

European Capitals of Culture 2007 - 2019

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The Commission presents an ex post evaluation of the 2013 European Capitals of Culture, which are Košice (SK) and Marseille-Provence (FR).

The report is presented under article 12 of Decision No 1622/2006/EC, which requires that each year the Commission shall ensure the external and independent evaluation of the results of the European Capital of Culture event of the previous year, are presented to the European Parliament, and the Council.

2013 European Capitals of Culture: the 2013 ECOC are the first ones to be subjected in full to the new selection arrangements introduced by the Decision. According to these arrangements, the competition is managed by the relevant authorities of the Member State concerned, usually the Ministry of Culture.

In Slovakia, nine bids were received, from which four were short-listed in December 2007. The panel then recommended Košice as European Capital of Culture in September 2008. In France, eight applications were received and four cities were shortlisted in January 2008. The panel finally recommended that Marseille-Provence be awarded the title in September 2008.

In May 2009, the two cities were formally designated as European Capitals of Culture for 2013 by the Council of Ministers of the European Union. The Melina Mercouri Prize of EUR 1.5 million was awarded to the two cities.

Main conclusions of the external evaluation: the evaluation confirms that many of the findings from previous reports, especially those pertaining to the overall **relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the ECOC action are still valid**. These findings have been updated with new information gathered during the 2013 evaluation wherever possible. The evaluation shows that the selection process introduced by the Decision No 1622/2006/EC ensured that the applications of both eventual ECOC title-holders set out objectives and approaches that were **coherent** with the legal basis. The two ECOC implemented cultural projects and activities that were consistent with the essence of their applications and therefore in line with the strategic and operational objectives of the ECOC action.

The ECOC concept also continues to be of relevance to the objectives of local policymakers and stakeholders. The experience of 2013 shows that the ECOC action has made a positive contribution to developing the range and diversity of cities' cultural offerings, enhancing social development, promoting the cities' international profile, and supporting their economic development (in particular through support for tourism and the creative economy).

In terms of **management**, the evaluation indicates that the 2013 ECOC were the first ones formally subject to the selection process introduced by the Decision No 1622/2006/EC. Evidence suggests that the new process enabled **two high quality applications** and two interesting, innovative ECOC to be selected. For Marseille-Provence this related to the further development of the European dimension in the final programme, while Košice took on board recommendations on legacy planning and the need to reach new audiences.

The **European dimension** of Marseille-Provence 2013 particularly highlighted the location of the city on the Mediterranean, as a place of meeting and dialogue between different European cultures and their Mediterranean neighbours. Košice's final programme placed less emphasis on the European dimension.

In terms of **impact on tourism**, it is the evaluator's view that both ECOC made a clear contribution to developing the creative economy and the tourism offer in their respective cities. Both had a positive effect on the cities' national and international profiles and attracted significant numbers of additional visitors. Hotel stays and international tourist visits increased respectively by 9 and 17 % on the previous year in Marseille while overnight stays increased by 10 % in Košice, which was included in the Top 10 destinations for 2013 in a famous tourism guide.

In terms of **sustainability**, the evaluation notes the impact in terms of new refurbished cultural facilities, improved capacity and greater expertise within the cultural sector as well as better networking and co-operation within the sector and links with other sectors. Evidence of lasting improvements in the cultural vibrancy of cities is perhaps strongest in the case of Košice, thanks to the numbers of continuing projects and the establishment of a new timetable of recurring events and festivals. Marseille-Provence 2013 did, however, have a positive impact on the level of (international) collaboration and networking amongst local cultural operators.

Measures taken by the Commission following the external evaluation: based on the strong points of the current programme, which works well on the whole, the report proposes certain improvements that may be summarised as follows:

- **a revised Guide for cities intending to bid:** the Commission published on its website a revised guide for cities preparing to bid, as well as a guide on how to strategically use the EU support programmes, including Structural Funds, to foster the potential of culture for local, regional and national development and the spill-over effects on the wider economy.
- **guidelines for the cities' own evaluations:** the Commission issued guidelines for the cities' own evaluations of their ECOC year, which are largely based on the expertise resulting from the external and independent evaluations of the ECOC produced since 2007 and provide cities with a set of common indicators as well as common guidelines in the form of a list of questions cities should ask themselves when deciding to bid or planning their evaluation procedures. The guidelines encourage cities to carry out longitudinal evaluations;
- **dialogue:** the Commission will continue its dialogue with Member States and stakeholders about the value of investing in the arts and culture as a way to encourage investment in the sector;
- **30th anniversary of the ECOC scheme:** the Commission will use the opportunity of the anniversary in 2015 to further increase the visibility of this EU action, notably as part of its next European Culture Forum in the autumn 2015. This will help to highlight and to disseminate examples of good practice from ECOC, including in the use of the EU Structural Funds or private sector investment.

The Commission will also prepare an internal action plan addressing the recommendations in the evaluation report. A follow up of this action plan will be done in 2016.

Lastly, the Commission intends to develop the approach to the evaluation of ECOC in order to ensure more and better data and to better measure the efficiency and impact of this EU action