



Esch-sur-Alzette European Capital of Culture 2022

First Monitoring Meeting

Report by the ECOC Expert Panel

Timisoara, June 2019

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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

Contact: Sylvain Pasqua and Gerald Colleaux

E-mail: eac-unite-D2@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

© European Union, 2019

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Attendance	4
Report from Esch 2022.....	5
Discussion	7
Conclusions and recommendations	11
Next Steps.....	13

Introduction

This report follows the meeting in Timisoara on 5 June 2019 between the Panel and Esch-sur-Alzette, one of the two European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) in 2022¹. Esch-sur-Alzette was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2022 in Luxembourg on the 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. Later on, at the 20th November 2018 the Panel had an informal exchange with a delegation from Esch-sur-Alzette in Brussels. This report is addressed to the Esch 2022 asbl institution and will be published on the European Commission's website⁴.

Attendance

The Panel members:

Sylvia Amann (Chair), Cristina Farinha (Rapporteur) 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;

Beatriz Garcia, Jiří Suchánek and Suzana Žilič Fišer, appointed by the European Commission 2017–2019;

Alin Adrian Nica nominated by the European Committee of the Regions 2019-2021.

For Esch-sur-Alzette:

Georges Mischo	Mayor
Nancy Braun	CEO Esch 2022
Christian Mosar	Artistic Director Esch 2022
Lidia Gryszkiewicz	The Impact Lab
Geneviève Laroche	The Impact Lab

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

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://www.esch2022.lu/sites/default/files/pdf/BidBook-Esch2022-ve.pdf>

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

Report from Esch 2022

Esch ECOC asbl institution submitted in advance of the meeting a comprehensive progress report. It outlined with due details the activities of the organisation since the new team in charge took office in the late autumn 2018. At the meeting, Esch 2022 made a presentation that included the following points:

The CEO started by describing the status quo upon their arrival to the project in November 2018, pointing out that alongside the bidbook and the Panel recommendations, there was uncertainty regarding the regional engagement, unfavourable press coverage and one year of standing still behind. She said it was vital to regain and promote confidence in the project among all stakeholders.

Long-term cultural strategy

While the city of Esch is working on the implementation of its cultural strategy, the ECOC team revisited it in order to clarify its own role and objectives presented around main topics i.e. **Culture – Public – People – Cities and Communes**. The team indicated their commitment to taking a lead so that the whole region follows a similar cultural strategy process. Moreover, the team indicated they would take into account the recent **National Cultural Development Plan 1.0** (KEP) for the period 2018-2028 in which the importance of culture in the regions is highlighted.

In this scenario, **evaluation and monitoring** was considered crucial. Side by side with the experts from The Impact Lab, one new staff member – namely the “Quality and Impact Research Coordinator” - is being hired to work on this dedicated area. The priority now is to outline the impact based on all objectives and contexts and the related research and evaluation programme.

European dimension

- Connecting to Europe is for the team a new start as they are now integrated into the ECOC family network and have been participating in its meetings. They have also joined the network **Tandem Cultural Capitals**, now constituted by 8 ECOCs, to further explore and develop cross-border collaborations and improve the European dimension.
- Regarding **collaboration with other ECOCs**, they have been in close contact and envisaging partnerships and collaborations with Kaunas 2022, the partner city, as well as with other ECOCs, such as Leeuwarden 2018 and Aarhus 2017, and they also plan to work with the ECOCs 2021 and 2023.
- Links to existing European cultural networks as well as to Esch’s twin cities are also being sought. The **University of Luxembourg** is also partner to develop Esch connections since it is quite well networked Europe-wide. The diverse embassies in Luxembourg as well as the Luxembourgish embassies abroad have been addressed too.
- The goal of **strengthening cultural ties with Europe** is part of the guidelines of the call for projects that has been launched. The bidbook’s concept of Remix Culture includes a European pillar aiming at rediscovering the fundamental values that unite Europe and at mixing them to form a new vision.

