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The European Commission has published the ex-post evaluation of the two European Capitals of Culture 2018 - Leeuwarden-Friesland, Netherlands and Valletta, Malta.

Ex-post evaluation of the 2018 European capitals of culture

This final report presents the findings of the ex-post evaluation of the European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) Action for 2018 undertaken by Ecorys and the Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services (CSES).

The cities of Leeuwarden-Friesland and Valletta were the two ECoC cities for 2018.

The evaluation has focussed on how these cities developed their application and cultural programme, how they delivered their ECoC year, the benefits and impacts that were gained and any legacy issues they experienced. The evaluation also highlights what the cities actually delivered over 2018 and describe the themes, priorities and key projects that made up their ECoC cultural programme.

Finally, the evaluation also puts forward conclusions, recommendations and lessons for future ECoC title-holders and applicants as well as EU institutions to learn from.

Among the key findings:

Valletta 2018

- The Foundation went through some considerable changes in personnel during the development phase, which impacted on the artistic direction and content of the cultural programme, whilst the governance of the ECoC also became the subject of much political debate. The governance of Valletta 2018 also attracted considerable national and international criticism.
- The eventual budget for Valletta 2018 (€26.5m) was considerably lower than the budget proposed in the application (€49.57m). As a result, expenditure on the cultural programme during the title-year and during 2013-19 was just over half the amount originally proposed.
- There was a consensus that the departure of key staff members had served to weaken the overall artistic direction of the ECoC and a number of important stakeholders suggested that the artistic vision of the ECoC was overshadowed by its political leadership.
- Valletta 2018 presented a cultural programme during the title-year that featured some events of high-quality and that was more extensive compared to Malta's cultural offering in previous years.
- In terms of cultural capacity, the ECoC has contributed to the culture-driven regeneration of Valletta by serving as a focus for cultural infrastructure investments, helping to stimulate private investments and implementing cultural activities that attracted visitors and increased the city's vibrancy.

Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018

- Overall, Leeuwarden-Friesland took the European dimension seriously. There were 1,600 international collaborations covering 87 countries, which was five times greater than originally estimated.
- By far the most unique and key principle of the Leeuwarden-Friesland ECoC was linked to the “City and Citizens” dimension. Engaging with and encouraging local people to develop and implement projects for the cultural programme was a key defining aspect of the ECoC and something that those in the LF2018 Foundation were totally committed to delivering.
- Another key impact was that the ECoC stimulated a new wave of amateur performers in the region, who wanted to directly produce rather than just consume culture. Over 60,000 local people took part as performers or volunteers, including teachers, farmers, office workers, restaurant owners, people out of work and schoolchildren as well as cultural professionals.
- The original budget in the bid-book for the delivery of the ECoC was €74 million. By the end of 2018, the actual budget had increased to €104.6 million, an increase of €30.3 million, mostly accounted for by increased private funding.
- Despite some positives, the actual legacy plans in terms of priorities, structures and responsibilities were perhaps less clear and advanced than expected in LeeuwardenFriesland.

Image: Leeuwarden Friesland

You can also read the final impact report on the Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018 ECoC [here](#)

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