

BIDDING FOR THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE: COMMON STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES AT THE PRE- SELECTION STAGE

Florin NECHITA¹

Abstract: *This article explores the common strengths and weaknesses, as they are revealed by the pre-selection reports issued after Selection Panels analyses the applications of the cities competing for the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) title. The results of the content analysis of the 11 pre-selection reports that cover the years 2013 to 2019 of the ECOC title could add a new interpretation to the guides for cities preparing to bid and concentrates directions for future research on successful bidding approaches.*

Key words: *European Capital of Culture, community engagement, European Dimension, bidding strategies.*

1. Introduction

The European Capital of Culture (ECOC), named European City of Culture until 2001 is one of the most successful and well-known European projects. The ECOC initiative was launched in 1985 by Melina Mercouri with the main goal to bring the member states closer together through the “expression of a culture which, in its historical emergence and contemporary development, is characterized by having both common elements and a richness born of diversity” [9]. Starting from 1985 to the 2019 (the year in which the names of the ECOC are known), 60 cities would have held the title of this flagship cultural initiative of the European Union. From 2020 to 2033, the legal basis for ECOC designation will be

Decision No 445/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union of 16 April 2014.

The ECOC project is an annual mega-event, which provides an excellent opportunity to challenge and engage local citizens, thus generating feelings of common citizenship. As festivals occupy a special place in almost all cultures, and celebrate community values, ideologies, identity and continuity, they have been well-researched and theorized by scholars in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology [18].

ECOC initiative has evolved significantly from a celebration of the arts in a city to a major driver for the raising of the awareness and the role of culture in the life of cities to the contribution to citizens' well-being. Culture is beginning to play a

¹ Faculty of Sociology and Communication, University Transilvania of Brasov.

crucial role in the process of attracting increasingly mobile public, especially in the 'declining industrial cities' which needed to shift the base of their economies from production to consumption in order to replace lost employment opportunities [36]. Some authors considered the Glasgow designation for 1990 title as starting point for using the ECOC as instrument to urban regeneration, since this city was in industrial decline [14], [15], [22], [36]. For instance, various ECOCs have used the designation as a tool to revive the city space [25].

The competition for title of ECOC city brought so many energies and is so intense that it could be compared with the Olympic Games nomination [36]. The strong competition and the less developed procedures for evaluation compared with the present ones produced nine awarded cities from the same number of applicants for the year 2000 title. The ECOC event is composed by a series of events that take place in a one full-year, the international attention to the hosting city starts many months and years before and after, and the benefits for urban and regional development are consistent.

The bid application process formally starts after the call for applications from the relevant national authority (Ministry of Culture), but the experience has shown that many of the previous designated ECOC start their preparation with many years in advance as the host country are known with more than 10 years in advance. The competitive rules of the ECOC programme have become more and more demanding, and participants cannot afford to opt for

lesser or different visions and promises than those offered by their competitors [30].

The reports produced by the Selection Panel influenced the reports submitted by the candidate cities qualified for the next stage, or influenced the content of the reports prepared for pre-selection stage by candidates for the years that come. The members of the Selection Panel could be considered as a part of public cultural performance, as they influenced the first shape of the ECOC project for each city [7]. The findings that came after analysis of the pre-selection reports direct to the most important issues that cities bidding for ECOC title should be aware of.

2. Methodology

For the purpose of this study the content of 11 pre-selection reports were analyzed [11]. This reports issued by Selection Panels cover the bid for the years 2013-2019 ECOC title. Three pre-selection reports have been excluded from analysis because of the lack of specific reference to the cities (France), or having only one candidate (Belgium2015 and Malta2018). As indicated in the Table 1, only the relevant part of the pre-selection reports was included in the content analysis. The analyzed texts have references from 69 cities entering in the pre-selection phase and 39 of these proceeded to the second round or final selection stage. In the analysis tables, the cities proceeding to the second round is written in bold. After the name of the city and year of ECOC, in parenthesis is written a number that indicated how many times the corresponding variable was incremented for a specific city.

The analysis objects included in the content analysis

Table 1

Country, year of the ECOC, number of cities bidding, number of cities pre-selected)	Parts pre-selection reports included	Parts of pre-selection reports not included
Slovakia 2013 (9 candidates, 4 pre-selected cities)	Comments applicable to individual cities proceeding to the second round.	Comments applicable to all cities proceeding to the second round. Comments of the panel applicable to all cities. Comments and advice to all cities that did not proceed to the second round.
Latvia 2014 (4 candidates, 3 pre-selected)	Conclusions.	-
Sweden 2014 (4 candidates, 2 pre-selected)	Conclusions.	-
Czech Republic 2015 (3 candidates, 2 pre-selected)	Presentation of the cities Conclusions of the panel (for each city).	General conclusions.
Spain 2016 (15 candidates, 6 pre-selected)	Conclusions and recommendations to the pre-selected cities.	Presentation of the cities Conclusions and recommendations to the non-selected cities (too general and very briefly).
Poland 2016 (11 candidates, 5 pre-selected)	Conclusions and recommendations (made both to selected and non-selected cities and was having almost the same length of text; for the selected cities, it was structured in “the Panel recognized” and “the Panel recommends”).	Presentations delivered by the cities General remarks for non-selected cities
Cyprus 2017 (3 candidates, 2 pre-selected)	The Panel’s assessment (to selected and non-selected cities) Recommendations to pre-selected cities	Presentations delivered by the cities General recommendations
Denmark 2017 (2 candidates, 2 pre-selected)	The Panel’s assessment Recommendations to pre-selected cities	Presentations delivered by the cities General recommendations
Netherlands 2018 (5 candidates, 3 pre-selected)	The Panel’s assessment (to selected and non-selected cities) Recommendations to pre-selected cities	Presentations delivered by the cities Common recommendations to all pre-selected cities

