



EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE

**Selection of the European Capital of Culture 2022  
in Luxembourg**

**The Expert Panel's report  
Selection Stage**

**Luxembourg  
November 2017**

## Introduction

This is the report of the Expert panel (the “panel”) in the selection phase of the competition for the European Capital of Culture 2022 in Luxembourg.

The Ministry of Culture of Luxembourg (the “ministry”) is the managing authority of the competition which is governed by:

- Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 (the “Decision”)<sup>1</sup> and
- Rules of procedure – Competition for the European Capital of Culture in Luxembourg in 2022, signed by the Minister of Culture of Luxembourg and put on the ministry's website in October 2015.

## Selection Panel

A panel of 11 independent experts was established for the selection procedure in line with Article 2 of the Rules. Ten members were appointed by the European Union institutions and bodies (European Parliament, Council, Commission and Committee of the Regions). One member was appointed by the ministry. The panel elected Ms Sylvia Amann as its chair and Robert Philippart as its vice-chair.

## Pre-Selection

The ministry issued a call for applications on 21 July 2015. The competition was then in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and selection (final recommendation of the panel). One application was submitted by the closing date of 23 May 2016. The panel met in Luxembourg on 14 June 2016 and recommended that the only candidate city Esch-sur-Alzette be preselected.

The Minister of Culture of Luxembourg accepted the panel’s recommendation and invited the city of **Esch-sur-Alzette** to submit a revised application with a deadline of 15 September 2017.

Esch-sur-Alzette submitted its revised application (“bidbook”) by this deadline.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG)

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

- The mandate of three panel members, Steve Green, Jordi Pardo and Suzana Žilič Fišer expired on 31 December 2016. Steve Green and Jordi Pardo were replaced by Beatriz Garcia and Jiří Suchánek while Suzana Žilič Fišer was reconfirmed as a panel member for a second mandate.
- Delegations from Esch-sur-Alzette met with the panel's chair in Linz and Leeuwarden to seek clarification of the recommendations in the pre-selection report. They were accompanied by observers from the ministry and the European Commission
- A delegation of the panel (Alain Hutchinson, Robert Philippart and Jiří Suchánek) visited Esch-sur-Alzette on 9 November 2017. They were accompanied by observers from the ministry and the European Commission. The delegation reported back to the full panel at the selection meeting.

## **Selection Meeting**

The final selection meeting took place in the city of Luxembourg on 10 November 2017. One panel member (Aiva Rozenberga) was excused. Representatives of the ministry and the European Commission attended as observers. The observers took no part in the panel's deliberations or decision.

The preselected city made a 30 minutes presentation followed by 75 minutes of a Question & Answer session. Its delegation had eight members.

The chair of the panel announced the panel's recommendation at a press conference after the meeting in the presence of the Prime Minister and Minister of Culture, Xavier Bettel, and the State Secretary for Culture, Guy Arendt.

## **Assessment of the candidate**

In their assessment of the candidate 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 the bid against the six criteria in Article 5:

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

In the commentaries which follow the panel notes the main elements of their discussions and specific recommendations are made to assist the implementation of the ECoC.

### *Long-term cultural strategy*

The panel appreciated that the ECoC programme is building on the multilingual and diverse cultural identity of Luxembourg, seeking to enrich the international image of a country which is often seen as a mere financial centre. A cultural strategy for Esch-sur-Alzette was adopted in June 2017.

The wider region involved in the ECoC programme – including eleven municipalities in Luxembourg and eight in France – has agreed to launch a procedure for a regional cultural strategy, which is a very welcomed development. The panel noticed the clear cross-border regional commitment as several neighbouring municipalities are actively supporting the ECoC project. Various strategies (the cultural strategy, the results of the Agenda 21 for Culture process, the new urban development vision 2040) are mentioned in the bidbook and are planned to boost and complement each other.

