



Esch-sur-Alzette

European Capital of Culture 2022

Second Monitoring Meeting
Report by the ECOC Expert Panel

Virtual Meeting, May 2020

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
Directorate Culture and Creativity
Unit D2 – Creative Europe

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Introduction

This report follows the virtual meeting on 27 May 2020 between the Panel and the team of Esch-sur-Alzette, one of the European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) in 2022¹. Esch-sur-Alzette was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2022 in Luxembourg on 6 December 2017 by the Ministry of Culture of Luxembourg, on the basis of the Panel selection report²; its bidbook is available on the Esch 2022 website³. There was previously a 1st monitoring meeting on 5 June 2019 in Timisoara. The first monitoring report by the panel can be accessed on the European Commission website⁴.

This report is addressed to the Esch 2022 asbl institution (the delivery team of Esch 2022) and will be published on the European Commission's website⁵.

Attendance

The Panel members:

Sylvia Amann (Chair), Cristina Farinha and Agnieszka Wlazel, appointed by the European Parliament 2018–2020;

Paulina Florjanowicz, Dessislava Gavrilova and Pierre Sauvageot, appointed by the Council of the EU 2019–2021;

Jelle Burggraaff (Rapporteur), Beatriz Garcia and Jiří Suchánek, appointed by the European Commission 2020–2022;

Alin Adrian Nica, appointed by the European Committee of the Regions 2019–2021.

For Esch-sur-Alzette:

Mayor Esch-sur-Alzette

CEO Esch 2022

Director of Cultural Programmes

Administrative & Financial Director

Quality & Impact Research Coordinator

¹ 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

² See selection report at:

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/ecoc-2022-luxembourg-selection_en.pdf

³ <https://esch2022.lu/assets/pdf/footer-publications/bidbook-fr.pdf>

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/ecoc-2022-esch-first-monitoring-report.pdf>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en

Also in attendance were observer(s) from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) and the Ministry of Culture of Luxembourg.

Report and video presentation from Esch 2022

Esch ECoC asbl submitted in advance of the meeting a comprehensive progress report. It outlined in detail the activities of the organisation since the first monitoring. Before the virtual meeting, Esch 2022 delivered a 30-minute-long video as a substitute of the regular presentation that could not take place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It included the following points:

The CEO started by stating that out of the box and innovative thinking were more important than ever in the current situation and that only by sharing this approach with all project participants, active partners and the committed audience, the Esch 2022 project could be carried forward. She stated that despite the many challenges that Esch faced and the many more that were still to come, Esch 2022 would be a great success with committed partners helping to realise the vision and shaping the future of the region.

The video concluded with the Mayor of Esch explaining he was happy to see the project quickly evolve and confirming the city's support of Esch 2022 with EUR 10,1 million, while an additional budget of EUR 26 m had been allocated to the creation of new cultural spaces. The cultural operating budget of the city has increased to EUR 20 m a year. An asbl named 'frESH', recently created by the city is aiming to implement the cultural strategy 'Connexions', thereby stimulating and animating the cultural life in Esch.

In the video presentation the CEO presented details in several areas.

Long-term cultural strategy

- In autumn 2019 a Task Force, "Cultural Programme", was set up to strengthen global storytelling and create a road map for a coherent artistic vision. In January 2020, due to previous problems with the delivery of an artistic vision, **a new programme director** was appointed.
- A "**manifesto**" is being finalised to establish a clear positioning, avoid a shift of priorities on different levels and emphasize the importance of Esch 2022. The manifesto clarifies the objectives, vision and mission of the project. As a legacy, Esch 2022 is planning to revitalize the region by transforming existing cultural heritage in a different and innovative way. The priority now lies on strengthening the team's relations with the external partners. Important in this respect is to provide partners with a platform for exchanging and sharing ideas as well as informing them on the progress of projects in order to ensure the running of Esch 2022 as a whole.
- Concerning **evaluation and monitoring**, 190 data sources from the region, Luxembourg and Europe have been collected and examined. The impact reports of a number of other European Capitals of Culture have been studied and meetings with the country's main public data producers as well as international market research media monitoring companies have taken place. Currently, collaborations with research institutes such as STATEC, the University and Liser are being developed.

- Due to a deficiency in the production of culture-related statistics at the Luxembourg level, **a shift in the role from analysing existing data to a self-collection mode** turned out to be inevitable. In this regard, a first survey on Esch 2022, conducted in January 2020, shows a broad support for the project amongst the Luxembourg population.

