



Tartu European Capital of Culture 2024

**Second Monitoring Meeting
Report by the ECoC Expert Panel**

Virtual Meeting, June 2022

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 16 June 2022 between the Panel and the team of Tartu, one of the three European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) in 2024¹. Tartu was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2024 in Estonia by the Ministry of Culture of Estonia on 22 October 2019 on the basis of the recommendation included in the Panel selection report²; its bid-book is available on the Tartu 2024 website³. A first monitoring meeting took place on 22 September 2020, and the first monitoring report is available on the European Commission website.⁴ This report is addressed to the Tartu 2024 Foundation and will be published on the same website.

Attendance

The Panel members:

Else Christensen-Redzepovic (Chair), appointed by the European Parliament,

Rossella Tarantino (Rapporteur), Marilyn Gaughan Reddan and Goda Giedraityte, appointed by the Council of the EU,

Jelle Burggraaff, Beatriz Garcia and Hrvoje Laurenta, appointed by the European Commission,

Anu Kivilo and Mikko Fritze, appointed by the Estonian Ministry of Culture.

The other Panel members Suvi Innilä, Anne Karjalainen and Jorge Cerveira Pinto could not join the meeting.

For Tartu 2024:

Mayor Tartu / Tartu 2024 Foundation Supervisory Council Chairman,

Tartu 2024 Foundation CEO,

Tartu 2024 Artistic Director,

Tartu 2024 Southern Estonian Coordinator,

Tartu 2024 Head of Communication and Marketing Division,

Tartu 2024 International Relations Manager,

Tartu 2024 Marketing Manager.

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://culture.ec.europa.eu/bad-ischl-bodo-and-tartu#tartu>

³ <https://www.tartu2024.ee/arts-of-survival>

⁴ <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/bad-ischl-bodo-and-tartu#tartu>

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, from the Estonian Ministry of Culture, Foreign Relations Department, and from the Estonian Permanent Representation to the EU.

Report from Tartu 2024

The Tartu 2024 Foundation submitted a comprehensive progress report in advance of the virtual meeting, supplemented by detailed annexes on strategy, status of the projects, capacity-building programme, staffing plan, financial details and communication plan. The report gives evidence of the advancement made by Tartu 2024 since the first monitoring meeting.

It confirmed the validity of the Foundation's strategy and of the evocative power of the concept chosen for the title-year, i.e. "Arts of Survival", which has acquired renewed significance in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic and, more recently, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. In this sense, "Arts of Survival" refers not only to the issue of climate change, but also to physical and mental well-being, to the survival of the arts community jeopardised by the pandemic; and, last but not least, to the EU values of respect for diversity, freedom of expression and democracy that we have collectively to further advance. In this sense, Tartu and Estonia are border strongholds for EU values; in connection with this, the report presents a number of initiatives aiming to engage Ukrainian refugees into culture and to give voice to Ukrainian artists and cultural expressions.

In accordance with Tartu 2024 leading concept, the report also emphasises the publication of Tartu Guidelines for organising environmentally friendly cultural events and the selection of Tartu as one participant in the EU Mission for 100 climate-neutral cities by 2030.

The report describes the progress of the cultural programme (including the implementation of a wide-ranging capacity building initiative). In particular, 25 bid-book projects totalling one third of the overall programme have been developed through an incubation process involving 40 local cultural institutions and organisations and most of the corresponding contracts have been signed. Two calls - at regional and international levels - were also launched to enrich the programme. Finally, the Foundation intends to complement the cultural programme with artistic commissions that the team sees as crucial to Tartu's artistic concept and with events it will produce.

The topic of outreach was touched upon, by highlighting the success of the "Tartu 2024 Extended" programme targeted at young people aged 14-19 and giving evidence of the connection with the LGBT+ community. The report underlines also the difficulties of involving the largest minority in Estonia, i.e. the Russian-speaking community.