Country, year of the ECOC, number of cities bidding, number of cities pre-selected)	Parts pre-selection reports included	Parts of pre-selection reports not included
Italy 2019 (21 candidates, 6 pre-selected)	Panel assessment (to selected and non-selected cities)	Presentations delivered by the cities Panel's assessment for: Citta diffusa Vallo di Diano (<i>application are too sketchy</i>) and Erice (<i>application submitted by an individual without formal support of a local administration</i>). Recommendations to the shortlisted cities
Bulgaria 2019 (8 candidates, 4 pre-selected)	Panel assessment (to selected and non-selected cities)	Presentations by the candidate cities Recommendations to the shortlisted cities

The themes and sub-themes used for the coding of cities strengths and weaknesses at the bid stage have been developed in Garcia and Cox report that cover hosting year between 2005 and 2018 [17]. To some extent, these themes and sub-themes are founded in the official European documents regarding bidding approach issued after the date of quoted report (November 2013). For this article, the content analysis chosen the items to frame the strengths and weaknesses identified from the pre-selection reports based on the criteria and sub-criteria for assessment of application (*article 5 of Decision No 445/2014, the Guide for cities preparing the bid 2020-2033, and the Call for submission of application for the year 2021 in Romania*). In addition to the six items and sub-items defined in correspondence with criteria set by aforementioned official European documents, the *Presentation* criteria was defined With the exception of the *Cultural and artistic content*, for the rest of 5 pre-defined criteria the *General* sub-criteria was assigned. In *General* sub-criteria was counted the general statements that logically belong to a specific criteria, but

are not specific enough in order to be linked with the predefined sub-criteria (as defined based on *article 5 of Decision No 445/2014*). Given the fact that references about budget, financial plans, funding projections appear very often in the analyzed reports, the sub-item *Budget* was introduced under the *Management* criteria. Only five statements was considered that do not match the 7-criteria model and was ignored from analysis: *innovative approach to ecology* (Warsaw2016), *applauded the delegation's evident commitment to ensure that the 10 year target date for reconstruction of the residential, commercial and cultural heritage of the city is met* (L'Aquila2019), *short time the bid team has had to put a project proposal together* (Siracusa2019), *some concerns about the evaluation were expressed* (Plzen2015), *bid suffered from its short development phase* (Gabrovo2019).

The statements from analyzed documents was divided in phrases that logically belong in one of the aforementioned criteria or sub-criteria, but in some cases an entire sentence or paragraph was counted as one increment in

the counted variables (sub-criteria). When the next sentence explained the statement of the previous one, the variable was counted only once. If the affirmation appeared identically or with the same meaning in other paragraph, the variable was incremented again. When a fact was evoked in the same phrase in a positive way first, and after the negative side or objections, the affirmation was counted in the weaknesses part of sub-criteria. In a couple of cases, the phrase was counted twice (as weakness and as strength).

The recommendations for further improvements was counted as weaknesses.

For some statements, the option to be classified as a strength or as a weakness was very subjective and debatable. For example, *conceptual strength of the idea might hide weaknesses as with regard to the concept's manageability* (Eindhoven2018) was interpreted as a strength in the *Artistic vision and strategy sub-criteria*, while *„Black Meadow” project is very ambitious and requires serious funding* (Ostrava2015) was counted in the weaknesses column at the same sub-criteria. Other sensitive interpretation could come from the chosen of one sub-criteria or another. For example, *potential of the themes is not fully exploited* (Leeuwarden2018) could be interpreted as a weakness of the *range, diversity and quality of the programme*, but was considered in the *Artistic vision and strategy sub-criteria*. The *linking of the city analysis to the proposed programme lacked a sense of dynamism and innovation* (Sofia2019) statement was not considered as a critic of the programme content as it was considered that the artistic vision and strategy was the missing link between the city analysis and artistic range and quality of this programme. In order to exemplify the methodology with the same *Culture and artistic content criteria*, the majority of the statements from the pre-selection

