



Selection of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2030 in Cyprus

December 2025

The Expert Panel's report Selection stage

Edited by

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of the expert panel (the "panel") for the selection phase of the competition for the European Capital of Culture ("ECoC") 2030 in Cyprus. The competition is a European Union initiative that dates to 1985. The title "European Capital of Culture" was previously awarded to one city in Cyprus, Paphos in 2017.

The Deputy Ministry of Culture (the "Ministry") acts as the managing authority of the competition, which is governed by Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 (the "Decision") and by the regulations adopted by the Ministry and published on its website together with the corresponding call for applications.

In line with Article 2 of the Action, a panel of twelve independent experts was established for the selection process. Ten panel members were appointed by the European Union institutions and bodies (the European Parliament, the Council, the European Commission, and the Committee of the Regions), two of them were unable to join the selection meeting. Two national members of the panel were appointed by the Deputy Ministry of Culture.

Pre-selection and final selection rounds

The competition occurs in two phases: pre-selection (shortlisting) and selection.

The Deputy Ministry of Culture of Cyprus issued a call for applications on 18 December 2023. Five applications were submitted by the closing date of 16 December 2024 by the cities of Ayia Napa, Kourion, Larnaka, Lemesos, and Nicosia in the Republic of Cyprus. Following the pre-selection meeting held in Nicosia from 25-27 February 2025, the panel recommended inviting two bidding cities — Larnaka and Lemesos — to progress to the final selection stage. The panel's pre-selection report is published on the website of the European Commission. The European Commission accepted the panel's recommendation and invited the two cities, Larnaka and Lemesos, to submit final applications with a deadline of 3 November 2025. The two cities submitted their final applications ("bid books") by the deadline, and both applications were considered eligible.

A delegation of two panel members participated in city visits on 8 and 9 December 2025 accompanied by the two national Experts and a representative from the European Commission. The delegation reported to the panel at the selection meeting.

Panel meeting

The panel members met in Nicosia on 10 and 11 December 2025. All panel members signed a declaration of no conflict of interest and confidentiality and gave it to the Managing Authority before the final selection hearings. The panel confirmed Toni Attard as its chair and Matthias Ripp as its rapporteur.

Representatives from the European Commission and the Ministry of Culture attended the meeting as observers. They took no part in the panel's deliberations or decisions.

At the selection hearings on 10 December 2025, each candidate city, in alphabetical order, presented its case (in 45 minutes) and answered questions from the panel (in 75 minutes).

The chair of the panel announced the panel's recommendation at a public press conference on 11 December 2025.

Thank you

The panel members wish to extend their gratitude to everyone who participated in the selection phase of the European Capital of Culture 2030 competition in Cyprus. The panel specifically observed that the two cities — Larnaka and Lemesos — utilised the bidding process as an occasion to strengthen their cultural strategies and emphasise the significance of culture and Europe in their socio-economic progress as a whole. This is already a substantial potential legacy that the ECoC competition has produced.

The two candidate cities are firmly encouraged to continue developing and implementing their respective cultural strategies. The panel wishes to extend its gratitude to the cities and all those who made contributions to their proposals. Additionally, it extends its appreciation to the European Commission for its guidance and the Deputy Ministry for its flawless coordination and the technical team.

Assessments of the candidates

In its assessment of the candidates, the panel noted the general and specific objectives in Article 2 of the Decision and the requirement for the application of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2030 in Cyprus to be based on a cultural and artistic programme with a strong European dimension explicitly created for the title (Article 4). The panel assessed both bids against the six criteria outlined in Article 5 of the Decision:

- Contribution to the long-term strategy of the city,
- Cultural and artistic content,
- European dimension,
- Outreach,
- Management,
- Capacity to deliver.

In line with the specifications of the call, the panel assessed both short-listed candidate cities based on their revised bid books and hearings against the objectives of the European Capital of Culture action and the criteria as specified above. A city's history, its recent and current policies, and its cultural offer may form the basis for the proposed programme, but they are not criteria in the selection process.

The city visits are not part of the formal assessment process; however, they provide invaluable assistance to the panel members in gaining a deeper understanding of the context and background of the ECoC applications.