Artistic and cultural programme

- The team has finalised an **evaluation of the bidbook projects** and critically concluded that they lacked concrete involvement and commitment from the quoted partners and that budgets had no solid base; thus, 90% of the featured projects did not have the conditions to be realised in a way as initially planned. As a consequence, a new start was envisaged, an action plan established and while keeping the same themes and the values and principle of the bidbook, a wide cross border call for projects was issued in February 2019. The selected labelled and co-funded projects will be at the core of the programme.
- In parallel, the team has been working to **secure partnerships** – with the Ministry of Culture and with all municipalities – and to **re-establish confidence**.
- Furthermore, the team is working on developing **in house their flagship projects** organised around 4 pillars:
 - Digital Space | Head Quarter: as it became clear that the Halle des Soufflantes will not be available as from 2022 (as planned in the bidbook) due to time and security issues, plans were made to use the area around the restored **blast furnaces** on the former industrial site of Belval. The planned Möllerei Hall is a new digital space for creation integrating digital culture into industrial architecture.
 - Connecting the Region: a different municipality will be under the spotlights each month, allowing to sharpen the profile of each town. Besides, there is also the intention to create a common thread throughout the region. The South region of Luxembourg is aspiring to become “Man & Biosphere” territory of UNESCO along the RedRockTrail (a green slow-way uniting the region). In this context Esch 2022, alongside other involved partners, are organising an architectural competition for accommodation and art circuit within the 60Km trail connecting the Esch 2022 territory - “**Rockin’ the Trail**”.
 - Connecting the twins: a new cultural map of Esch-City and Esch-Belval will be designed, by developing a programme that will connect both districts.
 - **22022022 – 22122022 opening and closing ceremonies**: the “red sky” project from the bidbook will be recovered for the opening; A detailed planning document is being prepared.

Capacity to deliver

- The area around the restored **blast furnaces A & B** on the former industrial area of Esch/Belval will be the central point (Headquarter) of Esch 2022. The area provides a great industrial environment for different open-air dramatic spots and allows a sustainable use of different remaining structures. The location in the university campus gives it the necessary context. The Esch 2022 administrative headquarters will be in temporary containers opposite the blast furnaces area. Yet the decision to use this location as the main intervention area still falls short of a Government confirmation that is expected in July (some national investments are necessary to make it operational).

Outreach

- The integration of a **participatory approach** within the project development is one of the selection criteria of the call for projects.
- A pavilion in Brill Platz (in the centre of Esch) will function as a **showcase incubator** for testing questions and issues to be addressed by Esch 2022, serving as a teaser programme.
- One of the current project managers has got a mediation background so to accompany the ECOC programme partners and project leaders. Moreover, a new full-time employee will be hired for the position of **Audience Development manager**.
- An agreement is to be signed with a specific service of the Ministry for Education, to promote the involvement of the educational sector in the Esch programme. It will function as a pilot project to be developed at national level at a later stage.
- A **citizen participation masterplan** (developed with The Impact LAB) is Esch 2022's long-term strategy to link to the different communities, identify target audiences and develop tailor made strategies, training sessions as well as a practical toolbox. It is foreseen to tackle the challenges of the current demographic trends in Luxembourgish cities.

Management

- The **Board of Directors** is composed of a wide diversity of representatives from all the involved stakeholders, including the central Government and municipalities, the university and civil society. The **Executive Board** is constituted by the CEO, the Artistic Director and the Finance and Administration Director.
- Regarding the **staffing plans**, each municipality is engaging 2 to 3 persons to work on the ECOC project. While such staff is not a part of the ECOC asbl team, it has a crucial role in making the necessary connections across the region. Moreover, in parallel to the core team, several areas of work will be implemented totally and/or partially through external positions, such as legal advice, the communication and the opening ceremony.

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 **necessary articulation of the ECOC team with the cultural strategy implementation at the municipal council's level as well as about the relationship with other municipalities involved**. The team explained that it has met all mayors involved admitting that rallying some municipalities has been a challenge. Yet mayors see now more clearly the impact such a project may have on cities but also on the whole region's development reverting back to each of the participating cities. The Mayor of Esch added that he holds regular meetings every 2/3 months with all other fellow

mayors of involved cities to discuss the project. They have improved their communication in non-political ways having a common focus on the ECOC project.

