

Elefsina European Capital of Culture 2023

**New second Monitoring Meeting
Report by the ECOC Expert Panel**

Virtual Meeting, May 2021

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
Directorate Culture, Creativity and Sport
Unit D2

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Introduction

This report follows the virtual meeting on 29 April 2021 between the European Capital of Culture Expert Panel (hereafter in the text "the Panel") and the ECoC team of Eleusis2023, one of the European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) in 2023¹. Elefsina was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2021 in Greece by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sport on 9 December 2016 based on the Panel selection report²; its bid book is available on the Elevis2023 website³. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and upon a joint request by the Ministry, the City of Elefsina and the Eleusis 2023 team, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU adopted on 23 December 2020 a Decision postponing the ECoC year in Elefsina from 2021 to 2023⁴. In line with this Decision, this meeting was a new second monitoring meeting. It follows the first⁵ and second⁶ monitoring meetings on 10 October 2017 and 4 June 2019 respectively and two city visits by panel members on 5 July 2018 and on 24 October 2019.

This report is addressed to Eleusis2023 (the delivery team of Eleusis2023) and will be published on the European Commission's website⁷.

Attendance

The ECoC Expert Panel members:

Else Christensen-Redžepović (Rapporteur), Suvi Innilä and Jorge Cerveira Pinto, appointed by the European Parliament 2021–2023;

¹ The European Capitals of Culture action is governed by Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council for the titles 2020 to 2033, which provides for three formal monitoring meetings between designated cities and the Panel.

See: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG

² https://ec.europa.eu/culture/sites/default/files/files/ecoc-2021-greece-selection-report_en.pdf

³ <https://www.2023Eleusis.eu/?lang=en>

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32020D2229>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/culture/sites/default/files/files/ecoc2021-elefsina-monitoring_en.pdf

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/sites/default/files/ecoc-2021-elefsina-second-monitoring.pdf>

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/elefsina-timisoara-and-veszprem#elefsina>

Dessislava Gavrilova, Paulina Florjanowicz and Pierre Sauvageot, appointed by the Council of the EU 2019-2021;

Jelle Burggraaff (Chair), appointed by the European Commission 2020–2022;

Alin Adrian Nica, appointed by the European Committee of the Regions 2019-2021.

For Elefsina:

Vice Mayor of Culture - ECoC

CEO - Eleusis2023

Artistic Director General - Eleusis2023

Mayor's Advisor for Infrastructure

Director of Administration & Finance Eleusis2023

Director of Artistic Training, Eleusis2023

Head of Premises and Infrastructure Department Eleusis2023

The European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture),organised the meeting and representatives from the Commission and from the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports attended as observers.

Introduction

The online monitoring meeting was opened by European Commission policy officer who thanked the Eleusis2023 team, the Board, the municipality of Elefsina and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sport for joining the meeting. He set out the guidelines and purpose of the monitoring meeting and outlined the new format of the monitoring meeting whereby Panel members and the Elefsina delegation would be divided into three thematic groups in order to go one step deeper into discussions on the key challenges such as 1. Finance and Governance 2. Infrastructure and 3. Programme and European dimension. He announced that the third and final monitoring meeting will take place at the end of 2022 where the Panel will consider nominating Eleusis2023 as receiver of the Melina Mercouri Prize. Panel member Jelle Burggraaff was Chair of the monitoring meeting and Else Christensen-Redzepovic the Rapporteur.

Report and video presentation from Eleusis2023

In advance of the monitoring meeting Eleusis2023 submitted their progress report and a video presentation. The recording is a substitute to the customary physical presentations by ECoC teams to the Panel in monitoring meetings due to the COVID-19 related travel and meeting restrictions.

The new Artistic Director of Eleusis2023 starts the video with a narrative of the historical meaning of Eleusis and the reasons for relaunching the Elefsina ECoC project with a new name, new theme, new Artistic Director, new team, and new Board, while keeping the original vision, spirit, and main projects of the bid-book.⁸ He recalls the challenges and turbulence of the past years regarding people and planning of the implementation of Eleusis2023 and ironically refers to the old saying: "When humans make plans clouds and goods are smiling". The Artistic Director goes on to thank the European Union for granting the postponement of the ECoC year from 2021 to 2023 that will allow the necessary time to achieve the goals. He underlines that although there are many changes surrounding the ECoC project, the core of the project remains as it was described in the final selection bid for the Elefsina ECoC bid. The Artistic Director goes on to say how the Council of Elefsina has risen to the challenges of hosting an ECoC in 2023 and has become a contributor to the strategic thinking for the successful implementation of Eleusis2023. By bringing in stakeholders and citizens from the community the Council works as a broader think tank for ideas and inspiration on strategic matters.

