

**REPORT
ON THE NOMINATIONS FROM THE UK
AND NORWAY
FOR THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF
CULTURE 2008**

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**Issued by
The Selection Panel for the European Capital of
Culture (ECOC) 2008**

February 2004

This report was written on the basis of the meeting of the Selection Panel on 25th February 2004. The report is addressed to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Commission and the Committee of Regions.

Background

The European Cities of Culture initiative, which is a major activity by the European Union, is a way of bringing together people involved in culture from the European Union and other European countries. The objective is to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens.

“The European City of Culture” was launched in 1985 by the Member States meeting in the Council on the initiative of Mrs. Melina Mercouri. Since then, the event has grown in popularity every year and is now well known to European citizens. For each year from 1985 until 2004 at least one European city has been awarded the title of European City of Culture. In 2000, as a tribute to the new millennium, a total of 9 European Cities of Culture were designated.

In intergovernmental and community texts, the “European Cities of Culture” changed to “European Capitals of Culture” (ECOC) with the Culture 2000 programme. The cities themselves have often used the title “Capital”, with an exception of the cities for the year 2000 when, because of the large number of designated cities, they preferred the title “City”.

Until 2004, the European Capitals of Culture were designated by the Council on the basis of intergovernmental cooperation. Decision 1418/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council established a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2005 to 2019. By this decision, a *new nomination procedure* was installed. Each year, one city of a Member State shall be designated as European Capital of Culture, in turn, following a list annexed to the decision.

For the year 2005 onwards, the *nomination procedure* for member states is as follows:

- The national authorities of the relevant country nominate one or several cities. The nomination or nominations are notified to the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions by the Member state concerned four years before the event is due to begin.
- A selection panel issues a report on the nomination or nominations judged against the objectives and criteria specified in the decision. The report is submitted to the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council.
- The European Parliament may forward an opinion to the Commission on the nomination or nominations within three months after the receipt of the report.

- The Commission gives a recommendation on the designation of the Capital of Culture to the Council. The recommendation takes the opinion of the Parliament and the selection panel's report into consideration.
- The Council officially designates the city in question as the European Capital of Culture for the year in which it has been nominated.

In addition, Article 4 of Decision 1418/1999/EC allows for a European non-member country to participate in the action. Thus, any such country may nominate one city as a European Capital of Culture and should notify its nomination to the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions. The Council, acting unanimously on a recommendation from the Commission, shall officially designate the nominated city as a European Capital of Culture for the year concerned, bearing in mind the desirability of four year's preparation time.

According to Article 2 of Decision 1418/1999/EC, the *selection panel* shall be composed of seven leading independent figures who are experts on the cultural sector, of whom two shall be appointed by the European Parliament, two by the Council, two by the Commission and one by the Committee of the Regions.

The selection panel:

The European Parliament abstained from nominating members for the selection Panel. Thus, the selection panel consisted of five members:

By written procedure number E/1039/2003 – on the basis of the draft Decision C(2003)1956 – the Commission appointed on 26th June 2003 Mrs Josephine Markovits and Mr Gottfried Wagner .

The Council approved the two Council appointed members, Mr Panos Theodorides and Mr Claudio Strinati ,on 15th July 2003. The two candidates had been nominated by the Greek and the Italian Council presidencies, in accordance with the Council Decision of 17th December 1999 (2000/C 9/01).

The Committee of the Regions presented their appointed member, Mr Henning Jensen, by their letter of 11th August 2003 from President Albert Bore to Commissioner Viviane Reding.

The members of the panel received the application from Liverpool by the letter of 27th January 2004 and the application from Stavanger by the letter of 10th February 2004 from the Commission.

Candidates for 2008

With his letter of 7th July 2003 to the President of the Commission, Romano Prodi, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom submitted the nomination of Liverpool for the title of European Capital of Culture, referring to annex I of the above mentioned Decision.

With her letter to the President of the Commission Romano Prodi, of 1st July 2003, the Minister of Cultural and Church Affairs of Norway, on behalf of the Norwegian government, submitted the nomination of Stavanger for the title of European Capital of Culture, referring to article 4 of the above mentioned Decision.

Meeting of the selection panel in Brussels, 25th February 2004

On the initiative of the Commission, the panel members were invited to a meeting on the 25th February 2004 in Brussels. The applicant cities were invited to present their applications and to answer questions from the panel members.