- The **new co-funding model** – i.e. each municipality is directly financing 50% of the costs of their part of the programme – this approach contributed to convince other regional stakeholders to engage. This helped to eliminate the concerns of municipalities of different sizes about a mismatch between their respective financial contribution to the ECOC project and its impact on their territory; they are now keen on hosting at least one major event. A survey conducted in the different communes revealed a fragmentation of Municipalities profiles and identities, and analysed the level of awareness, the expectations, but also the standpoint on cultural development in each municipality. Consideration will be given to these results when preparing the programme for 2022.
- The **Association's statuses** have been changed to allow new associated members, as some partners, notably mayors, expressed their will to participate. That shows the growing support for and awareness of the importance of this project. The fact that the municipal councils are hiring people, who might remain as cultural managers in the future, represents also a human resource investment and will be a relevant legacy.

Evaluation and monitoring

- The team informed that the **impact coordinator position** to integrate the Esch 2022 team has been already advertised and that the new person is expected to start next month and stay beyond 2022. The Impact Lab team will be continuously consulting Esch on this dimension.
- The Panel reminded Esch 2022 that those working internally on the impact and evaluation need to have a **degree of independence** ensured. This team member is not expected to be able to provide all the data because too many indicators are present. However, its function is to take the initial mapping already done, to look critically, to add definitions of success as well as to consider the national and local levels work together side by side. It is also very important to identify other available sources and which are the main data gaps that are essential to address, as well as to invest in the work with university and/or private market research agencies – as the budget allows.

European dimension and Artistic and cultural programme

- The Panel asked about the strategy for developing a **sense of ownership to the project among the varied stakeholders and the capacity to collaborate at different levels**, including at European. How will the project reveal its heart and soul? The delegation explained that the team is gradually talking to the citizens and the vision is being transmitted. The expected legacy is to bring people together, remixed. The team is meeting the cultural stakeholders from Esch and there are also meetings going on among themselves. Currently, there are tangible projects resulting from collaborations with the University of Luxembourg: one of them is related to the population of Esch and the history of migration in the south of the country. It is a ECOC funded project that joins researchers and artists. The delegation added that the professionalisation of cultural operators was a legacy of former ECOCs, so that now there are several institutions active that already have a strong ownership. It was said that Luxembourg is a small country where everybody knows each other, hence facilitating the political and cultural sectors' engagement in the

ECOC. There is also a willingness to coordinate the projects proposed via the call, so that each project may establish even further new unexpected connections and partnerships.

- Esch states that contacts are good with **twin cities** such as Lille (ECOC 2004) and Coimbra, which will run for ECOC in 2027. As there are many nations present in the city and across the country, these diverse communities can show Europe the multicultural character of Esch.
- The Panel insisted on the importance and urgency to have **clear guidelines and strategy, a concept and a set of planned projects given the affirmed need to re-start** and build up a new programme (as a high percentage of the bidbook revealed to be unrealistic to implement). The Panel also highlighted that the ECOC is a collective endeavour and all different stakeholders and teams have to contribute to this process. The team reiterated that it does not want to minimize what was done before, as the bidbook was awarded the ECOC title. If 90% of projects had to be cancelled in the format outlined in the bidbook, the team now actually expects that 90% of the former partners will propose projects. Remix culture means transformation in a positive perspective and they are aware they need to communicate it accordingly. The Remix theme is embedded into the guidelines, so as to ensure continuity of the bidbook's philosophy. They expect the involvement of representative cultural institutions in the call. They have made contacts and meetings with institutional stakeholders as well as the sector to clarify the call for projects. The press conference announcing the call was also a huge success.
- Another request from the call is the **need to link to other organisations**, so to improve professionalisation by developing co-productions, co-creations, and ensuring a legacy. A vision for the future development of the project proposed is also requested. The intention is to foster sustainable cultural collaboration in the region. This logic is new to those municipalities that had no cultural strategy before.
- Moreover, the team explained that the open call for projects features guidelines on the four topics of the bidbook, as well as clearly defined **selection and evaluation criteria** – such as the European dimension or audience engagement. These are requirements that make sure the projects fits into the expected structure. It was also clarified that the application form questions were based on the defined criteria derived from objectives – to make sure none was forgotten. Also, the different jury profiles were listed.
- The referred survey also asked about **project design and management needs** with a view of potential capacity building and support.
- The Panel insisted on the **importance of working with artists**, notably by commissioning directly their work, since not all of them are able to effectively respond to calls for projects. The team replied that they have insisted in their communication that content and ideas are the most important at this stage; furthermore, because the country is small, they have managed to contact and meet a great part of the sector professionals, via road shows and public events, to overcome all doubts.
- The Panel asked questions about the **programme highlights**. How will Esch 2022 attract foreign visitors? What is the artistic quality that it will stand for? What will be the specific projects funded and produced by the ECOC? The team argued that innovation is one of the call's criteria, and that they are looking for connecting contemporary digital

