



EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

**The European Capital of Culture
2021 in Greece**

**The Selection Panel's report
Final report**

**Athens
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Contents

Introduction	4
Selection Panel	4
Pre-Selection	4
Selection Meeting	5
ECOCs in 2021	5
Assessments of the candidates	6
Elefsina	7
Context	7
Cultural Strategy	7
European Dimension	8
Artistic programme	9
Capacity	10
Outreach	11
Management	11
Summary	12
Kalamata	13
Context	13
Cultural Strategy	13
European Dimension	13
Artistic programme	14
Capacity	15
Outreach	16
Management	16
Summary	17
Rhodes	17
Context	17
Cultural Strategy	17
European Dimension	18
Artistic programme	18
Capacity	20
Outreach	20
Management	20
Summary	21
Next Steps	22
Formal Designation	22

Melina Mercouri Prize	22
Reputation of an ECOC	22
The monitoring phase	22
The panel's recommendations to Elefsina	23
Governance	23
Programme	24
Thanks	25

Introduction

This is the report of the selection panel (the “panel”) for the competition for the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2021 in Greece.

The Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports (the “ministry”) is the managing authority of the competition.

The competition is governed by:

- Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 (the “Decision”¹)
- Rules of Procedure – “Competition for the 2021 European Capital of Culture title in Greece” (the “Rules”) signed by the Minister of Culture and Sports and published on the ministry’s website in April 2015².

Selection Panel

The selection panel consists of 12 members. Ten were appointed by the institutions and bodies of the European Union (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions) in line with article 6 of the Decision. The ministry appointed two members in line with Article 6 of the Decision.

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

Pre-Selection

The competition is in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and final selection. The ministry issued a call for applications to all Greek cities on 9 December 2014. There were fourteen applications submitted by the deadline of 30 November 2015³.

The panel met in Athens on 22-26 February 2016 for the pre-selection meeting. The panel recommended that the ministry invite three cities (Elefsina, Kalamata and Rhodes) to progress to the final selection. The panel’s report is published on the websites of the European Commission⁴ and the ministry.

The Greek Minister of Culture accepted the panel’s recommendation and the ministry invited the three cities to submit revised applications with a deadline of 5 October 2016.

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

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

² <http://ecoc2021.culture.gr/>

³ The bidbooks are available at <http://ecoc2021.culture.gr/bid-books-of-the-greek-candidate-cities-for-the-ecoc-2021/>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/files/ecoc-2021-greece_en.pdf

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

- All three cities met with the panel's chair via video-conference to seek clarification of the recommendations in the pre-selection report.
- Four members of the panel (Alain Hutchinson, Apostolos Kalfopoulos, Pauli Sivonen and Ioannis Trohopoulos) visited all three cities in November 2016, spending one day in each. They were accompanied by observers from the ministry and the European Commission. The panel members reported back to the full panel at the selection meeting.

Selection Meeting

The final selection meeting took place in Athens on 10-11 November 2016.

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

The candidates appeared before the panel in alphabetical order. Each city made a 30 minute presentation followed by 75 minutes in a Question & Answer session. Delegations had up to ten members.

The chair of the panel announced the panel's recommendation at a press conference after the meeting in the presence of the Minister of Culture and Sports.

ECOCs in 2021

2021 will be the fourth time Greece has hosted an ECOC after Athens 1985, Thessaloniki 1997 and Patras in 2006. There will be three ECOCs in 2021. Timișoara (Romania) and Novi Sad (Serbia) have already been recommended by their selection panels and are awaiting formal designation.

The criteria for an ECOC have changed considerably since 1985. They now embrace a deeper understanding of the role of culture in a city and European development. A particular new development is the requirement for a city to have a formal medium term cultural strategy. This ensures the ECOC is an element in progress of a city and not a one-off event. It enhances the importance of sustainable cultural, social and economic legacies.

The selection of an ECOC is based on the programme specifically designed for the ECOC year and set out in the bidbook, not the current cultural offer in a city or its cultural heritage.

The panel assessed each candidate individually and against each other using 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

The panel was presented with three bids from cities in different circumstances and proposing three different approaches to the ECOC title. All three candidates plan to involve their neighbouring region. They each positioned themselves not just in a Greek context but importantly in a European context:

- Elefsina has a drive to move forward from a heavy industrial past to a future underpinned as a contemporary cultural city not based on the traditional tourism market and portraying an alternative image of Greece.
- Kalamata seeks to take the opportunities given by the opening of road and air communications to act as a paradigm for a peripheral, yet resilient, city in a centralised country.
- Rhodes aims to develop its successful mass tourism market by extending the season and developing an enhanced cultural tourism offer.

There are many comparable cities in the European Union facing similar challenges. The three Greek cities have both much to learn from other cities and much, through their ECOC programmes, to contribute to wider progress. All are seeking to place culture (and culture in its very wide interpretation, no longer just the arts) in the centre of their cultural, social and economic future. All three recognised that the transformational change their city requires will not be achieved simply through a single year's programme; they have approved cultural strategies for a longer period.

The assessments later in this report record the main points of the panel's deliberations; the strengths and weaknesses of each bid. The panel is required to make recommendations to the city they put forward for designation and these are at the end of the report. The panel would have made a similar appropriate set of recommendation regardless of which city it recommends.

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

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

After careful consideration of the three bids the panel reached a consensus on a single candidate. Accordingly the panel unanimously recommends that the ministry designates, as a European Capital of Culture in 2021, the city of **Elefsina**.

Assessments of the candidates

The following assessments record the main aspects of the panel's deliberations. In the case of Elefsina recommendations are made both in their assessment and later in the report to assist their transition from candidate to implementation.