reports that referred to that topic was more easy to be categorized, such as: *enthusiastic about the Cesis concept* (Cesis2014), *concept of the bid was original and strong* (Lund2014), *clear and strong concept, based on the city's special features and addressed culture in a holistic way* (Matera2019) – artistic vision and strategy/ strengths; *to be more precise and possibly also reduce the number of themes and slogans* (Umea2014), *lack of a clear definition of the target groups* (Bydgoszcz2016), *the city lacked a sufficiently original creative vision for the event* (Limassol2017) – artistic vision and strategy/weaknesses; *high quality of the programme* (Las Palmas2016), *elements in the programme with playful and creative projects* (Lecce2019), *programme was lively with rich and interesting approaches* (Plovdiv2019) – range, diversity and artistic quality/strengths; *real challenges of size and excellence* (Martin2013), *not enough evidence of innovation and creativity in the programme* (Uppsala2014), *focus solely on co-created amateur activities instead of also ensuring artistic excellence in the programme* (Pafos2017) - range, diversity and artistic quality/weaknesses.

The main limitation of the content analysis realized for this research are to be founded in the lack of at least two other independent codors, in spite of having 95% intra-codor reliability realized after 3 coding sessions [32]. The second limitation came from the lack of detailed sub-criteria for the criteria *Presentation, written presentation* and *oral presentation* are to be two of them.

3. Analysis and main results

The results of the content analysis are presented in the tables 2-9, in the following sections named after the chosen criteria (*article 5 of Decision No 445/2014 +*

newly defined *Presentation* criteria). The extent to which each criterion covered the majority of the common strengths and weaknesses of the bidding could be subject to further researches.

3.1. Contribution to the long-term strategy

Documents of European Commission indicated that one of the legacies of ECOC is the jobs created from the investments made in the creative sectors [10]. However, the European Union, as well the most of the cities which have held the title tried to create a long lasting legacy of the ECOC by programmes that goes beyond infrastructure investments. The benefits that previous ECOC have reported are: years that came after designation acts as a catalyst for a positive change in the city and surrounding area, a measurable increase in the self-esteem of citizens and pride in the city; an increased engagement with the cultural offers of the city, especially with audiences less likely to attend or participate; new cultural offers, new skills, new opportunities for artists and cultural organizations; raising the international profile with direct result in increased tourism and reputation [13]. As majority of hosting cities use the ECOC to improve their international profile, to attract visitors, and to promote themselves and their countries as cultural centres, others used the title for a deeper image transformation and to move from superficial tourism towards contemporary cultural tourism [23]. The successfully nominated cities will benefit from an increased level of activity within creative industries and that may assist city regeneration due to the exceptional economic performance induced by these creative industries [5]. The cultural factor become widely used as a medium of urban transformation and as an element to attract

economic activities and new residents [22].

Beside the benefits of organizing this kind of mega-event, there are some dilemmas that local authorities have to have in mind: city marketing versus urban planning; focusing on the residents or the visitors; flagship versus small-scale projects; city center vs. periphery tensions and the risk of gentrification (spatial dilemma); consumption vs. production (economic development dilemma); buildings (or property/ capital development) vs. human networks or activity (cultural funding dilemma) [8]. City festivals help to reimagine urban space and reshape urban identity, but policy makers and urban planners have to pay attention to the risk of potential exclusion that cultural events staged with an eye towards city promotion can produce, such as neglecting permanent residents in favour of temporary visitors, or the risk of cultural and physical gentrification [24]. Boland list some of these sensible issues when analyses the Liverpool 2008: construction of contested place myths, the socio-economic indicators that contradicts positive impacts assessed after 2008, alienation feelings of the residents from poorer estates, spatial bias toward the city centre, negatively impact on certain demographic groups' use of urban space in the city centre [3].

The synergy between culture (cultural events being included) in the urban context became more visible in the second term of ECOC program, as transformation of city marketing techniques into more comprehensive city branding strategies [16].

There are opinions that changes in Central and Eastern European ECOCs have been often more comprehensive than in the Western counterparts [25].

The impacts of the any kind of the events should be assessed in at least three dimensions (social, environmental and

economic) by adopting a holistic approach [19]. As for the other large-scale events, impact of the ECOC is monitored by the organizers, sponsors, and the public, mostly because of the use of high amounts of public funds, from national and EU sources. At the beginning, as in other large scale cultural events, there was a lack of clear methods to measure intangible socio-cultural impacts and qualitative methods such as surveys and focus groups, stakeholder interviews, participatory mapping techniques and documentary reviews was most commonly used. Liverpool 2008 benefited by an extensive programme of research that covered 2000-

2010 period [26]. Lately, since 2006, the systematic evaluation of the European Capitals of Culture turned to be compulsory by the European Commission (Decision n° 1622/2006/EC) [35]. The first comprehensive evaluation report covered the 1995-2004 period [34].

It was found a positive correlation between collaboration during ECOC project and the innovation, and researchers came to the conclusion that policy makers and people administering great events should be aware of building an infrastructure supporting collaboration between various organizations involved in implementing these events [2].