technologies, aesthetics and philosophies. Digital policies are at the moment high in the national agenda. The ECOC projects will take place throughout the year in 4 chapters and will be curated externally. The Remix Europe chapter, for instance, will feature 2 digital exhibits in augmented reality on the topic of Europe. It intends to explore the Plato cave metaphor to debate current issues such as fake news and media. The artistic director also pointed out the will to provide a space for performing arts within the programme in line with the final selection bidbook. The team is not yet aware of the percentage of internal production of the programme projects. The panel expects for the next monitoring meeting the presentation of a coherent and attractive artistic vision of the project.

- The Panel also wanted to know if **cultural heritage experts** will join the team and/or the selection jury and inquired about the link of the ECOC to 1) the undergoing "Man and Biosphere" UNESCO application and 2) to the Luxembourgish National Heritage Administration. The team clarified that it is not involved in the application procedure but liaising with the committee in charge so to include this project in the ECOC Remix Nature chapter. Moreover, the team added that a new national NGO of experts in different areas is about to be constituted (a former think tank) to pursue national projects on industrial heritage. The idea is to formalize the work that has been done by the former think tank, to create a formal link to the Ministry of Culture and thus insure not only the protection of the industrial heritage but also the further development of the different industrial sites.

Outreach

- The team reiterated that the ECOC is not for the happy few that are already cultural consumers but wish to integrate those that are not (yet) **cultural participants**. The Mayor of Esch reinforced this intention, insisting notably on children, which would be the most relevant legacy.
- The Panel affirmed the need to communicate the project to the citizens in order to gain their confidence but also the one of the ECOC stakeholders. The intent to hire a project manager in delivery to audience and to develop a storytelling dimension in the communication was declared.
- The team mentioned that the choice of Belval as the main ECOC stage also results from the fact that both the Cité des Sciences and the University are based there. In this respect the area is lively with residences, services, shops, library, schools and offices, allowing to be easily in touch with diverse **audiences**, most notably researchers and students who are a main target. The intention is to transform the industrial hall into a laboratory, not into a museum.

Cultural infrastructure

- Several new **infra-structures** are planned, such as the acquisition and restoration of the old Ariston cinema by the city of Esch to be dedicated to youth and children; the Bridderhaus, a former hospice that will be renovated and used as residency for artists. Moreover, there are also plans to renovate some buildings and intervene to improve public spaces.

Communication

- The Panel questioned how to build public confidence and how to reach out internationally with a new distinctive image of Esch. The team expressed that their storyline is still under definition. They are now discussing on how to develop their corporate visual identity. They admit that it takes time to bring in the artistic vision.