⁸ After the monitoring meeting, it was decided to go back to the title Eleusis2023 instead of Elevis2023. This report consistently use Eleusis 2023 to reflect this, although at the time of the meeting the official name was Elevisis 2023.

Faced with additional challenges of COVID-19 the new Eleusis2023 team has taken the opportunity to utilize 2020 as an incubation time of the Eleusis2023 preparations giving the team a chance to test different models and testing digital versions in a time of crisis.

The new slogan of Mysteries of Transitions (close to the original one of Transition to EUphoria) goes down along the three axes in the original bid, that encompass People, Labour and Environment. 64.2% of the programme focuses explicitly on citizens' participation and audience development. Projects targeting and fostering networking, diversity, multiculturalism, youth, and education are in abundance. The programme is also extended to West Attica. Flagship projects, programme strands and significant projects are highlighted in this 30 minute video presentation.

The Mayor of Elefsina addresses the Panel with confirming the City of Elefsina's full commitment to the implementation of the Eleusis2023 programme as well as to living up to the high expectations of the European Commission, the Panel and moreover the expectations of the Eleusis2023 team, the city Council and the citizens of Elefsina. The Mayor assures the Panel that the Eleusis2023 team and the city Council are joined in this effort by the Greek Government, the Regional Administration of Attica and other bodies and collectives.

The Mayor states that the goal for the city is the completion of all planned infrastructure by the end of 2022. This includes the archeological site, the existing museum and the city's infrastructure in general. There will also be good progress on the premises of Eleourgiki and the Old Olive Mill.

The Mayor signs off by thanking the European Commission and the Panel for the interest, guidance and general helpfulness in securing the success of Eleusis2023. The Mayor is convinced that with the collective efforts and diligence of the Eleusis2023 team, the Board, the City of Elefsina and the Government Eleusis2023 will become a success and a point of reference to all of Europe in the years to come.

The video presentation also introduced the new Vice Mayor for Culture, who is responsible for the ECoC project in Elefsina. The position was established on the recommendation of the Panel in 2019. The Vice Mayor for culture acts as liaison between the city and the Eleusis2023 company.

It is widely known and understood by all cooperation partners that the city and region are going to benefit from a lasting legacy following a successful Eleusis2023.

Dialogue

During the subsequent dialogue, the Panel sought clarification on certain issues and offered experience and advice to the Eleusis2023 team. Topics discussed included the following:

Long-term cultural strategy

Observations and enquiries from the Panel:

- The Panel inquired about **the main challenges the ECoC team is currently facing and their plans for addressing them.** *The Chair of the Board of Eleusis2023 explained that COVID-19 restrictions had hit the team and its activities severely. Challenges in the administration and governance of Eleusis 2021 as well as municipal elections in 2019 led to radical changes in both Board and ECoC staff. Along with the COVID-19 situation and the granting of a postponement of the Elefsina ECoC year from 2021 to 2023 the new administration decided to make a fresh start by relaunching its ECoC programme with a new theme, name, and logo. The change of name from Eleusis to Elevisis along with the new logo has caused some upheavals in the city that the team, however, is confident will be settled through constructive dialogues⁹. On the economic side, given the COVID-19 situation, some funds have had to be redirected to the health sector. This has not only influenced the overall situation of the cultural sector in Greece but also commitments to the Eleusis2023 budget. The Eleusis2023 organisation is still severely understaffed with just 20 persons employed, largely due to a suffocating administrative burden and legal constraints on staff recruitment in public bodies. The very cumbersome legal regulations that the company must adhere to takes its toll on staff in terms of time consumptions, planning and communicating their activities. Although the staff is very motivated and dedicated, this situation is not sustainable and causes a lot of frustrations across all sections of the company. The company, however, has just been granted permission to employ another 8 persons, which should improve the situation. Even with the additional staff being granted the company will have to look at outsourcing tasks to external partners. Finally, the Eleusis2023 infrastructure plans currently pose a great challenge to accomplish, but the Chair of the Board is confident that it will be resolved over time.*

⁹ After the monitoring meeting, it was decided to go back to the title Eleusis2023 instead of Elevis2023. This report consistently use Eleusis 2023 to reflect this, although at the time of the meeting the official name was Elevisis 2023.