List of cities with references to Contribution to the long-term strategy criteria Table 2

	Strengths	Weaknesses
1.1 Existing cultural strategy	Gavle2014, Warsaw2016, Zaragoza2016, Mantova2019, Varna2019	Ostrava 2015, Lodz2016, Szczecin2016, Cordoba2016 Nicosia2017, Aarhus2017
1.2. Plans to strengthen the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors	Hradec Kralowe2015, Lodz2016 Poznan2016, Aosta2019, Cagliari2019, Mantova2019, Ravenna2019, Plovdiv 2019	Burgos2016
1.3. Long-term cultural impact	Presov2013, Hradec Kralowe2015 Ostrava2015, Katowice2016, Burgos2016, Segovia2016 Pafos2017, Leeuwarden2018 Palermo2019, Perugia2019 Pisa2019, Shumen2019, Sofia2019	Kosice2013, Cesis2014, Lund2014 Umea2014, Cordoba2016, Utrecht2018, Leeuwarden2018, Aosta2019
1.4. Long-term social impact	Lublin2016, Wroclaw2016, Utrecht2018, Perugia2019, Veliko Turnovo2019	Maastricht2018 (2), Leeuwarden2018
1.5. Long-term economic impact	Umea2014, Aosta2019, Venezia2019	
1.6. Urban development	Martin2013 (2), Lodz2016, Gdansk2016, Warsaw2016 Zaragoza2016, Limassol2017 Leeuwarden2018 (2), Eindhoven2018, Palermo2019 (2) Taranto2019	Leeuwarden2018

1.7. Monitoring and evaluating the impact and disseminating the results	Gdansk2016, Donostia2016 Limassol2017, Sofia2019	Plzen2015, Bydgoszcz2016 Las Palmas2016
1.8. General remarks considered for <i>Contribution to the long-term strategy</i> criteria	Poznan2016, Warsaw2016 Perugia2019, Regio Calabria2019 Siena2019	Limassol2017, Aarhus2017 (2) Sofia2019, Veliko Turnovo2019

3.2. European dimension

Before the recognition of the role of cultural activities in urban regeneration and economic development, ECOC initiative underlines the importance of culture in European unification. The link between cultural development and sustainability raises questions about whose culture it is promoted, which parts of the city benefit, and whether repetition and homogenization are imposed over the uniqueness of a specific culture [8]. The ECOC is a highly mobile policy within the European Union, which was constructed to produce ‘Europe’ as a political, economic and cultural space with a power that attract

cities even from non-EU space [31].

The “European dimension” is one of the most quoted phrases in the bid evaluation documents, aiming at highlighting the richness, diversity and the common features of European culture. As the Table 3 indicates, the most of the references fall into the general remarks about the European Dimension (*should be more worked out and better defined* (Plzen2015) or *almost completely absent from the application* (Aarhus2017)), and references about *cooperation with operators and cities in different countries, and transnational partnerships* sub-criteria came second.

List of cities with references to European Dimension criteria

Table 3

	Strengths	Weaknesses
2.1. Activities promoting the cultural diversity of Europe	Cordoba2016, Hague2018 Siena2019, Gabrovo2019	Ostrava2015, Leeuwarden2018 Maastricht2018, Aosta2019 Bergamo2019, L’Aquila2019 Pisa2019, Siracusa2019 Venezia2019
2.2. Activities promoting intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens	Cagliari2019 (2), Matera2019 Veliko Turnovo2019	Maastricht2018
2.3. Common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history	Ostrava2015, Lublin2016 Cagliari2019, Ruse2019	Lund2014, Hradec Kralowe2015 Ostrava2015, Lublin2016 Eindhoven2018, Mantova2019
2.4. European integration and current European themes	Bialystok2016, Lublin2016 (2) Donostia2016, Leeuwarden2018 (2), Matera2019, Sofia2019 Veliko Turnovo2019	Warsaw2016

2.5. Activities featuring European artists and international artists	Cagliari2019	Leeuwarden2018 , Mantova2019 Regio Calabria2019
2.6. Cooperation with operators and cities in different countries, and transnational partnerships	Lund2014, Umea2014, Zaragoza2016 , Palermo2019 Perugia2019, Siena2019 Sofia2019	Nitra2013, Umea2014 Szczecin2016, Sonderborg2017 Leeuwarden2018 , Maastricht2018 , Aosta2019 Bergamo2019, L'Aquila2019 Pisa2019
2.7. Strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public		Hradec Kralowe2015, Bialystok2016, Mantova2019 Varna2019
2.8. Links between cultural programme and the cultural programme of other cities holding the European Capital of Culture title	Gdansk2016, Cordoba2016 Zaragoza2016, Segovia2016	Katowice2016, Warsaw2016 , Lublin2016
2.9. General remarks considered for <i>European Dimension</i> criteria	Kosice2013, Presov2013 , Umea2014 , Torun2016 Wroclaw2016 Sonderborg2017 , Hague2018 Leeuwarden2018, Plovdiv2019 Veliko Turnovo2019	Martin 2013, Presov2013 , Cesis2014 , Gavle2014, Hradec Kralowe2015 (2), Plzen2015 (3), Bydgoszcz2016, Poznan2016, Szczecin2016, Torun2016 Limassol2017 (2), Nicosia2017, Aarhus2017 (2), Sonderborg2017 , Hague1018 Utrecht2018, Maastricht2018 Leeuwarden2018 (2), Eindhoven2018 (2), Caserta2019, Lecce2019 , Regio Calabria2019, Urbino2019, Burgas2019, Gabrovo2019 Shumen2019, Varna2019

