

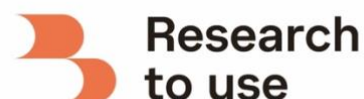
BUDWEIS 2028
EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

Budweis2028 European Capital of Culture
2024 Monitoring report

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Introduction

This report is part of the Monitoring and Evaluation framework adopted by European Capital of Culture Budweis2028. In this document, we present the results of monitoring Budweis2028's performance with regard to the artistic programme as well as governance and management during 2024. We assess the extent to which the ECoC team and its collaborators managed to move closer towards achieving the goals set for 2028. The aim of this document is to ensure that the preparation process for the title year (2028) is progressing in the right direction, and to identify problems and areas requiring greater attention or a change of approach.

2024 was the first year of preparation towards the 2028 title year. It was the year of putting the assumptions and dreams expressed in the bid book into practice. The reality, as always, proved harsher than expected: throughout the year, the team worked with much more limited resources than those declared in the bid book. Funding was restricted for both event production and hiring new staff, and this situation did not change significantly until the end of 2024. In addition to external limitations, the ECoC team struggled to implement an effective organizational structure within the newly created institution.

Nevertheless, the 2024 programme yielded nearly 360 outputs: activities for the general public and representatives of the culture sector, works of art, and publications. The largest project realized by one of the partners—South Specific, led by the South-Bohemian Theatre as part of a wider consortium—proved to be a huge success, selling more than 20,000 tickets, with nearly all visitors declaring their intention to return in the future. Also, the ECoC itself produced several projects that aligned with the strategic goals of the initiative and were met with satisfaction by both participants and stakeholders, fulfilling their intended aims and contributing positively to the overall impact of the year's programme.



Finally, most of the governance and management issues that were evident at the end of 2024 had been addressed, and while some challenges remain, significant improvement is already visible among both team members and curators.

The report consists of two parts. The first part focuses on the artistic programme and the concrete outputs delivered in 2024. We provide a bird's-eye perspective on the year's achievements, comparing the results against the goals set out in the Implementation Strategy. Importantly, these goals are set to be achieved for year 2028, with varying priority for implementation in each year. This means that certain elements that appear underrepresented in 2024 may not indicate neglect or failure, but rather reflect the phased approach to achieving the full ECoC vision. For many strategic priorities, 2024 served as a foundational year for establishing processes and frameworks that will be expanded and assessed in subsequent years. Therefore, our findings should be understood within this developmental context. Where we identify areas for strengthening or expansion, these represent strategic opportunities for the remaining preparatory years rather than fundamental shortcomings of the 2024 programme.

The second part of the report addresses topics related to governance and management. Here, we describe the experiences and opinions of those involved in delivering the ECoC programme—mainly the ECoC team and project curators.

The results presented in this report have several limitations. First, in many cases, we do not have sufficient data to determine whether something was a success or not. In particular, we lack data about audiences. In 2024, we managed to conduct three post-event investigations, albeit only in some of the most important projects of the year. One was in Kul.turista, a flagship project dedicated to community building, where we surveyed community leaders taking part in capacity building and later implementing their own local projects. Another investigation took place among participants of the Permaculture Forum, which serves as the grand opening of the year for the culture sector and all interested individuals. Finally, we conducted research among the audience of South Specific, the already mentioned large theatre festival. Apart from these three projects, we carried out a qualitative evaluation of the



flagship capacity-building programme for cultural organisations, Audience Amplifier. Research reports from these events are available on www.budejovice2028.cz.

Whenever possible, we will refer to the results of these evaluations throughout this report. In 2025, we plan to integrate several more ECoC projects into the research framework, mainly by using post-event surveys for audiences and participants.

The second limitation pertains to the fact that 2024 served as a pilot year for developing comprehensive monitoring systems. Data collection processes were still being established and refined throughout the year. The database of projects and activities was constructed by the Monitoring and Evaluation coordinator using available sources—event programmes, official reports prepared for the Ministry of Culture, and selected internal documents. However, standardized project reporting mechanisms had not yet been fully implemented, resulting in information gaps for certain variables such as activity locations or audience numbers. While these gaps limit some aspects of the quantitative analysis, the available data provides a reasonable approximation of overall programme patterns and identifies key areas for strategic attention in future development.