The agenda of the meeting was as follows:

1. Introduction by Director Gregory Paulger, the Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture.
The selection panel appoints its Chairman.
2. Presentations by the UK's nomination, Liverpool, and questions from the selection panel to the delegation.
3. Closed discussion.
4. Presentations by representatives from Norway's nomination, Stavanger, and questions from the selection panel to the delegation.
5. Closed discussion.

All panel members were present. Both cities presented their candidature.

The following were present from the Commission as observers: Gregory Paulger (Director for Culture, audiovisual policy and sport), Antonios Kosmopoulos (current Head of the Cultural Unit), Harald Hartung (incoming Head of the Cultural Unit), Jacqueline Pacaud (the Cultural Unit), Anna Collins (the Cultural Unit).

Gottfried Wagner was elected chairman and conducted the meeting.

Representatives of each nominated city gave a presentation of their candidature and answered questions from the selection panel. After each presentation, the panel had a closed-door deliberation of the city's proposal.

Summary of the presentation of the nominated cities:

Liverpool:

The 9 representatives from Liverpool mentioned the strong involvement of the UK government in this event and its support for it, and reminded the fierce internal competition (12 cities) that Liverpool had to face to be nominated by the UK. The chair of the independent UK selection committee stressed the enthusiasm and strong positive commitment of Liverpool and their will to perform at the highest possible level.

The representatives of Liverpool extended the information given in the elaborated application documentation and highlighted the following positive points of Liverpool as European Capital of Culture: the cultural contribution to powerful ongoing efforts to regenerate the city and to overcome the consequences of the economic changes of the past decades, the commitment of the citizens to use 2008 for a new quality of life in the city, the involvement of many of them in the preparatory process and in the 2008 events as such, the magnificent area, the historical and artistic heritage, the numerous museums and theatres and the vibrant cultural life, ranging from world-famous popular culture and culture in a broad anthropological sense (including the role of sports) to the highest expression of artistic excellence .

They presented the organisational structure, the provisional budget, and indications on the overall investment to which the ECOC investment would add.

They stressed their will of involving all (and especially young) people and neighbourhoods of Liverpool (suburbs included), and of making the event as a part of the development of the city. The international and global role of the city will be an asset, reflected in artistic programmes reaching out to the neighbourhood of Europe (e.g. Arab countries) and other parts of the world.

The partnership that they intend to develop during 2008 with Marseille, Naples and Bilbao (“the cities on the edge”) and Cologne was also mentioned.

Stavanger:

The 8 Norwegian representatives (from Stavanger and the region and from the ministry of culture, strongly supporting the application) presented the ECOC and the planned events as a daring and exceptional experience and challenge for the city as well as the whole region, and for Norway and Europe. On top of the very elaborate programme outlines (three documentations) they gave additional information on the mix of projects ranging from outstanding artistic interventions, participatory processes including the citizens (and visitors) and the local youth broadly, long term sustainable investment and attempts to diversify the intellectual, cultural and knowledge-based capacities of the region in order to make it attractive to its inhabitants and less dependent on the predominant economic sources now, to projects focusing on challenges which Europe and the world is facing in terms of migration, asylum, peace building, conflict prevention, reconciliation, and how focal points like cities, even if they are small, can contribute to it in a European and cultural and artistic spirit.

They want to collaborate with Europe in many ways, through the artistic choices, through the projects which will be developed during the year, and through

emphasising their will to be really an “open port” (their motto) and a pilot project ‘for Europe’.

Cooperation with the “new neighbours” in the Nordic area (accession states) and with Liverpool was mentioned. They presented the productive “hybridity” of artistic projects and the fantastic landscape (video) and grouped the programme along the 4 seasons, which will compose the cycle of events.

They also introduced a project focusing on an outstanding Norwegian artist (a travelling exhibition which will take place in several museums in Europe).

The panel’s judgement

The panel based its judgement on criteria outlined in Article 3 of the decision 1419. This article states that the nominations shall include a cultural project of European dimension, based principally on cultural co-operation, in accordance with the objectives and action provided for by Article 151 of the Treaty. The further specifications of Article 3 as well as the criteria mentioned in annex II of the decision were taken into account fully by the panel during the meeting.

The criteria are attached to the report.

Conclusions

Liverpool

The panel felt that the presentation was excellent and showed a vibrant enthusiasm and energy. The Panel wished to congratulate the team on what had been achieved so far, and felt that the proposal promised another organic boost to urban regeneration, city tourism and cultural merit. In addition, it was noted as a strong point that Liverpool had won through a stringent competition to receive the UK nomination for 2008. There was no question about the overall quality and the efforts to serve the interests of the citizens, the European visitors, the city development and the ECOC scheme. The level of investment is impressive, and the mix of offers, including participatory events, is comprehensive.

