



Chemnitz

European Capital of Culture 2025

Second Monitoring Meeting

Report by the ECoC Expert Panel

Virtual Meeting, 23 May 2023

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Introduction

This report follows the virtual meeting on 23 May 2023 between the Expert panel for the selection and monitoring of European Capitals of Culture, hereinafter referred to as “the panel”, and the European Capital of Culture team of Chemnitz, one of the two designated European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) 2025¹.

Chemnitz was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2025 in Germany by the relevant German authorities in January 2021 based on the panel selection report²; its bid book is available on the Chemnitz2025 website³.

A first monitoring meeting took place on 28 September 2021 and the first monitoring report is available on the European Commission website⁴. This report is addressed to the team of Chemnitz 2025 and will be published on the same European Commission website.

Attendance

Panel members nominated by EU institutions:

Toni Attard
Jelle Burggraaff
Else Christensen-Redzepovic
Goda Giedraityte (chair)
Suvi Innilä
Hrvoje Laurenta
Jorge Cerveira Pinto (rapporteur)
Anne Karjalainen.

Panel members nominated by the German authorities:

Ulrich Rauff
Barbara Mundel.

For Chemnitz 2025:

Mayor and Chairman of Chemnitz 2025
CEO Programme Director
CEO Managing Director

¹ The European Capitals of Culture action is governed by Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union for the titles 2020 to 2033. The Decision 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://ec.europa.eu/culture/sites/default/files/ecoc2025-germany-selection-report.pdf>

³ <https://chemnitz2025.de/bidbook/documents>

⁴ <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/chemnitz-and-nova-gorica>

Head of Cultural Department, City of Chemnitz and Head of Staff Unit ECoC
Chemnitz 2025
Team Generation
Head of Communication
Mayor of Ehrenfriedersdorf, Cultural Region, Member of the Board C-2025 Ltd.
Curator MBA 25.

Panel members excused:

Rosella Tarantino
Marilyn Gaughan Reddan

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) and from the State Chancellery of Saxony.

Report from Chemnitz 2025

The organisation of Chemnitz 2025 submitted a progress report in advance of the virtual meeting. The report gives evidence of the advancement made since the first monitoring meeting in September 2021, according to the six evaluation criteria of the European Capitals of Culture action. The report also included a full updated list of projects, intervention areas, financial projections, EU-Funding Plans, Staffing Plan and CVs CEOs C-2025 Ltd.

Discussion

The meeting started with a presentation by the city team, alongside a video presentation highlighting major developments since the previous monitoring meeting.

During the presentation, led by the Lord Mayor of the City and President of the Board, the message centred around the idea that the project, the people, and the city are now much more interested and curious about the work being done. The work has now extended to various regional partners and even other cities.

Another important aspect mentioned was the significant developments in terms of the structure of the company that will deliver the project, now fully formed and with more than 37 full-time staff elements.

For this year, the following priorities were presented: significant advances in terms of all the projects that are part of the programme (more than 40 public events and calls were organised, and the bid book projects are in *full swing*); clear definition and understanding of the mission statement for the company and its major milestones; attracting third-party funds and bringing additional regional support to the project from other cities and from private institutions, including national companies.

Finally, it was mentioned that most strategic decisions related to the project would be taken up to the end of the current year.

Other information conveyed during the presentation related to the following aspects:

- The new headquarters will be extensively used starting in 2024. Its location and visibility will contribute to further dissemination of the project.
- The continuous increased work with the local community, so that the programme is more inclusive, more intergenerationally based, with elements that will resonate further with specific groups and targets.
- Regarding communication, cooperation and coordination with other cities and organisations will support bigger and better promotional and tourism-placed actions. Digital channels and a place to directly provide information to the public – “café” type – have also been activated and this has proven to be successful. The activation of the digital side of the programme is expected in the spring/middle of 2024.
- There is a need to prioritise capacity building by bringing together various organisations including international partners. This will also bring additional funds to allow the establishment of new organisations in the region – e.g. Makers spaces.
- Pilot projects are on-going, involving several municipalities and partners.
- Recognition that further coordination is core for the successful delivery of the project and ensuring a proper legacy for the future. A council of mayors will contribute to this.
- Recognition of the need to develop and advance a security concept, incorporating the lessons learned from other cities and events.