In the following commentaries, the panel highlights the main elements of their findings during the selection phase.

One of the most essential features in Decision 445/2014/EU governing the ECoC action from the 2020 titles is the requirement that cities have a formal and explicit cultural strategy. This requirement ensures that the ECoC is grounded in a medium-term transformation of the city and its cultural life.

In the case of the selected city, specific recommendations are made to assist it in implementing its ECoC project.

Larnaka

Larnaka's bid for the ECoC title bears the motto "*Common Ground*" and is rooted in the vision of Europe reimagined as a space of togetherness, care, and shared belonging. The concept reflects the city's lived experience as a place of displacement, diverse identities, and a culture of care—values that speak directly to contemporary European challenges. Larnaka's bid articulates a powerful response to polarisation, nationalism, and the humanitarian crises facing Europe, proposing that culture can serve as a bridge for understanding and shared futures.

The city of Larnaka has developed a comprehensive long-term cultural strategy entitled "*Investing in Our Talents*" (2025-2040), adopted by the City Council in February 2025. This strategy is grounded in genuine citizen participation and reflects the voices of diverse communities within the city. The candidacy builds on Larnaka's position as a gateway between continents, a city of refugees and migrants, and a place where people of different origins have coexisted for millennia.

Contribution to the Long-Term Strategy

- The Cultural Strategy "Investing in Our Talents" (2025-2040) has been formally adopted by the Larnaka City Council. The strategy is comprehensive and clearly aligned with contemporary European frameworks, including Agenda 21 for Culture, Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and the New European Bauhaus. The strategy establishes six clear priorities: Family Friendly City, Human City, Intercultural City, Creative City, Curious & Talented City, and Sustainable City. The ECoC 2030 programme is also integrated with the long-term cultural strategy.
- The long-term cultural, social, and economic impacts are clearly described with consideration for sustainability and legacy.
- The monitoring and evaluation plan is comprehensive. The Human Legacy Project ensures that evaluation is participatory, real-time, and captures both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of change.
- A clear timeline with actions to be carried out through 2040 is in place. The strategy will be revised every seven years through detailed Action Plans, providing both stability and adaptability. The connection between the Cultural Development Strategy and the ECoC programme is coherent and mutually reinforcing.

Cultural and Artistic Content

- Larnaka's artistic vision is built on the concept of "Common Ground," manifested through three thematic lines: *WE* (exploring identity and belonging), *LARNAKA* (celebrating the city's heritage and contemporary life), and *EUROPE* (addressing broader continental themes). These themes are developed across twelve subthemes, each intended to address distinct aspects of contemporary European and local concerns.
- The programme is presented in a structured manner, with project descriptions providing information about involved artists, partners, planning timelines, budgets and expected deliverables. The overall artistic intent is coherent and connected to the central concept. The programme demonstrates substantial investment in infrastructure through the Common Ground Cultural Complex, which will serve as a flagship venue designed by internationally renowned architects (Foster + Partners).

- The programme is rooted in strong involvement of local artists, cultural organisations, and community members. The participatory process that generated the original bid, with co-creators' networks and neighbourhood engagement, has built genuine local ownership. Educational programmes are embedded across most projects, with clear mechanisms to engage young people aged 15-29 through multiple pathways including universities, youth boards, and community organisations.
- The integration of heritage preservation with exploratory cultural expressions demonstrates a thoughtful approach to bridging tradition and contemporary creativity.
- The programme demonstrates particular strength in addressing the refugee and migrant experience through projects that centre these communities' narratives and contributions. This focus on inclusion and belonging resonates strongly with contemporary European challenges and offers authentic, lived perspectives on these critical issues.

European Dimension

- Larnaka's bid articulates a strong vision of what the city and its diverse populations offer to a reimagined Europe. The concept of "Common Ground" speaks directly to European anxieties about polarisation, migration, and cohesion, proposing culture as a vehicle for building shared understanding.
- The European dimension extends beyond artistic partnerships to encompass thematic alignment with key European discussions: cultural rights and governance, sustainable development, intercultural dialogue, and peace-building.
- The bid demonstrates substantial engagement with European partners and networks, particularly within the Mediterranean region.
- The concept of "Common Ground" itself represents a European narrative—a response to current crises grounded in specific local knowledge but articulated for continental significance. The programme's emphasis on shared values, care, and togetherness addresses urgent European needs.