Artistic and cultural programme

- The international call for projects that was launched in February 2019, led to the submission of over 1000 proposals – including projects of the French CPHVA municipalities – of which **31 have been accepted and 176 are still in discussion**. The final number of selected projects will not exceed 80. The already selected projects are of high quality and are in line with the values and bidbook of Esch 2022.
- To establish the connection with the region, the **Esch+ programme** dedicates each month in 2022 to a different municipality responsible for developing its specific cultural highlights.
- Following the general theme of “REMIX”, amongst the in-house projects that are highlighted are ‘**The Belvalspace**’, which will host digital arts as well as more general reflections on the digital era, ‘**Urban Time Travel**’, which allows visitors to discover the past through new technologies and the ‘**Minett Trail**’, which will give new life to a hiking trail through a cultural programme.
- The collaboration between Esch 2022 and the city is very supportive with **monthly meetings** taking place.
- A **regular exhibition and event programme** taking place on the Esch 2022 territory has been launched as a start to engage with the public.
- The opening date has been set on 22.02.2022 and will be organised in partnership with Berlin-based **Battle Royal**. First workshops have taken place and ‘From Red Earth to Gray Matter’ is the main thematic arch. Participation will be a key element.
- The importance of the **European Dimension** is stressed through the cooperation with Kaunas 2022 and the wish to renew and continue the Tandem 2019 project in which Luxembourg and Serbia collaborated on a common project.

Capacity to deliver

- Esch 2022 continues to have broad support of the national and regional/local authorities, with up until now **no budget cuts in the foreseen income** – as outlined in the bidbook – from the State (EUR 40 m) and from Esch (EUR 10.1 m). An additional EUR 35 m has been made available by the national Government for the realisation of the Belval space.

- **All municipalities from the region have become adherent members** of Capitale Européenne de la Culture Esch2022. This facilitates exchanges and allows the team to better define the responsibilities within the project.
- Besides the Ministry of Culture, many **partnerships** have and will continue to be developed in the near future with **national authorities and structures**.
- Concerning cultural infrastructure, the **reconstruction works on the Belval site started** right before the COVID-19 pandemic and had to be stopped again on 16 March. Nevertheless, it is expected that the works can be completed within the set framework. What might raise a problem though is **the construction of the National Archives on these premises** – one of the priorities of the Minister of Culture – of which the starting date is expected to be set for the end of 2021. Solutions must be found to prevent these constructions from disturbing or overshadowing Esch 2022.

Outreach

- The **citizen participation masterplan** is being finalised and outlines the general guidelines for citizen participation in culture. It will provide the Esch 2022 team, municipalities, cultural stakeholders and cultural project owners with a set of tools to encourage and manage citizen participation. In addition, the **annex22 exhibition space** is shared with participating partners. The **'MOIEN' road show**, which started in February 2020, serves to introduce Esch 2022 to a larger audience.
- The **educational dimension** is secured through a collaboration with Service de Coordination de la Recherche et de l'Innovation pédagogiques et technologies" (SCRIPT).
- Audience development guidelines for all municipalities are being developed and a working group will create a **special needs chart** to increase the focus on people with visual, acoustic, or intellectual impairments.
- Concerning tourism, Esch 2022 wants to **redefine the perception of the region** by strengthening its heritage in order to build a new contemporary and attractive image. It wants to give visitors a new perspective on things and show art, nature and people in today's social and digital changes in a new and positive light. Relations with the Ministry of Tourism, **'Luxembourg for Tourism'**, local and regional tourist offices, tourist offices across borders and cities from the greater region are strengthened in this aspect. The **'Urban Time Travel Belval'**, the **'Augmented Reality App'** and the **'Minett Cycling Tour'** will offer tourists unique customer experiences and are an important part of the mobility strategy to revitalise the region.

Management

- Since the first monitoring meeting, **9 new staff members joined the Esch2022** team, with one additional employee starting the week after the second monitoring meeting. Another 4 open positions were announced on 11 May.

- A **sponsor strategy** has been articulated, with the general ambition of making the region the **European cultural hub for the next decade**. The sponsor model is structured around four main types of partnerships: **strategic partners, thematic partners, qualified partners for project leaders, and promotional, technological and organizational partners**. A **sponsorship and mentoring structure** is to be set up in the summer of 2020 to assist project leaders in their search for funding and in-kind contributions.
- Regarding Marketing & Communication, together with external consultants and agencies, a **communication strategy** has been developed. As part of its first implementation are a number of public events, amongst which the **Nuit de la Culture** and the **Open Market Days**, several publications, the launch of a **new website** and other promotional activities.
- **Toolboxes** that will allow municipalities and external partners **to monitor their progress** in coherence with Esch 2022, facilitate exchanges, work flow as well as coherence and progress on all projects are currently being developed.