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

A. Contribution to the long-term strategy

- The panel wanted to know how the programme would continue to ensure a level of uniqueness and development in its concept for the title year, since some of the core concepts – e.g. creative spaces; makers and fablabs – are now relatively common and present in all cities. In their reply, the city representatives stated that their focus was on the impact that the title would generate. Even though the concepts are now extensively used and applied, they have already generated impacts and are advancing a city transformation, having culture at its core. It was also mentioned that the concept of culture would be extended beyond arts and creativity, since the digitization process impacts were transversal and merging boundaries.
- The panel enquired the team about what they expected to state in the proposed *White Paper* on the most significant legacy of Chemnitz 2025 that would add substantial value to the European Capital of Culture brand. In their reply, the city team explained that the added value for Chemnitz of having the ECoC title could be

seen in terms of pride and joy, in parallel with increased activities, interests and awareness of the value of culture.

- The panel enquired about the current state of the evaluation strategy. The progress report mentions “an evaluation to review the progress of the Cultural Strategy’s implementation is planned for the first half of 2023”. Furthermore, there is a milestone that is described as “contract and carry out first data collection in autumn 2023”. In their reply, the team mentioned that they were working on a proposal to involve the university, the municipality (that owns a significant volume of data) and potentially another company to develop the research and monitoring process. In addition there are already short-term indicators and impact metrics, together with a long-list of indicators for the city, and for the company’s legacy. It was also mentioned that a workshop with internal staff to identify and agree goals took place and workshops were further foreseen with the university regarding the technical and methodological aspects.

B. Cultural and artistic programme

- The panel requested further explanation regarding the seeming reduction of 3.91 million euros available for programme expenditure, as per Annex 3 of the progress report. How was the team planning to address these cuts and would that impact on the approved bid-book projects? In their reply, the team reiterated that no projects were cancelled because of financial reasons and explained they would not fund partner's projects for the full 100% and therefore they will have to find other funding sources, for example applications through the State of Saxony. The outcome of the Open Calls is expected in October (these are however not entirely new activities, but fill spaces foreseen in the Bid book like the European Workshop for Democracy), and until the end of the year decisions are made on which Bid book projects implemented by external partners are fit for continuing development. The team reiterated their confidence that there would not be funding issues.
- The panel enquired about the fact that as many as 21 of the 63 projects that are in development were in-house productions, a very high percentage, even with a growing team. How was the team going to ensure the high quality, the legacy as well as human resources for so many in-house productions? And how to ensure a fair handling of the in-house vs. other projects in the programme revision process taking place with the independent advisory expert panel in October? In their reply, the team mentioned that there had not been so far any problems, or disappointments or imbalances between the in-house vs. other projects. By the end of this year, the programme team will have more resources freed from the other projects, as their aim is that these projects will run independently, although on a high level of control (towards the team). Furthermore, many of the in-house productions will be based on volunteers, which means that they don’t require so much workforce from the team. The team also mentioned that it was important to allow all partners to run the programmes according to their resources and times. The in-house team will deliver the top responsibilities. Therefore, the team declared

that it was still unknown if there would be a need to choose and maybe guarantee the balance between in and out house projects. In any case, this will not affect or impact the flagships projects or initiatives.

- The panel wanted to hear from the team how, on a very practical level, they were ensuring the correct balance between the necessary solid progress and the high level of ambition aimed for throughout the next 1 ½ year of preparations. In their reply, the team mentioned that they were working into moving from ideas to operational status, with concrete dates and milestones. It is a very time-consuming exercise, done in parallel with the building of the organisational structure. To facilitate this process, a project management team is in place. However, the team recognized the need to improve and continue this work to have clear project milestones and conclude this planning as soon as possible. Finally, they believe that when compared with other cities they were in a good position.