However, the description remains fragmented on how these elements interact to create a comprehensive ecosystem with the view to reaching strategic goals for the cultural development of the city of Esch and the wider region, using the acceleration potential of the ECoC-project. The linkages between the ECoC and the cultural strategy require further adaptations and specifications. The expected positive changes and legacy vision for the city and its cultural development seem not to be yet totally anchored in the mind-sets of all decision makers. Cultural, social and urban/economic impact indicators are listed, but should be more detailed to ensure an effective monitoring of the progress made during the ECoC implementation process and then a reliable ex post evaluation of the impact. Evaluation efforts are suggested and will involve external experts in order to ensure neutrality and independence in the assessment. There

is also mention of some data collection collaboration with the local university. The double role of the local university as both a project promoter and an important contributor to the evaluation team needs to be carefully taken into account.

→ *Recommendation 1*

*The role of the European Capital of Culture in the long-term cultural strategy needs further definition and more focused action-planning. A narrative about common objectives can ease related internal and external communication; as well as clarify and help to prepare future legacy plans.*

→ *Recommendation 2*

*The research & evaluation programme, data availability / needs and research stakeholders' relationships must be mapped out in more detail. The local university should benefit from the opportunity to build its expertise and capacity in this research domain and, given its key positioning and reputation in Esch, it has an important role to play in ensuring the best quality approach to research and evaluation. Naturally, as both a major stakeholder for some important projects in the ECoC programme and a desirable partner (or potential lead) in the evaluation process, it is important that measures be taken to avoid any conflict of interest. This is becoming now standard procedure within universities at all major-event hosting cities.*

→ *Recommendation 3*

*The sustainability of the cultural development and legacy of the ECoC project must be clearly defined (with further developed indicators) based on an agreed definition of expected success.*

### ***European dimension***

The European concept of the Esch-sur-Alzette ECoC project relies on the original principles of the European unification process – namely actively working against nationalism. It aims at furthering Euro-optimism to fight against today's wide-spreading pessimism. The central concept of the Esch project is the mixing of cultures in the area, which is perceived as being the corner stone for a future positive and common development of Europe. The question of second cities is correctly highlighted as it

concerns many cities in Europe as well as a whole bunch of European Capitals of Culture; yet the proposed action – namely a network of second cities – raises questions regarding its specific focus and relevance. The European cooperation is still underdeveloped in the bidbook. Project partnerships involve few international partners with too strong a focus on neighbouring countries. The potential to attract conferences of European networks is not fully used. Several elements of the programme will allow generating interest from an international audience (e. g. Ai Weiwei and Dubuffet). However, the proposed approach lacks a comprehensive definition and strategy to attract potential international audience, taking into account the geographical central position of Esch-sur-Alzette. The cooperation with other ECoCs is well-developed concerning the years 2021 and 2022 with a special focus on Kaunas. The proposed programme lacks a wider cooperation effort towards past European Capitals of Culture and candidate cities in Northern and Western Europe.

→ *Recommendation 4*

*Clarification should be sought with regard to the specific need for a new second cities network, its main functions as well as related linkages to existing ECoC and other cities networks.*

→ *Recommendation 5*

*The European dimension of the proposed programme needs considerable enlargement, notably at the geographical level. European networks and institutions relevant for the thematic focus of the programme should be especially addressed (e. g. the Translation Centre for European Bodies based in Luxembourg etc.).*

→ *Recommendation 6*

*The positive message of multiculturalism and multilingualism – to have the potential to reach a variety of addressees and to generate impact for the European process – requires a comprehensive definition of main European and international target groups.*

→ *Recommendation 7*

*The cooperation potential with past and present ECoC and candidate cities should be further enlarged to better cover the diversity of the EU territory as well as its neighbouring countries involved in the action.*

## *Cultural and artistic content*

The artistic vision of the programme "REMIX CULTURE" aims at highlighting the questions of identity and pleads for a remix of cultures. The related strategy focuses on the social challenges of the Luxembourg South including structural changes due to post-industrial realities as well as high-immigration and more than double the national unemployment rate. The intention is to mobilise the population so that they re-appropriate many of the abandoned and barely-used public spaces, to address the specificities of a region having played an important role in the European unification process and to accelerate the local creative industries.