- With many decisive challenges - such as the heavy administrative burden, legal requirements and infrastructure still being the same as in 2018 and 2019 **the Panel wanted to know what mistakes will be avoided from now on and given the ongoing overall problems, and very limited time left, how can the team be convinced that it is on the right path?** *The Eleusis2023 team acknowledged that some challenges have no solutions as of this moment but that solutions are being sought at a fast pace. The Eleusis2023 team called on the Panel for advice on how to solve some of the challenges, which the Panel has done in the recommendations set out below in this report. Following the recommendation of the last monitoring report and city visits, the Eleusis2023 team, together with the Board and Municipality, have jointly brought about many positive changes that have given the team confidence that it is on a good path.*

- In the past monitoring report, it was stated that the region of West Attica had not yet been involved in the ECoC planning. In the most recent report, it is stated that progress has been made in that respect. The Panel asked for an update on **the involvement of the region.** *The cooperation with the West Attica region became very close following the 2019 election. It is a very harmonious and fruitful cooperation and a representative from the region is now serving on the Board.*

Artistic and cultural programme

- The Panel finds that there are **many changes to the original programme from the final selection bid of Elefsina ´s ECoC project, that must be regarded as a de facto contract with the European Commission on the implementation of the Elefsina ECoC.** With an ongoing open call ending in June 2021, it is assumed that even more new projects will come onboard. The Panel thus was interested to find out how **the Eleusis2023 team justifies these changes?** *The Eleusis2023 team assured the Panel that in real terms, not many changes have occurred. It is mainly a question of necessary adaptations to planned projects, synergies, and expansion of projects. For various reasons, some projects were not possible to implement or did not make sense to implement unless redefined. It was also underlined that the annex of the second monitoring report setting out programme changes include approved changes that were made prior to the arrival of the new team and already included in past monitoring reports. Further, the new Artistic Director takes the stand that an ECoC must be a synthesis of all the different evolutionary stages in the overall programme development.*

- The Panel wanted to know the **percentage of programming already contracted at this stage and what the plans are for contracting in the coming months.** With the administrative and legal requirement challenges halting this process in the past, what has been done to overcome these obstacles to complete the essential contracting for the programme. *The legal challenges have not yet been resolved and still pose a very big problem. The Artistic Director is not optimistic regarding the timely contracting for programming, given the ongoing cumbersome legal procedures combined with the shortage of staff. The contracting challenge not only delays the overall contracting of the*

Eleusis2023 programme, but it also causes delays and, in some cases, stops current events from happening or events experiencing little public attention as it has not been possible to advertise the event prior to contracts being signed. The Eleusis2023 team plans to announce the overall Eleusis2023 programme by the end of July. For this to happen, it will be necessary to outsource the contracting task. Overall, bureaucracy remains the biggest single challenge for the Eleusis2023 team.

- The Panel inquired whether the **programming provides digital solutions as a plan B given that the global pandemic is not completely resolved**. *Although digital alternatives pose a huge compromise for most programme segments, there is a digital plan B. In the recent round of open call, a digital plan B was even requested. A plan B is also part of the cooperation projects with international partners. There is already some experience at hand in the Eleusis2023 team, as programme elements have been presented digitally during 2020 and 2021.*
- The Panel inquired about the **drop in programming budget from the original €16.5 and how this will be tackled**. *There is a concern that programme money will be redirected to other areas such as infrastructure. This is recognized as a challenge and the original budget level will be advocated strongly for by the Eleusis2023 team.*
- Announcing open calls inevitably means having to reject proposals. The Panel was interested to know how the Eleusis2023 team **plans to manage expectations**. *One way is working continuously to increase the programming budget. Another way is to endeavour to host as many project examples as possible on one platform. Communication plays a big role in managing expectations in this respect.*
- A concern with open calls is the **difficulty in presenting a clear and coherent programme to the audience**. *The Eleusis2023 team believes that this can be overcome by communicating the projects, by making Elefsina a cultural hub for new expressions, for new artists and new forms.*
- The Panel was interested to learn about **plans for the opening ceremony**. *At this stage the plans are semi-secret. What can be revealed is that the Mayor and the CEO of the Port are important stakeholders to negotiate with for the opening ceremony. The first part of the opening ceremony cannot be shared yet, but it can be revealed that the second part will consist of a huge music event.*