Part 1. Monitoring of the artistic programme

1.1 Methodology and sources of data

This section presents the results of the 2024 monitoring of the artistic programme. The monitoring covered a total of 18 projects, encompassing both those engaging regular audiences and those focused on internal planning activities. The projects included are: Ars Biologica, Audience Amplifier, Bibliocity, Centrum Trojmezi, Circular House, Creative Minds, Crossing Borders with Music, Diary, Inspire, South Specific, Open Season, Permaculture Forum, Culture Island, Pilgerland, Young Creators, Kul.turista, Skateholders, and Womenpedia. For more information about the projects, please consult Matěj Vlašánek (matej.vlasanek@budejovice2028.cz).

The most important type of output considered in this report is an activity—the smallest, most concrete elements of projects that are identifiable to both organisers and audiences/participants (typically by being listed in event programmes). Examples of activities include concerts, lectures, workshops, spectacles, guided tours, and similar undertakings.

Throughout this report, our analysis will focus on two levels: projects as a whole and activities as individual components. We will not refer to the “middle layer” that organisers might call events. For example, the project “Skateholders” comprised 19 activities delivered across two events: the Skateholders Forum and Ozvěny Skateholders Fóra. While these two events occurred at different times of the year and targeted slightly different audiences and objectives, our analysis will concentrate either on the entire project (e.g., its collaborators) or on the individual activities (e.g., their types, locations, target groups, etc.).



From our perspective, focusing on projects and activities—rather than including events—offers a clear and insightful view into the richness of cultural operations, while avoiding unnecessary complexity. Initially, our database and analyses included all three layers: projects, events, and activities. However, this approach proved overly intricate, making it difficult both to interpret the results and to communicate them effectively. The main issue was that, in many cases, events and activities were essentially the same—for instance, when a standalone round table for experts was organised as a single activity that also constituted the entire event.

1.2 Artistic programme: overview

In 2024 European Capital of Culture Budweis2028 produced 18 projects with a total number of 358 outputs. 65,4% of outputs were activities (N=234). The rest of the outputs were:

- publications and other text outputs (78, most of which were entries about the city and everyday life published online in the project Diaries),
- other visual / video / audio outputs (e.g. pictures commission specially for Diaries, audio recordings)
- three works of arts (a dance performance, a musical composition, a temporary outdoor installation)
- eleven interventions in public spaces, meaning mostly renovations and revitalizations done inside cultural organizations and in public space within community projects supported by Kul.turista.

In the following parts of the report we will be focusing solely on activities (N=234). Majority of them (78,6%; N=184) were public, meaning that they were open to regular public (in minor cases by enrollment, but always not requiring any special invitation). 50 activities (21,4%) were internal, meaning that you either had to get a special invitation (e.g. as an expert or collaborator) or that recruitment was limited to very specific groups of people (e.g. members of one of ECoC-supported cultural networks).

The following parts of this report are structured against Permaculture goals, which were initially formulated in the second bid book, and further elaborated in the Implementation Plan (2024).



1.3 Diversity in ECoC programme: forms and genres of activities

Key findings:

- Spectacles and non-traditional theatre dominated the programme. The largest project, South Specific, contributed significantly to the high proportion of spectacles (39.3% of all activities) and shaped the genre landscape, particularly in non-traditional theatre.
- Capacity building and professional development were strong focuses. Meetings, workshops, and lectures collectively accounted for a substantial share of activities, reflecting the programme's emphasis on learning and managing cultural projects.
- Community and social activities were notably present. Socialising events and parties featured prominently, especially in community projects and as accompaniments to internal activities.
- Diversity of genres and forms was evident but uneven. While there was a wide range of activity types, some traditional and visually oriented categories (e.g., heritage, painting, ceramics, folk music) were absent or minimally represented.

Recommendations:

- Ensure balanced artistic diversity across the full ECoC timeline. While different years may have different artistic focus, develop a strategic approach through the preparation years to strengthen representation of diverse art genres and domains so that they have adequate presence in the overall ECoC programme.
- Maintain focus on capacity building and professional development. Continue to provide learning and networking opportunities for culture workers.
- Continue and strengthen support for community initiatives. Ensure that these efforts remain integral to the cultural programme in a long-term perspective.