Outreach

- Larnaka's bid demonstrates a strong and systematic approach to community engagement. The participatory process that generated the programme was genuine and inclusive, with documented evidence of broad community involvement in shaping the vision. The bid shows deep civic ownership and engagement.
- The programme includes convincing strategies to engage key target groups: young people, migrants and refugees, families, and elderly and isolated populations.
- The approach demonstrates strength in engaging underrepresented communities, with explicit focus on citizens from diverse backgrounds, low-income families, people with disabilities, and those experiencing social isolation. The outreach strategy emphasises sustainable, interconnected activities rather than one-time interventions.
- The Digital Curator role and the use of multilingual programming, mobility schemes, and targeted outreach demonstrate commitment to barrier removal and inclusive access.

Management

- The total operational budget for Larnaka 2030 is €27 million. The budget structure reflects allocation of 63% to programme delivery and approximately 20% to wages, overhead and administration.
- Political support is evident and documented. The City Council has formally voted on financial commitments and adopted the long-term cultural strategy. The fundraising strategy for EU funds is well developed with realistic targets and clear connections to specific projects.
- The governance structure is described, with the ECoC delivery team (Larnaka 2030, established as a municipal legal entity in 2022) operating with municipal support and structured oversight through a Board of Directors. The Artistic Director has been appointed and will serve from 2026-2031, providing continuity. The General Director position is planned for appointment in Q1 2026 upon designation.
- The contingency planning is detailed and realistic. Specific contingency measures are outlined for potential delays to the Common Ground Cultural Complex, including use of the old airport arrival hall and other existing venues as "Plan B" alternatives. The bid demonstrates an awareness about risk mitigation.

Capacity to Deliver

- Political support and commitment are strong at the municipal level, with documented formal votes on financial commitments (5 October 2025) and the adoption of the long-term cultural strategy. The city's overall strategic plan *Larnaka 2040* provides a broad framework supporting cultural development and urban regeneration.
- The city demonstrates capacity of existing cultural infrastructure and venues. Two indoor theatre venues are in place, with one under renovation during the application period. Access to the largest open-air theatre in Cyprus (2,000 seats) provides substantial capacity during summer programming.
- The Common Ground Cultural Complex (consisting of Cultural arts centre, Design centre and Home of Memory.) represents a significant capital investment of €30 million, designed by internationally recognised architects (Foster + Partners), with an additional €9 million allocated to other cultural infrastructure projects. The total capital expenditure budget is €39 million. The timeline for delivery has been presented with detailed planning, targeting completion in 2029 ahead of the ECoC year.
- The city has experience in hosting large-scale cultural events and has demonstrated capacity for coordination across municipal departments and partner organisations. The cultural infrastructure investments align well with the broader urban regeneration vision (removal of refineries from the seafront, waterfront development).

Conclusion

The bid presents a convincing balance between a robust 'Capacity to Deliver'—evidenced by strong political consensus and strategic planning—and a 'European Dimension' that addresses urgent continental themes through a distinct local lens.

Larnaka has presented a coherent bid grounded in genuine community engagement and a compelling conceptual vision centred on themes of urgent European significance. The

artistic vision of 'Common Ground' addresses fundamental European challenges of cohesion and belonging. The substantial infrastructure investment in the Common Ground Cultural Complex demonstrates long-term institutional commitment.

While the bid is robust, the panel identifies specific implementation focal points for the transition phase. The infrastructure delivery, relying on EU Structural Funds, necessitates the prompt formalisation of pending agreements. Similarly, the management structure requires scaling to match the operational scope. The panel views these elements as key performance indicators for the monitoring phase rather than structural deficits in the proposal.

The city has experience in delivering large-scale cultural activities and has demonstrated effective coordination with relevant municipal departments and partner organisations.

The panel recommends that the bid of Larnaka is selected.

Recommendations for preparing Larnaka for the title year can be found at the end of this report.

