



# **Bad Ischl 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, Creativity and Sport  
Unit D2

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### **Disclaimer**

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## Introduction

This report follows the virtual meeting on 29 June 2022 between the Panel and the team of Bad Ischl, one of the three European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) in 2024<sup>1</sup>. Bad Ischl was designated as European Capital of Culture on 20 December 2019 by the Austrian Federal Chancellery on the basis of the Panel's selection report<sup>2</sup>. Its bid book is available on the Salzkammergut 2024 website<sup>3</sup>. The first monitoring meeting took place virtually on 25 September 2020 and the Panel's report can be accessed on the European Commission website<sup>4</sup>. The present report is addressed to the Bad Ischl - Salzkammergut 2024 organisation and will be published on the European Commission's website<sup>5</sup>.

## Attendance

The Panel members:

Jelle Burggraaff  
Else Christensen-Redzepovic  
Beatriz Garcia  
Goda Giedraityte  
Suvi Innilä (rapporteur)  
Hrvoje Laurenta  
Marilyn Gaughan Reddan (chair)  
Rossella Tarantino  
Dominik Nostitz-Rieneck (national expert)

For Bad Ischl – Salzkammergut 2024:

Head of Supervisory Board of the Bad Ischl - Salzkammergut 2024 organisation  
Mayor of Bad Ischl  
Artistic Director of the Bad Ischl - Salzkammergut 2024 organisation  
Managing Director of the organisation  
Programme Team member, also in charge of Capacity Building  
Programme Team member, also in charge of International Relations  
Programme Team member, also in charge of Evaluation

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<sup>1</sup> 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](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG)

<sup>2</sup> See selection report at: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/fi/node/791#bad-ischl>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.salzkammergut-2024.at/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/BB02\\_A4Hoch\\_WEB\\_70dpi-13.11.pdf](https://www.salzkammergut-2024.at/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/BB02_A4Hoch_WEB_70dpi-13.11.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See first monitoring report at: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/fi/node/791#bad-ischl>

<sup>5</sup> <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/fi/node/791#bad-ischl>

Programme Team member, also in charge of Community Building and Youth  
Programme Team member, also in charge of Regional Cooperations  
Head of Communication and Marketing

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) and the Austrian Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport.

## Report and presentation from Bad Ischl 2024

Bad Ischl 2024 submitted in advance of the meeting a comprehensive progress report under the name *Salzkammergut 2024 – European Capital of Culture Bad Ischl Salzkammergut*. The report reflected the process since the previous monitoring meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting, the representatives of Bad Ischl and of the Bad Ischl – Salzkammergut 2024 organisation made a presentation, which updated and complemented the written report. The presentation made by the mayor, the managing and artistic directors as well as the head of the supervisory board was followed by the other members of the delegation presenting themselves and their areas of responsibility. After some turbulent times, both for global as well as internal organisational reasons, the team is now confident that they have calmer times ahead of them, and that they will be able to produce a successful European Capital of Culture year.

### Long-term cultural strategy

- The ECoC year is considered an important opportunity for the city and the region. One of the main aims is to strengthen the regional cooperation between 23 cities and communities in Salzkammergut.
- The long-term strategy focuses around People, Places and Programme, as outlined in the bid, intertwining also with the outreach plans.
- Supporting a more sustainable model of cultural tourism is a central part of the Cultural Vision of the overall ECoC project, focusing on growing overnight stays and encouraging greater occupancy during low seasons. Networking of the local cultural scene with tourism management has already led to positive results.
- A suitable institute to become the evaluation partner is currently being sought throughout Austria. A key criterion for the tender is the storage and provision of the data obtained for longer-term research from 2025 onwards.

### Artistic and cultural programme

- Out of the 154 currently planned programme projects, 42 were included in the bid book, 56 result from the open call launched in 2021 and 50 are 'other projects'. At the time of reporting, 43 projects had been confirmed by the organisation's advisory board.
- An open call was organised in 2021, resulting in 1000 proposals. The evaluation process of these proposals has taken several months. Only approximately 50 of them can be included in the programme for budgetary reasons. To avoid

disappointment among those whose projects are not selected, a *Marketplace of ideas* was organised, offering an opportunity for networking, cooperation and finding alternative sources of funding. The *Marketplace of ideas* concept seems to be successful and is now spreading also to other areas of the region.

- Since the new artistic director began her work, the original programme lines have been slightly sharpened. For example, the previous *Power of Tradition* line is now formulated as *Power and Tradition*, and the previous *Strength of Counterculture* is now *Culture in Motion*. The new denominations are meant to be more dynamic and in tune with the content of the projects that the four programmatic lines include.