Milestones

- Regarding **administration**, the focus will be on recruitment, relations with stakeholders and the move of the Esch 2022 premises to Esch/Belval.
- The **sponsor strategy** will be further developed and implemented in the next coming months.
- The development of the **cultural programme is the number one priority**. The team will proactively be working on its own content as well as continuing the work with project partners, local and national stakeholders throughout the entire preparation phase.
- For the remainder of 2020 the focus will be on **digital communication**, with an eye being kept on print.
- The **media strategy** the team is working on has to result in the acquisition of press partnerships. Joint communication actions with Kaunas 2022 are being developed.
- The collaborations with the **municipalities, the communication departments, and external partners is strengthened**, while tools for a better workflow and exchange will become available soon.
- The **tourism strategy** will take further shape this year. Following initial talks, a partnership with a renowned local tour operator is foreseen.
- The **participation strategy** is being finalised and will be implemented from 2021 onwards.

- In the light of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the team sees the need to be flexible and innovative. Back-up plans for all the strategies need to be kept ready to ensure that the continuation of the project can be guaranteed.

Discussion

During the subsequent discussion, the Panel sought clarification on certain issues and offered experience and advice. Topics discussed included the following:

Long-term cultural strategy

- The Panel inquired about the **plans of the ECOC team to adapt the preparation of Esch 2022 to the new COVID-19 situation** and the follow-up disruptions it causes. The team explained that on the operational level the pandemic had not caused a real problem as it managed to swiftly change its mode of working together. Special working groups will be set up to work on the programme and to take the current situation into account, keeping an outlook on the direction in which the situation develops. The manifesto includes a road map to avoid a shift in priorities and stress the importance of the project. Throughout the current crisis, the team has been in constant contact with the project leaders, working collaboratively on solutions on different levels with all projects.
- The **Panel asked about the state of affairs of the potential joint cultural strategy for the (cross-border) region and the perspectives for the legacy**. There is a person in the team responsible for collaborating with the French territory, while in France, a person has been hired to assist the team in developing the common strategy. The cross-border collaboration on projects will serve as a legacy for both territories. In this aspect, the newly constituted frESH (asbl) entity has been set up to assist in putting the 'CONNEXIONS' strategy into place.
- The Panel also wanted to know which **in-house production would leave the biggest lasting impact on tourism** in the region and by whom it would be carried out after the ECOC year is over. The team develops products that do not only have a function in 2022, but that will also become part of the legacy for tourism in the region. In this aspect, Minett Cycling Tour is being developed, 'Urban Time Travel' will be installed for 2022, and an augmented reality app will be produced for 2022. These and other products will be supported by the city of Esch and the municipalities in the territory afterwards.
- Another important element was the need for data collection and data curation. The team elaborated on the **challenges it faces regarding monitoring and evaluation**. The last survey on cultural practises in Luxembourg is from 2009, while data from the follow-up survey will not be available until 2022. There is also currently no national institute gathering data in this field. After all possible stakeholders have been met, the team now works on developing statistical data gathering tools that can be used by all possible partners, such as ready-made templates. Culture will be added to existing statistical surveys, and a survey is conducted amongst students of the university to measure to what extent they attend cultural activities. The collected information will serve as the baseline data on which further monitoring can be undertaken.

- The panel asked about the complications that the **construction of the National Archives** might have on the Belval site. The team explained that it may disturb some parts of the programme, as construction starts by the end of 2021. In two weeks' time, there is a meeting with the Director of the Fonds Belval, responsible for the organisation of the construction of the entire site, during which the team will bring forward this point. It is also possible though that due to the COVID-19 crisis, the construction of the archives will start later. The team hopes to have more details on the final situation in 2 months' time.