Diversity in this context is understood in two ways: as a variety of forms (concerts, spectacles, exhibitions, meetings, etc.) and as a variety of genres (traditional and non-traditional theatre, classical music, painting, etc.). The categories used in our database combine existing classifications (e.g., for visual or performing arts) with

information emerging from the artistic programme itself. Our goal is to provide as comprehensive and rich a picture as possible. Consequently, our analyses may appear detailed at first glance—but this reflects our understanding of “diversity” in the programme: an abundance of forms and genres with the potential to appeal to a wide range of people.

Table 1. Forms of activities identified in 2024 (N=234) – selection of the most frequently represented. One activity can represent more than one form

Form of activity	N	%
spectacle	92	39,3%
meeting: less formal than a debate / only for people involved in projects' organization	65	27,8%
workshop	63	26,9%
lecture	42	17,9%
concert	34	14,5%
debate / discussion - active participation of audience + some experts involved	22	9,4%

source: own elaboration

Table 2. Genres of activities identified in 2024 (N=234) - selection of the most frequently represented. One activity can represent more than one genre

Genre of activity	N	%
"non-traditional" theatre, incl. site specific / immersive performances	90	38,5%
"project management": summaries, plans	40	17,1%
professional education	26	11,1%
opera	24	10,3%
a socialising/fun activity: party, pub quiz, game	24	10,3%
classical music	23	9,8%
dance	21	9,0%
urbanism / city	18	7,7%
cultural education	17	7,3%
"everyday" / micro / local history	17	7,3%



Genre of activity	N	%
literature & poetry	16	6,8%
sports	13	5,6%
information / knowledge, incl. history of arts	12	5,1%

source: own elaboration

In 2024, the most popular form of activity in the ECoC artistic programme was the spectacle (39.3% of all activities). This outcome is largely due to the South Specific theatrical festival, which produced 90 performances, all classified as “non-traditional” theatre—the most popular genre of the year. Some of these spectacles also functioned as concerts, which explains the high proportion of concerts among other forms (14.5% of all activities). Concerts outside South Specific were mostly part of openings or closings of all-day events, rather than standalone activities. Classical music was almost exclusively represented in South Specific performances, while other musical genres (mainly rock/pop) appeared less frequently. The popularity of “opera” among genres is also linked to South Specific, as no opera activities occurred outside this festival.

The next most popular activities in 2024 were meetings (27.8%), workshops (26.9%), and lectures (17.9%). These are closely tied to learning and project management, as reflected in the genres: “project management” was the second most frequent genre (17.1%), followed by “professional education” (11.1%). Nearly all internal activities (those requiring an invitation) fell into these categories, highlighting 2024 as a year of capacity building and future planning for culture workers and experts.

Debates and discussions were also popular, accounting for 9.4% of activities. While many of these were internal, several were public events aimed at sharing knowledge and insights with broader audiences.

A somewhat surprising finding was the popularity of “parties and socialising activities” (10.3% of activities). These were often organised alongside internal activities and were particularly well-received in community projects supported by Kul.turista.



Other notable genres, appearing in more than 10 activities, include “urbanism/city” (7.7%), which was the focus of several debates and workshops, and “cultural education” (7.3%). The latter appeared less frequently than “professional education,” underscoring the year’s focus on preparing for future years rather than producing public events.

The popularity of four additional genres—“micro/local history,” “literature & poetry,” “sports,” and “information/knowledge”—can be attributed to specific projects: Centrum Trojmezi (Franz Kafka in local history), Skateholders (skating contests), and Womenpedia (events on women in art history).

Table 3. Forms of activities identified in 2024 (N=234) – selection of the least frequently represented. One activity can represent more than one form

Form of activity	N	%
exhibition	9	3,8%
physical exercise / presentation	8	3,4%
movie screening	7	3,0%
happening	5	2,1%
contest	5	2,1%
guided tour	4	1,7%
public reading / slam	0	0,0%

source: own elaboration

Table 4. Genres of activities identified in 2024 (N=234) – selection of the least frequently represented. One activity can represent more than one genre

Genre of activity	N	%
self-growth	9	3,8%
material heritage	9	3,8%
photography	8	3,4%
architecture	7	3,0%
rock/pop music	6	2,6%
film	6	2,6%
nature	6	2,6%