European Dimension

- The Panel inquired about whether the Eleusis2023 team has a **mapping structure in place to ensure the adherence to the projects and contacts listed in the final selection bid**. *A mapping tool has been developed not only to map the European Dimension projects and contacts from the final selection bid, but also as a tool that ensures that all ECoC criteria are adhered to as well as other aspects of the final selection bid.*

- An enquiry was made into the **level of engagement with the local population and of connecting people from Europe with people from Elefsina**. *Ensuring that the city itself is a theatre is important as this is a way of engaging and involving the citizens of Elefsina. Every Friday for two hours people of Elefsina gather to discuss culture, politics, and everyday life. In June there is a production - Elefsina and the revolution - where 70 persons from Elefsina are performing. In 2020 there were several digital events focussing on audience development plans involving local stakeholders. Young people are engaged in co-creation projects and in September they will organise their very own projects with the support of the Eleusis2023 team. Volunteer programmes are also in the making in close cooperation with the municipality. The European Dimension of the above activities is considered as well.*

- **With Greece hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants, the Panel wanted to know what place this topic and migrants and refugees themselves will have in the programme**. *The umbrella/flagship project Refuge will run throughout 2022 and 2023. Another project is the interdisciplinary (with education) The Walk project. Other projects involving refugees directly include gastronomical and cultural tradition activities. All projects will be prepared and implemented with due respect and at eye level.*

- The Panel was interested to learn whether Eleusis2023 will include **cooperation projects with Turkey in their programme**. *The Eleusis2023 team responds that for historical and political reasons such cooperation is very important. Acknowledging the power of arts to bridge differences and to unite people, projects with Turkey are expected to come from the open call. Further, with 85% of Elefsina's population being refugees of before or now, several projects deal with aspects of migration. Some of them are cooperation projects with Balkan countries, MENA region and the Mediterranean countries as well as with Turkey.*

Outreach

- The Panel pointed out that it appears not to be widely known in Greece or in Europe that Elefsina has won the ECoC title. The Panel thus asked how **the Eleusis2023 team is planning to communicate the ECoC project**. *A new communication strategy has made significant progress in communicating the projects professionally in a wide range and with a digital programme. Important cooperation and partnerships with institutions and organisations in the city, neighbouring municipalities and the Attika region are*

established to ensure a wide outreach. Sponsorship programmes containing legacy elements and volunteer programmes are well on the way. Different campaigns with other ECoC cities are planned and contacts with international media are being established. Having said that, communication is still halted by the overwhelming bureaucratic obstacles to which a solution is being sought.

Management

- The Panel was interested to know **how the governance situation has improved since the last monitoring meeting and city visit**, as well as the efficiency in the administration. *Overall, with the changes in staff and Board the communication has improved. 35% of the new Board are women. An inter-ministerial committee has been created, which has improved cooperation. Communication and cooperation with the Municipality and the Ministry is now very constructive. The municipality has employed a very dynamic vice mayor for the ECoC project and a vice mayor for tourism and international relations, which is a great improvement. With the appointment of a new and very qualified Artistic Director on the Eleusis2023 team the programming is in very good hands. In the past the Panel had raised concerns about the CEO serving on the Board however, this is a constitutional requirement and cannot be changed. The new CEO assures the Panel that she understands the difference of the role of CEO and Board member. The staffing shortage remains the big challenge, which has been mentioned earlier in this report.*
- 52% of the current budget expenses are allocated for “other activities”, and the Panel would **like to know how come there are these expenses not included in the original budget**. *The Eleusis2023 team explains that the gap is caused by a lot of expenses not having been calculated properly and not included in the final selection bid.*

Capacity to deliver

- The Panel inquired about the postponed **key infrastructural development projects** that are now due to be completed in the title year. What would be a **realistic** assessment of whether these projects will be completed in time? **What are the dangers**, and what could prevent the timely completion of these vital infrastructure projects? *The Eleusis2023 team see COVID-19 as a gift in terms of having been the course for rethinking and for developing formats, where not one single theatre or music production requires an indoor venue per se. Further, open spaces in the city are being rethought as venues and schools, community buildings and sports complexes are included in the overall infrastructure plans. Work with local authorities on plans B are being prepared for infrastructures that are at risk of not being ready on time. As for the emblematic industrial historical places, many of those are on a good path. Many venues will be of flexible nature, others will be leased spaces such as for instance a bowling centre. The team is optimistic*

about the infrastructure and sees it as a strong legacy for the city. The advantage of the postponement of the Eleusis2023 has given rise to rethinking the infrastructure overall to meet European standards.