Lemesos

Lemesos's bid for the ECoC title is centred on the concept "*The Understory*"—a metaphor for the hidden voices, overlooked communities, and untold stories of the city. The concept responds to challenges facing many contemporary European cities: rapid urban development and gentrification that risk displacing communities and cultural heritage. The bid portrays Lemesos as a "city of two speeds," where capital investment and high-rise development coexist with the struggles of workers, artists, migrants, and long-time residents seeking cultural and physical space.

The concept of "*The Understory*" aims to give voice to these marginalised narratives and to challenge division through culture, emphasising community resilience, cultural democracy, and plural representation. Lemesos articulates a vision for a city where culture becomes the driver of development, not its afterthought.

Contribution to the Long-Term Strategy

- Lemesos 2030 has grounded its bid in the Cultural Strategy 2024-2034, which was adopted by the Municipal Council in November 2024. The strategy is built upon three main pillars: Activating the Arts and Creative Economies, Connecting Communities through Inclusive Development, and Supporting Relationships and Synergies. It directly addresses the ecosystem's identified challenges regarding public space management, capacity building, and long-term sustainability. During the hearing and in the bid, concrete evidence of political support was provided, by announcing that the city has voted on a €2 million increase to the operational budget.
- The alignment between the ECoC programme and this long-term strategy is clearly articulated, with the ECoC serving as a strategic catalyst for the strategy's implementation. The bid envisions the ECoC cross-pollinating with the strategy through three key mechanisms: activating beyond-urban development alternatives, making art a daily participatory habit, and positioning culture as a shared necessity.
- The monitoring and evaluation framework is decentralised and scientifically robust, led by the Cyprus University of Technology and the University of Limassol. This

framework employs an innovative, multi-perspectival methodology featuring creative data-gathering tools such as the Vibesensor, PrideSensor, Measuring Stories, Monitoring Shifts, and Soundtracking.

- To address capacity concerns, the municipal government is establishing new permanent positions—specifically a Cultural Officer and a Curator of Municipal Cultural Spaces—to be filled by the end of 2025. Furthermore, the bid strengthens its regional impact through formal partnerships with the neighbouring municipalities of Amathounta and Kourion (a former candidate city), effectively creating a unified cultural corridor along the southern coastline.
- While the bid presented a coherent cultural vision, it was less convincing in demonstrating the sustainability and legacy dimensions of its infrastructure investments. The proposal lacked clarity on how capital expenditures aligned with the city's broader masterplan or how they would contribute to long-term cultural and urban transformation.

Cultural and Artistic Content

- Lemesos's programme comprises 47 projects structured around the central concept of "The Understory," which addresses healing and local narratives.
- Whereas the programme addressed relevant challenges, such as gentrification and inequalities, its focus is predominantly local with the European dimension not strongly integrated. The programme budget was presented with indicative allocations of monetary ranges per project, making it insufficient to assess the overall programme's feasibility.
- The programme foresees 20% of its content to be developed through open calls, which demonstrates an inclusive approach and potential for new creative input. The bid also features several notable artistic projects, including an international co-production led by Robert Lepage and Ex Machina, offering valuable opportunities for collaboration and professional exposure for local creators.
- The panel acknowledges the strong presence of the performing arts, particularly dance, as a notable strength of the programme; however, it would welcome a more balanced representation of artistic genres.
- Several programme activities are spread across multiple years. Whereas the panel acknowledges that process-led programmes require significant lead time, it expressed concern that some projects with a significant public facing component—for Example Water Stories and Neighbourhoods That Float—risked diluting the project's impact in the title year.

European Dimension

- The concept of "The Understory" positions Lemesos's local narrative within an urgent context, addressing healing and spatial trauma. However, the panel noted that the bid did not sufficiently translate the concept to a European level. While the bid leverages Lemesos' unique southeastern Mediterranean position, the panel remarked that the bid's focus on local challenges did not build sufficiently on the broader European context.
- The bid explains in a sound manner how different projects promote the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens, and how it highlights European heritage and history as well as European integration and current European themes.
- The bid makes a deliberate strategic choice to add value to the existing visitor experience by attracting critical thinkers, reflective travellers, and cultural participants, rather than focusing on large-scale tourist audiences. Whereas the idea of attracting "critical thinkers" is conceptually sound, the practical mechanisms to engage European audiences are not sufficiently detailed. The panel expressed concern that this approach limits the action's objective to also reach a wider

international audience. Whereas the bid presents a solid marketing and communication strategy, its international dimension was not strongly articulated.

