



**EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE**

**Galway**

**European Capital of Culture 2020**

**First Monitoring Meeting**

**Report by the panel of independent experts**

**Brussels**

**March 2017**

## Introduction

This report follows the meeting in Brussels on 8 March 2017 between the panel and Galway, one of the two European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) in 2020<sup>1</sup>. Galway was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2020 in Ireland in September 2016<sup>2</sup>; its bid-book is available on the Galway 2020 website<sup>3</sup>. The report is addressed to the Galway 2020 organisation (Galway Cultural Development and Activity CLG) and will be published on the European Commission's website<sup>4</sup>.

## Attendance

The panel members:

Sylvia Amann, Cristina Farinha (Chair) and Agnieszka Wlazel, appointed by the European Parliament 2015-17

Ulrich Fuchs, Aiva Rozenberga and Pauli Sivonen, appointed by the Council of the EU 2016-18

Beatriz Garcia, Jiří Suchánek and Dr Suzana Žilič Fišer (absent), appointed by the European Commission 2017-2019

Alain Hutchinson, nominated by the Committee of the Regions 2016-2018

For Galway 2020:

Mark O Donnell	Project Manager a.i.
Nollaig McGuinness	Community Engagement, Outreach and Volunteers
Tracy Geraghty	European Dimension & Programme Development
Marilyn Reddan	Legacy & Programme Development

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (DG EAC) and from the Irish Ministry of Culture.

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<sup>1</sup> The European Capitals of Culture action is governed by Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council for the titles 2020 to 2033, which provides for three formal monitoring meetings between designated cities and the panel. See: [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)

<sup>2</sup> See selection report at: [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/documents/ecoc/2017/panel-report-cyprus\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/documents/ecoc/2017/panel-report-cyprus_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://galway2020.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/G2020-Bid-web.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/capitals-culture\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/tools/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm)

## Report from Galway 2020

The Organisation submitted a detailed and comprehensive written report in advance of the meeting. The report outlined the activities of the Organisation since September 2016, date of the official nomination by the Irish Ministry of Culture.

At the meeting Galway 2020 made a presentation which included the following points:

- The team members introduced themselves and the Project Manager presented a video from the recently appointed Chairperson of the Board, Ms Aileen McGinley, addressing the main developments of Galway 2020 since designation.
- Mark O'Donnell explained that the Board is to take a strategic approach while the implementation will be in the hands of the Organisation.
- The implementation of the long-term strategy of the city is unfortunately delayed. However, Galway 2020 will be aligned with the Creative Ireland programme that sets a new national framework for culture and the arts in the whole country. The city's long-term strategy is being modified to fit into this new framework.
- A Limited Liability company has been created, that aims to be a reference of transparency in the country and constitute a best practice for cultural governance. The Board key appointments have been made in the last months. The next appointments will be made through an open call, and based on the skills needed.
- The recruitment of management staff has been delayed due to the need to go through a public procurement contract to deal with the staff recruitment. The call to recruit has been published in December with a very good response. The final decision will be made in April, to allow for the appointment of the remaining members of the Board before a decision on the appointment of the CEO is made.
- During 2017, the positions of Creative Director (call already published) and programme coordinators should be filled in. The appointments will be faster once the CEO is appointed.
- On communication, the current strategy is to engage the right stakeholders and not to have as broad an approach as was the case during the application phase. The target now focuses on cultural managers, businesses as well as local and regional government. The connections with media both at national and international levels are maintained, and contacts have been made with broadcasters both in Irish and English languages. The work is being advanced as much as possible, but decisions are pending on the appointment of the CEO and the Creative Director.

- Tracy Geraghty explained that there was advancement made on the development of the programme; however, here again, some decisions are pending on the appointment of the Creative Director.
- Several applications regarding specific projects have been submitted for European funding. One project has been awarded a grant under Erasmus +.
- A meeting was held with cultural managers at the end of 2016, using an open method. It appeared that projects were at different stages of development and there is a need to better focus the next meetings on projects at similar stages. 2017 is a year of project development and capacity building.
- Strong relationships have been developed with other ECoCs: in particular with Leeuwarden on their project about minority languages, with Aarhus on some of their projects on rural development through culture, including artists' residencies in the field. The communality of rural arts programming with other ECoCs (Aarhus, Rijeka, and Leeuwarden) has led to the idea of establishing of Rural Arts Network. A meeting will be held in May to work towards a Creative Europe application.
- Circus and Street Arts are a very important part of Galway's programme and the collaboration with the Circostrada network is ongoing, with the Fresh Street international seminar to happen in Galway in 2019.
- Marilyn Reddan spoke further about the programme development mentioning also some of the projects on which Galway is collaborating with other ECoCs, such as 27 Neighbourhoods with Rijeka.
- The Symphonic Waves project, that received funding from the Erasmus + programme, will set up an orchestra of young people coming from all over Europe and will be an important legacy of the year. The project Aerial Sparks will develop a series of art works for radio broadcasting.
- Schools are also an important part of the programme. A schools' framework partnership is being developed including the region, with a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme on cultural issues, but also training the artists in education contexts. This strategy will feed into the legacy and the audience development strategy.
- Finally, regarding outreach, the team highlighted one project connected to the recommendation of the panel to focus on the "new Irish" communities in Galway. The project Forest Days highlights the importance of the Polish community, the biggest foreign community in Ireland. It will include music exchanges, photograph exhibitions, family days with storytelling.