Genre of activity	N	%
other music genre	5	2,1%
gastronomy / eating	5	2,1%
other visual arts	4	1,7%
design other than crafts and fashion	4	1,7%
electronic/disco etc.	3	1,3%
graffiti / street art.	2	0,9%
health	2	0,9%
immaterial heritage, traditions	2	0,9%
crafts	2	0,9%
"traditional" theatre	1	0,4%
sculpture	1	0,4%
artistic education	1	0,4%
"big" history	1	0,4%
jazz/blues/contemporary music	0	0,0%
traditional / folk music	0	0,0%
painting / drawing / other related	0	0,0%
ceramics	0	0,0%
comics	0	0,0%
fashion	0	0,0%
religion	0	0,0%

source: own elaboration

The forms and genres that proved less popular (appearing in fewer than 10 activities) were primarily in the visual arts. The ECoC programme in 2024 included only 9 exhibitions. Genres such as “photography” and “film” were marginally represented (in 8 and 6 activities, respectively), while “other visual arts,” “sculpture,” and “graffiti/street art” appeared even less frequently. “Painting/drawing” and “ceramics” were not represented at all.

Similarly, music genres other than classical were underrepresented. “Pop/rock” appeared in 6 activities, “other musical genre” in 5, and “electronic/disco” in 3. “Traditional/folk music” and “jazz/blues/contemporary” were not represented.



Lastly, “material” and “non-material heritage” were also underrepresented, despite their importance in the bid book. This indicates an area for potential growth and focus in future programme planning.

1.4 Diversity in ECoC programme: audiences

Key Findings

- Over a quarter (27.4%) of activities were targeted at people from the culture sector—workers, informal leaders, and artists—with most of these intended for project partners and experts.
- The vast majority (75.2%) of activities were open to anyone interested in the topic, form, or genre, but only 9% were explicitly designed to attract a broad, general audience.
- Very few activities (three in total) explicitly addressed people with disabilities or ethnic minorities.

Recommendations

- Promote broad, general audience events: Increase the number of activities designed to attract a wide, non-specialist audience, such as public festivals, street events, and inclusive community gatherings.
- Increase inclusivity for marginalized groups: Develop targeted programmes and outreach strategies to include people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, seniors, and other underrepresented groups.
- Strengthen audience research: Broaden data collection on actual audience demographics and participation across all projects to better understand and address community needs.

The overarching goal of striving for diversity in ECoC activities is to make the programme attractive and accessible to people from various social groups, backgrounds, and interests. Our database reflects the intended target groups for each activity—those explicitly addressed or most likely to attend based on form, genre, and topic. In 2024, audience data was only investigated for two projects: South Specific and Permaculture Forum. This limited data makes it impossible to draw definitive conclusions about who actually participated in ECoC activities.

In 2024, 27.4% (N=64) of all activities were targeted at people from the culture sector (workers, informal leaders, artists, etc.), with 67.2% (N=43) of these aimed solely at



those directly engaged in project management (international and local partners, experts). The remaining 32.8% focused mainly on capacity building (e.g., Audience Amplifier or Open Season) or knowledge sharing (e.g., Permaculture Forum, Creative Minds).

A significant majority—75.2% (N=176) of all activities—were directed at people likely to be interested in the topic, form, or genre. This included all activities requiring a ticket (e.g., theatre spectacles), those taking place in restricted spaces with a specific topic (such as lectures or workshops), and those assuming some level of audience skill or familiarity (e.g., skating contests). While many of these activities were also aimed at the culture sector, they were not restricted to it, allowing broader participation.

Only 21 activities (9.0%) were explicitly designed to attract a broad, general audience—such as passersby or those seeking entertainment rather than a specific cultural experience. Most of these were part of three projects: the Re.Use Festival (Circular House), Kul.turista, and Skateholders.

Some activities targeted specific age groups: 16.2% were aimed at youngsters and 8.5% at children. Seniors were explicitly invited to just 1.7% (4 activities). Foreigners were purposefully included in 12.4% of activities, and teachers were welcome to 8.5%, with a strong focus on relationships with young people in projects like Creative Minds and Young Creators.

Finally, marginalized groups remained underrepresented. There were only two activities explicitly inviting people with disabilities and one for ethnic minorities, highlighting a significant gap in the programme's inclusivity.