REMIX CULTURE is sub-divided in four strands: "Remix Europe" – which starts from the analysis of a fragile Europe; "Remix Nature" – a programme element related to the public space and a new visibility as a common region; "Remix Yourself" – which raises the questions related to the digital world and virtual reality; and "Remix Art" – a series of international arts events. A Remix Culture Club will be established as a creative hub and neuralgic point for capacity building.

A total of 20 main endeavours are presented in the bidbook. It remains unclear how the announced enlargement of the programme will be organised. The set of selection criteria is comprehensive, but demanding, and raises questions regarding the absorption capacity of the region (e. g. involvement of a youth and children strand in all programme elements).

The notion of REMIX is widely used (e. g. in music) and a feature of many European Capitals of Culture. In order to make it a unique element, the concept of REMIX requires careful specification and a distinctive narrative.

The programme strand "Remix Europe" covers promising approaches like the first European "Multilinguale" taking account of the specific linguistic framework and challenges of small language groups and dialects. It is a project with relevance for Europe, many regions and their multiple identities. On the other side, the critical analysis of the digital world as announced with Remix Yourself is not fully visible. Some projects e.g. Revolution Results, Esch-Sans-Alzette – An Invisible River Returns; Magical Paths or Weaving look however promising. Regarding the opening ceremony, the glowing sky over Belval is an interesting approach using virtual reality techniques to make history tangible. However, the overall concept of the opening remains at this stage very vague. For some of the projects, a strong and sustainable involvement of the local population is required (e. g. Jamming the South, Thil and the Remix Yourself strand),

which is per se very positive. But the bidbook remains too generic regarding how the local population will be mobilised to participate in cultural events. The plans related to cultural and creative industries focus on pop music. Related support activities like the new hub are promising approaches for a sustainable development of the CCI. Finally, the budget for some flagship projects seems extremely high and the sum of all project budgets mentioned exceeds the global amount indicated for the programme expenditure in the operating budget.

→ *Recommendation 8*

*There is a need to further elaborate the specificities of the REMIX CULTURE concept to generate a sound conceptual ground and a related distinctive narrative for the 2022 ECoC in Esch-sur-Alzette (e.g. ensure clear differences with usages of similar concepts in previous ECoCs, such as Aarhus 2017 'Rethink' motto).*

→ *Recommendation 9*

*The detailed preparation of the programme must include feasibility studies, business plans, detailed budgeting and clarification about production (in-house, co-production, co-operation, labelling), as well as an analysis of sustainability.*

→ *Recommendation 10*

*Further developing the programme (opening, closing, flagships, new projects, open calls, enlargement of partnerships) must be a priority for the ECoC team.*

→ *Recommendation 11*

*The feasibility of the capacity building programme (infrastructure, participation) must be carefully analysed and should start in 2018. It must be based on a comprehensive analysis of capacity building and skills development needs (team, cultural sector, cultural and creative industries, co-creating participants).*

## ***Capacity to deliver***

City, region (including the cross-border territory) and State have confirmed their strong political commitment for the ECoC project. Financial engagement covers a multi-annual period on a contractual basis. The existing cultural infrastructure will be used. In addition, different options



regarding new venues and re-use of industrial sites are under investigation for the ECoC. Favourable elements are the short distances in Luxembourg (20 km from the capital city of Luxembourg to Esch-sur-Alzette), but challenging are the constant traffic jams on peak hours due to high internal and cross-border commuting circulation. The ECoC is looking for more environmental-friendly alternatives. Accommodation facilities are scarce in the area. Capacity is bigger in the city of Luxembourg, but rapidly sold out and expensive. A whole set of alternative and pop-up hotel offers is under preparation in order to overcome this bottleneck.

The proposed re-use and adaptation of former industrial sites is still in a preparation stage. This links directly to crucial needs of the ECoC, for example for the big exhibitions of the programme's Remix Art strand as well as to the main communication and capacity building centre – the Remix Culture Club.

