



EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

Kaunas

European Capital of Culture 2022

First Monitoring Meeting

Report by the panel of independent experts

Brussels

November 2018

Introduction

This report follows the meeting in Brussels on 20th November 2018 between the panel and Kaunas, one of the two European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) in 2022¹. Kaunas was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2022 in Vilnius on the 20 December 2017 by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania on the basis of the panel selection report²; its bidbook is available on the Kaunas 2022 website³. This report is addressed to the Kaunas 2022 public non-profit institution and will be published on the European Commission's website⁴.

Attendance

The panel members:

Sylvia Amann, Cristina Farinha (Rapporteur) and Agnieszka Wlazel (Chair), appointed by the European Parliament 2018–20

Ulrich Fuchs, Aiva Rozenberga and Pauli Sivonen, appointed by the Council of the EU 2016–18

Beatriz Garcia, Jiří Suchánek and Suzana Žilič Fišer, appointed by the European Commission 2017–19

For ECOC Kaunas 2022:

Ana Čizauskienė	Head of International Relations and Programming
Simonas Kairys	Deputy Mayor, Kaunas City Municipality
Tadas Metelionis	Head of the Kaunas City Development and Investment
Viltė Migonytė-Petrulienė	Regional partnership Curator, Kaunas 2022
Virginija Vitkienė	CEO, Kaunas 2022
Rityš Zemkauskas	Kaunas Myth Curator, Kaunas 2022
Deimantė Zutelienė	Head of Communication and Marketing, Kaunas 2022

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (DG EAC) and Mr. Saulius Šimanauskas from the Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU.

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://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/ecoc-2022-lithuania-selection-report_en.pdf

³ http://kaunas2022.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Kaunas_2022_ECoC_final_bid_EN.pdf

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en

Report from Kaunas 2022

Kaunas 2022 public non-profit institution submitted in advance of the meeting a comprehensive and thought-through report that the panel commends for its design and writing style with a good sense of humour. The report outlined with due details the activities of the organisation since the official nomination as ECOC.

At the meeting Kaunas 2022 made a presentation that included the following points:

Long-term cultural strategy

- The City's Deputy Mayor affirmed how the **cultural strategy long-term process** is already having horizontal impacts at all the municipality departments. He added that Kaunas District municipality in the involved region are as well entering this process and starting to activate the ECOC programme.
- The **good collaboration with the Ministry of Culture** was also pointed out. A Memorandum was signed ensuring the increase of the salaries of professionals working in the cultural sector, a relevant pre-condition for the work to be carried out in good conditions.
- The ECOC has contributed to the perception of Kaunas as a **tourism destination**, which is new to the city. There are good external relations of the city with other countries such as Japan and the Netherlands.

Cultural infrastructure

- The Head of the City Development and Investment Department ensured that all infrastructure projects scheduled are on time to be finished up until 2022. Regarding the planned **Science Centre (STEM)**, he gave the good news that the national Government has agreed to contribute to the funding and that it will not be a STEM but a STEAM dedicated venue, going beyond sciences and including the arts and creative disciplines.
- An inter-regional **INTERREG project "Star Cities"** has also been approved and started and will promote sustainable tourism development in riverside areas in 5 European Cities.
- Regarding the planned **Concert Hall**, the winning design proposal has already been selected and the public procurement procedures for construction are moving on.
- Initiatives such as "Heritage for Kaunas" and "Kaunas Highlights" were also referred for their success regarding the engagement of stakeholders from different areas as well as for the number of proposals already received and being implemented.

Programme

- The CEO affirmed the **vision of Kaunas 2022** and how they are working inter-sectorial and more connected towards a united narrative. She highlighted the focus

on giving youth a stage as well as positioning Kaunas as a place for relevant contemporary European culture. Their strategic plan is in place and it is updated every year. The General Meeting of stakeholders appointed the Advisory Board – in which the Ministry for Culture has a seat – that meets 2-3 times per year.