The bidbooks of the three candidates are at <http://ecoc2021.culture.gr/bid-books-of-the-greek-candidate-cities-for-the-ecoc-2021/>

Elefsina

Context

Elefsina presented their bid under the name of "Eleusis21". The city sees their bid as a major contributor to the progress the city has been making from its heavy industrial and polluted past, "a grey industrial city" to its new sustainable urban economy in the wider metropolitan area of Athens. The city has maintained its investment in culture which it sees as a core element in the transition. Through the ECOC the city seeks to establish an attractive environment for young people with know-how and innovative ideas to develop their activities. The city is home to the Aeschylia Festival and other festivals and folk art associations.

The bid also includes activities in the Western Attica region.

The ECOC bid is under the title of "Transition to EU-phoria". It is structured in a matrix combining three core pillars "EU Working Classes" (the human and economic impact), "EUenvironment" (redefining our relationship with the environment) and "EUrbanisation" (the social impact of transition).

Cultural Strategy

The city's cultural strategy covers ten years, 2016-2025. It is based on the initial adoption of the Agenda 21 for Culture in early 2016 and with a more detailed Cultural Strategy approved in September 2016. The strategy has four strategic ambitions: a focus on innovation and contemporary cultural production, strengthening citizens' participation, entertainment and the economic impact of arts and culture.

The ECOC plays a central facilitating part in the strategy. The panel welcomed the clear statement of intent in the strategy including the near doubling of the cultural budget from 2021. There is a clear statement of the elements in the proposed ECOC programme which will be continued after the ECOC year either as stand-alone festivals and organisations or integrated into other festivals. The panel noted the aspiration not to create institutions with their higher overheads but to focus on contemporary cultural production. The panel noted the strong emphasis on citizens' participation as a key strategy.

The ECOC programme includes a major programme, the Capacity Building and Innovation Centre, to strengthen the city's cultural management. It is planned to continue this after the ECOC.

The panel recognised the potential cultural impacts of the ECOC. In particular the panel appreciated the understanding that these take time rather than a focus on a single year. This is especially true for image and reputation. A focus on contemporary production is sound and the panel recommends that the future programme development seeks to ensure the offer from Elefsina is complementary to that of near neighbour Athens and not competitive. This also applies to the development of the creative industries. The panel saw strengths in the "Neighbourhood Cultural Councils" both for their cultural impact and a key part of social impacts required in the criteria. The panel feels more development is needed in the social impact areas: installing "Vertical Gardens" and converting old empty spaces are good openers.

The panel considered the plans for the development of the creative and cultural industries as an economic driver for the city to be under-prepared given the proximity to Athens. A firmer business case, rather than purely cultural, is needed in conjunction with the economic development department of the city council. The panel recommends, in 2017, a detailed mapping of the creative industries in the city leading to an economic impact study. This in turn can prompt a detailed business development plan with a focus on sustainable job creation over the next few years.

The panel was less convinced on the economic impacts. There is considerable literature on the various economic impacts of ECOCs and the bidbook did not develop beyond assertion.

The panel noted there was no monitoring process in the bidbook. Monitoring is critical for the ECOC management team to receive and understand feedback during the implementation period. It is separate to the longer term and deeper impact evaluation process.

A ten-year evaluation process is planned. The two other ECOCs in 2021 are taking a similar approach and the panel recommends Elefsina seeks to work with them in a consortium. The panel noted the planned use of the Melina Mercouri prize money, if awarded, for the evaluation process after 2021. This seems an excessive expenditure on evaluation.

The outline indicators in the bidbook focussed more on outputs rather than impact and outcomes. No indicative targets were mentioned. The panel would expect a more robust approach to the various legacies at this stage; an ECOC is an opportunity for sustainable cultural development.

European Dimension

The panel appreciated the clear analysis of how the ECOC wishes to engage with current European themes including the transition from a reliance on work in heavy industries to a service and knowledge employment pattern, the fragmentation of society, the reduction in the use of public space and the relationship with the Arab world. The project outlines give a wide geographic coverage of both Europe, the neighbouring countries of Greece together with projects with artists from Arab countries (eg "Distant Relatives"). A key element in the proposed programme is that all projects involve both Greek and international partners.

Although the analysis is clear, the resulting actions are still in broad outline and too generic. A deeper European narrative is needed with greater sharing of and learning from cities which have faced or are facing similar post-industrial regeneration challenges. There is a strong emphasis on the impact of these changes on people with an aim of rebuilding trust between citizens. These ambitions are reflected in specific projects in the programme.

The indicative programme needs to go further; it does not, for example, explore in any depth the contribution made by the city's many non-Greek immigrants. With somewhere between 25% and 50% of the city's population being of non-Greek origin the panel would expect them to be represented in the senior management as well as in the projects. The richness of this cultural diversity of the city did not stand out. The bid team have been active in engaging with several European cultural and civil society

networks; the panel encourages them to continue this approach to more networks not only in the cultural sector. The city administration itself could usefully be active in networks such as Eurocities looking at wider urban development issues.

The panel felt the approach of tackling history in the “Local European Stories”, “Europe of Festivals” (where the European Festivals Association would be a key partner) and the “Agora for Europe” was sound. The panel would expect a section in the “Local European Stories” to include the Greek civil war as ECOCs provide an opportunity to tackle blocked memories which still resonate today. The “reading groups idea” could be extended to other cultural institutions such as libraries and archives to participate and develop their collections on the more recent (post 1945) local history. The development of an active library can be a key legacy for the ECOC.

The panel notes the intention to work on projects with the other two ECOCs in 2021 as well as with several forthcoming ECOCs. The degree of specific projects partnerships is still limited and less than would be expected at this stage. The panel welcomes the intention to work with the other candidates for the title in Greece with a focus on new ways of working in the independent sector (outside Athens) in the “City Art Lab” project.

