

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

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The Commission presents its report on the ex Post evaluation of the European Capital of Culture event 2007 (Luxembourg and Sibiu) and 2008 (Liverpool and Stavanger), in accordance with Decision n° 1622 /2006/EC establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019. The evaluation exercise for 2007 and 2008 has been merged. The report puts forward the Commission's position on the main conclusions and recommendations of the external evaluation of 2007 and 2008 European Capital of Culture.

The external evaluation: with regard to the relevance of the action, the evaluator found that whilst all four ECOC were relevant to the objective of developing cultural activities, this was most apparent in Stavanger. In the other three ECOC, this was seen through the lens of other overall aims, i.e. building a cross-border region (Luxembourg GR), raising the international profile of the city (Sibiu), and urban regeneration and inclusion (Liverpool). All four ECOC were relevant to the objective of promoting the European dimension of and through culture, primarily through their objectives of fostering co-operation with cultural operators, artists and cities in other Member States. All four ECOC were also relevant to the objective of pursuing economic development through culture, primarily through using the ECOC to improve the image of the city (the GR in the case of Luxembourg) and to the objective of pursuing social development through culture through widening access to culture.

The evaluation noted that whilst all four were effective in achieving impacts related to economic, tourism and urban development objectives, it is not clear whether there is a limit to the extent that the ECOC concept can continually drive urban regeneration. In the future, it may therefore be that there are efforts to recover the purely cultural objectives of the early years of the ECOC, or that the concept needs to be revisited. On social inclusion, the report notes that the social dimension of the 2007 and 2008 ECOC has consisted primarily of widening access to culture, rather than of cultural inclusion or social inclusion per se.

The Commission agrees with the overall gist of the recommendations by the evaluator, the main points being as follows:

Efficiency of Governance: the Commission should recommend all ECOC to commission evaluations of the impact of their cultural programmes and associated activities.

Efficiency of ECOC mechanisms at EU-level: future evaluations should consider: the efficiency, effectiveness and impartiality of the selection and monitoring processes introduced by the 2006 Decision; and the continued value of the ECOC “brand”, as viewed both by the title holders and by the wider world (media, cultural sector bodies and the general public). In the event that the value of the brand is perceived to be diminishing, the Commission should explore alternative approaches and compare their relative merits with those of the ECOC.

Effectiveness in achieving economic, urban development and tourism impacts and in supporting social development through culture: in forthcoming debates, the European Commission should explore the extent to which the ECOC concept (and culture more generally) can (continue to) and should be used to stimulate: (a) urban regeneration and economic development or whether to return to an approach that is more about culture as an end in itself; and (b) the genuine social renewal of cities and outreach to all citizens, as opposed to merely widening opportunities for culture to already existing audiences; (c) or whether to retain the flexibility for cities to strike their own balance

Conclusion: the Commission is aware that the strength of each ECOC is rooted in its diversity and cultural uniqueness and will ensure that cities have enough latitude to implement the objectives of the Action. It notes that most ECOC already have evaluation schemes covering all or parts of their cultural programme and will recommend overall evaluations at local level. In order to promote the circulation of good practices, the Commission has supported a policy grouping where the comprehensive evaluation model developed by Liverpool 2008 is being further adapted to the needs of future ECOC. The Commission will also have a closer look at the way structural funds are used and can be used by ECOC. It is pleased to note that new selection, monitoring and financing procedures set by Decision 2006 already go in the direction recommended by the evaluation findings. The Commission is well aware of the ECOC "brand": it provides guidance on its use through the ECOC guide to candidate cities and will continue to monitor its use and the value of the brand.

It will promote the exchange of good practices and highlight the experience of ECOC as a "laboratory" for urban development through culture. As for the inherent tension between the instrumental use of culture for social and economic purposes and the intrinsic value of culture for the European citizen, the Commission is persuaded that successful ECOC provide good examples of ways of reconciling artistic quality with socio-economic development.