## European dimension

- The team continues its efforts for strengthening the European and international dimension and increasing the number of international artists in the programme.
- There is a continuous active exchange within the ECoC network, which provides a substantial basis for cooperation projects such as *Libertalia*, *Mysterious and Wohlstand Afterparty*.
- International cooperation is being developed also on other continents. *Deconfining* - funded under the EU Creative Europe programme - is a cooperation project with African stakeholders, including upcoming African Capitals of Culture. For other projects, partners have been sought also from Japan and Latin America.
- In terms of inviting international artists to the area, a strong focus will be on the *Artist in Residence programmes*, which are connected to the aim of revitalising vacant places, especially train stations, through art and culture.

## Outreach

- The general excitement about the ECoC year has grown in the local community, as it becomes more tangible.
- The School of Art and Craft as presented in the bid book is coming to life in the form of the *Salzkammergut Craft Art Lab (SCALA)*, based in Bad Goisern. It creates a common space for experimentation, which at the same time is a platform for cooperation with other cultural institutions and businesses in the region as well as universities and international partners.
- The concept of the *Salty Family* has a key role in community building. Participation of all social groups is important for the whole ECoC project and central to sustainable legacy.
- Between March and June 2022, a compact Digitisation strategy for Bad Ischl - Salzkammergut 2024 was developed including three main aspects: 1. Digitisation & communication/marketing; 2. Digitisation & programme; 3. Digitisation & capacity building.

## Management

- A budget of nearly 26 million euros (including the Melina Mercouri prize) has been secured. Figures are expected to increase, in sponsorships and EU funding. The total budget is in line with the bid book.

- The financial contract between Bad Ischl - Salzkammergut 2024 and the National Government (Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport) was signed on 29 June 2021, as well as the financial contracts between Bad Ischl - Salzkammergut 2024 and the Federal State of Upper Austria and the Federal State of Styria. Following the legally binding decisions of all municipalities in the years 2019/2020, financial contracts were signed with all 23 partner municipalities by 27 April 2021.
- At present, the operating team comprises 14 staff members. The number will grow to at least 28 personnel units by 2024. Finding employees has proven to be challenging, which has led to cooperation with agencies and freelancers.
- The new artistic director started her work in November 2021. The structure of the artistic team has been slightly reformed with more clearly defined areas of responsibilities for each staff member.
- The communication strategy has been sharpened in recent months and external support has been sought from agencies.

## Capacity to deliver

- Bad Ischl - Salzkammergut 2024 continues to have strong political support on all levels. Directors and team members hold regular meetings with the politicians (mayors and cultural advisors) of Bad Ischl and the region.
- While the responsibility for the infrastructure projects remains with the city, municipalities and private owners, a working group has been established to coordinate and support the processes. Most of the planned infrastructure projects are expected to be completed at least partially during 2024, so that they can be used for ECoC purposes even though they would be finished only later. One such example is the Open Cultural Centre; its implementation will take place in several stages starting in 2023, and in 2024 the House will be open for some ECoC exhibitions and events.

## Discussion

During the subsequent discussion, the Panel sought clarification on following issues:

### Long-term cultural strategy

- Although the new logo includes both Bad Ischl and Salzkammergut, the Panel has noticed that in some communication materials, the ECoC year is branded merely as Salzkammergut 2024. The Panel is therefore concerned about how to avoid further confusion about the holder of the Austrian 2024 ECoC title (i.e. the city of Bad Ischl) in future communication: the title is always awarded to a city, not to a region, even though it is possible (and, often, quite relevant) to involve the city's surrounding area in the project. In its response to the question, the team said that the city was indeed 100% responsible for the implementation of the ECoC project. However, it underlined that in order to get the support and to ensure the future development of the whole region, it was important to bring all 23 municipalities together and to emphasise that Bad Ischl (i.e. the title-holder) is just one of the 23 municipalities covered by the project. Locally all know that the title is awarded to Bad Ischl, so the problem of confusion mainly concerns outsiders.

- Concerning the monitoring and evaluation process, the team explained that there was full continuity with previous efforts for a longitudinal approach but that due to Covid, the schedule had changed. Instead of 2020, they have decided to have 2022 as their baseline year. Also, the evaluation working group has evolved into a three-tier structure. One tier is working with the Universities of Vienna, Graz, Klagenfurt, Innsbruck, etc. and students collecting qualitative data and working on free research questions. The team is also collaborating closely with such key quantitative data providers in the region as tourism bodies and municipality partners.
- The Panel considered positively that the capacity building programme had a wide scope, including politicians, but had a concern whether (and to what extent) it also covered the practical needs of project holders, for instance on international networking. The team ensured that the project holders were one of the main target groups, and regular roundtables were organised specifically for them. There has already been a workshop about EU funding, and the international networking will be further enhanced.