- It was announced that all programmes have already been launched. In the present Ignition phase the capacity building and networking are the main efforts. For the next period, they will be working more on the “Contemporary Capital” project.
- The CEO also pointed out key elements for the **smooth process from bid to implementation phase**: the team remains in place since the bid process; and all involved stakeholders are very much dedicated to the project, notably, the Kaunas City municipality and Kaunas District municipality keep financial schedule. The State Government reserved first special subsidy for Kaunas 2022 programme in the state budget for 2019.
- Head of International Relations and Programming stressed that all **bidbook projects** have been reviewed; key areas in which international partners are needed have been identified and open calls will be launched next. The intention is to produce financially wise around 30–40% in house.
- The **Tempo Academy of Culture** is creating a network of local organisations with capacity-building and value-based work and open to a diversity of audiences, which is an important legacy in itself. They have started the **audience development** programme with 12 organisations and plan to have 50 involved by 2023.
- The **community culture mediators** – the Fluxus agents – are being trained via team building exercises (8 are already working in neighbourhoods and 15 going through training courses this year). Up to 40 dedicated youngsters every year (third edition now) are participating at the training / **faculty “Kaunas Challenge”** and most engaged alumni of the programme (around 20 now) are producing their own cultural projects. The **welcoming and volunteering faculty** is also underway.
- The **ECOC Forum** was initiated in 2018, an annual platform to discuss the programme development with a wider platform and to internationalise the scope of their cooperation. The attendance this year was far beyond initial expectations.
- The **international youth summer camp** had 100 participants from other ECOCs and from Japan. Other initiatives link them to several other ECOCs such as Plovdiv, Matera, Esch and Leuwarden.
- Moreover, the Regional Partnership Curator pointed out the **regional partnership, architecture and further community involvement initiatives**, including also elderly, minorities and disabled.
- Finally, the Kaunas Myth Curator emphasised the **contribution of Kaunas** under the mottos *from confusion through confluence to consciousness* and *from temporary to contemporary* to a new European narrative, which is very much needed at this moment. He updated on the Kaunas Beast movements and myth identity and how children book explaining the programme and a national radio programme are being implemented.

Communication and marketing

- The Head of Communication and Marketing explained how they are **building multiple audiences** in a 3-phase process and managing the relations with the different stakeholders and communicating their impact, including open door events, discussions and open reporting.
- They are also working with the **Tourism** department to find an organisation for international communication. The **sponsorship** strategy looking for long-lasting and value-based relationships is being developed.

Discussion

During the subsequent discussion the panel praised the good development of the project implementation, sought clarification on certain issues and offered experience and advice. Topics discussed included the following:

Programme

- How the **collaboration with other Lithuanian cities** has proceeded was discussed. Despite difficulties to connect since the bid teams are no longer in place, there are plans to cooperate with Klaipeda and other five Lithuanian cities from 2021 on. A dedicated round table to discuss potential common projects will be launched in 2020. Nevertheless, the participation of artists from Klaipeda in the programme is already a reality. The panel was also informed that this city might become the European Youth Capital, which is good ground for collaboration.
- The panel recapped its recommendation following the selection process on the need to emphasise the **European dimension so to keep interest from wider audiences**. The proposal of the Memory festival was quoted, as a programme that accentuates the openness to the other and raises issues on conflict that are contemporary and common to European societies. The team believes the Baltic States have nowadays an even more relevant history to tell the rest of Europe.
 - **Recommendation 1:** Keep the good track on the European dimension of the programme, ensuring that the international connections promoted among the cultural operators remain as part of the legacy.
- Making sure there are enough reasons for **international visitors to go to Kaunas** in 2022 was another matter of discussion. Highlights are the new formats being designed such as a performing arts festival to take place in public space as well as the Fluxus festival in the community quarters in the summer 2022. The team considers experiencing the journey from confusion to confluence and consciousness unique – “if you want to change your life come to Kaunas” would be the motto! The three main events proposed follow a specific Aristotelian drama structure and the participants will have an active role to play. Moreover, the team argued that it begins to be known in the surrounding region that something exciting is going on in Kaunas, naming this

phenomenon as “It is Kaunastic!”. The hospitality and full experience of Kaunas are a unifying experience.