1.5 The programme will not take place only in the centre

Key findings:

- The majority (61.5%) of ECoC activities took place in České Budějovice, with a significant portion (26.1%) in other towns, but only a small fraction (5.6%) in rural areas. The remaining 6.8% were conducted online.
- Around 1/3 of all activities took place outside České Budějovice which shows intent to provide programme across the region
- Activities that took place in cities and towns occurred mostly in central areas (74.6%), while 21.5% took place in districts outside the center. Cultural institutions and organizations hosted 33.0% of activities, with others in social/cultural spaces (13.3%), public outdoor spaces (12.8%), heritage sites (12.4%), pubs/bars/restaurants (11.5%), schools (4.6%), and universities (3.2%). Unusual locations (16.2%) included boats and repurposed buildings.

Recommendations:

- Continue and expand the programme outside traditional cultural institutions. Given that a significant share of activities already take place in non-traditional venues (e.g., social spaces, outdoor areas, pubs, and unusual locations), this approach should be maintained and further developed to reach new audiences and increase program accessibility to various groups.
- Strengthen the presence of ECoC activities outside České Budějovice and beyond city centres. While 31.7% of activities were held outside the main city, and some in rural areas, more effort is needed to ensure broader regional coverage and to reach communities in towns and villages as well as districts outside urban centres.

In 2024, 61.5% of ECoC activities took place in the city of České Budějovice, 26.1% in other towns, and only 5.6% in rural areas. The remaining 6.8% of activities were held online. Beyond České Budějovice, the ECoC programme was most visible in Český Krumlov and Třeboň (notably through 49 spectacles during the theatre festival), with additional activities in Tábor, Osek, Benešov nad Černou, Slavonice, Prachatice, and Jindřichův Hradec. In rural areas, activities were organized in

villages such as Zvonková, Libníč, Komařice, and Holašovice (the latter two also featured in the theatre festival programme). Overall, 7 out of 18 projects organized activities outside České Budějovice, accounting for 31.7% of all activities.

Of all activities organized in cities and towns, 74.6% took place in their central areas, while 21.5% were held in districts outside the central zone.

Table 3. Activities by types of localisation (N=218, exclusion of activities held online)

Type of localisation	N	%
inside a cultural organisation	72	33,0%
other social / cultural spaces	29	13,3%
public outdoor space	28	12,8%
other	28	12,8%
heritage site	27	12,4%
bar, pub, restaurant	25	11,5%
school	10	4,6%
university / scientific institution	7	3,2%
public indoor space (city hall, train station)	2	0,9%

source: own elaboration

Regarding venue types, 33.0% of activities were hosted by cultural institutions and organizations, 13.3% in social or cultural spaces outside specific institutions (e.g., coworking or conference spaces), 12.8% in public outdoor spaces, 12.4% in heritage sites (such as castles or the village of Holašovice), and 11.5% in pubs, bars, or restaurants. Schools hosted 4.6% of activities, and universities 3.2%. Unusual locations—such as boats or the former post building (which became the ECoC office in 2025)—accounted for 16.2% of activities.

1.6 There will be opportunities for direct and active involvement in projects

Key findings:

- Opportunities for creative engagement in 2024 program were limited: 20.1% of delivered activities were workshops, interactive spectacles or creative projects in schools; only 6.4% of all programme activities involved artists collaborating directly with the public to create something together. Only two out of 18 projects engaged volunteers.

Recommendations:

- Increase the number of activities where artists work together with the public to create something, not just teach.
- Continue involving volunteers, but move towards a more structured and less spontaneous approach.

20,1% (N=47) of activities delivered in 2024 offered its participants opportunity to be creative or to express oneself through cultural or artistic means. Majority of such activities were workshops, complemented with highly interactive spectacles resembling escape rooms, and a series of creative projects undertaken at schools. Only 31,9% of them (and 6,4% among all activities in the programme) involved artists in a way that they created something together with regular, non-professional public (rather than teach how to create something, like in most workshops).

From a different angle, only two projects out of 18 engaged any volunteers. However, this was done mainly as initiative of specific project managers or curators, without any broader system of support for them or the volunteers themselves.



1.7 We will connect the cultures through projects

Key findings:

- The 2024 programme strongly emphasized local themes—neighborhoods, local identities, and local heritage.
- European identity, heritage, and policy-related topics were much less represented, with only a small percentage of activities explicitly addressing them.