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 project is now getting back on track as a result of the re-evaluation and mapping developed and the reconnections and partnerships established, having in mind the cultural strategy goals at local, regional and national levels. Esch 2022 is currently benefiting from stable political and financial conditions, capacity building, national recognition and engagement of various stakeholders.
 - **Recommendation 1:** Continue to develop a collaborative environment and a sense of ownership amongst stakeholders in the city and the region. In this respect, the ECOC can act as a facilitator for actions and dynamics that are meant to ensure sustainability.
 - **Recommendation 2:** Reinforce the links with the city municipal council of Esch to closely articulate the cultural strategy implementation so that the ECOC can effectively contribute and leave legacy.
 - **Recommendation 3:** In view of the legacy, further explore the possibilities of working on a joint cultural strategy for the region.
- The choice to move and use the Belval area – the most important industrial area of the furnaces – as the main stage and the ECOC headquarters is a significant and symbolic step, essential to reach out and get closer to the citizens.
 - **Recommendation 4:** Once the feasibility of using the blast furnaces site is confirmed, anticipate the ECOC headquarters presence in the site, develop content and inject dynamics in the area to materialise as much as possible the ECOC project in the territory and in close link to the citizens.
- The impact assessment provides a very relevant starting point for further sound developments. The team has worked to translate the impact indicators into objectives and requirements that are now part of the open call for projects, which is a good integrated approach.
 - **Recommendation 5:** It is now important to reflect on how to tell the ECOC story via the research process and how to define its priorities. In this sense, it is essential to appoint the impact coordinator within the timeframe suggested, in 2019.

- **Recommendation 6:** Reinforce exchanges with other ECOCs in terms of evaluation and monitoring, while making use of the Commission's guidelines and framework, adapting it to the features and specificities of Esch 2022.
- The open call for projects, based on the bidbook's vision and objectives, was deemed as a good tool, although it needs to be very clear and precise in terms of objectives, timing, selection criteria and experts involved in the evaluation.
 - **Recommendation 7:** Make sure there is a coherent artistic vision and conducting line resulting from the selection procedure.
 - **Recommendation 8:** Being one of the most international and multicultural places in Europe, expectations in terms of artistic quality and the capacity to engage and present this diversity are great. The programme should have a good balance between the local (diverse) cultural potential and the top international scene. Moreover, being historically in the centre of the EU integration process, Esch ECOC 2022 should contribute to enhance the ECOC as one of the most prestigious initiatives in the field of culture in Europe.
 - **Recommendation 9:** It is essential to include expert knowledge on how to make sustainable use of industrial heritage so to fully explore its social and economic potential, in order to go beyond the use of industrial sites as scenery. Expert knowledge on developing participatory approaches is also recommended – as it can fuel the vision as well as the projects' selection process.
 - **Recommendation 10:** Further explore links and partnerships with European cultural networks, notably those dealing with the creation and sustainability of cultural centres and creative hubs in industrial sites, such as Trans Europe Halles and the European Creative Hubs Network.
 - **Recommendation 11:** In view of the call for project's results, evaluate what is missing in the programme and launch micro grants for new small-scale projects and/or individual artists.
 - **Recommendation 12:** Provide opportunities for the cultural sector to travel, to meet and to learn from other European peers.
 - **Recommendation 13:** Make decisions regarding the projects' production allowing the right balance between in-house and outsourcing, taking as much as possible advantage of the existing capacity within the local/national cultural operators.
- The Panel welcomes the strong alliance with the The Impact Lab team as well as the good basis and values guiding the outreach plans.
 - **Recommendation 14:** The showcase incubator of artistic content should be further explored for its potential to promote participation and engagement.

- As regards management and organisational issues and capacity to deliver, the Panel notes some necessary fine tuning:
 - **Recommendation 15:** Review the organizational chart ensuring that: 1) a dedicated staff member is in charge of aligning the ECOC activities with the cultural strategy and of coordinating with the municipal council of Esch; 2) an international relations manager provides that Esch and collaborating cities utilize their unique position in Europe to benefit from relevant international partnerships; 3) the new ECOC dedicated positions in the involved municipalities should be made visible in the organigram.
 - **Recommendation 16:** Make the necessary links with the tourism sector and institutions at different levels, using existing knowledge to provide interesting alternatives and new solutions for the challenges regarding mobility and availability of affordable accommodation.

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 second monitoring meeting in mid 2020.

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