C. European dimension

- The panel enquired about the international collaborations, and praised the fact that the progress report stated that the programme team assisted in making international matches and encouraged international collaborations generating real artistic or thematic exchange between the partners. The team further confirmed that the partners listed in the bid would contribute in different ways, but not all of them would be integrated in the programme, citing the example of the partner from Georgia that due to the war would not be able to participate. In some other cases, the impact of Covid was mentioned as the reason for not being able to engage. The team further mentioned that in such cases they were trying to find new partners. They have also recently organised meetings with 150 partners from the Czech Republic, Poland and Finland amongst others.
- The panel asked the team to describe what was the added value for their ECoC, for Chemnitz and region in the cooperation with the EU-Japan fest and if they were cooperating with other non-European partners as intensely as with the latter? In their reply, the team mentioned that they received a generous offer from EU-Japan fest and that many stakeholders in Chemnitz and in the region were keen to cooperate with Japan stakeholders. Capacity-building projects from this cooperation are extremely valuable. The cooperation also contributes to a more international mind-set in the city and region. The team also explained about other projects in the pipeline - in particular cooperation with African partners. Furthermore, the Lord Mayor underlined cooperation with twin cities.

D. Outreach

- The panel enquired about the concept of “silent middle”, introduced in the bid book, and mentioned in the progress report, requesting more details on its role in the overall project. In their reply, the team explained that the term “silent middle” was used to describe many different groups that were not represented and that they wanted to include in the project. To accomplish this, they have reached out to

communities using various approaches, including developing some working groups on diversity and inclusion to improve accessibility. What they realised is that nobody wants to be a part of the “silent middle”, and therefore concluded that the term had serious limitations in its applicability for communication purposes. The response was to broaden the approach, while keeping the concept, and continuing to advance the intellectual discourse and reflections on the “silent middle” concept. The team sees this development as positive, since it shows that they are listening to the people and are trying to apply them in the context of the pilot projects. They have also been in dialogue with key persons and NGOs on these topics. Specifically, regarding inclusion, there exist many guidelines, but there is a need to understand how these can be implemented in the specific context of Chemnitz and its region. To accomplish this, they organised roundtables that provided valuable outputs to help projects being more inclusive. E.g., exchanging with Tartu 2024 and others on youth participation and the creation of guidelines for inclusion and accessibility.

- The panel wanted the city team to address the issues of diversity, accessibility, inclusion and exchange between generations and what was expected from the preparation and participation. The team highlighted the importance of communicating through the local and regional media to tell the stories that were already happening. One other example mentioned was the project *Soft Skill Academy* that challenges individuals to imagine activities for the future collectively.

E. Management

- The panel sought further clarification regarding challenges faced because the company’s staff has grown at a very fast rate. The report also described the different tools for ensuring internal communication and well-being of the personnel. In their reply, the city team acknowledged no major problems until now. There is an onboarding process for now, and there will be an off-boarding process in due time at a later stage. The use of digital channels facilitates the sharing of information with everyone. The current team is able to work in 9 languages and this will also facilitate the international affairs scope. There is also constant contact with the Departments to understand if there is a need for additional personnel. This process is also further supported by the involvement of personnel from the municipality, with large experience in managing these issues, including risk management processes. Finally, the team has identified key players and is planning on how to secure the knowledge by learning from former ECoC.
- The panel noted that in the progress report, the current media and public reaction to the ECoC was mixed, although generally satisfactory, and wanted further details about the nature of the negative comments and how the team planned to manage them and deal with wishes and hopes that cannot be realised. In their reply, the team explained that the major negative comments were related to the project communication and to doubts whether the city would be prepared for the event in 2025. The positive side is that this demonstrates a strong interest in the city and that people care and want to be engaged and talk with the team. There has been some criticism related to the use of the English language. The team also refers to

the need to better manage expectations, since the ECoC will not sort out all the city's problems.