Recommendations:

- Continue to promote activities that strengthen local identity and heritage. These topics resonated should remain a core part of the programme.
- Increase the number of activities that address European identity, heritage, and policy-related topics. This area was underrepresented compared to the ECoC agenda and needs to be expanded.

We measure “connections of cultures” by examining whether the activities delivered in 2024 addressed cultural identities and/or histories at various levels: neighborhood, local, national, or European. In 2024, locality was by far the most prominent theme. Specifically, 17.5% of all activities focused on neighborhoods or the place of living, 11.1% on local identities, and 12.8% on local heritage.

European topics appeared less frequently: 6.4% of activities dealt with European identity, 12.4% with European heritage, and 4.7% addressed specific topics or values we defined as European based on current EU policy trends—such as climate change, civic participation, youth participation in culture, and cultural diversity. Additionally, 5.6% of activities aimed to give voice to groups underrepresented in public debate, including people with disabilities and women. Overall, 7 out of 18 projects included some aspect that can be considered “European.” Given the ambitions of the ECoC agenda, this is too limited to be considered a success. Moreover, 7 projects did not touch upon any aspect of “connection of cultures,” whether on the local or international level.



1.8 Stories of local communities are integrated into the program

Key Findings

- Only two projects (Kul.turista and Inspire) had a specific focus on community work, producing 35 activities (15.0% of all activities) in 2024. Both prioritized deep engagement with communities rather than reaching a wide audience.
- According to evaluation carried out specifically for the project, Kul.turista successfully transferred practical knowledge, fostered collaboration, and served as an accessible entry point for public participation in ECoC. Workshops and consultations led to real changes, new connections, and planned partnerships among participants.

Recommendations

- Continue delivering community-focused projects like Kul.turista and Inspire, prioritizing both depth and breadth of engagement. While the focused, in-depth approach worked well, consider also reaching out to more communities to increase overall impact.

In 2024, two projects were specifically dedicated to community work: Kul.turista and Inspire. Together, they delivered 35 activities (15.0% of all activities), a figure that may not seem overwhelming at first glance. However, both projects focused on depth rather than breadth. Kul.turista provided versatile, systematic support to 10 communities—helping them learn and then develop their own projects. Inspire, on the other hand, concentrated mainly on preparatory work for future years, conducting focus interviews with community representatives and organizing meetings to photograph local communities. Both projects are continuing in 2025: Kul.turista with a renewed topic and framework, and Inspire by transforming its 2024 findings into a theatre performance.

According to detailed project evaluations, Kul.turista achieved its goals in 2024 by transferring practical knowledge, fostering collaboration between cultural organizations and communities through open calls and capacity-building, and serving as an accessible entry point for the public into ECoC activities. Workshops and



consultations led to real change for most participants, who valued learning from both experts and peers. Participants expressed interest in further guidance on starting and managing collaborations.

The initiative had a strong social impact, with most participants forming new connections and planning new partnerships. Ten community projects were successfully implemented, engaging local communities and utilizing local spaces—though efforts to improve accessibility were lacking. Project leaders were experienced, but balancing participation with family responsibilities was challenging. Kul.turista's positive effects extended beyond individuals to organizations, and all leaders would recommend the project.



1.9 Projects will meet minimum accessibility criteria

Key findings:

- More than half of the projects (10 out of 18) implemented at least some accessibility measures. However, majority of them did not address any needs related to health, mental or sensory conditions. Most common tools included translations or childcare which certainly makes ECoC program more welcoming for various audiences, but not strictly accessible to people with disabilities.

Recommendations:

- Continue to keep most activities free or low-cost. for audiences.
- Expand accessibility measures across all projects. While some projects have made progress, accessibility should be a standard for all activities.
- Provide systematic support for all projects to ask about accessibility and comfort needs, to share information about physical accessibility for all event locations, provide other specific tools dedicated to specific groups of people.

In 2024, few projects required participants to purchase tickets: South Specific, a major theatrical festival (comprising 90 activities), and a handful of workshops such as those in Creative Minds (which required a small payment from participants). This means that majority of ECoC program delivered in 2024 posed no financial barriers to audiences.