The Panel wished to stress the following points:

- The Programme should clearly develop an increased ‘European dimension’. So far European (and global) culture, arts and artists are of course involved in Liverpool’s programme of events, and the important contributions which Liverpool provided and does provide to European culture is clearly elaborated, yet, the overall concept of the ECOC doesn’t yet reflect sufficiently the “European-ness” of the ECOC scheme and the exceptional “brand” of this scheme compared to other exceptional events such as festivals or cultural seasons (compared to what could happen anyhow if exceptional resources are mobilised). This need to develop the European idea behind the scheme practically, and the European message sent out to the citizens as well as to Europe was felt even more relevant since the role of cities, and UK cities such as Liverpool, in forming a sense of European ‘belonging’, contributing to a

European civil society, is crucial. The present and upcoming challenges which Europe is facing, such as the “realities” of a - then - enlarged EU and its “new neighbours”, the role of Europe in the world, can be articulated and translated in an artistic and cultural, intellectual and popular event such as the ECOC. In the application, all necessary elements are in place, the Liverpool team might re-enforce the cohesion and specify the ‘message’.

- The ‘Cities on the Edge’ idea, for example, was appreciated very much, yet it was felt that this could be developed further as one of the ways in which the European dimension could be increased. The respective part in the application – as one of the more explicit European approaches – still remains relatively under-developed (not just ‘European aspects of the programme’ - page 139-146 !) compared with other projects in the documentation, which raise the profile of the city and its cultural marketing.
- The Panel emphasized the advantage of the applicant’s inclusion of more global perspectives (Africa, Asia, USA) into the programme, and advised the city to work on the respective “vision” running through the programme, specifying the reasons for the choices made, the expected outcomes, the role which Liverpool wants to play in global processes, and bundling the arguments and cases of possible best practice into a coherent set of evidence.
- The Panel had questions about the role of a possible Artistic Director. On the one hand, the programme is already far developed (also in detail), which is a plus, but makes it quite difficult to attract an outstanding independent (European?) personality if not given space for developing an integrated “artistic vision”, on the other hand the strong elements of entertainment, city marketing, tourism, event-character, show and animation in the current plans (notwithstanding the very strong components of artistic excellence) would need an ultimate conceptual and artistic “leadership” in order to live up to the expectations at the highest possible level (which Liverpool is striving for). The challenges of forming a “whole out of the parts”, of combining popular with advanced and experimental highlights, of formulating a message, are not small, especially since many “tools” which will be used in 2008 are already in place or under development.
- Given the value of combining organically the regular (enormous) investment in urban regeneration with special ECOC investment, specification of the operational budget for arts and culture was asked for. However, one of the strengths of the application is the non-artificial attempt to build on existing and ongoing cultural assets.
- It was strongly suggested and hoped that a linkage would be made with Stavanger.

Stavanger

The Panel were impressed with the daring Programme that Stavanger was proposing, commenting that the artistic quality was excellent, including a remarkable contemporary programme of challenging nature.

The theme of ‘Open Port’, the “arts of hospitality” components, the strong inclusion of the “ordinary people” and young citizens, the attempts to spread the lasting effects over the preparatory period as well as over the years after, and the proposals for artistic collaboration were appreciated. It was noted that the stunning landscapes, the geographical location and other factors would be strong pull-factors for artists and

visitors alike, emphasising the quality aspects being almost more important than aspects of quantity.

The “Point of Peace” idea in particular was seen as unique and was highly appreciated by the Panel. In complementing Norway’s contribution to the European arts and culture scene in an original way, and adding to the European-ness of the programme, the special efforts towards peace and reconciliation, hospitality and conflict resolution mark a model of solidarity accepted by the citizens, a sense of global responsibility which can serve as a pilot case.

This was also noted in view of Norway’s very high financial contributions to the new EU member states, and it was felt that Stavanger hosting the Capital of Culture in 2008 was relevant for European issues and of high potential impact for the current debates in Norway. The programme was seen as an authentic contribution to the wider European cultural space and to an organic contribution to diversity on all levels, local, regional, national, European, and global.

