

**Open Letter from the
Experts nominated to the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) Selection Panel**

23rd November 2017

Today it has been announced that the planned ECOC 2023 pre-selection in the UK will not take place. The pre-selection was scheduled for the last week of November 2017 based on the five candidacies received: Belfast, Dundee, Leeds, Milton Keynes and Nottingham.

As experts nominated to the ECOC Selection Panel, we would like to express our appreciation for the work and enthusiasm of the candidate cities. The world and Europe need more than ever reconciliation and cooperation. Culture and the arts can play a crucial role to bring people together and to build bridges and collaboration - a conviction shared by all those involved for more than three decades in the ECOC initiative.

We understand that, due to Brexit, relationships between the United Kingdom and the European Union need to be redefined, but fruitful cultural exchange and joint projects should remain an aspiration deserving support to the mutual benefit of all citizens. The undeterred will of five cities across the UK to work on their bids for a European Capital of Culture in 2023, despite the complex political situation, is a valuable sign of the wish for cooperation with European cultural partners.

In view of the today's events, we wish to express our engagement to support an open dialogue and all kinds of constructive bridges to strengthen cultural diversity and cooperation between ECOC cities and all other cities in Europe and worldwide.

Signed

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