- The volunteers programme was very successful during the application phase and the team tries to build on the momentum. The volunteer strategy will be developed by the end of 2017 drawing on the best practices of other ECoCs. The European Green Leaf that will be hosted by Galway in 2017 will also be an opportunity to build on this strategy. The full audience development strategy will be developed in 2018.

## Discussion

During the subsequent discussion the panel sought clarification on a number of issues and offered experience and advice. Topics discussed included the following:

- The panel was surprised by the late timing of the audience development strategy and sought for clarification. The team said that audience development had been included in the programme development – each project will have its own audience development plan which will feed into a broader Audience Development Strategy, and that work was also being done regarding outreach and community involvement. However Galway wants to explore and choose from the best practices from other ECoCs. It is also important to manage expectations in this regard and it would not be appropriate for example to encourage people to volunteer now as there is no need for a high number of volunteers at this stage.
  - **Recommendation 1:** Audience development should be part of the process as project should be developed while projects are being prepared, and not only when the programme is ready. It should therefore be included as soon as possible in the capacity building programmes. Mechanisms and tools for data collection should be established and base line studies should be done in the initial phase of the process.
- On the organisational side, there is a risk according to the panel that the management positions will not be filled before the summer (even if candidates were to be selected soon) or even – for some positions – before the end of the year, which might entail important delays in decision making for the programme. The team acknowledged that the procedures had taken longer than planned and that as much preparatory work as possible was made for the management to act rapidly upon appointment. The panel also underlined that the Creative Director will have to stick to the bid-book and avoid taking in charge all the production work.
  - **Recommendation 2:** The panel recommends reinforcing the team as soon as possible (without waiting for all key positions to be filled in) and associating the CEO to the recruitment process once appointed, without waiting for him/her to formally take office.

- The panel welcomed the Project Development Framework sheet as an interesting and useful information template to be used with individual projects. However, the panel wondered whether the document was not overcomplicated for small organisations and projects. Galway responded that an individual approach was taken for each of the projects, helping the smallest ones to fulfil the conditions.
- The panel asked if there were projects of the bid-book that appeared to be unfeasible at this stage. Galway explained that though individual projects were in quite different development phases there was no perceived need at this stage to abandon some projects. A prioritisation exercise has been carried out, with regards to the funding available, and advice has been given to each project on how to leverage other funds. The contracts have not been signed yet as before going to signature any specific project will have to develop a sound business plan and ensure funding.
  - **Recommendation 3:** Move forward to the contractual stage as soon as this is possible. The time for strategic thinking will soon have to come to an end and the organisation will then have to move from idea generation/collection and reality-check to implementation mode.
- The panel congratulated Galway on the different titles that it had been awarded for the next years, such as European Green Leaf in 2017 or the European Region of Gastronomy in 2018. These awards will of course give the city a high profile in Europe. However this raises concerns about the city capacity to deal with various high level initiatives at the same time, also with regards to the skills needed (marketing, ICT etc...). The panel inquired about the steps taken to ensure that these initiatives created synergies and not competition. According to the team, such initiatives show that the city, which was inward-looking just 25 years ago, has now opened to the European arena. The teams in charge of these various initiatives collaborate and look for synergies. With regards to the staff, Galway will search for talents in the whole country and abroad where necessary. The team is small at this stage and it is clear that it needs growing in the short term.
- The panel welcomed that the team was well aware of the current challenges, and asked about what they would need in future to move fast and leverage quickly. Galway 2020 responded that they would need to see how best to use the resources made available in the city's cultural strategy for the ECoC project, in particular in connection with legacy issues. The team collaborates with the team in charge of culture in the City administration to have shared resources, for example, for the development of the creative economy.
  - **Recommendation 4:** The financial and procedural delays should be overcome as soon as possible as they impact the quality of the whole ECOC preparation.