The financial commitment of the institutional partners is confirmed: the Region - covering 19 municipalities from Southern Estonia - secured 1.5 million euro, while the City and the National Government allocated the funds in their respective budget strategy and signed the corresponding financial agreements for 2022. There is still some delay in the fundraising campaign, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The team has been reinforced, tripling the number of its employees since the first monitoring meeting: all the managerial positions are covered while a new CEO and a new Artistic Director (both coming from the Creative Council of the Foundation) have been appointed. Finally, the report includes a detailed communication plan.

Discussion

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

Long-term cultural strategy

The first introductory and overall question by the Panel was about the greatest challenges faced so far in the preparation of the ECoC-year.

- The team indicated three main unexpected events:
 - Covid-19, that led them to partially change their implementation strategy; in particular, the pandemic severely affected the local cultural sector and prompted the City of Tartu and the Estonian Government to introduce new fiscal support to help the cultural sector;
 - The inflation and overall economic situation, in particular the rise of energy costs and salaries, that has a stronger impact on project developers than on the Foundation itself;
 - The war in Ukraine: due to the war, “Arts of survival” has acquired renewed significance, stressing the importance of giving voice to the Ukrainian artists while avoiding instrumentalisation. In addition, the war made tourism less appealing to some Europeans. Thus, the challenge is to persuade tourists from the rest of Europe that Estonia is a safe destination and to develop a strategy to attract people for the title-year.

The Panel asked about the engagement of creative industries in the capacity-building programme.

- The team emphasised the two projects in the programme that have a connection with the film and fashion sectors. In addition, the Foundation is also cooperating with Tartu Centre for Creative Industries.

The Panel inquired about evaluation and data collection, specifically about possible delays in collecting the necessary baseline data.

- The team underlined that different methods were in place: collecting data gathered by different institutions, using “cultural managers’ surveys” and collecting data from specific target groups (e.g. audiences, local entrepreneurs, and local policy-makers). As to the evaluation, it will be conducted by the Foundation according to the FEET model (Finnish Event Evaluation Tool).
- Regarding baseline data, the team intends to rely on data catered on a regular basis by Ministries, the Municipality and other sources, which could be used as baseline, while the ongoing cultural managers’ survey will have a two-year gap.

The Panel inquired whether - and eventually why - the Foundation did not intend to assess the economic impact of the title-year, including its touristic dimension.

- The team replied that the Foundation, strongly urged by entrepreneurs, was going to ensure that at least one of their five impact areas had a clearer economic angle. As to the collection of touristic data, the Foundation is probably going to use mobile positioning data in collaboration with Visit Tartu, which provide very valuable information but are also very expensive to get.

In relation with the environmental strategy and guidelines, the Panel asked if they had been drafted using the experience from other ECoCs and inquired about a possible cooperation with Tallinn Green City 2023.

- The team explained that the Tartu 2024 Guidelines had been designed in close collaboration with the City of Tartu with the view to developing solutions that were relevant in the local context; so far, no specific cooperation on this issue has been

developed with other ECoCs. The team plans to monitor the impact of the guidelines' implementation.

- Tallinn and Tartu signed an agreement implying an exchange of practices and a learning process. Tallinn is interested to learn from Tartu as a Smart City and from successful initiatives, such as for instance the Car-Free Avenue project in the city centre.

Artistic and Cultural Programme

The Panel investigated about the status of the projects, with particular attention to production plans and associated budgets.

- The team explained that 25 projects from the bid-book had been successfully going through the six-phase development process implemented by the Foundation. Prior to signing any contract, a sustainable project plan and a detailed cost production plan had to be presented and approved. The Foundation provides a maximum of 70% of the overall budget, while the cultural partners are responsible for the remaining co-funding, which comes mainly from EU or State funds. For the time being, no plan B has been envisaged, in case production costs are inflated or the match-funding target is not reached. However, in such a scenario, the Foundation would be prepared to discuss with project holders how their projects could be reshaped while keeping core ideas and activities.

The Panel asked if children under 14 were also a target group in the Foundation's audience development strategy.