Artistic programme

The proposed artistic programme is under the theme of “Transition to EUphoria”. It is based on three main points: “EU as a core value” (long-term co-operations, networking, and programme as process); “the city as a stage” (active citizens’ engagement, all neighbourhoods, regional cultural development, and new meeting spaces) and “the linking of past, present and future”. The bidbook sets out a range of projects with indicative budgets of €16.5m, the full programme budget for the ECOC. This degree of forward planning is unusual in an ECOC at this stage of selection. It can preclude new and relevant projects being developed in the next few years. The major projects, by budget, are the “EcoCulture Festival” (€1m), “Vertical Gardens”, “Share the Light”, “Agriculture” and “City Mysteries” (all €0.8m), the “Balkan Agora” and (the awkwardly named) “fARTory” and “City Art Lab” (all €0.7m). The “Capacity and Innovation Centre”, a transversal programme, is budgeted at €0.6m.

The panel felt the structure was suitable for planning at this stage of preliminary development but would need to be simplified for marketing to a wider public. The three pillars themselves are clear enough. The vision as a slogan “Transition to EUphoria” needs to be articulated in very clear and direct terms so that all ECOC staff can readily keep on message and visitors can understand. It is not clear at the moment what the “euphoria” looks like after the transition. During the ramp years and during the year itself the ECOC senior management will be required to make many speeches and interviews, nationally and internationally, and need to be very concise.

The panel felt the three core themes are strong and send a clear message. The “EU Working Classes” in particular, taken with the positive engagement of the Workers’ Associations, has the potential to be a very influential element in ECOC. The emphasis on projects with knowledge and innovation at the centre is key to the future of the city, and Europe in general. In the same area the panel would see inequality being added as an area of exploration. The panel would like to see a differing approach to the “Women’s Gardens” project.

The EUEnvironment pillar generates a laboratory for projects in the surrounding area. As it stands the panel felt the regional activity was underdeveloped and needs a review. In general the panel was less convinced about the role, objectives and projects in the Western Attica region. It would expect a new sub-plan for this area linked to their regional plans.

The "Green Incubator" project has significant potential beyond the rather limited approach in the bidbook. The panel would expect that the lessons of reducing the environmental impact of the cultural sector should be taken on board in all the actions of the ECOC from 2017 rather than limited to a forum in late 2021.

The panel considered the proposed programme still lacks a few flagship events to attract a wider audience (wider than Attica and Athens). Several have the potential. For example the "Eleusis Terracotta Army" deserves a much longer exhibition phase than only five days. Limiting it to five days indicates a rather inward looking approach.

The panel welcomed the ambition of the "Neighbourhood Cultural Councils". They have the potential of extending their reach into areas of participative budgeting and local projects beyond the cultural arena. The panel recommends the participatory development of their governance and operations.

Capacity

The city council voted unanimously in September 2016 to support the bid. Support has also come from the Attica Regional Unit and the municipalities involved in the bid.

The city has limited conventional cultural venues but a range of outdoor theatre/performance stages. There is limited capacity for the visual arts. For the ECOC programme a wide range of venues and spaces will be brought into play from private homes to industrial heritage and archaeological sites.

The capital infrastructure plan includes three key new venues which the ECOC will use intensively. The panel felt the planned works programme has an acceptable degree of risk to the ECOC. The challenge the cultural infrastructure presents is less to the ECOC year itself and more to the strategic legacy of being seen, and being, a cultural city. To acquire and maintain that reputation will mean the venues will need to be far more intensively used than is now planned. The bidbook states that the council intends to fund both the increased running costs and the programme costs on a long term recurrent basis by doubling its current cultural budget to €2m annually. The panel would expect a more concrete strategic policy document on legacy operations to be prepared jointly by the city administration and the ECOC in 2017/18 for the Board and the city council to approve. This needs to be far more pragmatic (more orientated to a far more flexible staffing and operation than standard cultural institutions) than the more academic research orientated "Eleusis, The Living Museum" project.

The panel welcomed the major accompanying programme "Capacity Building and Innovation Centre". This seeks to significantly upgrade the skills of artists and cultural managers in the city. The panel particularly noted the recognition that the first stage of its activity is the training of the new ECOC team itself. The panel recommends that the scope of training partners needs to widen across Europe to gain the benefit of dynamic and flexible approaches to cultural management.

The bidbook sets out the limited tourism facilities, especially hotel beds in the city. Given the proximity to Athens this is not seen as a major factor. It does mean however that the marketing strategy needs to incorporate a strong engagement with the Athens hotel and tourist sector to bring visitors from Athens to Elefsina. The bidbook did not cover the range and quality of tourist information facilities in the city. It is probable that these need a complete overhaul in time for 2021, including a training programme for information staff, volunteers and interns.

Outreach

The panel noted the volunteer network of around 180 (in addition to the existing strong volunteer networks of the city). The panel welcomed the initiation and training programmes given to the volunteers and the aspiration to involve the whole population. The panel appreciated the efforts to extend the volunteer communication through social media. In particular it welcomed the initiative of the French speaking volunteers to translate the pre-selection bidbook into French. It is unusual (but welcome) for a "local business and professionals network" to have more members than the ECOC's volunteer network.

The proposed programme is designed to be active throughout the city and particularly in the more problematic neighbourhoods. This is a positive approach to engagement and to inclusion through culture by taking the arts to people rather than expecting them to go to arts venues. The panel also welcomed the programmes aimed at improving the skills and experience of the unemployed; this is an important group given the ECOC's, and city's strategic objective of moving from a post-industrial to a culturally led city.

The audience development programme covers a much wider geographic range than the city itself. The panel found the outline in the bidbook to be less developed than expected at this stage and seeks a more substantive plan in 2017. It is intended that many projects will have an educational programme with schools. The panel would have expected more details on this promising approach. The panel welcomed the senior management post of an Audience Development and Participation Officer.

Management

The forecast budget is €24m of which the city and region will each contribute €8.7m, EU programmes €0.9m, other sources €0.6m and the private sector €2.9m. The expectation is that the national government will contribute €2.3m. Unusually the city will allocate a proportion of its existing cultural budget to the ECOC.

The income is allocated 69% to programme costs, 14% to marketing, 16% to salaries and administration and just under 2% for evaluation.