Out of 18 projects, 10 implemented some accessibility-related measures for their audiences or participants. Four projects provided Czech-English or Czech-German translations (with two offering only this service). In three projects with specific activities that required online registration, the organizers asked if they can address any accessibility-related needs. Two projects prepared descriptions of the physical conditions of event locations. One project, Open Season—which was specifically focused on accessibility in culture—offered additional solutions, such as translations into Czech Sign Language. Finally, three projects offered childcare during events.



1.10 Projects will contribute to the development of institutions. We will connect institutions with international partners and with each other

Key results:

- A substantial part of the programme (64 activities, 27.4%) was dedicated to the culture sector, with most activities held in České Budějovice and over half being internal or invitation-based.
- The programme engaged 84 organisations and informal groups: 60 in one-off activities, 18 in systematic capacity building (12 from the city, others from the region), and 7 in multiple activities outside a full capacity building programme.
- Collaborations (exchange of resources/invitations to participate) were present but limited in numbers and scope.
- International engagement was small compared to the ECoC agenda.

Recommendations:

- Engage more organisations in network activities (both old and new members) and make participation broader (with wider range of activities than capacity building, e.g. joint projects, lobbying and advocacy).
- Expand international collaborations in ECoC program, especially in joint projects and lasting partnerships. Help local organisations connect with partners across the country and abroad.

In 2024, a significant share of the ECoC programme—64 activities, or 27.4% of the total—was dedicated to people working in the culture sector: managers, artists, workers, and volunteers. The vast majority of these activities took place in the Ceske Budejovice, with a handful online and a few others in selected towns (Slavonice and Tábor). More than half of these (54.7%) were internal, intended for specific groups (e.g. members of one of ECoC-supported networks) or requiring an invitation, which helped foster closer collaboration and targeted capacity building.

Throughout 2024, the programme engaged 84 organisations and informal groups. Of these, 60 were involved in one-off activities (e.g. meetings, workshops etc.), while 18



took part in a more systematic capacity building program. 12 organizations that participated in capacity building were from the city of Ceske Budejovice; the rest was from the region. Seven organisations interacted with the program through multiple activities, but not as part of a full capacity building initiative.

In terms of collaborations—defined here as some exchange of resources and/or invitations to participate in project activities (separate from delivering capacity building and other knowledge-related activities to cultural organisations)—seven projects involved some local cultural organisations, and four included partners from across the country. Also, two networks were specifically dedicated to fostering collaborations in culture sectors. Majority of activities undertaken in these two networks in 2024 took place within two projects: Audience Amplifier and Kul.turista. Cross-sector collaborations (outside culture sector, e.g. with schools, universities, skate shops, journalists...) took place in nine projects locally and three nationally. Five projects had an international dimension, but only four established deeper, ongoing partnerships involving joint creation or closer contact.

The programme also included 5 activities specifically supporting young or emerging artists (involving over 170 musicians in one case), and 17 activities supporting the independent cultural scene, mainly through concerts and performances.



1.11 Projects will be implemented with minimum requirements for sustainability

Key result:

- Sustainability was addressed in only a minority of projects during 2024, with practical measures and internal discussions on the topic remaining limited and not systematically integrated across the ECoC programme.

Recommendation:

- Introduce clear internal criteria for environmental sustainability and provide support for project managers, so that sustainability becomes a regular and visible part of both planning and public programming within the ECoC initiative.

In 2024, the issue of sustainability within the ECoC programme was addressed in a limited and unsystematic way. Only 5 out of 18 projects took steps to implement practical sustainability measures—such as using public transport for participant logistics or developing guidelines for sustainable practices for project’s participants.

When it comes to environmental sustainability as a topic, it appeared in three projects, and only in the form of internal discussions and activities rather than as a visible element of public programming. In a few cases, workshops and project planning sessions included sustainability as a subject, but these were exceptions rather than the rule. The broader theme of the “cultural landscape” was also referenced in one project (Pilgerland), linking cultural activities to environmental concerns, but again, this was done internally and not publicly communicated.

As of May 2025, internal criteria for environmental sustainability in the ECoC programme — along with a support system for project managers — are under development. Until these guidelines are finalized and implemented, the absence of clear standards makes it challenging to consistently monitor, compare, or encourage sustainability efforts across projects.