3.3. Cultural and artistic content

The statements from the pre-selection reports analyzed that was counted to this criteria are clearly defined the 4 sub-criteria chosen. For the purpose to recommend best practice needed by the future bidding cities, a deeper analysis of the bid-books will be more valuable. For this reason, only the cities positively mentioned at *Artistic vision and strategy* sub-criteria will be enumerated (cities written with bold letters qualified for the

final selection): **Kosice2013, Presov2013, Cesis2014, Lund2014**, Gavle2014, **Ostrava2015, Katowice2016, Lublin2016, Wroclaw2016, Burgos2016, Donostia2016, Nicosia2017, Sonderborg2017**, Hague2018, **Maastricht2018, Leeuwarden2018, Eindhoven2018, Matera2019**, Palermo2019, Siracusa2019, Urbino2019, **Plovdiv2019**, Ruse2019, **Sofia2019, Varna2019**.

3.4. Capacity to deliver

In order to achieve maximum benefits, many of the ECOC cities try to mobilize a great diversity of local actors, and invite ones from beyond their limits, too [29]. Evaluation reports demonstrated that the local administration leadership, and in some cases the contribution of the head of this administration was determinant to the successful bid and/or implementing the ECOC year (Sibiu2007, for example) [38]. Public-private partnerships are needed to create the essential and critical mass [4].

Strong political support and a sustainable commitment from the relevant local, regional and national public authorities is the sub-criteria counted for nine references in the analyzed texts with statements like general positive remarks as *strong commitment of regional and local authorities* (Perugia and Urbino for 2019) to very specific counted in the Weaknesses section: *budget might be a constant source of difficulties over the next years, because of the evidence of opposition to the bid* (Gavle2014) and *the Panel would like to see a stronger financial involvement of the city of Nicosia and the other municipalities* (Nicosia2017).

Cultural infrastructure (existing and planned) sub-criteria is positively mentioned for **Riga2014**, **Lund2014**, Hradec Kralowe2015, Lodz2016, **Aarhus2017**, Bergamo2019, **Ravenna2019**, Siracusa2019, Urbino2019 and was considered as a weakness for Jurmala2014, Bialystok2016, Torun2016, **Segovia2016**, **Pafos2017**, **Nicosia2017**.

3.5. Outreach

The need for early preparation comes from the criteria set by the European Union and large categories of the citizens and actors should be involved in the bidding process, such as schools,

universities, NGOs or individual citizens. Bidding preparation could be an effective way of community development using local cultural resources and an instrument for creating networks of civic engagement [39].

The involvement of people outside the city center avoided gentrification and this spatial distribution of culture is more important in the small cities from Central and Eastern Europe [40]. Inclusion could be realized by promoting volunteering, welcoming representatives of very different stakeholders to join the cultural boards, giving support to local and regional civil organizations, and respecting the suggestions and contributions of others as equal parties. The conscious and well-planned efforts to include willing participants into the bidding process is affected by the imbalanced relation between the desire of locals to participate (bottom-up) and the willingness of the ECOC management to include them (top-down) [30]. Though is not about engaging people at the bid-preparing stage, one study indicated that volunteering is celebrated as the opportunity to engage with new cultural experiences and groups of people with great potential to communicate orally the messages about ECOC (to tourists and residents alike) was not included at first as a key volunteering group (the taxi drivers) [27].

Beyond the role played by universities in reshaping the landscape of post-industrial cities worldwide as producers of graduates that populate the cultural organisations in ECOC and non-ECOC cities, they can contribute to urban and regional innovation by acting as key intermediary between local and global interactions [42]. Cooperation with the local universities and their involvement is mentioned in the Panel evaluations: *work with the university to conduct an evaluation process of the event to measure its impacts*

(Limassol2017), *participation of the universities in the consultations* (Szczecin 2016), *involvement of the universities, but a strong potential of the city – students – was not taken sufficiently into account* (Hradec Kralowe2015), *backed by robust partnership with academic centres* (Lublin2013) *presentation was truly incorporating the language of audience development* (Pafos2017), *solid social and inclusive dimension with a strong involvement of the University* (Hague2018). For interdisciplinary

research with a special focus on ECOC, Umea University invested 400,000 Euro [37].

The Table 4 indicated with almost no doubts that *involvement of the local population and civil society in the preparation of the application and implementation of the bid* is the strongest argument for the Panel decisions (21 from the 39 cities that entered in the next stage have positive references in this criteria, and 17 from the 30 unsuccessful bidders have negative remarks).