The panel felt the overall budget was well put together. There has been an increase in €2m since preselection. The expectations of support from national government appear realistic (with other ministries as well as the ministry of culture being approached). The overall budget is still at the lower end of recent ECOC budgets (in countries with similar or smaller GDPs). The panel urge the ECOC to continue with strenuous fund raising. Wider funding approaches may benefit from a professional fund raiser. The local Business Network offers a good start, as will national private sector companies and foundations.

The anticipated income (€0.9m) from EU funded or co-funded programmes is lower than most ECOCs manage. Further efforts should be made to explore and obtain EU funding over the next four years through the European Funding, Development and Management Office.

The panel noted the start of the creation of an SA legal entity. It is customary now for a representative of the national government to be on the Board of Directors with a role to ensure close cooperation with all national ministries and organisations. The panel points out that care needs to be taken that no Board member has a vested interest in the programme of the ECOC to avoid any possible concerns of conflict of interests. The panel also makes recommendations on the function of the Board. The Board and the Eleusis21 organisation need to maintain high standards of transparency.

The panel noted the plans for open calls to recruit staff. It points out that many ECOCs have successfully brought in new people at this stage as the skills required for implementation are not necessarily those required during bid preparation. The panel welcomes the intention that the senior staff of the ECOC (whether involved or not in the bid) once appointed undertake specialist management training with the assistance of former ECOCs. Again Elefsina should co-operate with similar plans in the other two ECOCs.

The panel was concerned with the statement that the Artistic Director becomes “invisible”. ECOC experience has shown that the Artistic Director and the CEO become the two public faces of the ECOC; both have a considerable public local and international representational role.

The panel appreciated the outline of marketing plans with their focus on online and network activities. It is clear that an active multi-lingual social media presence is now a major element in the awareness marketing of an ECOC from selection onwards before more traditional marketing tools (attendance at international trade fairs and close co-operation with the national tourist organisation) kick in. The panel adds a few recommendations.

The panel considers the approach to highlighting that the ECOC is an action of the European Union to be adequate but needs further elaboration given the recent history of EU-Greece relations. Recommendations are made under the European Dimension.

Summary

The panel considered this a strong bid. It demonstrated a clear awareness of the city in both European and local contexts. It was rooted in the life of citizens with a strong participatory element from engagement in development (including business and unions). The general plans for the cultural legacy are clear right from the outset. The proposed programme is gradually built up during the ramp years. It has a good artistic quality. The panel appreciated the distribution of the programme around the city and the aspirations behind using the ECOC to increase cultural and civic actions. It still has a relatively small budget for an ECOC; more work is required. There are areas of improvement covered in the recommendations. The panel considers the bid can act as laboratory, a prototype, for a small post-industrial city transformation with culture as a key element.

Kalamata

Context

Kalamata seek through their bid for their city “to be a paradigm of how a peripheral city can lead sustainable development”. In recent years the motorway to Athens and the expansion of the airport have opened up the city; these are having a significant impact on a city previously relatively cut-off. The city had rebuilt itself after the devastating earthquake of 1986. The cultural scene is based around festivals, of which the Dance Festival is the most prominent. Most of the festivals are organised by private initiatives and run during the summer. There is a vibrant amateur arts scene.

The ECOC bid is under the theme of “Kalamata Rising” as its concept and “Beyond the Edge” as its artistic vision. The proposed programme has three thematics: “Awaken, our past”, “Confront, our present” and “Transform, the future”. There are three umbrella projects which operate across all three themes, “Residences: 21”, “Academy: 21” and “DigiKa”.

The bid includes neighbouring municipalities in Messinia and others in the Peloponnese.

Cultural Strategy

The city’s cultural strategy covers the period 2016-2025. It was approved by the city council in September 2016. The strategy has six generic objectives, 12 functional priorities and three priority axes. The strategy is available online, in English, on the ECOC’s website⁵. It was developed through a convincing participatory process.

The ECOC is seen as an accelerator in achieving the aims of the cultural strategy. It has adopted several of the functional priorities. The panel noted that the bid team had studied three cities in France, Denmark and Germany in a similar situation. The objectives of the ECOC are to cultivate a contemporary mindset, to develop adequate capacity, to reach the broadest possible accessibility, to nurture culture and creative industries and to foster active citizenship. The plan is to use the Melina Mercouri prize money, if awarded, to help sustain the legacy after the ECOC.

The panel welcomed the mapping of the cultural sector in the city and region as a sound foundation for the development of the strategy and the ECOC. The bidbook sets out a clear list of cultural, economic and social impacts cross referenced to specific projects. These were in turn linked to specific indicators. These tended to focus on the quantifiable aspects of the ECOC year itself and less on the more transformational aspirations for the city laid out in the objectives. There was a useful narrative of possible impacts spread through the 2020s. With the Council committing to a 12% increase in its culture budget after 2021 and the setting up of a small unit to sustain the ECOC momentum these seem realistic.

European Dimension

The panel was unclear on the range of the engagement with European partners within the scope of the criterion. The bidbook offered two statements ranging from 90% of projects with European partners to 2/3 of projects having partners or related to

⁵ <http://kalamata21.eu/cultural-strategy-2016-2025/?lang=en>

European themes. The panel felt the named partners were fewer than expected as this stage of the competition. The panel welcomed the importance and scope of the "Residences 21" programme, although it could be improved with opportunities for artists in Kalamata to undertake their own international residences. The budgets for the residences seemed low, especially for longer stays for the performing arts. Current European themes were covered in some projects but not in the level or depth that the panel expected.

The bid has a well-developed series of planned partnerships with other ECOCs with specific projects lined up. The panel appreciated the creation of the "ECOC Candidates Cities Network" to help maintain momentum in cities which do not achieve the title. It hopes Kalamata will play an active role in this network.

The panel did not see enough strong aspects in the programme to attract international visitors beyond those who would be already visiting the region or visiting on cruise ships.