- **Recommendation 2:** Translate your relevant yet complex narrative onto a communication with simple and clearly understandable messages linking to Kaunas ECOC vision and targeting the general public.
- The **relations with the local cultural institutions** were addressed. The team reassured that via the capacity building programme close connections and regular meetings have started among them. Long-lasting stable relationships and results are expected since participants are supposed to introduce changes into their own organisations.
- The panel also reminded that though the wrap up years are essential, it is important to have a **good balance so that the Year itself has a clear focus and strength** raising national and international interest. The balance between **in house production and outsourcing** was also brought up. 30–40 % of in house production will be a big challenge for the team. The team confirmed that building on the successes of the Conference on Modernism and the ECOC Forum, notably, which will contribute to the legacy; the plans for 2022 include 3 main productions and at least one highlight from each programme will be produced in house.
 - **Recommendation 3:** Make clear and transparent decisions regarding the percentage of outsourcing versus in house production. The option for outsourcing may foster capacity building and the legacy.
- In what comes to **international cooperation** with neighbouring countries, a programme that includes artists from Ukraine and Belarus is being sought, notably around the topic of post-war modernism. Within the Memory Festival, on the celebrations of the anniversary of the temporary capital, there will be involvement of artist coming from the five languages groups that used to be in the city stamp (Lithuanian, Polish, German, Yiddish, Russian).
- The promotion of a **sustainable and green events programme** was also discussed.
 - **Recommendation 4:** Benchmark on existing initiatives in Europe on how to conceive and implement green events and include it in the capacity building programme as well as share it with the regional partners within the riverside tourism project.
- The **cultural and creative industries planned mapping and support** were not addressed in our discussion, nevertheless the panel expects to have an update on the progress in this area in the next monitoring report.

Evaluation and monitoring

- The panel applauded the storytelling element in the approach of Kaunas 2022 and asked about the impact assessment plans, most notably how this symbolic dimension will be reflected in the evaluation and documentation process. The planned measurement of “happiness process” was also discussed. The team admitted they are

still at an early stage of this process, but reiterated this same objective. The existing seven small scale universities in the city want to be included and they are sharing research directions. An international call for artists is scheduled for creating a Happiness Sensor; thus, there was an option for an artistic approach.

- **Recommendation 5:** Keep on with the effort to use mixed methods, and include the story telling and symbolic qualitative elements into the documentation and impact assessment process. This qualitative approach would mean a relevant contribution to the sector's much-needed effort to go beyond figures.

Cultural infrastructure

- The **delay regarding the European structural fund** for the M. Žilinskas Art Gallery (belongs to National M.K.Čiurlionis Art Museum) renovation and the need for a potential plan B were subject to query. The team explained that this art gallery is State managed and that the Ministries for Culture and Energy are expected to fund the renovation, therefore negotiations are still underway on the split of the budget. The ECOC and the City are constantly communicating with the institution and the government and an agreement is expected soon. Though not at the same level, there are other venues in the city that may replace this art gallery if not ready in 2 years as planned. Finding new places and renovating them for a concrete exhibition purpose has been done for years in the frame of the Kaunas Biennial.
 - **Recommendation 6:** Meet and coordinate with all involved stakeholders and come up with a concrete agreement, time plan and budget. The panel recommends as a first step an urgent meeting at State level (Ministries of Culture and Energy) to have the issue solved swiftly so that implementation activities (namely tendering) can start in early 2019. Furthermore, it is also advisable to have a Plan B prepared.
- The panel also sought clarification on the future prospects for the management and programme of the **Science Centre** as well as the **Concert Hall** and their links to the ECOC. The Science Centre vision is to further increase the existing potential in the IT and engineering sectors by widening the promotion of science, notably among the children. The architecture proposal has been selected and now public tenders for the construction are being worked on. A contract was also already made with an experienced Polish company to develop the concept and exhibition plan. Negotiations with the architects are now under way so to include additional spaces for arts and culture and other events. A partnership was sealed with the Ministry of Culture ensuring an increase of the initial budget to 23 m€. It is foreseen that a public operator administrated by the Municipality will manage the venue funded by the Ministry of Culture. The opening is scheduled for the end of 2021. Thus, a specific ECOC programme on arts and technologies and a clear collaboration are envisaged. The same plans are expected for the new Concert Hall, which was not included in the bid-book. Nevertheless, other halls exist where the programme can take place in case delays occur. The funding is still being sorted out yet commercial areas are

previewed; therefore, partnership with private investors can be put into place. Finally, a temporary stage on the water has also been envisaged to supply further venues, therefore a partnership with the Bregenz festival (with much experience in this respect) is being developed.