Outreach

- The bid articulates a commitment to community engagement and accessibility, referencing outreach activities conducted during the bidding phase (2024-2025) intended to build foundations for partnership. The proposal highlights the involvement of the reactivated Limassol Intercultural Council to coordinate with migrant and diverse communities and aims to address marginalised groups including asylum seekers and people with disabilities.
- However, the panel found that participation could have been a stronger dimension of the final bid. While the bid document mentions these groups, the panel noted that specific forms of participation were not clearly visible and the information provided was not comprehensive. The strategy for improved accessibility of venues in physical and digital terms was assessed as lacking specificity regarding how inclusive access would be operationally ensured.
- The bid integrates an educational dimension with plans for youth engagement, including ambassador schemes and capacity-building programmes. It also attempts to link cultural participation with the city's Net Zero 2030 Mission City Label.
- Ultimately, the panel recognised the experimental approaches of the bid as promising but concluded that the participation strategies required significantly more detail, particularly regarding volunteer engagement and concrete mechanisms for ensuring the active involvement of target groups beyond the planning phase.

Management

- The total operational budget for Lemesos 2030 is projected at €25.8 million, with a reliance on public sources (89.5%) and private contributions (10.5%). While the bid outlines increased commitments from the Municipality of Lemesos and neighbouring cities, the panel noted that the private fundraising strategy would benefit from further development, though it acknowledged the confirmed support already secured at this stage of the bidding process.
- Regarding governance, the bid outlines a structure intended to coordinate across the municipality and community organisations.
- The capital investment plan, nominally €59.2 million, includes projects such as the restoration of the Apollon Cinema and redevelopment of Heroes Square. However, this infrastructure plan could be better aligned with the master plan and is lacking a clear vision on how to use the ECoC title to drive urban transformation. The panel also noted that the contingency plan for infrastructure was underdeveloped, and capital expenditure was not sufficiently linked to concrete project delivery, raising doubts about readiness.
- The organisation is formally established as an independent non-profit entity with a Board of Directors. The panel expressed concern about the clarity of primary leadership and decision-making authority, particularly in situations where views may diverge.

Capacity to Deliver

- Lemesos 2030 is established as an operational entity since January 2023, providing structural continuity, and has implemented pilot activities and built partnerships during the bidding phase.
- The contingency planning is only partly convincing. While alternative scenarios and fallback options are identified, the panel noted that key elements remain insufficiently specified, notably in relation to alternative venues and the depth of financial and operational contingency planning.

Conclusion

Lemesos presented a committed bid built around the metaphor of *The Understory*, focusing on less visible narratives and on responding to the social consequences of rapid urban change. The panel appreciated the openness with which issues such as gentrification and social exclusion were addressed, in particular through the *City in Therapy* strand, and recognised the intention to strengthen the local cultural ecosystem as a positive element. At the same time, a number of aspects would have needed further development. While the cultural and artistic programme showed strong engagement at local level, the European dimension and the overall artistic scope were not sufficiently clear. In addition, elements of the governance set-up and the financial framework remained too broadly defined to give full confidence in delivery.

On this basis, the panel acknowledged the cultural ambition and local relevance of the proposal, but considered that the balance between local focus, European positioning, and the solidity of governance and financial arrangements was not yet convincing enough at this stage.

Given these observations, the panel does not recommend Lemesos for the ECoC 2030 title. The panel nonetheless encourages Lemesos to build on its strengths and continue advancing its cultural vision for the future.

The panel's decision

The panel was presented with two distinct and differently articulated bids from significantly diverse cities, each with its own interpretations of the ECoC criteria. The bids tackled issues of significant urgency for Europe and the world at large. Both bids had their strengths and weaknesses. According to Decision 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, the panel looked at the programme designed explicitly for the ECoC year and with a strong European dimension. The panel debated the merits of each city against the two objectives and six criteria of the Decision, and then, in the final discussion, the applications were weighed against each other.