- The team acknowledged that there was a wide and successful programme targeted essentially at 14-19 aged people. Yet, some projects are directly addressing children, such as "Growing your own food" or projects with schools.

The Panel investigated about the rationale, timing and resources of the new strategy adopted by the Foundation, which – in contrast to the initial phase – has decided to complement the bid-book programme with direct commissions to artists and self-produced events. Likewise, the Panel asked about the budget allocated to the two on-going calls, to the new commissioned art-works and to the events to be produced by the Foundation.

- The team underlined that with the appointment of the Artistic Director, also as a response to the previous monitoring meeting, the necessity emerged to reinforce the "artistic touch" of the overall programme through direct commissions to artists (but always with a curation). This is to better address the urgencies of the challenging present and envision a future in these uncertain times. As to the budget breakdown, 2,5 mill euro were allotted to the calls, namely 1,5 mill euro to the regional projects and 1 mill euro to international projects, while the financial allocation for the 25 bid-book projects developed (and for the most part already contracted) is 5,7 mill euro. The budget for in-house projects (e.g. opening and closing ceremonies) is about 4.5 mill euro, whereas the commissions will be based on two funding models: 1) commission with shared costs with Tartu 2024 partners as for example the project "From DNA to AI"; 2) commission directly stand-alone projects.

The Panel inquired how the programme as it now stands differed from the bid-book. Information was also requested about the flagship projects and the timeline of the calls' selection process.

- The team explained how the development programme process worked. The inclusion of the local cultural scene was one of their priorities; some of the proponents of the

bid-book projects decided to withdraw, but they were offered the opportunity to apply for smaller scale projects. The majority of the proponents took part in the incubator process and most of them were able to develop detailed and sustainable projects that are now inserted in the ECoC programme. Finally, the programme will not include Manifesta 2024, which will instead take place in Barcelona, as the Foundation found it difficult to implement and finance the Biennale along with the ECoC programme. However, the team keeps good contacts with the Manifesta organisers. The three flagship projects already in the bid-book (Surrealism 100, Kissing Tartu and Reclaiming River Emajogi) have been complemented with a new project "From DNA to Artificial Intelligence" developed together with the other two ECoCs 2024. As to the regional call, a long selection process involving experts representing the various municipalities of South Estonia and the Creative Council is going to be finalised in the coming months.

The Panel asked whether the international open call would foster connections between local and international cultural operators, in order to prevent the risk of parachuted one-off initiatives coming from abroad.

- As a premise, the team highlighted that all the projects inserted in their programme would have a strong international dimension. The call has been launched so as to amplify and diversify content-based international dimension. It is open to Estonian and international partners, but a crucial emphasis has been placed to facilitate the cooperation between international applicants and local partners.

European dimension

In light of previous recommendations, the Panel wanted to know how Tartu 2024 intended to reinforce international artistic and cultural partnerships, notably extending the links with Southern and Eastern European countries and strengthening the cooperation with European cultural networks.

- The team explained that, because of the pandemic, it had been more difficult to strengthen international ties. This is why a pragmatic strategy has been initiated focussing mainly on the Baltic countries, Finland, Germany and the United Kingdom, as connections with these countries were already in place. The ECoC network also proved a useful tool to enlarge partnership so as to include Southern and Eastern ECoC-cities, like Novi Sad in Serbia or Elefsina in Greece. On top of this, the team highlighted connections with other networks, such as EUNIC, Culture Next or Trans Europe Halles (a possible TEH conference is planned in 2024 in Tartu). The Mayor underlined also the networking with UNESCO creative cities of literature, the smart green cities, the Hanseatic League and the twinning with Northern Cities. The team highlighted the need to focus on meaningful collaborations that could be managed properly, and admitted that the quest for partners from Southern and Eastern European countries would require a tailor-made approach.

The Panel asked about the international marketing strategy, taking as an example "the street art exhibit" brought to Berlin.

- The team explained that the international marketing activities would start in August 2023, when the final programme would be ready. Until then, some few initiatives will be taken in their EU target countries, like Germany.