- The panel wanted to know how the Eleusis2023 team will **ensure adequate monitoring and evaluation**. *A new and reliable monitoring and evaluation partner has come onboard to provide more direct and practical input to the overall ECoC strategy planning.*

Conclusions and recommendations

The Panel welcomes the full commitment by the Mayor and Council to the successful implementation of the Eleusis2023 project according to the high standards of a European Capital of Culture.

The Panel acknowledges the progress made so far by Eleusis2023 and wishes to draw attention to the following conclusions and recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1:** The Panel underlines the importance of adhering to the final selection bid as your de facto contract with the European Commission and recommends regular cross-checking with the final selection bid in the preparatory processes.
- The Panel recognises the improvement achieved in the new Board, staffing and composition. It is concerning to see, however, that the Board engages in frequent and time-consuming Board meetings, and in detailed decision-making.
 - **Recommendation 2:** The Panel strongly advises that statutes of the Board be changed and limited to strategic decision-making only, thereby giving executive power to the management level of the Eleusis2023 organisation to act within the strategic framework of its Board. Further, the Panel recommends reducing the number of Board meetings to 3-4 annually. Such changes would free up valuable time and resources and ensure a smooth and efficient daily running of the company, which is essential for implementing a successful ECoC in Elefsina.
- The Panel fully understands the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the way the ECoC team has been able to work together and the limitations this has brought about. The Panel also acknowledges the improvements made in the Eleusis2023 team since

the last monitoring meeting and visit to Elefsina. However, the overall status of the preparations for the ECoC year gives rise to great concern in the Panel. The ongoing challenges of the heavy administrative burden, underdeveloped programming, missing contracting, insufficient budgets for programming, underperformance in communication and infrastructure must be addressed in a professional, efficient, and **realistic** manner. Solutions to the pressing problems must be found here and now.

- **Recommendation 3:** The Panel recommends the daily use of professional project management tools. Important is the use of very clear key performance indicators (KPIs) at all levels of the ECoC preparations. The KPIs will assist in monitoring and evaluating the performance and successes in progress planning and activities. Given the critical situation in the ECoC planning for Eleusis2023 the KPIs should be at short intervals such as monthly.

The KPIs will help the Eleusis2023 team to keep on track monthly what has been achieved and what is pending. For tasks that do not meet a given KPI, ***the team must make realistic decisions on how they can be completed within a realistic new timeframe.*** In some cases, the team will need to make very tough decisions and scope its pending tasks to meet the reality of its resources - its time, human resources, and budget available combined - to accomplish a given task! It is vital to respect the KPIs and to act immediately if tasks are not meeting the gates of the KPIs.

The proper usage of performance indicators in the Eleusis 2023´s daily work is vital to avoid making mistakes and minimise the risk of not managing the planned tasks on time and within budget.

- **Recommendation 4:** Overall, the Panel recommends a **realistic** approach to problem-solving, and moreover, ensure that problems are solved promptly and not merely delayed.
- The Panel does not doubt the overall competences of the Eleusis2023 staff, but it underlines the importance that key staff possess professional project management and administration skills and apply them in their daily work.
- **Recommendation 5:** If such skills are not present, the Panel recommends seeking assistance from management consultancies to provide time efficient targeted training. This will be a good investment for the very hectic work ahead for the team in months and years to come.

- The Panel understands that it has been possible to employ an additional eight persons, which is encouraging.
 - **Recommendation 6:** Given the staffing challenges - even with more hands being onboarded - the team will need to either swiftly work on securing more staff in addition to the eight, outsource substantial part of its work tasks, or the team will need to scope the amount of work you can accomplish with the work power at hand. Leaving the staff overworked for prolonged periods of time will backfire with lack of concentration, decreasing motivation and worst-case with burnouts. Underperforming on all accounts will jeopardize the ECoC project.

