European Capital of Culture Info Day in Finland

Helsinki, 2 April 2019
Some initial reading...

- Decision No 445/2014/EU of the EP and the Council: new rules and criteria applied for the first time in Finland

- The call for applications and the rules of procedure published in your country

- The guide to cities preparing a bid + guide for evaluation and compendium of recommendations from ex post evaluations

- Internet: applications from former candidate cities / future ECOCs
What is a European Capital of Culture?
An ambitious event

• Not always a capital city

• A large scale **cultural** event of one year
  ... developed for the title and with a strong European dimension

• Not about what a city looks like or its past/heritage, but what it **envisages to be and to do** (programme) during the year and after (legacy)

• A title awarded to one city in 2 Member States in 2026
A demanding and complex event (1)

• One of the most visible and successful European cultural events: An honour and a responsibility

• A multi-faceted event with (sometimes) conflicting agendas

• Time is needed for a careful preparation and planning:
  – To embed the event in a cultural longer term strategy
  – To significantly engage with the citizens, the cultural and creative sectors and other key stakeholders

.../...
A demanding and complex event (2)

- To make the necessary European links and develop relations with peer cities and partners

- To ensure the right infrastructure is in place

- Learn from previous experience

> You have to put in place a bid team
Objectives

• General objectives at EU level:
  – Promoting cultural diversity and common features of cultures
    > "Sense of belonging to a common cultural area"
  – Fostering contribution of culture to long-term development of your city

• Cities can have their own local objectives responding to their local/regional needs and priorities
How to become a European Capital of Culture?
The selection procedure

- A real competition for all cities from your country > only one city can win but it's up to you to make the most of the bidding experience...

- A competition organized by your national authorities

- A competition launched with the publication of a call for applications

- The call includes formal, exclusion and selection criteria as well as the questionnaires cities have to answer
How is the competition organized?

• A two-step competition
  – Pre-selection phase with hearing
  – Selection phase with visits of short-listed cities and final hearing

• Candidatures (applications + hearings) assessed by a panel of up to twelve independent experts with no conflict of interest...
  ... on the basis of 6 categories of set criteria

• No need for lobby to affect outcome! Costs money and is pointless
How to prepare your application?
Formal and exclusion criteria

• Be a city in Finland

• Need to send a written application answering all the questions of the call by the deadline set in the call

• In English (+ another official language of the EU)

• Respect the size limit
  - 60 pages in A4 format for pre-selection
  - 100 pages in A4 format for final selection
  - All illustrations, graphs etc. included in the size limit
Six categories of award criteria

- ECOC = high standards reflected in demanding criteria
- See the criteria as a tool to prepare your bid and – if elected – to plan the title-year
- Six categories with equal weighting – All are important to ensure a successful ECOC
- Advice: Be concise and sharp in your answers, but also creative!
What is the outcome of the competition?

At the end of the final selection meeting the Panel will:

- Recommend one city for the ECOC title in Finland
  - Endorsement by your national authorities (= formal designation)
  - Publication in the OJ of the European Union
  - No need for a positive recommendation

- Recommend to the European Commission whether or not to award the Melina Mercouri Prize
  - Actual payment is conditional and will come later
Thank you for your attention

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