- In the report, it is mentioned that because of the legal structure behind C-2025 Ltd. in many cases it will not directly apply for funding. The panel sought additional information regarding this issue, and in their reply the team clarified this situation was only related to official/public funds, since a limited company was not eligible for funding under these calls. To manage this situation, they are collaborating with a non-profit institution and even considering whether to make changes in the legal structure. This does however not affect the sponsorship fundings. It was mentioned that a significant part of the funds could go directly to the project's partners, and the team was supporting them to secure the necessary funds. Finally, the team recognized that this issue also affected the legacy, and how the legacy organisation would be set up.
- The panel sought additional information concerning the project's finance, since the report acknowledged the uncertainty regarding income from sponsorship and additional funds and there had been a budget reduction. In their reply, the team clarified that the marketing department would be responsible for the sponsoring and fundraising activities. They have also employed a dedicated staff member who is searching for all possible ways to apply in different funding institutions. The sponsorship fundraising activities started in spring this year and requests were sent to various companies – more than 30 companies raised their interest. They also noted the role of the mayor in articulating the communication with some important German companies. They feel confident that they will reach their goals, combining important national sponsors with regional and local companies' support.

F. Capacity to deliver

- The panel asked about any concerns in terms of venues and infrastructure and enquired about how much of additional funding went to capital investment which directly affects the implementation of the ECoC year. In their reply, the team explained that they had doubled the infrastructure funds to 60 million Euros, first to cover the rising costs, but also to develop further – e.g., maker hubs are a part of the infrastructure legacy. The city provided an additional 4 million euros to the company. They are also already working to secure funds for post-2025. They reiterated that not a single euro was being reduced in the programming budget.
- The panel noted that there was only a short section about Risk Management in the report, mentioning common threats of violent outbreaks in ECoCs, the energy crisis and the possibility of the reintroduction of social distancing. However, the panel wanted to know if in their Project Management plan, the team had carried out a thorough risk assessment and developed specific mitigation tools. In their reply, the team mentioned the collaboration with the Saxony Government to work on all kinds of risk management. They have on-going dialogue with the security forces, the fire departments and with all municipalities, which have a significant experience in dealing with these issues, from political risks to cyber-attacks. They also

mentioned the intention to bring these experts from the municipality to support the company, since this was their everyday reality. This would allow the adaptation of their expertise to the programme with the view to creating a more structured approach.

- One final question posed by the panel related to the current state of the digital maker space and the digital remote access of the ECoC programme. In their reply, the team mentioned that the first thing created on a digital level was a platform for all project management to start conversation with project partners. Secondly, the creation of a digital platform to manage all open calls. And a third element will be the creation of a tool to assist in the finalisation of all projects developed. On the Digital Makerspace project, managed by Makers United, where independent makers can meet and exchange, an international meeting point for makers. The new website will develop a map giving visibility to everyone.

Conclusions and recommendations

The panel acknowledges the serious commitment and significant advancement made so far by Chemnitz 2025 team and draws attention to the following conclusions and recommendations:

Recommendation 1

There is a need to ensure a firm and structured project management drive, assisted by careful monitoring and speed progress and deliverables. This will be further accomplished by having a clear project scope (time, human resources, and financial resources against project plan) and KPIs/gates. Formal project management training might be considered for key positions.

Recommendation 2

There is a need to continue developing and exploring what will be the legacy of Chemnitz2025, not only for the city but also for Europe as a whole - the added value of the ECoC brand and the learning for other cities and regions across Europe.

Recommendation 3

The panel recognises that at this stage of the ECoC project, focus is important. It is fundamental to maintain the high level of ambitions that were expressed in the bid book that led to the selection of Chemnitz as the 2025 ECoC. Therefore, the panel recommends that priorities – including programming - are carefully chosen, in full alignment with the bid book.

Recommendation 4

The panel recommends a more careful and attentive management of expectations, across the various stakeholders and audiences. For this to happen, communication is paramount.

Recommendation 5

The panel reiterates the need to reinforce the European dimension mind-set throughout the design, planning and implementation of their ECoC.

Recommendation 6

Although the panel acknowledges the limitations mentioned during the presentation and discussions related to some of the initial concepts presented in the final bid book (e.g. the silent middle), it reiterates the importance of implementing these interesting concepts through programming and communication activities, in smart, creative ways.

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 the third and final meeting in the autumn 2024. 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 Chemnitz 2025.

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 Chemnitz 2025 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