#### → *Recommendation 12*

*Rapid clarification must be sought for regarding the use of industrial sites for the ECoC as well as potential alternatives (e. g. the well-developed existing cultural infrastructure in the city and region).*

#### → *Recommendation 13*

*Transport and accommodation offers developed for the ECoC should especially take into account complementary low-budget and environmentally friendly alternatives in order to ensure the participation of a diverse public, in particular youngsters. A sales agency should be set up for selling tickets and packages in cooperation with local, regional and national cultural and tourism actors.*

### **Outreach**

The core element of the Esch-sur-Alzette outreach programme is the Remix Culture Club – a lab for exchange, learning and involving. Its mission is to further tolerance and openness. Efforts are under way to gain Boy George as patron for the endeavour. The Regional Culture Council is another part of the outreach activities dedicated to a structured cooperation between main stakeholders from the ECoC team, decision makers, local artists and other stakeholders, which is a positive element.

The four specific strands and one transversal approach in the Remix Culture Club reflect the needs of the cultural sector and the local population on the one side as well as the requirements regarding involvement from the ECoC programming side. The outreach to a considerable number of participants remains however a critical point, all the more because it lacks a clear identification of the various target audiences, internally and internationally.

The outreach efforts furthermore lack sustainability elements. The involvement of the population must not end with the participation in the ECoC project – methods must be developed to ensure a long-term participation in culture and arts. The related audience development strategy – although including some promising elements such as art in public space, cultural education, focus on co-creation and plans for youth involvement – still remains generic. Activities allowing a broader exchange with Europeans from other countries are still too limited and rely mainly on the exchange of volunteers. The strategy still lacks a specific effort towards the engagement of the students at the University of Luxembourg in Esch-sur-Alzette and the huge number of commuters working in Luxembourg (approx. 200 000).

→ *Recommendation 14*

*The development of a comprehensive audience engagement strategy is required to ensure full participation of the local population, (international) students, European audience, etc. as well as the digital audience dimension.*

→ *Recommendation 15*

*An implementation plan for the audience engagement strategy needs to be developed integrating as many participative and co-creation elements as possible to enhance personal engagement for the crucial European topics addressed in the ECoC programme.*

## ***Management***

The total budget amounts to 70.6m € of which 10.1m will be provided by the City, 40m € by the State Government and 12.9m € by the region – a promising and sound financial framework is in place. Regarding the financial contribution from the City, it will come from additional budgetary resources on top of the city's budget for culture. EU funding sources are also addressed – by the means of partner organisations – due to the

recent foundation of the ECoC association and subsequent illegibility for some European programmes. The sponsoring programme is built on the growing interest of the business sector in Luxembourg for arts and culture and it is expected to raise a total of 7.6 m € from the private sector. The overall splitting of the budget refers to common ECoC practice. The high staff and organisation costs are explained due to the level of salaries in Luxembourg.

Capital expenditures will amount to 68m € and cover five main infrastructures of relevance for the implementation of the cultural programme.

The ECoC disposes therefore of a solid financial framework, with written commitments from all stakeholders. However, the financing of the most relevant infrastructures needs to be better ensured as well as the related organisational setting for a sound implementation in accordance with the needs of the ECoC in the ramp-up years and in 2022.

Moreover, the organisational chart is too simplified. Crucial positions such as the audience development team and the infrastructural liaison officer are for the moment not planned for. The role and position of four European experts remain too generic. The Department of Project Development requires further detailed staffing planning. The dual leadership is an extremely challenging approach – especially in the operational setting of an ECoC where fast and clear decision-making and authority are required.

The high risk areas in the programme – namely the lack of available adapted infrastructures (e. g. for exhibitions) and the current weak engagement of the population for culture and volunteering (while their engagement is crucial for most of the proposed ECoC projects) are not sufficiently addressed with regard to staff, further human resources and methodological approaches (beyond workshops).

The slogan REMIX CULTURE encompasses several meanings and the proposed derivatives are too complex for marketing purposes. The concept of Cultural Karaoke is not clear. The planning of (tourism) marketing activities is still in the making.