### Artistic and cultural programme

- The Panel wanted to know the updated status of the programme projects, as according to the progress report only 14 out of 154 projects had advanced into the contract phase. The team explained that since the submission of the report the situation had advanced and new contracts had been made so that the number of contracted projects had grown up to 25. Contracts include a detailed project description including partners and the budget. Out of the projects presented in the bid book, 65% have now been confirmed, but the rest is still uncertain or has been withdrawn. Some of the bid book projects and their holders have, however, advanced to the programme through the open call or by participating in other projects. The Panel also wanted to know which projects were the 50 'other projects' mentioned in the report. The team explained that these projects had been initiated and developed by the team to fill in gaps of the programme content. Examples include the projects related to the Jewish community, the national-socialism period as well as artist residencies.
- Regarding the current political situation in Europe and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the Panel inquired whether the team had some specific plans to involve Ukrainian artists and cultural organisations in the programme and other activities, and maybe Russian non-regime artists and organisations as well. It was confirmed that the Ukrainian artists would be given priority in different projects when the artist selections are made. For example, the film festival *Point of View* has this year a thematic emphasis on Ukraine.
- The Panel was interested in the background concerning the rephrasing of the term 'counterculture' in one of the programme lines. The team explained that in German speaking areas, this word was now instrumentalized and could potentially lead to misuse of the ECoC title. It was also considered that as culture was always changing, the new programme line's name *Culture in motion* was better and stronger than its previous version *Strength of Counterculture*.
- The Panel also wanted to know more about the project *SCALA* and its relations with other important projects concerning art, design and architecture. *SCALA* is a legacy project that is a discourse platform and a physical hub connecting local crafts to international designers, crafts and artists. It is connected also to smaller ECoC programme projects with similar contents.



- A question was also made whether the open call ending last autumn, resulting in 1000 proposals, was marketed internationally. The team responded that the call was only published nation-wide and therefore received proposals mainly from Austria. Applicants were however asked to include international connections in their projects.

## European dimension

- The Panel noted that the activities around the theme of hyper-tourism could potentially have great European significance, and wanted to know more about the international partners in this area. Due to the pandemic, some delays and changes have occurred in these activities. Both regional and national tourist boards are involved, and the team is also working together with the region of Bavaria in Germany. Cooperation around the topic is also developed with Tartu and Bodø.
- A question was made about the location of international relations in the organisation chart. The team explained that the responsible person was part of the programme team.
- The Panel also wanted to know how the team monitored the inclusion of European artists, cultural organisations and networks which collaborate with the projects. The team responded that this was one of the questions all projects had to answer already when applying to the programme and before a contract was made. The Panel also wanted to hear which international networks had been contacted since the previous monitoring meeting. The team explained that the ECoC network was very important to them in several projects and in other areas. They are also part of the Danube Festivals Network and work also beyond the EU borders with African partners and Capitals of Culture, and with some Mexican, Japanese, and American organisations.
- When the Panel asked for some concrete examples of international artists and organisations working within the programme, projects such as *Art Your Village* and *Libertalia* were mentioned, with international artists already involved. For example, in *Libertalia* artists from Bootle, Gothenburg, Limerick, Turku, Veszprém-Balaton, Magdeburg and Bad Ischl-Salzkammergut come together in one-week Labs already in the summer 2022.

## Outreach

- The Panel inquired how the progress of the *Salty Family* initiative was being monitored. There are regular meetings with the mayors of the 23 municipalities and roundtables with all different types of stakeholders, while progress reports are delivered by project holders. The team has many projects with the around 800 associations and community clubs ('Vereine') existing in the region. A digital platform called *OnStage* will also be developed, and the people and organisations involved in the projects will be part of it. The database for the platform is being collected with different partners.
- Regarding free subculture scenes and artists, the Panel was interested in knowing their current status in the programme, and whether the team had received applications from such fields and actors that were not used to open calls and long-term schedules. The team responded that the subculture scenes and artists were hit by the pandemic especially hard, and that it was the ECoC's responsibility to strengthen and support them by e.g. helping them in applying for funds and

creating networks. The team has tried to involve them in the bid book and open call projects, and has also connected them to calls from other ECoCs.

- Concerning the digital strategy, the Panel wanted to know where in the organigramme was the expert responsible for this work located, and learned that the person sat in the programme team, but that the team also resorted to several external experts.
- To the question regarding the percentage of the overall programme that would be available online, the team could not yet answer at this point.