Artistic programme

The artistic programme has the title "Beyond the Edge". It has four goals: to mobilise (local citizens and artists); to invite (international artists); to connect (to bridge the local with the European) and to strengthen (to develop capacity in the cultural and social sectors). The programme has three thematics and two leveraging umbrella projects. The bidbook sets out projects with a combined budget of €14.9m out of the total programme budget of €21m. The major (by budgets) projects are the "Creative Hub" (€1m); the "Green Design Festival" and the "Maria Callas series of mini-operas" (both €800,000); "Inside out Fashion" (€460,000) and several budgeted at €400,000 including "Academy: 21", "Civil War (Anguish)", "Public Art Festival", "Theatre Method" and "Ancient Drama Now". The panel appreciated the clarity of most of the project descriptions but felt several of the planned budgets seemed at odds with the scope of the project.

The panel considered there was a standard range of international partners and a wide range of artforms. There were fewer multi-year projects than the panel would have expected with a stronger emphasis on events, especially festivals in 2021 itself. The panel found this at variance with the intention to build a sustainable cultural programme after the ECOC year.

The panel noted the change in emphasis of the "Body in Revolt" programme following the comments in the preselection phase. It still has doubts about the suitability of the exhibition space but the other elements of the programme demonstrate a contemporary take on the 1821 anniversary with a focus on partnerships with Turkish artists. The panel would have expected a closer alignment of the 1821 anniversary with a wider contemporary European context. The panel welcomed the "Awaken" project with Turkish artists which it felt could have been extended. It appreciated the "Civil War (Anguish)" project based on the 1945-49 Civil War; ECOCs are often a good opportunity to tackle openly blocked memory issues which still resonate today.

The panel welcomed the information that the "Digi: Ka" programme is planned to be developed regardless of the outcome of the competition. Assuming a high speed fibre optic broadband will be installed in the city in the next few years the new centre could

become a centre for innovation in the region. The panel was less certain from the bidbook that it would trigger a critical mass of creatives.

The panel welcomed the idea and plans for the Agora within the “Ancient Drama Now!” project. This could be a strong participatory programme tackling controversial issues of public concern.

Around a third of the programme budget is not yet allocated. The panel noted the four level structure of projects from fully managed to fringe. The criteria for selection are sound.

The panel felt the plans for the engagement with the region were sound.

Capacity

The city council approved the candidacy in 2015 and again in September 2016 as it approved the cultural strategy. The five neighbouring municipalities in the Messinia Region have also voted to support the bid.

The city has a wide range of cultural venues and has the capacity to host major events. The bidbook recognised that there is not a facility for “high end” art exhibitions as it would exceed the city’s needs. This reflected the panel’s concern at pre-selection that the original concept for the “Body in Revolt” exhibition had no professional standard venue. The panel was concerned about the significant under-utilisation of the city’s premier cultural space, the new Dance Hall. The panel was assured during the presentation that a report on a possible Public-Private Partnership solution would be completed by the end of the year. The panel was less convinced that the building could be developed into a Kunsthalle; no sustainable business plan was available. The panel appreciated the diverse open spaces and buildings being drawn into the ECOC programme, from buildings destroyed by the earthquake to schools hosting summer workshops and events.

The programme includes a major capacity building project (“Academy: 21”) to strengthen the cultural management of the city. The panel welcomed the three strands, of school communities, the cultural sector and the city capacity and lifelong learning. This upskilling is a key element of the ECOC’s strategy, within the national government’s decentralisation aspiration, so that the city is not reliant on importing cultural managers from the rest of Greece. The panel noted that the ECOC team were prioritising upgrading the skills of the cultural sector over the new cultural buildings. This appears sound as the capital projects (cultural) linked to the ECOC programme shows a high level of projects at an early stage. During the presentation the panel learnt of the training needs of the tourist sector which was anticipating “vast numbers of tourists”.

“DigiKa” is one of the key umbrella projects which underpin the whole ECOC and form a significant part of the legacy. The panel noted the lack of a high speed broadband and noted that the installation of fibre optic broadband is only on a national priority list for late 2016/2017. Without it the “DigiKa” aspirations for digital nomads etc will be difficult to achieve when neighbouring countries such as Bulgaria are already operating in this area. The panel noted that Kalamata was bidding in a €24m Ministry of Finance programme for one of the 11-14 creative hubs in the country.

Outreach

The positive approach to engagement with citizens seen in the pre-selection phase has developed into a more focussed grouping of specialised Projects Groups. The panel welcomed several community based projects, "Art from the People", "Citizens Today, Citizens Tomorrow". These have maintained the momentum of an open approach to the programme design.

The number of volunteers has increased to over 400, a commendable number in a small city, with the aim to reach over 1000 by the ECOC year. The panel noted the "Cultural Pass" which already has over 4,000 registrations.

The panel appreciated the continued elaboration of the audience development programme. Links to the mapping of the cultural offer in the city and information from the "Culture Pass" have enabled a more detailed plan for audience development. The panel found the proposed breakdown of barriers and the related measures to be an adequate template for future actions but expected more concrete action plans.

The panel welcomed the outline of the activities and partners involved in the "Academy: 21 School Communities" project. The inclusion of projects with the Roma community not only in Kalamata but in neighbouring countries was a strong point.

Management

The forecast budget for the ECOC is €30m (an increase of €10m since pre-selection) of which the city will contribute €5m, the region €8.5m, other Messinian municipalities €0.5m, EU programmes €4m and the private sector €4m. The expectation is the national government will contribute €8m.

The expenditure is allocated 70% to programmes, 15% to marketing, 13% to staff and administration and 2% to monitoring and evaluation. The intention is to use the Melina Mercouri Prize, if awarded, for activity relating to legacy after 2022.

The panel considered the proposed financing to be generally sound. It felt the city contribution to be on the low side, especially as it may include EU funds and a mix of cash and in kind. The contribution from the national government is not confirmed yet but is at a level found in recent ECOCs on Member States with comparable GDP. The evaluation budget is higher than usual. At some stage over a ten year period the foundation and university should assume responsibility for evaluation as by then it is at standard academic levels.