Table 4

List of cities with references to involvement of the local population and civil society sub-criteria

Cities with statements counted as strengths for cities entering in the selection stage	Cities with statements counted as weaknesses for cities not entering in the selection stage
Liepaja2014 Lund 2014 Umea2014 Ostrava2015 (2) Plzen2015 Gdansk2016 Lublin2016 (2) Burgos2016 (2) Donostia2016 (2) Pafos2017 Sonderborg2017 Maastricht2018 Leeuwarden2018 (2) Eindhoven2018 Cagliari2019 (2) Lecce2019 Matera2019 (3) Perugia2019 (2) Siena2019 Plovdiv2019 Sofia2019	Jurmala2014 Uppsala2014 Hradec Kralowe2015 Bialystok2016 (3) Bydgoszcz2016 (2) Hague2018 Bergamo2019 Caserta2019 L'Aquila2019 Pisa2019 Regio Calabria2019 Siracusa2019 Taranto2019 Urbino2019 Venezia2019 Ruse2019 Shumen2019

3.6. Management

The management structure could imply a shared participation of local institutions, private economic agents with experiences of the business sponsorship context and NGOs.

The bottom-up and top-down approach for citizens, local actors and stakeholders require a very clear marketing and communication strategy. As ECOC become a multi-dimensional action that must incorporate different economic and cultural objectives, must represent both

local cultural heritage and European identities, and should balance the international arts events with the local cultural sector and social inclusion objectives, it promises more than it can realistically deliver [33]. And these contradictions and multiple objectives are often reflected in the communication strategy. In the 2004 Palmer/Rae report objectives for ECOC closely related to communication and promotion were (raising the international profile of a city; changing the image of the city; increasing foreign and domestic tourism; broadening audiences for culture) and some priorities such as promoting the brand/image of the Capital of Culture and promoting the cultural programme [34]. However, the promotional activities of the Cultural Capital year should stem from the historical realities, and be consistent with the candidate city branding [20].

There are no many specific references in the pre-selection reports about marketing and communication strategy described in the bid-books. As the strengths are evoked *the innovative communication strategy* (Szczecin2016), and the fact that the Panel was *pleased with the marketing and*

communication strategy with its focus on up-to-date ways and channels of communication (Utrecht2018). In the category of weakness was listed the following quotes: *communication strategy was weak* (Hradec Kralowe 2015), *need for a more clearly defined communication strategy* (Plzen2015), *the fact that organizers might face great difficulties in adequately communicating the highly complex and overly process-driven vision* (Aarhus2017), and *percentage to marketing is significantly higher than normal in an ECOC and leads the panel to wonder if the project leans towards city branding* (Urbino2019).

The role of the new media or recently popularised online environments (at that times) such as Facebook, Flickr, Twitter was analysed by the researchers in the conjunction with the communicating strategies for the ECOC [28].

In the Table 5 are indicated the two most important sub-criteria of the *Management* section part of the analysis, but strongly justified Panel members decision to recommend or not the cities that entered in the next stage: *Organisational structure* and *Budget*.

Table 5

List of cities with references to Organizational structure sub-criteria and Budget sub-criteria

Cities with statements counted as strengths for cities entering in the selection stage on <i>Organizational structure</i> sub-criteria	Cities with statements counted as weaknesses for cities not entering in the selection stage on <i>Budget</i> sub-criteria
Warsaw2016, Burgos2016, Cordoba2016, Zaragoza2016, Donostia2016, Maastricht2018 Leeuwarden2018, Cagliari2019, Lecce2019 Perugia2019, Ravenna2019, Siena2019	Jurmala2014, Hradec Kralowe2015, Bialystok2016, Torun2016, Lodz2016, Limassol2017, Hague2018 (2) Bergamo2019, Regio Calabria2019, Taranto2019, Urbino2019, Burgas2019, Shumen2019

3.7. Presentation

As for *Cultural and artistic content*, those 39 positive written statements

extracted from the analyzed documents and counted as the Strengths for 28 cities and other 39 negative remarks on written bid-book or oral presentations need more

in-depth analysis. The references have been made either on bid-book content, oral presentation or to both of them. Some of them are **general** (*presentation and the questions and answers part were fruitful and interesting - Ostrava, high level of intellectuality, modern approach and interesting ideas in the Nicosia bid, vividness and enthusiasm reflected in both the application document and the presentation - Pafos and Sonderborg, freshness of the bid book – Utrecht*) and other are very **specific** (*very complete list of strengths and weaknesses of the city, a sign of a serious candidacy and the result of a rigorous analysis - Zaragoza, the focus seems to be on purely economic, ecological and agricultural issues without mentioning the cultural facets - Leeuwarden*).