The Panel wished to stress the following points:

- There were concerns about the density of the Programme compared to the population of the region, and thus about the absorption capacity of the events proposed in terms of audience numbers. However, the panel was positive about the attractiveness of the city, region and its programme for international artists.
- In view of the high investment in excellence and model projects, and in view of the limitations of local audience (in numbers) and conservative figures on possible increase in tourism it was recommended to search for means of communication spanning over the continent, using also the virtual and media space of Europe as already envisaged for the international media cooperation with the Nobel Peace Committee.
- The Panel commented on the investment figures as well as on the planned expenses for the artistic operational costs and debated whether or not the city could attract the envisaged sponsorship funding. In view of the economic strength of the region and the presence of international players on the (energy- and oil-) market, however, and given the profile of the multi-annual efforts, there are good reasons for optimism.
- The Panel wondered how much room for manoeuvre the Artistic Director would have, given the advanced state of planning of the programme. Stavanger will have to make a decision whether they need a “coordinator” or an artistic director of independent international profile. Those key figures, notably in the latter case, could play an important role in balancing the small scope of the city and its location far North with the European and international ambitions. However, it was made clear that Stavanger strives for making the case for the potential of cities and regions of that scope.
- It was strongly suggested and hoped that a linkage would be made with Liverpool.

In addition, the Panel wished to offer follow-up support to the representatives from Stavanger, should they wish it, suggesting a form of voluntary monitoring whereby they could meet again in approximately one year’s time in Stavanger to offer advice and see how things were progressing, especially in view of issues the still to be clarified.

The panel's recommendation

On the basis of an overall evaluation of, and the panel's recommendations to the applications from both the nominated cities, the panel – while asking for some improvement in the areas commented upon - agreed unanimously to recommend to the Institutions of the European Union that Liverpool and Stavanger host the European Capital of Culture in 2008.

General Considerations

The Panel also discussed - totally apart from the 2008 applications but also considering previous experiences - some ideas concerning the reform of the present procedure for designating the Capital of Culture (which was described earlier in this Report). They offered the following suggestions and ideas for consideration by the European Institutions:

- The selection panel stressed the symbolic and 'real' importance of the ECOC scheme being one of the few cultural European focal points of broad interest, with the capacity to evoke cross-border media debates, to add to a European public space, and to stimulate extraordinary efforts.
- The selection panel discussed three items:
 - o the question of a competitive nature of the scheme,
 - o the role of the/a jury, and
 - o criteria for a clear European-ness of the applications.
- The selection panel felt that the present procedure has some clear weaknesses - for example the possibility of there being no competition at all in deciding the nomination for a given year - nonetheless they felt that a totally open competition would be impossible – both logistically and politically.
- The Selection Panel wished to see more involvement of the European Jury, both upstream (before the nomination(s) are submitted to the European Institutions, by including an international jury in the national pre-selection process) and downstream (once the city has been designated but still during the preparation phase for the year itself). This would allow for more evaluation of and potential input to the 'European-ness' of the Programme being developed both pre-nomination, and, crucially, post-designation of a city as the Capital of Culture for a given year. At present, the role of any jury is somewhat awkward, especially in cases of missing competition and 'no choice'.
- Given that clear plea for a - feasible and manageable! - competitive nature of the future scheme, the European institutions and the Council would also be challenged to develop criteria for smaller countries or countries whose major cities have already been appointed ECOC.
- It was recommended that a clearer definition of 'European-ness' should be included in a future decision/scheme. On top of the present (valuable but vague) criteria, which should continue to form the basis, the future scheme should add measurable criteria. One suggestion for this was to define (for a period of e.g. four years) particular challenges facing Europe at that time. These 'challenges' could be defined, 'translated' into criteria and built-in to

the scheme for a certain time period. Three examples where cities as focal points of public opinion, and as ‘metropolitan corridors’ of European-ness could make invaluable contributions in cultural and artistic terms were mentioned:

- The need for a European civil society and a sense of belonging in all diversity
 - The challenges of integration in view of enlargement and the “new neighbours” – the wider European cultural space
 - Europe in a globalising world
- The work of the selection panel would be facilitated if a template existed for applications. This need only be 10 or so pages long, and would of course be supplemented with much more information presented by the nominated city or cities – but having a standardised presentation of key parts of the application: such as an action plan, the artistic vision, etc , would greatly help the Panel to compare applications.
 - It was felt that any discussion about changing the current procedure should not jeopardise the planning of countries already heavily preparing (2009 and 2010), nor the involvement of the new member states in the Capital of Culture event.
 - In addition, the Panel mentioned the necessity for any future Decision to be flexible enough for any future new Member States to be included without having to start the legislative process again. The same consideration applied to the evolution of the challenges of “European-ness” over time.

Claudio Strinati
(Council designation)

Panos Theodorides
(Council designation)

Henning Jensen
(Committee of Regions designation)

Josephine Markovits
(Commission designation)

Gottfried Wagner, elected chairman
(Commission designation)