The panel considered the proposed governance, managerial and staffing structures and plans to be appropriate. The panel noted the recognition that Kalamata lacks adequate managerial capacity both in the municipality and in the independent sector and the proposed actions to mitigate this weakness. The Development Director post was also noted with its longer term responsibility to the legacy management. The panel would have liked to have seen proposals from the city council in strengthening its own cultural administration rather than appearing to rely on the ECOC structures.

The panel noted the recognition that the ECOC brand has a relatively unfavourable reputation in Greece and appreciated the efforts made to regain support for it.

The panel welcomed the intention for all three ECOCs in 2021 to share a common website (www.econ2021.eu).

Summary

The panel felt the proposed programme did not measure up to the aspiration of being a role model at European level of a peripheral city. The strategy and ambitions were well presented. The three programme strands resonated and provide a strong framework. However the panel felt that there was a weak cohesion between the aspirations of the strands and the projects within them. The programme contained many interesting projects but gave the impression of a series of independent productions rather than a coherent whole. The plans for a sustainable cultural legacy were not as strong as to be expected. This covers both programme and content of the new cultural offer and capacity and the means to sustain it. Prudence over future city budgets is a sound policy but even so the city is only committing a very small increase in its cultural budget, which coupled with its low initial investment into the ECOc weakens the strategic resolve.

Overall the panel felt the intention to become a European level model of a resilient peripheral city was interestingly put forward yet it lacked a strategy and plans to identify other European peers to partner over the next 5 years in order to learn and exchange experiences.

The panel recommends that the city revisits its programme in the light of the outcome of this competition. There are strong points in the bid which will contribute to its cultural strategy over the medium term. The energy, commitment and participation of its citizens in the bid development deserve to see progress.

Rhodes

Context

Rhodes presented itself as a successful city with strong heritage assets to complement the beach holiday trade. The bid includes the islands in the Dodecanese. Their inclusion means the area has diverse cultural capital which acts as an inspiration for projects and artists. The panel learnt in the presentation of the objectives of spreading the tourist season to the under-developed winter seasons, the drive to enhance the cultural tourist offer and to build capacity especially in the islands.

The current cultural offer is strongly based on the heritage attractions. The bidbook acknowledged that many of the artists, theatre groups, musicians, designers etc are "trapped in small scale productions due to poor audience attendance and lack of opportunities".

The bid is based on the theme of "Journey to the Light". It is structured around four themes, based on the compass: "Citizen Europe" (diversity and values), "East-West" (Dialogue Platform), "Insularity" (sustainability and access) and "Creative Space, Creative People" (co-create and rejoice).

Cultural Strategy

The city council approved the cultural strategy as part of its Operational Plan 2015-2019 in 2015. An amendment was added in 2016 to extend the cultural element for a further

five years. The strategy will be reviewed every three years, including an online consultation process. The ECOC bid is consistent with a rather general cultural strategy. There has been no formal mapping of the cultural sectors and the bidbook admitted that the information is fragmented. It would undertake a baseline study if selected.

The panel appreciated the commitment to proceed with 36% of the projects in the bidbook in the regardless of the outcome of the ECOC competition. The plan is that 44% of the events in the bidbook would not be one-offs but the first step in self-sustainable annual or biennial activities.

The bidbook gave limited information on the cultural, social and economic impacts of the ECOC. Unlike many bidbooks there was no open analysis of the challenges and opportunities the city is facing to put the cultural strategy and subsequent ECOC bid into perspective. The panel noted an inconsistency between the assertion in the bidbook that the ECOC was not aiming at increasing tourism and the information provided during the presentation which did highlight increasing tourism especially in the low season.

The panel felt that the plans for monitoring and evaluation were limited. The monitoring process was not identifiable as a separate activity to guide the ECOC management during the build-up period so changes could be made. The tables of possible indicators covered areas not within an ECOC's scope of ambition. Some caused the panel concern, including one which sought data on "number of residents who perceive language customs and tradition as central to national identity". This does not seem compatible with the concept of European citizenship as through internal and external migration the nature of citizenship is changing.

European Dimension

The strength of the European dimension in the proposed programme comes from the ambition for every project to have partners from the Middle East (mainly in the eastern Mediterranean) as well as other European countries, the 2+1 Social Erasmus principle. This is a laudable (if rather over-exclusionary of other sound projects meeting the objectives) aim. The panel did not see this laudable aim translated into the objectives in the evaluation section. There the indicators were about volumes of events but not about any sense of delivering a greater awareness and understanding of the cultures of Europe, and in this case of the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East as well. This weakness was also evident in the lack of inter-cultural dialogue actions beyond performance. Given its location the city had an opportunity to create a strong programme addressing current issues of cultural conflict. The panel did not see a strong range of partners from Europe. Many organisations are small scale and have limited international appeal.

The bid team has signed co-operation protocols with several forthcoming ECOCs and signalled the intention to work with ECOCs between now and 2021 although the panel would expect a more detailed set of project agreements at this stage.

Artistic programme

The artistic programme under the heading of "Journey to the Light" is structured around four axes: "Citizen Europe", "East West", "Insularity" and "Creative Space". This represents a deliberate reduction from the seven axes at preselection to make the

message clearer. The approach is to use the four years of development to attract a significant number of artists and audiences from around the world.

The bid was developed in conjunction with meetings with the local cultural operators including architects, NGOs and the University of the Aegean.

A key of the programme is the intention that projects should have a project from the Middle East and two partners from the European Union. Several proposed projects also have partners from further afield including Russia and the USA.

The panel noted several projects or programmes of interest. Most of these were relatively small scale, workshop based, and bringing small numbers of people from different countries together with a shared interest. It would have expected a greater participation of local people in these events; the impression gained was of using the island as a venue for others rather than a focus on its own citizens so they could increase their understanding of the diversity of cultures in Europe.

Some programmes were ambitious, for example the "Persona European Centre of Cinema" which aims to generate a constant flow of film production to Rhodes and the "Digit: Isle" based on technological innovation in art with an educational element included. The panel noted a relative limited number of projects in the various visual arts leading to an over-concentration on performance in one form or another.

