision is already set out in the bid book. The same applies if a candidate proposes

a collective artistic leadership. It is acknowledged that the appointments may be conditional on the outcome of the competition.

The planned staffing arrangements from early 2020 to 2024 should be outlined including secondments, interns and volunteers.

Capacity to deliver

Candidates should re-confirm that their bid-book, including the programme and the financial commitments, have the formal approval of the mayor, the city councils, other involved parties like regions and all political parties.

Candidates are reminded that the criterion for an ECOC requires a special programme for the year in addition to the normal cultural offer. The panel expects more information on the managerial capacity in the city/region to manage the depth and range of an ECOC. The cities should also plan strong capacity building programmes as ECOC's scope goes beyond current local capacities. If projects are planned to be funded from competitive EU programmes (e.g. Creative Europe) this should be indicated.

The final bid-books should clearly indicate how potential **capital investments crucial for the ECOC** will be managed (management structures, state-of-play related to the EU-ESI-Funds such as the connection with the relevant Operational Programme, timeline and public procurement). The capital investment crucial for ECOC should be presented with overall budgets and timeframes.

The panel also wants to be sure that all candidates understand correctly the financial contributions from the national government.

The panel would like to see concrete local, regional and European legacy aspirations.

Signed

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Vienna

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