



Maximizing the Legacy of the European Capital of Culture: Recommendations for Long-Term Impact

Enhancing Legacy through Funding, Monitoring, and Collaboration

Contributors

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Based on conversations with different people involved in ECoC's and large-scale cultural projects.



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Context and Rationale

About the Topic Addressed by this Policy Paper

The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) programme transforms cities into cultural hubs, revitalizing local economies, fostering social cohesion, and showcasing European diversity. However, the sustainability of these impacts hinges on the quality of legacy programmes. These programmes are vital for ensuring long-term cultural, social, and economic impacts. Despite the programme's transformative potential, many ECoC cities struggle to maintain momentum after the title year due to insufficient resources, strategic oversight, and long-term planning.

Not every city that has held the title, has developed a legacy programme. In the more recent cities you can distinguish differences. Cities as Matera (2019), Leeuwarden-Friesland (2018), and Galway (2020) have each designed unique initiatives to continue the momentum generated during their year in the spotlight. There is no right or wrong way or format for a legacy, there is only the importance of a legacy programme to hold on to and further develop the movement started during the ECoC – year.

Culture Next's Position on the Topic

Culture Next believes that legacy is one of the cornerstones of the ECoC programme. To ensure the continuity of cultural, economic, and social benefits, legacy programmes must be thought about early in the bidding process and during the creating and executing of the programme of a ECoC. Culture Next advocates for structured European support to amplify the long-term impact of the ECoC title, alongside networks like Culture Next to facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

Culture Next Action

Culture Next has been actively involved in promoting the sustainability of ECoC legacies through:

1. **Workshops and Public Events:** Convening stakeholders to discuss best practices for cultural legacy programs.
2. **Knowledge Sharing:** Creating platforms for former, current, and candidate ECoC cities to exchange insights and resources.
3. **Advocacy:** Highlighting the need for funding mechanisms and strategic guidance for legacy programs in dialogues with European policymakers.
4. **Partnership Development:** Strengthening connections with cities, cultural operators, and networks to support culture-led urban development.

These initiatives have generated positive feedback and demonstrated widespread interest in enhancing the longevity of ECoC outcomes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Key Takeaways

- Legacy programmes are vital to maintaining the cultural, social, and economic benefits of the ECoC program.
- Serious attention to a fully-fledged legacy programme in bid books and during interim progress discussion in the development towards an ECoC is necessary to stress the importance of a legacy programme.
- Additional European funding is critical to sustaining these programmes.
- Networks like Culture Next provide essential support for knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

Recommendations

For European Policy Creators and Decision Makers

1. **Develop Dedicated Legacy Funding:** Introduce a specific fund under the European Union's Creative Europe or Regional Development programmes to support ECoC legacy initiatives.
2. **Emphasize Legacy in Selection Criteria:** Require detailed, realistic legacy plans in the ECoC selection process.
3. **Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a formal framework to assess legacy program implementation, with follow-up support for cities facing challenges.

For National and Regional Governments

1. **Support Regional Legacy Efforts:** Provide co-funding to ensure that cultural projects initiated during the ECoC year and full-fledged legacy programmes after the ECoC year have long-term support.
2. **Integrate Cultural Strategies into Urban Policies:** Align ECoC legacies with national urban development and cultural policies.

For European Cities (Including Culture Next Members)

1. **Build Long-Term Partnerships:** Collaborate with local businesses, cultural operators, and international organizations to sustain cultural momentum.

For Various Cultural Networks

1. **Facilitate Knowledge Exchange:** Host forums, workshops, and webinars focused on successful legacy practices.
2. **Promote Cross-City Collaborations:** Encourage ECoC cities to work together on joint cultural initiatives post-title year.

For Cultural Operators

1. **Innovate for Sustainability:** Develop programs that can evolve beyond the ECoC year and integrate into the city's broader cultural ecosystem.
2. **Leverage ECoC Visibility:** Use the platform to establish long-term funding and audience engagement strategies.

For Culture Next Itself

1. **Advocate for Legacy Funding:** Continue engaging with EU policymakers to prioritize legacy in ECoC funding structures.
2. **Expand Network Support:** Provide tailored guidance to member cities on implementing sustainable legacy plans.

References

- Culture Next Website: www.culturenext.eu
- EU on European Capital of Culture: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/culture-in-cities-and-regions/european-capitals-of-culture>

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About Culture Next

The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) is one of the most recognized action programmes of the European Union. The dynamics and dimension of the process makes it attractive to cities that seek cultural, social, economic and infrastructural transformation. The hundreds of cities participating in this process bring together a vast set of learnings, good practice and knowledge that it's important to share and by doing so, to be an agent of positive action for Europe.

Culture Next's mission is to contribute to having more European Capital of Culture (ECoC) programmes implemented in European cities and regions and to define a long-term European vision on local development through culture and creativity.

Building on the experiences, processes and collaborations established during the ECoC bid, we support all cities, being them awarded or not, to implement culture-led local development programmes and policies. We are committed to deliver a sustainable impact and meaningful legacy of the ECoC programme.

Whether being ECoC labelled or not, all cities need support and inspiration in order to carry on with the implementation of their programmes. The partnerships, talents and resources mobilised through ECoC bidding make a strong base for culture-led sustainable development in these cities. We can all contribute to the success and legacy of the ECoC project.

Cities are where democracy, inclusiveness and innovation are produced, and culture is a facilitator of this entire ecosystem. More cities with cultural programmes mean more power to address European challenges and opportunities.

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