The panel noted the intention to minimise the climate impact by using a tree planting offset scheme; now seen as a rather limited approach to carbon reductions. It would have hoped this could have been taken further with a stronger approach to reducing the real impacts of the event in the cultural sector itself (eg green events) and the tourist industry. The panel appreciated the piloting of several possible projects as test beds.

However the panel's assessment of the proposed programme was made difficult by the lack of financial information on the proposed projects (a standard feature in bidbooks at final selection).

The panel learnt during the presentation that the main events have not yet been disclosed. This meant the panel were uncertain on the flagship projects which customarily act as the attractors of an international audience over and above the normal tourist attractions of the city and island.

The panel learnt during the presentation that one project will have a budget of over €3.7m and be led by the Artistic Director's own organisation. This arrangement is very unusual in ECOCs and will give rise to accusations of conflict of interests. Based on experience of previous ECOCs it is important that senior managers (and Board members) do not also have an operational interest in the ECOC programme. There were also a seemingly large number of projects from the Heat Collective in its various formations. The panel could not compare the relative size and scope of projects nor the balance between the axes.

One of the objectives outlined in the presentation was the aim of building up the cultural offer in the off-peak tourist season. The panel was unable to judge this as there was not outline timetable presented.

The proposals for the development of the creative industries were very limited; creating a weakness in the meeting of economic objectives of an ECOC. Opportunities for the expansion of the crafts industries were missing in projects such as "Harvesting Tradition".

Capacity

The bid was unanimously approved by the city council in 2015. All the leaders of the political parties signed a declaration supporting the bid in the event of a change of political leadership between 2015 and 2021. At the same time the city councils of the 18 islands of the Dodecanese also supported the candidacy. The city council in September 2016 in approving the cultural strategy also de facto reapproved the bid.

The city has reserved €37m for a restoration and renovation plan for improving the cultural infrastructure. Limited information was given in the bidbook on the specific projects and their current state of play and expectation of completion. The panel was unable to establish whether this programme established a risk to the ECOC. The city has a range of venues, mostly in heritage buildings for events with a particular emphasis on the performing arts. There was less indication of contemporary art spaces. Throughout there was less evidence of a cultural production capacity rather than venues for performance.

The bidbook had little information on the cultural management skills and experiences in the city. There is recognition that on the islands the cultural institutions "are lagging behind in long term strategy, outreach and management". A small training programme was envisaged; most ECOCs now highlight a major training programme for the cultural managers and city administrators in a city. The panel was not convinced that there would be a significant increase in the local management capacity (rather than short term assignments from Athens etc) to handle the significantly increased cultural programme after the ECOC.

Outreach

The panel at preselection had noted the strong engagement with citizens, organisations as well as the cultural sector. It appeared from the bidbook that this engagement has reduced considerably since pre-selection as the focus turned to consolidating the programme. There is a sound connexion between "special population groups" and specific projects. There is less information on a more transversal integration approach with marginalised groups. (For example, ensuring access to cultural facilities and reviewing reasons for non-attendance etc). The panel appreciated the aim to make cultural venues accessible to those with disabilities.

The panel felt that the audience development plans were weak. The panel would expect a far more detailed approach to audience development by the festivals and cultural operators. This is separate to the engagement with schools, which was hardly mentioned in the bidbook. The digital plan did not include, as the panel would expect, elements to expand the participation in culture of citizens.

Management

The forecast operational budget is €45m. It will be raised from the city (€17m), region (€8.7m), the EU (mostly competitive bids) (€1.9m) and €5.4m from the private sector. The expected contribution from the national government is €11.9m.

The intention is to allocate 80% to programme costs, 10% to marketing and 8% to salaries and administration. A further 2% of the programme expenditure is for new activity before 2021.

The expected contribution from the national government is not yet confirmed but is at a level in other ECOCs in countries with comparable GDPs.

The panel had concerns with the financial projections. No ECOC has managed to spend 80% of its budget on programme spend or as little as 8% on salaries (given a forecast 60 staff at peak employment).

The panel noted the proposed legal entity and its Board composition. It noted there was no representative from civil, educational or cultural sectors.

The panel considered the planned recruitment of the CEO and Artistic Director and other senior staff, to be appropriate. The division of responsibilities was not clear.

The panel noted the outline of the marketing strategy and the advantages the ECOC would have with its close relationship with the extensive tourism and hospitality sector of the island. There was a clear and detailed approach to informing the existing tourist base of the island as well as its own citizens and those in mainland Greece. The panel felt there was less focus than expected on the new target audiences who would be attracted by the programme of the ECOC. The ECOC would need a specific marketing strategy separate from the normal tourism promotional material emphasising the new cultural offer and aimed at a different target audience.

Summary

The bid had an interesting ambition to work on every project with partners from both Europe and the Middle East. This would bring added value to the ECOC development. The panel felt the aims of the bid were unclear. The lack of financial information on projects was a weakness. At times, especially during the presentation, the drive to enhance the cultural tourism offer of the island was to the fore, a position not advanced as much in the bidbook. This demonstrated a lack of clarity on the objectives. The panel has concerns on the capacity of the cultural sector on the island to deliver a project as complex and large as an ECOC. The capacity building element was relatively limited. Despite a frequent inclusion of digital activity the programme lacked a contemporary and innovative focus. There was an over balance towards the performing art forms with the various visual artforms underrepresented. The scope of the creative industries could be developed much further including the craft sector. The plans for the islands were not clearly defined although during the presentation several seemed positive including training and the use of volunteers,

The panel welcomes the intention to implement 36% of the programme regardless of the outcome of the ECOC competition. This demonstrates a clear commitment to enhancing the cultural offer of the city in line with its cultural strategy.

Next Steps

Formal 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, and based on this report, the ministry will designate Elefsina to hold the title of ECOC in Greece in 2021. It will inform the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions. This formal designation enables Elefsina to use the title “European Capital of Culture 2021”.