- The Panel acknowledges that the Eleusis2023 team attempts to encompass the European dimension throughout. However, the European dimension in an ECoC programme is of utmost importance and cannot be overemphasized as this is the *raison d'être* of the ECoC Action.
 - **Recommendation 7:** The European Capital of Culture Action is innately European, and the European dimension must be at the heart of an ECoC programme. The European dimension ensures that an ECoC is an international programme and not exclusively a domestic event. Hence, the European dimension must permeate the entire cultural programme as well as the associated activities, notably marketing and communication. It is of utmost importance to keep this fact in mind in all aspects of the team's daily work in preparing the ECoC programme and processes.
 - **Recommendation 8:** As the programme should have a good balance between the local (diverse) cultural potential as well as the top international scene, the development of European partnerships is a top priority now. Therefore, a considerable number of European artists and organisations need to be included in the programme. Explore the cooperation with the European partners listed in the final selection bid and monitor the number and quality of European partnerships with artists, cultural organisations and networks who will participate in the projects.
 - **Recommendation 9:** Develop a strategy for the visibility of Europe in Eleusis2023 and the region that includes addressing the European themes listed in the final selection bid, connections with cultural operators and their peers in Europe, co-creation processes and invitations for hosting network meetings. Through communication and activities locally, ensure that the local community in Elefsina has an experience of being part of a wider European project.

- The Panel welcomes the progress in programming, albeit with many changes in relation to the final selection bid.

- **Recommendation 10:** The Panel underlines the importance of adhering to the original budget of €16,5 million for Programming to ensure a successful implementation of the Eleusis2023 project and a sustainable programme legacy. This amount should not be reduced or redirected to infrastructure or other expenses.

- **Recommendation 11:** It is of utmost urgency to ensure full contracting with all actors of projects and programmes. Solutions to the administrative challenge preventing this from happening at a necessary pace must be found without delays. ***All efforts at all levels of authority must be put in place to find realistic and workable solutions.*** Failing to solve this overarching problem will put your ECoC project in jeopardy and inevitably will cause damages to the ECoC brand.

- **Recommendation 12:** Considering the high number of projects from open calls and the scaling, improvement and merging of projects, it is important to manage the expectations of all parties involved properly to safeguard the ECoC brand. Failing to deal with this optimally can lead to severe tensions, negative communication flows and parts of the cultural sector turning against the ECoC Action.

- The Panel welcomes the work on planning the necessary infrastructure for the implementation of the Eleusis2023 programme.
 - **Recommendation 13:** Continuous focus on ensuring the necessary infrastructure through having **realistic** targets and adjusting expectations to match reality where necessary.

- The Panel welcomes the improvements made to the communication strategy and the further professionalisation thereof, none-the-least the necessary digital aspect.
 - **Recommendation 14:** The Panel urges the communication department to move ahead full speed with implementing the new communication strategy locally, nationally and internationally. The success of the Eleusis2023 project is highly dependent on the efficient rolling out of a solid and professional communication plan that resonates at all levels.

Next steps

The Panel greets the relevant steps taken so far and remains available for questions and advice, through the Commission services.

The Commission will call for a final monitoring meeting in autumn 2022. **Given the ongoing challenges in the preparations for the Eleusis2023 title year the Panel would like to request a six-monthly status update on the progress on milestones achieved, planning and preparations for the ECoC year.** This should include the state of play concerning the programme, a list with the status of cooperation with local and international artists, cultural organisations and networks, the state of play on the cultural infrastructure projects and an overview of the state of the budget. It is important to focus on achievements over planning. The status report should not exceed 5-7 pages. The Panel would like to receive the next status by 15 November 2021.

At the end of the third monitoring meeting in 2022, the panel will make a recommendation to the Commission on whether to grant the Melina Mercouri Prize to Eleusis2023.

The conditions for the payment of the Prize are specified in Article 14 of Decision 445/2014/EU:

"The prize money shall be paid by the end of March of the year of the title, provided that the designated city concerned continues to honour the commitments it made at the application stage, complies with the criteria and considers the recommendations contained in the selection and monitoring reports.

The commitments made at the application stage shall be deemed to have been honoured by the designated city where no substantial change has been made to the programme and the strategy between the application stage and the year of the title, in particular where:

(a) the budget has been maintained at a level capable of delivering a high-quality cultural programme in line with the application and the criteria;

(b) the independence of the artistic team has been appropriately respected;

- (c) *the European dimension has remained sufficiently strong in the final version of the cultural programme;*

- (d) *the marketing and communication strategy and the communication material used by the designated city clearly reflects the fact that the action is a Union action;*

- (e) *the plans for the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the title on the designated city are in place."*

The Panel would like to thank the vice Mayor of Elefsina and the Eleusis2023 team and Board for a very informative and frank discussion and looks forward to the next developments of the European Capital of Culture project in Elefsina.

(Signed) all attending Panel's members