Each panel member weighed his/her interpretation of the criteria against the two cities with their bid books, presentations, questions, and answers. The panel decided by vote to recommend to the Deputy Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Cyprus to designate Larnaka as European Capital of Culture 2030 in Cyprus.

This report has been sent to the managing authority and the European Commission. Both will publish it on their websites. In accordance with Article 11 of the Decision, the Ministry will proceed to the designation of the ECoC 2030 in Cyprus based on the recommendation contained in this report. It will then inform the European Parliament, Council, Commission, and Committee of the Regions. This formal designation enables Larnaka to use the title "European Capital of Culture 2030".

Melina Mercouri Prize

Based on this report, the panel recommends that the European Commission award the Melina Mercouri Prize to the designated city. However, the payment of the €1.5 million prize is deferred until 2030, in line with Article 14 of the Decision. It is conditional.

The ECoC panel will further recommend to the European Commission in late 2029 at the end of the monitoring process on whether to make the payment. The conditions for the payment are as follows (Article 14):

- The ECoC continues to honour its commitments made in the application;

- It complies with the criteria;
- It takes into account the recommendations contained in the selection and monitoring reports;
- There has been no substantial change to the programme and strategy set out in the bid book, in particular:
 - The budget has been maintained at a level capable of delivering a high-level programme and at a level consistent with the bid book;
 - The independence of the artistic team has been appropriately respected;
 - The European dimension has remained sufficiently strong in the final programme;
 - The marketing and communications strategy and material reflect it is a European Union action;
 - Plans for monitoring and evaluation are in place.

Reputation of an ECoC

A city awarded the ECoC title receives considerable international attention from the selection recommendation extending well beyond the ECoC year. It is responsible for upholding the reputation of the ECoC brand for the benefit of those previous title holders and future ones. City administrations should be aware that decisions taken (and not just in the cultural sector) might attract attention far beyond what they are used to handling formal media and social media. This adds a unique and new aspect to decision-making in the city over a wide, full range of issues, much beyond culture only.

The monitoring phase

Once an ECoC has been designated, it enters the “monitoring phase” (Article 13 of the Decision). Under the auspices of the European Commission, the panel will work with the ECoC to ensure the quality of the ECoC brand and to offer advice and experience. **The bid book at final selection becomes the *de facto* contract** between the designated city, on the one hand, and its citizens, the panel, the Deputy Ministry, and the European Commission, on the other hand. It has an important role in the payment of the Melina Mercouri Prize.

The panel will expect a close alignment with the bid book during the preparation phase and during the ECoC year. Significant variations from the bid book should be discussed with the panel through the European Commission in advance of decisions being made. There are three formal monitoring checkpoints (autumn 2026, mid-2028, and autumn 2029) when the ECoC will meet with the panel under the auspices of the European Commission. Before each meeting, the European Commission will invite the ECoC to provide progress reports.

The European Commission will indicate areas that specifically need to be addressed in the reports. In addition, the panel may decide, with the agreement of the European Commission, to visit the city to observe progress. The panel’s reports after all three meetings will be published on the European Commission’s website. The ECoC may decide to publish its progress reports in the interest of transparency.

The panel’s recommendations

The designated ECoC now moves to a transition period from a set-up suited to a bid campaign to the more formal ECoC delivery structure independent of local city administration.

The panel expects Larnaka to develop cooperation with the other bidding city and the wider artistic and cultural community in Cyprus. The ECoC in Cyprus in 2030 provides a national opportunity, which will reflect internationally on Larnaka and the country as a whole.

The following recommendations are addressed specifically to Larnaka as the designated European Capital of Culture 2030. The panel advises the city to integrate these points into the first progress report due in Autumn 2026.

Contribution to the Long-Term Strategy

- Ensure that the cultural strategy, the ECoC programme and the wider urban transformation plans are fully synchronised and accompanied by detailed timelines and actions, with a clear delineation between permanent municipal cultural strategy objectives and specific ECoC 2030 goals.
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation framework by delivering the planned baseline studies and establishing more precise, specific and measurable indicators. Revisit highly aspirational targets, such as increasing the percentage of artists earning a sustainable income to 50% by 2035, to ensure they are realistic and phased through concrete implementation steps and intermediate milestones.
- Clarify the formal role, governance and institutional ownership of the “Larnaka 2030” entity beyond the title year to ensure continuity of the cultural strategy and to institutionalise participatory structures within permanent municipal governance.