## Management

- Due to the two directors' governing model, the Panel inquired, who had the final say if the managing director and the artistic director disagreed. The 'Rules of Procedure of the Management' include provisions to deal with such an occurrence. In case problems would happen, the chairperson would have the final say.
- The Panel also expressed its concern about the number of staff members, referring to the report where challenges in filling in open positions and recruitment of the staff were described as major. The team still feels secure that they can commit enough people to their own functions as well as to the positions of the external projects.
- The Panel noted that organising a public call for volunteers in the autumn 2022 seemed to be rather late, but the team found this was still quite timely. A marketing campaign, an online registration tool and cooperation with different organisations will support this process.
- As noted in the first monitoring meeting, the formal decisions about the projects could only be made once the artistic director was appointed. The Panel wanted therefore to know, had the change of artistic directors caused any further delays in programme development, and what were the underlying reasons for this choice. The team considered that the bid book had wisely foreseen some of the potential future challenges, and therefore their organisational structure was ready to face them. It is considered very important that there are still several people in the team from the bidding phase.
- Concerning the communication strategy, the Panel was concerned how the team would reinforce the international visibility of the ECoC. The entire communication will be made bilingually, and there is a plan to work with international media outlets, as well as with other ECoCs. The communication will take place at different levels, also internationally. The communication strategy is under preparation, and will be ready in due time.

## Capacity to deliver

- The Panel wanted to know if there were optional plans for the infrastructure projects and for sustainable mobility. The team is optimistic that they will be able to use the new venues in 2024. Not all venues will be finished by then, but they can be used in parts for the ECoC purposes. For sustainable mobility, the team is collaborating with different organisations in order to improve the public transportation situation and its present challenges, and is confident that this can be done.

- With the steep inflation worldwide, shortages of materials and delays in deliveries, the Panel inquired if the team would be able to meet the deadlines and manage budgets. The team has considered this as an important and relevant question, and is prepared to negotiate with the State and Federal Governments about possible adjustments to the funding in the autumn 2022.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The Panel appreciates the good and solid progress made so far by Bad Ischl, despite the challenges caused by the pandemic and the war situation. The Panel wishes to draw attention to the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** The Panel would like to underline the importance of consistency when communicating about the ECoC and recommends using for example “Bad Ischl - Salzkammergut 2024” as it appears in most of the communication materials. It is important to note that the ECoC title was awarded to Bad Ischl in a regional context and not to Salzkammergut as such, since a region cannot hold an ECoC title. The Panel acknowledges the key role played by all the municipalities in the Salzkammergut region, and in general regional support for an ECoC is encouraged in the guidelines for European Capitals of Culture. However, leaving the name “Bad Ischl” out of the national and international communication materials would not be correct and only cause confusion. The Panel would also like to remark that this is not the first time a European Capital of Culture includes its surrounding municipalities and region in their ECoC. Several similar examples such as Essen/Ruhr, Marseille/Provence, Leeuwarden/Friesland, Matera/Basilicata, Aarhus/Midtyjlland and Galway/Galway existed in the past.

**Recommendation 2:** The recent modifications in the programme lines are well reasoned, and the original idea presented in the bid book still remains as the fundament of the programme. The newly introduced additional content and project areas concerning dark history are also a welcomed addition; however, these topics should be approached in an interesting way that appeals to a wide and international audience, as well as address sensitivities for immediate, local and regional communities of interest.

**Recommendation 3:** Although measures have been taken to reach out more widely to European partners, it is necessary to further strengthen the European dimension of the programme and of the ECoC as a whole. Not only in terms of financial aspects, but especially in terms of cooperation and cultural and artistic content. The Panel recommends reaching out to more European networks and partners for co-operation, co-creation and co-production beyond the ECoC family, IETM and EUNIC that are mentioned in the programme.

**Recommendation 4:** The Panel is concerned about the high number of projects realised and run by the Bad Ischl 2024 organisation itself, considering the relatively small size of the team. In combination with the already experienced major challenges in recruiting staff, this structure can lead to severe problems in the quality of the implementation. The Panel therefore urges the team to mitigate risks on this challenge by looking for other solutions.

**Recommendation 5:** A sound contingency plan for programming and infrastructure that pays attention to the steep inflation rates, shortages of materials and delays in deliveries should be made soon.

## Next steps

The Panel remains available for questions and advice, through the Commission services.

The Commission will call for a third (and final) monitoring meeting in November 2023. At the end of the third monitoring meeting, the Panel will make a recommendation to the Commission on whether to grant the Melina Mercouri Prize to Bad Ischl 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 Bad Ischl and the Bad Ischl 2024 team and representatives for a very informative discussion, and looks forward to the next developments of the European Capital of Culture project.

(Signed) all attending Panel's members