- **Recommendation 5:** Look for the "bridge builders", i.e. those people who can ensure that the right connections are made between all relevant stakeholders. The example of Leeuwarden 2018 and Aarhus 2017 that have seconded staff from the Region and City administrations can be taken as best practices in particular regarding legacy.
- **Recommendation 6:** In order to reinforce the capacities to implement the project, look for external partners and co-creation production models to reduce the burden on the organisation. This will also help engaging the cultural operators already at this stage.
- The panel asked whether the political support was sufficiently strong to bring the project forward to 2020. The organisation reassured the panel and explained that they were establishing appropriate communication channels with the political stakeholders, at City but also now County levels. It is very important for the team to convey the message that this project will benefit the whole region.
- The panel asked about the cooperation with the other candidate cities and how the programme would become a national issue. The Creative Ireland programme will provide a framework for collaboration among the different cities. The discussion on a project to project basis will start shortly. Also, local producers in Galway have connections with cultural operators in the other cities, and the team will ensure that these contacts continue.
  - **Recommendation 7:** The panel recommends implementing the city cultural strategy without waiting for national or regional strategies to be in place, and only then looking for the most suitable synergies to put in place with strategies developed at a higher level of territorial governance.
- The panel asked about the digital ECoC, which seemed to lag behind while it was very prominent at selection phase. The team agreed though the infrastructure is there. The project with MIT is however progressing well. Some further collaborations are also making progress, notably with Ars Electronica or The Egg. On a more general level, capacity building for these projects is fundamental, and the team reassured the panel that the development of the digital ECoC was a top priority for the next period.
  - **Recommendation 8:** The panel reminds Galway 2020 that the digital ECoC was an important element in the panel's choice to recommend the city for the 2020 ECoC title. It should not be downsized to a simple capacity building project. The respect of commitments made at application stage is a condition for the payment of the Melina Mercouri Prize. In this respect, the panel recommends appointing a curator specifically for the development of the cultural content of the digital ECoC.

- The panel asked about the advancement of the infrastructure projects, including the Centre for Digital Arts. The team explained that some of the projects were behind schedule, but as long as the programme was essentially based on existing infrastructure the delays didn't entail a risk for the ECoC. Regarding more precisely the Centre for Digital Arts, it is under the responsibility of the local authorities, and is progressing well.
- The panel inquired about the promotion strategy, in particular at international level, as well as partnerships already developed in this respect. The team mentioned the partnership with the Dublin Airport that will open the door to communication through airlines for example. Other transport companies will follow suit. There will also be a dedicated person to represent Galway 2020 in tourism fairs.
  - **Recommendation 9:** The panel recommends developing marketing and communication strategies as soon as possible and starting making Galway 2020 known in tourism fairs already at this stage, in cooperation with the relevant national organisations. The panel reminds Galway 2020 that the EU logo of the European Capitals of Culture and the fact that this is an EU initiative should be present in all communication material. This is a criterion for the payment of the Melina Mercouri prize.
- The panel was also interested in the plans to apply for ERDF for the ECoC programme. The organisation has a good relationship with the National Assembly and the agency in charge of ERDF. At this moment, capacity building is provided for drafting applications related to cultural heritage and creative industries.
- The panel noted with interest the focus on rural arts and the collaboration with the other ECoCs that have a similar focus. The next meeting of those ECoCs will be held in Brussels in May, and the possibilities to set up a project under Creative Europe will be explored.
- On the budget, the panel asked about the regional contribution to the ECoC project. It also felt that the finance target from private sources (€6.75m) was quite ambitious and that the cash-flow foreseen might be problematic. The team explained that the sponsoring strategy was two-fold: on the one hand, based on traditional commercial partnerships and, on the other hand, drawing on the Irish diaspora around the world.
  - **Recommendation 10:** The panel recommends revisiting the cash-flow for sponsoring funds and starting early with the "diaspora" strategy. The example of Liverpool showed that the diaspora approach was useful to raise awareness of the year, but did not bring much money to the budget.

## **Next Steps**

The panel acknowledges the great work already carried out by Galway 2020 in a very short period of time, and is confident that the delays will be resolved in the short term, in particular with the appointment of key management staff that should be able to move forward with decision making very rapidly. The panel puts itself at the disposal of Galway 2020 for any questions through the Commission services.

The Commission will call for a second monitoring meeting in mid-2018.

The panel would like to thank Galway 2020 for a very informative and interesting meeting and looks forward to the next developments of its European Capital of Culture project.