Melina Mercouri Prize

The panel recommends that the European Commission awards the Melina Mercouri Prize to the designated city. The payment of the €1.5m prize is deferred until 2021. It is conditional.

The conditions are (article 14 of the Decision):

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

In late 2020 the monitoring panel will make a recommendation to the European Commission on whether to make the payment based on these conditions.

Reputation of an ECOC

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

The monitoring phase

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

The bidbook at final selection becomes the de facto contract between the designated city and its citizens, the monitoring panel, the ministry, the European Commission as well to the other candidates. It has an important role in the payment of the Melina

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

There are three formal monitoring checkpoints (*autumn 2017, spring 2019 and autumn 2020*) when the ECOC will meet the panel in Brussels. The European Commission, on behalf of the monitoring panel, will ask the ECOC to provide a progress report and highlight any particular issues which need to be covered in the progress report. The report should indicate the major developments taken by the ECOC, updates of projects, finances and plans in the bidbook, a risk review and an outline work plan for the subsequent period. These will include information on the implementation of recommendations by the selection and monitoring panels.

The panel may decide to visit the city to observe progress.

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

In addition to the formal monitoring meetings the selection panel recommends that the senior staff (CEO and Artistic Director) meet with members of the panel in early 2017 for an in-depth review of the proposed programme and the management of the ECOC. Such an early meeting can enable the ECOC to plan its first year's operation in the light of the monitoring panel's experience. The concurrent of the Commission is needed for the meeting.

The panel's recommendations to Elefsina

These recommendations are designed to assist Elefsina ECOC management develop their programme and ensure strong governance and management. The first year after selection is a crucial year for every ECOC as it seeks to establish a firm foundation for its subsequent operations.

Governance

- To establish the Eleusis2021 SA legal entity. To appoint the Supervisory Board of Directors. Care should be taken to ensure Board members have the appropriate strategic skills as well as being from certain sectors. Board members should have no vested interests in the programme of the ECOC to ensure no conflicts of interest. Their role is to operate at a strategic not executive level. Day to day management rests with the Executive Director. They are ambassadors for the ECOC and should be senior enough to engage at a high level in the public and private sectors at local and national level. They have a special responsibility to ensure the legacy of the ECOC.
- The Board and the Eleusis2021 need to operate in all matters with the highest degree of transparency.
- The Ministry of Culture to be invited to be a member of the Board to facilitate high level relationships with ministries and national public institutions.
- The city puts the Cultural Strategy on its website (in Greek).

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- The Board confirms the appointment of the Artistic Director and recruits through open international competition the Chief Executive Officer. Other senior posts are recruited by the same method and are in place as soon as possible in 2017.
 - The CEO prepares, for Board approval, the financial regulations including the explicit delegation of financial and legal approvals.
 - An external organisation is appointed to undertake annual audits and to approve the Annual Accounts of the SA to ensure transparency and public accountability. The Annual Report and the Accounts of the Association must be published. Note this is the publication of the audited accounts and not just the proposed budget as indicated in the bidbook on page 88. The report and accounts should also be sent to the monitoring panel via the Commission.
 - Internal management and administrative processes are in place by summer 2017. These will include human resources, legal (e.g. project contract arrangements), data privacy, intellectual property rights, the criteria and systems for calls for projects, the marketing and branding strategy. It is important that these are prepared early in the transition period as systems used in the bid process are unlikely to be robust enough for implementation.
 - An internal communications strategy is developed and implemented. This covers communications within the association, between the association and the city administration, between the association and the ministry, with the national tourist organisation and between the association and the European Commission. This could also extend to the other two candidate cities (and the other two ECOCs) to assist collaboration.
 - A detailed staffing plan up to and including 2022 including the use of interns, secondees and volunteers. There should be a clear distinction between the roles each employment category will perform so that unpaid interns and volunteers do not replace fully paid staff.
 - To revisit the financial plans, including EU and private sector funding. To consider commissioning a professional fund raiser.
 - To set up a monitoring facility from 2017 so that management can see the impact they are having during the build-up period.
 - To revisit the outcomes and indicators, establish targets (and prioritise them). To link the evaluation organisations with those of Timisoara and Novi Sad so they work as a consortium.

Programme

- Most ECOCs revisit their programme after selection to bring the plans up to date, to possibly merge projects and to strengthen them. The panel recommends such a review with a particular emphasis on deepening the European partnerships and tackling European themes so that citizens can enhance their awareness of the diversity of cultures in Europe. At the same time the richness of the diversity of Elefsina should be brought out into the programme (and management). There are specific references to particular projects in the assessment section of this report.
- To review the flagship events to ensure a stronger programme to attract international visitors (eg the exhibition of the Terracotta Army).
- To ensure the programme and legacy changes complement and not compete with Athens.
- To review the approach to highlighting common European issues through hosting international conferences, seminars and workshops throughout the ECOC period

and within the year. The three ECOC themes have a strong pan European appeal and the ECOC should exploit them.

- To carry out more detailed research and planning on various elements of the programme including the creative industries; audience development, Neighbourhood Councils, the use of libraries and archives and the activities in the Western Attica region.
- ECOCs frequently engage professional marketing companies in their first year to review the marketing and branding strategy. As well as the general tourism appeal already in the city the ECOC needs to focus on niche marketing with a high social media interaction (in multiple languages).
- For the city to undertake a comprehensive review of its tourist infrastructure and support for tourists.
- To establish a strong working partnership with co-ECOCs in Timisoara and Novi Sad. This may include a shared umbrella website www.ECOC2021.eu , co-marketing and joint evaluations.

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.

Steve Green (Chair)

Apostolos Kalfopoulos (vice-chair)

Sylvia Amann

Cristina Farinha

Ulrich Fuchs

Alain Hutchinson

Jordi Pardo

Aiva Rozenberga

Pauli Sivonen

Ioannis Trohopoulos

Agnieszka Wlazel

Suzana Žilič Fišer

Athens December 2016