In the multilingual context of Europe, visual discourse functions as a cross-lingual, cross-cultural mode of communication [1]. Many positive remarks were made on the quality of the visual presentation: particularly good and imaginative high-tech visual presentation (Umea2014), the quality of the videos (Zaragoza2016). Oral presentations was mentioned especially as a way to clarify some issues from the written presentations (*welcomed the explanations in the presentation - Lecce2019*), but was cases *when incomplete answers were given to the questions during the discussion* (Zaragoza2016) or the Panel members *observed the excess of confidence* (Cordoba2016).

4. Conclusions

After the 2019 year (when the old EU member states will have been represented three times each, and all the new member states once), with the appearance of the new legislation of ECOC designation, the European Commission succeeded to

maintain the future relevance of the programme. The aim was that the new generation of Capitals of Culture gives the European dimension more concrete form and content, when local challenges are also seen as European issues, local history retold in a wider context, and universal values are discussed for their implications both at a European and at a local level [21]. As the Table 3 indicates, the Panel's assessments to the European dimension contain more specific statements in the recent reports. They were used as a feed-back by cities entering in the second stage or by those that bid for the afterward editions.

Being the main driver (at least from the number of references in pre-selection reports) for a successful bid, the engagement of community should be considered as a top priority. Beside the efforts to increase the level of the engagement, a careful monitoring process of this should be developed in order to measure the mood of the population in order to take necessary actions to rally support behind the bid [37]. If planned properly, such an event may enhance the community spirit and pride, promote cooperation and leadership within the community, strengthen the support for local cultural traditions, and the building of greater cross-cultural understanding [6]. As a direction for further researches, a semiotic analysis of visual resources or themes chosen by the cities that have many positive references on artistic vision and strategy criteria will provide more valuable insights and recommendations for the bid-book preparing teams.

References

1. Aiello, G., Thurlow, C.: *Symbolic Capitals: Visual Discourse and Intercultural Exchange in the European Capital of Culture Scheme*. In: Language and Intercultural

- Communication, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2006), p. 148-162.
2. Bergsgard, N. A., Josendal, K., Garcia, B.: *A cultural mega event's impact on innovative capabilities in art production: the results of Stavanger being the European capital of culture in 2008*. In: *Int. J. Innovation and Regional Development*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2010), p. 353-371.
 3. Boland, P.: *'Capital of Culture—you must be having a laugh!' Challenging the official rhetoric of Liverpool as the 2008 European cultural capital*. In: *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 11, No. 7 (2010), p. 627 – 645.
 4. Briciu, G.-A., Briciu, V.-A.: *Theoretical aspects regarding the key factors in building a place brand strategy*. In: *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov* (2013) Vol. 6 (55), No. 2, Series VII, p. 271-276.
 5. Campbell, P.: *Creative industries in a European Capital of Culture*. In: *International Journal of Cultural Policy* Vol. 17, No. 5 (2011), p. 510–522.
 6. Candrea, A.N., Ispas, A., Constantin, C.: *Residents' perception towards urban sport events. The case of EYOWF 2013 - Brasov, Romania*, *Revista Economică Supplement 3* (2012), pp. 45-54.
 7. Crisafulli, D.: *Cultural Policy and Policy of Culture in Lithuania. Vilnius – European Capital of Culture 2009, an anthropological view*. In: *Filosofija, Komunikacija*, 19 (2) (2011), p. 60-69.
 8. Deffner, A., Labrianidis, L.: *Planning Culture and Time in a Mega-event: Thessaloniki as the European City of Culture in 1997*. In: *International Planning Studies* 10 (2005) No. 3–4, p. 241–264.
 9. European Commission: *Resolution of the Ministers Responsible for Cultural Affairs Concerning the Annual Event “European City of Culture”*. Doc.7081/84, 4th June. Brussels (1985).
 10. European Commission: *Commission launches public consultation on future of cultural and creative industries* (27 April 2010). Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-10-466_en.htm. Accessed February 2015.
 11. European Commission: *Pre-selection reports*. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm. Accessed February 2015.
 12. European Parliament: *Decision No 445/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 establishing a Union action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033 and repealing Decision No 1622/2006/EC*
 13. European Capitals of Culture 2020 to 2033. A guide to cities preparing to bid. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/documents/ecoc-candidates-guide_en.pdf. Accessed February 2015.
 14. Garcia, B.: *Urban regeneration, arts programming and major events: Glasgow 1990, Sydney 2000 and Barcelona 2004*. In: *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 10 (2004), p. 103–118.
 15. Garcia, B.: *Deconstructing the City of Culture: The Long-term Cultural Legacies of Glasgow 1990*. In: *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42 (2005) No. 5/6, p. 841–868.
 16. Garcia, B.: *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration in Western European Cities: Lessons from Experience, Prospects for the Future*. *Local Economy*, 19 (4) (2004), p. 312-326.