Cultural and Artistic Content

- Enhance the balance between community-based artistic expression and bold, innovative artistic projects that will attract European audiences and critical attention. Safeguard artistic excellence within the broad community co-creation model, ensuring that social inclusion does not dilute artistic distinctiveness or lead to repetitive formats.
- Reinforce the artistic vision to address with courage and creativity the controversial and sensitive issues that resonate in Larnaka and in Europe. In particular, further develop the Opening Ceremony as a distinctive artistic statement with a contemporary and innovative approach.
- Streamline the programme structure by rethinking the twelve subthemes—especially those with only one associated project—to reduce fragmentation and enhance clarity and coherence in communication, while preserving sufficient flexibility to integrate upcoming opportunities and new projects in the years leading up to 2030.
- Enhance European collaborations by defining specific partnerships and joint projects with cultural institutions, organisations and networks across Europe, and clarifying how these collaborations are rooted in and add value to the local context, including projects such as Sistema Europe Orchestra.
- Maintain a strong focus on community involvement by ensuring that temporary and permanent residents, and local, regional and national artists and cultural stakeholders, actively shape and deliver the cultural and artistic programme. Ensure island-wide inclusion of the professional artistic sector and a diversity of art forms beyond the currently dominant genres.

European Dimension

- Deepen the integration of European narratives by implementing cultural and artistic projects that explicitly address shared European themes, such as migration, minority languages and cultures, sustainability, resilience and social cohesion, clearly articulating the specific contribution of Larnaka to these debates.
- Significantly broaden the geographic reach beyond the current Mediterranean and Middle East focus by establishing partnerships and co-operations with cultural

institutions and artists from Nordic countries and Central Europe, in order to ensure a genuinely pan-European profile.

- Building on Larnaka's position as Cyprus's main international gateway, expand and refine the international visitor strategy so that it fully leverages this advantage, with targeted offers, partnerships and projects designed to attract and engage diverse European audiences.

Outreach

- Define the logistical and financial resources required for outreach activities and accompany them with measurable objectives and indicators, so that the reach, quality and impact of participation across different target groups can be properly monitored and evaluated.
- Strengthen accessibility and inclusivity by developing detailed measures to remove barriers for international visitors, marginalised communities and people with disabilities, and for example by paying particular attention to residents in remote rural areas, ensuring that they also benefit from and participate in the ECoC programme.
- Differentiate between strategies for active co-creators and those for audiences who wish to participate as spectators or tourists, tailoring programming and marketing approaches to the needs, expectations and capacities of each group.
- Develop a robust and meaningful digital engagement strategy that goes beyond communication and promotion, offering genuine artistic, educational and participatory opportunities, and complementing physical accessibility before, during and after the title year.

Management

- Review and, where necessary, adjust the planned organisational structure and staffing levels in line with the decision to produce a significant proportion of the programme in-house and with the ambition to reach international audiences, ensuring sufficient capacity particularly in programme production, international relations, marketing and communications.
- Further strengthen governance, planning and risk management through continued alignment across structures and a coherent risk management framework.
- Secure in a timely manner the key funding and stakeholder commitments that underpin the project, including the formalisation of EU Structural Funds Agreements for the Common Ground Cultural Complex, and reinforce collaboration mechanisms with local, regional and national partners to ensure stable support throughout the preparation and title year.

Capacity to Deliver

- Maintain the timetable for delivering the Common Ground Cultural Complex and other critical cultural infrastructure, while at the same time develop more detailed and operationally viable contingency plans (including the use of the old airport arrival hall and other alternative venues) with clear decision points and implications for the programme and budget.
- Ensure strong and stable leadership by appointing the General Director (CEO) and completing the senior management team within a short period after designation, and by embedding their work in an integrated contingency and decision-making framework that connects infrastructure delivery, programme implementation, accessibility, tourism capacity and risk governance.

Signed

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Matthias Ripp (Rapporteur).

Nicosia, 11 December 2025
All panel members (signed)