Outreach

The Panel asked about the strategy to attract international tourists and how it could be affected by the current war in Ukraine.

- The team replied that the war affected touristic flows from Germany and the UK while the situation had not changed for tourists from the other target countries in the Baltic region and Finland. Therefore, the Foundation is closely working with Visit Tartu and Enterprise Estonia (EAS, the State agency responsible for tourism promotion in Estonia) to convey the message that travelling to Estonia is safe. In any case, the April 2022 data are promising, as domestic tourism has already exceeded the 2019 figures, while international tourism is close to the 2019 level. The Mayor also underlined that the 11 universities of Tartu were supporting international conference tourism and contributing to deliver the message that "Tartu is safe to visit".

The Panel asked about the sensitive situation in Tartu concerning the LGBT+ minority and the initiatives Tartu 2024 intended to undertake to face the homophobic front.

- The team recognised that the situation was somewhat problematic in Tartu, as there is a small but very vocal conservative community. The Mayor underlined that the 11 universities represented an important platform to advocate for diversity and tolerance in the city. The recent Pride in Tartu went very peacefully and the team is strongly committed to working on an open, bolder and friendly city.

Management

The Panel asked if and how the communication and marketing strategy, which had been so far focussed on five countries (Lithuania, Finland, Latvia, Germany and the UK), would be extended to the other EU countries.

- The team emphasised that the communication strategy responded to a pragmatic approach, e.g. to target those five countries having well-established travel links to Tartu.
- As to the other countries, the communication strategy will rely on the network of Estonian Embassies: focused meetings will be organised while Estonian Ambassadors and Honorary Consuls are asked to be the ambassadors of Tartu 2024 across Europe and beyond.

As to the staffing plan, the Panel inquired about the main challenges in recruiting people and attracting volunteers, about the rationale for having no international people in the team and for having chosen a CEO with a higher experience in business rather than in cultural management.

- The team did not envisage any problems in recruiting people coming from other Estonian cities and in engaging volunteers, as Tartu can rely on the large number of University students.
- As to the Artistic Director, the original plan was to choose an artistic director from abroad; but they found the perfect candidate in their Creative Council. However, the new Estonian-born Artistic Director has much experience internationally. Both new members in the Creative Council have spent most of their professional lives abroad. The team is also enriched by some volunteers coming from France and Hungary.
- As to the CEO, the Mayor explained that he was a well-known entrepreneur and the former Chair of a Municipality Council with huge experience and the capacity to bring together all the various stakeholders and different municipalities in the South Estonian region and to run the Foundation that requires also horizontal management and coordination capacity.

Capacity to deliver

Concerning the co-financing model in place across the programme, the Panel asked for further details about the budget to be raised in terms of match funding/co-financing.

- The team explained that 1,5 mill euro is expected to be raised from EU funds and 1,5 mill euro from private sector. The EU funds target is seen as quite achievable, as 0,4 mill euro has already been secured and further 1,1 mill euro can be acquired by 2024. The private fund-raising proves to be harder, because of the war and of the economic situation; but the goal is achievable.

The Panel asked about the solutions envisaged to cope with the lack of quality accommodation in the City when big events take place.

- The team explained that for the few events that are supposed to drive a huge audience to Tartu in 2024 such as the opening, they intended to encourage locals to invite people to their homes. In addition, there is also the possibility to use the accommodation in Southern Estonia and in Tallinn, which are quite close. Finally, Tartu 2024 can count also on some new accommodations opened in Southern Estonia because of the ECoC.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Panel acknowledges the serious commitment and significant advancement made so far by Tartu 2024 and draws attention to the following conclusions and recommendations:

Recommendation 1

The Panel welcomes the recruitment of the new CEO and Artistic Director and the definition of a clear staffing plan; it appreciates the wide institutional support at local, regional and national levels that ensures the stability of the delivery structure and the financial public commitment. Yet, some difficulties in raising private funds are acknowledged as well as in coping with the uncertainties related to inflation:

- The Panel recommends to intensify the efforts in the fund-raising campaign, and to invest more in international communication so as to ensure higher visibility for potential private partners while at the same time being prepared to seek for alternative funds from other sources;
- The Panel recommends to develop a financial contingency plan to cope with the financial situation in Europe (steep increases in prices, shortages of products and delays in deliveries), and the risk that project holders are not able to ensure the level of co-funding requested or to guarantee high quality of the projects due to difficulties in facing inflated costs.