- **Recommendation 7:** Go forward with the necessary content and feasibility programmes for these two new venues and make the necessary links with the ECOC programme and team.

Funding

- The debate on the **challenges regarding the national Government funding** followed. The fact that State funding will be done by compensation endangers the cash flow capacity of Kaunas 2022 to fulfil its financial commitments. Furthermore, as public funding cannot be redistributed, all commissions will need to go through public tenders, which is time consuming and complex for the content of an ECOC programme that involves international partners. The team gave account on the good will from all involved parties to facilitate these procedures. Solutions have been sought and one option would be that national funding would be transferred to the municipality and then swiftly to Kaunas 2022 upon invoicing. In order to avoid the long public procurement processes, the city will issue a call for projects that the ECOC will manage and select and then apply to the city funding providing a list of projects and partners. Nevertheless, the governmental budget procedures are an urgent issue and the team asked for the panel's advice.
 - **Recommendation 8:** Study the Latvian Ministry of Culture model – 20 % advance payment followed by gradual next payments upon every quarter-of-the-year report and specific needs of projects. Meet and coordinate with all due stakeholders to agree on a final action plan that is fitting Kaunas 2022 specific needs having in mind the project good progress so far.
 - **Recommendation 9:** Allow enough time for the open calls and selection procedures required so to be able to start contracting in 2019.

Staffing

- The panel enquired about the staffing **strategy regarding the external/self-employed staff** members. The team explained that it is a better option for all those that have other jobs and only can dedicate partial time to the ECOC; for those that only intervene in specific events; as well as to reduce the costs of the international staff.

Communication

- The **branding and communication approach** was also briefly addressed. The team referred to the development of diverse partnerships and to the fact that each of them will have the space to create their own narrative in the relation to the Kaunas 2022 brand. In the case of many initiatives, the ECOC is just sponsor or ambassador. A

partnership will be made with a company for monitoring of media coverage and in 2022 the reputation will be measured.

- **Recommendation 10:** Create clear guidelines for all the communication efforts, ensuring that the ECOC as an EU initiative is visibly standing.
- The Kaunas 2022 team also announced the launch of some diverse **interactive platforms and digital tools**, notably for evaluation and for the Kaunas legend connecting with local heritage. The IT and creative industries potential of the city and the willingness of students and universities to contribute with apps and games will be explored this way.

Outreach

- The panel wanted to know more about the **cooperation with schools**. The team explained that it is taking place in different city districts and throughout the region. Liaisons are also supported via the City education department and the Fluxus agents. New projects are now being accomplished, including taking contemporary theatre and arts to the classrooms; as well as a storytelling educational programme. Regarding the work with **Kindergartens**, a theatre and dance performance programme targeting earlier ages as well as children books are being developed. Once the open call for the image of the Beast is finalised, the ECOC may step deeper into this audience.
- Regarding the **outgoing mobility of local cultural operators**, it was explained that some youngsters, cultural operators and Fluxus agents have had the opportunity to travel already, notably within the ECOC network. Volunteers and journalists will also have the opportunity to go to Matera and to Plovdiv soon. Furthermore, the young ambassadors programme from the City Council to its sister cities, like Saint Petersburg, will be having additional options to go to ECOC cities. City councillors will also be encouraged to travel, notably to other ECOC openings.

Risk management

- Finally, the biggest **challenges** ahead were discussed. The need to work even closer with the directors from national cultural institutions so to have a bigger engagement is one of the challenges. Moreover, it was also shared that the supplementary precautionous attention towards the ECOC spending at the national and city levels leading to the need of frequent reporting, is consuming energy and time.

Next Steps

The panel acknowledges and congratulates the cohesion of the team and the great committed work carried out by Kaunas 2022 since its nomination. The preparations for the ECOC year are on the right track with many good achievements such as interesting artistic programme with sound European dimension, strong capacity building initiatives with the Tempo Academy for Culture, the ECOC Forum, the Fluxus lab and agents, and the overall involvement of the communities.

The panel still notes the need to overcome the few challenges discussed and thus would like to draw attention to the recommendations above. It also remains available for Kaunas 2022 questions and advice, through the Commission services.

The Commission will call for a second monitoring meeting in mid-2020.

The panel would like to thank Kaunas 2022 for a very informative and motivating discussion and looks forward to the next developments of the European Capital of Culture project.