17. Garcia, B., Cox, T.: *European Capitals of Culture: Success strategies and long-term effects. Study for Directorate General for Internal Policies. Policies Department B: Structural and cohesion policies.* Culture and Education (2013).
18. Getz, D.: *The nature and scope of festival studies.* In: International Journal of Event Management Research 5 (2010) No. 1, p. 1-7.
19. Gregori, G.L., Pencarelli, T., Splendiani, S., Temperini, V.: *Sustainable Tourism and Value Creation for the Territory: Towards a Holistic Model of Event Impact Measurement.* In: Quality Management 14 (2013) No. 135, p. 97-102.
20. Hakala, U.: *'Culture is the message': The status of Cultural Capital and its effect on a city's brand equity.* In: Place Branding and Public Diplomacy 9 (2013) 1, p. 5-16.
21. Immler, N., Sackers, H.: *(Re)Programming Europe: European Capitals of Culture: rethinking the role of culture.* In: Journal of European Studies, Vol. 44 (1) (2014), p. 3-29.
22. Herrero, L. C., Sanz, J. A., Devesa, M., Bedate, A., del Barrio, M. J.: *The Economic Impact of Cultural Events: A Case-Study of Salamanca 2002, European Capital of Culture.* In: European Urban and Regional Studies, 13 (1) (2006), p. 41-57.
23. Iordanova-Krasteva, E., Wickens, E., Bakir, A.: *The Ambiguous Image of Linz: Linz09 – European Capital of Culture.* In: Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural, vol. 8 (3) (2010), p. 67-77.
24. Johansson, M., Kociatkiewicz, J.: *City Festivals: Creativity and control in staged urban experiences.* In: European Urban and Regional Studies 18/4 (2011), p. 392-405.
25. Lahdesmaki, T.: *Impacts of the European Capital of Culture designation on regeneration of city space.* In: Proceedings of Global Conference on Interculturalism, Meaning & Identity, Inter-Disciplinary (2013), p. 51-64.
26. Langen, F., Garcia, B.: *Measuring the Impacts of Large Scale Cultural Events: A Literature Review.* In: Impacts 08 Report (2009), p. 1-12.
27. Melville, R., Selby, M., Cliff, M.: *Re-telling the City: exploring local narratives of Liverpool.* In: Impact 08 (2007) Re-telling the City, p. 1-18.
28. Miah A., Adi A., 2009. *Liverpool 08, centre of the online universe: The impact of the Liverpool European Capital of Culture within social media environments.* In: Impacts 08, Liverpool (2009), p. 1-36.
29. Nemeth, A.: *Multi-level development perspectives and the European Capital of Culture: Pécs 2010 and Turku 2011.* In: Transforming cities: urban processes and structure, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (2013), p. 17-30.
30. Nemeth, A.: *European Capitals of Culture – Digging Deeper into the Governance of the Mega-Event.* In: Territory, Politics, Governance, DOI:10.1080/21622671.2014.992804 (2015).
31. Oanca, A.: *Europe is not elsewhere: The mobilization of an immobile policy in the lobbying by Perm (Russia) for the European Capital of Culture title.* In: European Urban and Regional Studies, Vol. 22(2) (2015), p. 176-190.
32. Onuț, Gh.: *Cercetarea sociologică. Metodologia cercetărilor sociologice descriptive. Metoda anchetei. Metoda analizei de conținut (The sociological research. Descriptive sociological research method. Survey method. Content analysis method).* Bucharest. Tritonic Publishing House, 2014.

33. O'Callaghan, C.: *Urban anxieties and creative tensions in the European Capital of Culture 2005: 'It couldn't just be about Cork, like'*. In: *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 18 (2) (2012), p. 185-204.
34. Palmer/ Rae Associates: *Study on the European Cities and Capitals of Culture, and the European Cultural Months (1995-2004)*. Brussels, 2004.
35. Remoaldo, P., Cadima Ribeiro, J., Mota, P., Vareiro, L.: *Perceptions of residents of hosting the "Guimarães 2012 European Capital of Culture": An ex-ante approach*. In: *Tourism and Hospitality International Journal*, 2(2) (2014), p. 71-93.
36. Richards, G.: *The European Cultural Capital Event: Strategic Weapon in the Cultural Arms Race?* In: *Journal of Cultural Policy*, 6 (2) (2000), p. 159-181.
37. Richards, G.: *Evaluating the European Capital of Culture that Never Was: Brabantstad 2018*. In: *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* (draft accepted) (2014).
38. Richards, G., Rotariu, I.: *The Impact of the 2007 European Capital in Sibiu: A long term perspective*. "Lucian Blaga" University Publishing House of Sibiu, (2010).
39. Sandru, C.: *The Civic Commitment Networks – an Instrument of Facilitating the Communication and Cooperation in the Local Communities*. In: *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, Vol. 11, No. 1(15) (2009), p. 85-94.
40. Sebova, M., Dzapka, P., Hudec, O., Urbancikova, N.: *Promoting and financing cultural tourism in Europe through European Capitals of Culture: a case study of Kosice, European Capital of Culture 2013*. In: *Amfiteatru Economic*, vol. XVI, 36 (2014), p. 655-670.
41. van Heur, B., Peters, P.: *VIA2018. University Emancipatory Practices, Regional Strategies, and a Research Program*. Position paper. (2010).