Recommendation 2

The Panel acknowledges the detailed communication plan presented in the solid report and the growing visibility that Tartu 2024 is attaining at national level through media partnerships so as to make Tartu 2024 the biggest brand in Estonia in 2024. Yet, the Panel invites the team to enlarge the visibility beyond national borders and the five European countries that currently have more plane links with Estonia and to ensure a European-wide coverage.

- It is of paramount importance to ensure a Marketing and Communication Plan with a European coverage, which is able to allure audience from all the EU countries. In this sense, special emphasis should be placed on digital communication, exploring also new formats with media partners, in order to attract international attention beyond the five countries with well-established travel connections. This broad campaign, able to attract a larger audience also at distance, could facilitate the private fund-raising as well.

Recommendation 3

The Panel values the strategic work made on the new significance of Tartu 2024 concept of "Arts of Survival" in the light of the new urgencies posed by the pandemic and by the war in Ukraine. Likewise, the Panel welcomes the integration of the Programme with new artistic commissions proposed by the new Artistic Director so as to reinforce the presence of artists as recommended in its previous report.

- With the appointment of a new artistic leadership, the Foundation is invited to invest further into a daring, edgy and experimental programme, which would also be appealing to an international audience. In this sense, the extension of the concept of "Arts of Survival" not only to the issue of climate change, but also to mental well-being and the EU values of respect for diversity, freedom of speech and democracy, can facilitate a European-wide reflection.

Recommendation 4

The Panel recognises the progress made in the development of the programme and in international networking, through the connections with Embassies and some EU networks like EUNIC or ECoC-cities. However, further steps ahead should be taken in order to ensure a broader European dimension of the programme.

- The Panel recommends to strengthen the European dimension above all under the cultural angle, seeking notably for artistic and cultural cooperation agreements with cultural operators and networks as well as with artists. In addition, it is important to enlarge the links and integration beyond the Baltic countries and the European countries with which Tartu has already consolidated links, extending partnerships also to Southern and Eastern European countries, through tailor-suited artistic cooperation, so as to ensure more diversity.
- Likewise, a closer cooperation with ECoCs and green cities in the EU is suggested, in order to take full benefit of the collective efforts made at EU level in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating sustainable big events and in adopting participative approaches.

Recommendation 5

The Panel acknowledges the progress made to involve different target groups of citizens: particularly appreciated is the work made with 14-19 aged people and with the LGBT+ community (originally not included as a target group in the bid-book), especially as a response to homophobic events. A special mention for including the Ukrainian refugees into the society through culture and for giving voice to Ukrainian artists. Yet, the Panel invites the team to extend the audience engagement process also to other important target groups that risk to be excluded from participating in the ECoC rejuvenating process.

- While welcoming the empowerment of the teenagers in the programme, the Panel recommends to strengthen the involvement of the children, by targeting some of the programme elements (beyond purely educational projects) to this important group;
- The team should seek for a special approach to actively involve in the programme the largest minority in Estonia, i.e. the Russian-speaking community, and to involve them into a cultural dialogue;
- While the Panel welcomes the definition of a detailed communication strategy targeted to specific expected audiences, it recommends at the same to pay attention to the "silent majority" to be reached, envisaging some tailor-suited activities aimed not only to develop but also to actively engage these groups, in line with the "co-creation value".

Next steps

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

The Commission will call for a third (and final) monitoring meeting in autumn 2023.

At the end of this meeting, the Panel will make a recommendation to the Commission on whether to pay the Melina Mercouri Prize to Tartu 2024.

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 Tartu and the Tartu 2024 team 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