#### → *Recommendation 16*

*The budgetary concept (calculation of project costs and costs breakdown) needs further explanation for internal and external communication purposes.*

→ *Recommendation 17*

*The organisational chart doesn't reflect the specific structural needs of an ECoC. An updated version should also include clarification with regard to clear leadership, project and audience development, evaluation and marketing team as well as a responsible for questions related to the use of industrial sites.*

→ *Recommendation 18*

*The proposed staffing plan remains too fragmented and doesn't reflect sufficiently on the requirements for projects fully or partly produced by the ECoC foundation (e. g. the opening). Clear selection criteria reflecting the European scale of the project and a catalogue of required competences should be applied to the whole current and future staff. The Director general and artistic director should sign a responsibility assignment matrix.*

→ *Recommendation 19*

*A more detailed and concrete sponsoring plan needs to include the potential support by big industrial players in the region including Arcelor Mittal. Strategic negotiation support should include high-level decision makers.*

→ *Recommendation 20*

*Based on the risk analysis, the team should further focus on crucial elements like the use of the industrial sites for the purposes of the ECoC as well as on capacity building and engagement.*

→ *Recommendation 21*

*The marketing strategy and slogan built on the REMIX CULTURE concept with its potential to reshape and rejuvenate the image of Luxembourg requires further development. The ECoC communication team needs to focus not only on marketing-promotional tactics but also on the building of a clear and strong communication identity rooted in the ECoC aims and mission.*

## **The Panel's Decision**

After the presentation the panel debated the merits of the candidature against the six criteria. Each panel member weighed their own interpretation of the criteria with the bid book, presentation, questions and answers, augmented by the feedback from the city visit. The panel reached consent on the single candidate.

Accordingly, the panel recommends that the ministry designates, as a European Capital of Culture 2022, the city of

### **Esch-sur-Alzette**

The final bid book presented by the city of Esch-sur-Alzette reflects the huge progress made so far since the beginning of the preparation process. Remix Culture is a very good starting point for debates on European integration, multicultural societies and multilingualism. The European concept of the Esch-sur-Alzette ECoC project relies on the original principles of the European unification process – namely actively working against nationalism. The underlying programme principles of participation and re-use of spaces related to the industrial era reflect on local specificities and needs in the European context. The focus of the team in the next phase must be oriented towards the enhancement of the European dimension, detailed project planning and sound governance.

## **Designation**

This report has been sent to the ministry and the European Commission. Both will publish it on their websites. In accordance with article 11 of the Decision the ministry will designate Esch-sur-Alzette to hold the title of ECoC in Luxembourg in 2022 based on this report. It will then inform the European Parliament, Council, Commission and Committee of the Regions. This formal designation enables Esch-sur-Alzette to use the title “European Capital of Culture 2022”.

## **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 is deferred until 2022. It is conditional. The monitoring panel will make a

further recommendation to the European Commission in late 2021 on whether to make the payment.

The conditions are (article 14 of the Decision):

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

## Reputation of an ECOC

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

## The monitoring phase

Once an ECOC has been designated it enters the “Monitoring Phase” (article 13 of the Decision). The Expert 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 the panel, the ministry and the European Commission as well to its own citizens. It has an important role in the payment of the

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

There are three formal monitoring checkpoints (normally autumn 2018, mid 2020 and autumn 2021) when the ECOC will meet with the panel. Prior to each meeting the European Commission, on behalf of the panel, will invite the ECOC to provide progress reports. The Commission, after consultation with the panel, will indicate areas which specifically need to be addressed in the reports.

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

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

## Thanks

The panel wishes to place on record its thanks to the Minister, the staff of the ministry, ably supported by Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission, for their efficient management of the competition.

Sylvia Amann (Chair)

Robert L. Philippart (Vice-Chair)

Cristina Farinha

Ulrich Fuchs

Beatriz Garcia

Alain Hutchinson

Aiva Rozenberga (excused)

Pauli Sivonen

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**Luxembourg, November 2017**