Artistic and cultural programme

- The Panel asked questions about the reason for **replacing the previous artistic director** and the consequences this can have on the artistic programming. At the end of 2019, the decision was made to reframe the programme, which coincided with the current programme director joining the team to develop the programme further. There is now an absolute need to develop programming at a fast pace, and the Board decided, after concertation with the former artistic director, that a change of leadership was necessary. The team acknowledges that the call for projects has also caused misunderstanding, but that a broad base of cultural actors now wishes to participate in Esch 2022. There is no time to lose, discussions with project leaders have taken place over the last months, while the submitted project proposals are being evaluated now. The selection criteria ensure that it is not just about projects being added up, but about a cohesive whole that shapes the programme based on values of humanity and freedom to co-construct the world we want to live in.
- With regard to the industrial past that is a vital element of the identity of Esch, the panel was interested to know with which **European partners the team collaborated for the industrial heritage related projects**. Concerning the Belval site, Ars Electronica from Linz is an important partner, while **ZKM (Zentrum für Kunst und Medien)** in Karlsruhe collaborates with the team in connecting the past and the future, also in relation to the digital revolution. These partners are used to broaden the scope of discussion to the international level, through cultural exchange and residencies.
- The team explained that the **University of Luxemburg was eager to make European connections**. It will participate in the Ars Electronica Festival with an art installation. Through a screen, visitors in Linz will be able to direct people in Esch to where they want to go, so as to get an impression of the city and to see if it is worth a visit in 2022.
- The Panel inquired about the reason for **Esch Kulturfabrik to withdraw** from a number of projects. The team explained this concerned projects that were probably beyond the scope of what was manageable for this organisation, but that they were still part of the main venues hosting projects for Esch2022 involved in a number of smaller projects.

Outreach

- The team mentioned that they were entering into a formal agreement with the 'Service de Coordination de la Recherche et de l'Innovation pédagogiques et technologies'

(SCRIPT) **to develop the engagement with the education sector in Esch and other municipalities.** The collaboration will consist of workshops with schools, artist residencies in schools, developing a 'Kulturkoffer' project with which children can visit different events and activities, and co-editing publications. The team will hire a new person to work together with 'SCRIPT'.

- The Panel questioned how the over **200,000 commuters** that come to Luxembourg for work every day from the nearby border regions of Germany, Belgium and France would be involved. Numerous projects focus on this group, ranging from installations along the railroad, art radio that can be listened to while commuting by car, discussions with people when they move from one place to the other, to a 12-hours theatre play.
- The panel inquired if the **cultural diversity and the diverse communities in the south and in Luxembourg** in general were well presented in the selection of projects. The team explained the south was well represented in the programme and that a certain number of projects addressed a broader population. Instead of having segments of one singular culture presenting themselves; the aim is to bring these cultures together like in for example the "Nuit de la Culture". While there is already a programme on inclusion, the team is currently looking into ways to make minorities present and visible in the project as well.

Management

- In a view of outsourcing some parts of organisational aspects, the Panel wanted to learn how this was communicated and what this entailed for **who is behind the 'Esch 2022' brand** in the eyes of the wider public. The team argued that it intended to take advantage of the institutions and structures that were already in place and therefore worked a lot with external partners. It is up to these partners to develop action plans, also for the impact in the long-term, with Esch 2022 being in the lead in the end. Once the action plans are finalised, all these collaborations will be communicated to the public.
- Concerning marketing & communication, the Panel questioned **how the new challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic** were addressed, in particular the impact the crisis might have on the tourism industry in 2022. The team answered that in regard to sponsorship, its consultants were quite confident that with the message that sponsors help in the development of a whole city and an entire region, the sponsor budget of EUR 5 m could still be reached. In the coming weeks, conversations with potential partners will start. In case of less sponsor money coming in, each department will have to cut on some parts although cuts in the programme budget will try to be avoided. The team also tries to bring project leaders in contact with potential sponsors. Even though this involves smaller amounts, there are risks about how this will work out in the current situation. On tourism, the team follows how the National Institute for Tourism responds to the crisis, and together with the national authorities, it wants to develop strategies to attract people to the south of Luxembourg.
- To **attract a pan-European audience to come to Esch**, part of the website will focus on tourism and what people can experience in the city and the region.

- The Panel inquired how **the keywords of proximity, authenticity, diversity would be put into practise** in the programme and communication. The team explained that these features are part of the DNA of the project as well as the region. The programme as a whole will be cohesive. Although it will be developed by different partners, everyone is working together on the same ideas. As project leaders can be more affirmative of their projects in the nearby future, they will also be able to communicate about the programme as well then, thus creating different voices but one body.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Panel acknowledges the progress made so far by Esch and wishes to draw attention to the following conclusions and recommendations:

- The Panel acknowledges a lot of strategic work has been undertaken in order to be able to implement the project in line with the cultural strategy goals at local, regional and national levels. Esch 2022 continues to benefit from stable political and financial conditions, national recognition and engagement of various stakeholders.
 - **Recommendation 1:** In the phase Esch 2022 is entering now, with the various strategies, tools and collaborative platforms in place, review of the organizational chart and management processes is advised. Ambitious goals and a large number of partnerships require an appropriate number of staff members, good internal communication and efficient decision-making processes. Additional staff, on top of the 4 new positions mentioned in the report, are needed to deliver the project of the ECoC size.
 - **Recommendation 2:** In view of the legacy, collaborate closely together with the city, remembering that Esch is the entrance gate to the region and should acquire more visibility in the ECoC process. The legacy projects that will be created must also be linked to the city as such, not just the region.
- The Panel welcomes the progress that has been made in the development of the programme, of which the open call is a first good step to put together a cohesive programme with partners from the city, region and beyond.
 - **Recommendation 3:** This is the time now to put artistic visions into practice, make and communicate programming decisions, inform the applicants (both selected and not selected) and start signing artistic contracts as soon as possible.
 - **Recommendation 4:** Connect and work closely with the sector professionals for the sake of the projects development as this is also about capacity building.
 - **Recommendation 5:** As the programme should have a good balance between the local (diverse) cultural potential as well as the top international scene, give the development of European partnerships top priority. Make sure

to involve a considerable number of European artists and organisations in the programme elements. Monitor the number and quality of partnerships with artists, cultural organisations and networks around Europe who will participate in the projects of the co-organisers and partners.

- The COVID-19 pandemic affects the entire cultural sector and requires a reflection that is needed to work in this new context.
 - **Recommendation 6:** Based on the influence the pandemic may have on all parts of the project (outreach, visitors, programme etc.), use a holistic approach and acknowledge that there might be a need to create a plan B and even C for each of these areas that provide the team with different scenarios to work with. Keep a high degree of flexibility to adapt projects to the COVID-19 situation. The planning for the next phase should be built up from this risk analysis and corresponding mitigation reflection with maximum flexibility.
 - **Recommendation 7:** Revisit the tourist strategy, making use of the advantages of Esch being located mostly in the rural region as the restrictions that are, or may be, put in place in the future (again), have fewer implications here.
- The Panel welcomes the stable financial situation with the confirmed contributions from the city and the national Government and looks forward to the results of the sponsorship strategy that will be put in practise.
 - **Recommendation 8:** Concerning the digital component of the programme the Panel suggests to explore the possibilities of setting up partnerships with tech companies.
- A lot of effort has been put into conducting research on the statistics on culture that are available in Luxembourg. Due to a deficiency of data available at the national level, a shift was needed from the team in analysing collected data to producing data itself.
 - **Recommendation 9:** Examine the evaluation of the previous ECoC in Luxemburg and use its data to enrich the baseline data, if possible.
 - Furthermore, as templates for data collection are being prepared for the partners make sure that basic instructions (or capacity building activities) for data analysis are also shared to increase the efficiency of monitoring and evaluation.

The development of the communication strategy with its first actions being implemented is a first good step to start engaging with the local, national and international audiences.

- **Recommendation 10:** Communicate regionally that the programme is developed through multitude and diverse partnerships and what the Esch22 brand means in this regard.

- **Recommendation 11:** Study how other ECoCs and other cultural institutions have worked in a post-industrial setting and subsequently create your own story for Esch, as this might be an interesting angle for the European Dimension as well.
- **Recommendation 12:** Climate change is already here. Keeping in mind that this can be an even bigger topic in 2022, strengthen ecological aspects of the ECoC actions for example by adding elements supporting organisation of eco-friendly art events.
- **Recommendation 13:** Build the international communication narrative in line with the E22 Manifesto values and further develop the distinctiveness, excitement and appeal of the E22 message for a broad audience.

Next Steps

The Panel greets the relevant steps taken so far and remains available for questions and advice, through the Commission services.

The Commission will call for a third monitoring meeting in autumn 2021.

At the end of this third monitoring meeting, the panel will make a recommendation to the Commission on whether to pay or not the Melina Mercouri Prize to Esch 2022.

The conditions for the payment of the Prize are specified in Article 14 of Decision 445/2014/EU:

"The prize money shall be paid by the end of March of the year of the title, provided that the designated city concerned continues to honour the commitments it made at the application stage, complies with the criteria and takes into account the recommendations contained in the selection and monitoring reports.

The commitments made at the application stage shall be deemed to have been honoured by the designated city where no substantial change has been made to the programme and the strategy between the application stage and the year of the title, in particular where:

- a) the budget has been maintained at a level capable of delivering a high-quality cultural programme in line with the application and the criteria;*
- b) the independence of the artistic team has been appropriately respected;*
- c) the European dimension has remained sufficiently strong in the final version of the cultural programme;*
- d) the marketing and communication strategy and the communication material used by the designated city clearly reflects the fact that the action is a Union action;*

- e) *the plans for the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the title on the designated city are in place.”*

The Panel would like to thank the Mayor of Esch and Esch 2022 for a very informative and frank discussion and looks forward to the next developments of the European Capital of Culture project.

(Signed) all attending panel's members