Part 2. ECoC governance

2.1 Methodology and sources of data

This chapter explores the internal dynamics of governance and management within the Budweis2028 European Capital of Culture team and collaborators during 2024. The analysis is centered on two main areas. First, it examines the level of job satisfaction and the assessment of working conditions among both ECoC team members and project curators. Second, it considers the quality of cooperation and mutual management between these two groups, with a particular emphasis on the collaborative processes that underpin the artistic programme.

The findings presented here are based primarily on qualitative insights gathered through in-depth meetings with curators and open-ended survey responses. Quantitative data from closed survey questions provides supporting evidence for these qualitative patterns. In November 2024, two internal surveys were conducted—one targeting ECoC team members and the other directed at project curators. These surveys included a mix of closed and open-ended questions. They addressed topics such as working conditions, job satisfaction, the quality of cooperation, and suggestions for improvement. The response rate was substantial, with 13 out of 16 team members and 9 out of 19 curators participating.

To complement the survey data, two rounds of in-depth meetings were held with approximately nine curators. The first round took place in winter 2024/2025. It provided an opportunity to discuss experiences in greater detail and brought to light several issues that had not been fully captured in the surveys. In January 2025, a dedicated meeting was organized to communicate all the findings—many of them difficult and detailed—directly to the ECoC team. This session was thorough and candid, covering far more detail than is included in this report. Despite the challenging nature of the feedback, the ECoC team responded with a clear commitment to improvement, treating the session as a call to action. It was collectively agreed that a second round of monitoring would be conducted after three



to four months, allowing the team time to implement changes and demonstrate their commitment to the principles of Permaculture, as well as to their own well-being and that of their collaborators.

The second round of meetings, held in spring 2025 with the same group of curators, revisited the key topics to assess whether the problems identified earlier had been addressed and whether the quality of collaboration had improved. This approach proved effective, as it provided space for reflection, action, and follow-up.

By integrating the results of these surveys with insights from the curator meetings, this chapter aims to provide a nuanced assessment of the working environment within the ECoC structure. While the live feedback sessions covered a much broader and more detailed range of issues, this report focuses on three main areas that remain the most strategically important. The chapter also identifies areas where further development is needed, with an emphasis on lessons learned and priorities for ongoing improvement.



2.2 Ambiguity of ECoC Goals

Key Findings

In 2024, both the ECoC team and curators struggled to clearly define and apply Permaculture goals in practice. While it should be noted that evaluating progress against Permaculture goals may not be an adequate approach for a single year—given that practical priorities are often driven by budget constraints and project readiness timelines rather than conceptual frameworks—the observed struggles with goal clarity nonetheless had real operational consequences. This lack of clarity led to uncertainty about expectations, fragmented collaboration, and complex decision-making. The ambiguity negatively affected workflow and morale, with curators feeling unsupported and team members finding it hard to justify decisions.

In 2025, a new approach was introduced to make expectations more concrete and actionable for all team members and collaborators. Formal agreements now include more specific requirements that align with the ambitions of Permaculture. Capacity-building efforts have shifted toward direct support for curators and project managers, including a tailored audience development programme. While these operational changes have improved clarity and support, defining the broader Permaculture goals remains a work in progress, with the current focus on practical, project-based objectives rather than a unifying vision.

Recommendations

- Expand targeted capacity-building so that the key areas of ECoC interventions (audience development and accessibility, environmental sustainability, local and European dimension) are successfully implemented in projects.
- Create a transparent framework for decision-making and project prioritization.
- Alongside operational improvements, work toward a broader vision that can inspire and unite all stakeholders.

Problem Overview and Manifestation



Throughout 2024, the ECoC team and project curators faced ongoing challenges related to the clarity and practical application of Permaculture goals. When asked to describe the key goals of the initiative several team members and curators struggled to articulate specific, tangible benefits. Responses often relied on broad concepts of urban development or were expressed in ambiguous, jargon-like language. Only a minority of people who participated in surveys could point to concrete outcomes. This lack of shared understanding influenced the quality of collaboration with curators, who frequently expressed uncertainty about what was required from them, particularly regarding how to align their projects with ECoC priorities.

The absence of a clear set of goals led to practical difficulties in daily work. Team members and curators reported a sense of fragmentation and, at times, confusion about the direction of the programme. Decision-making, especially in the context of budget constraints, became very complex and engaging for several people at the same time, as there was no agreed-upon, fully transparent framework for prioritizing projects. The key Permaculture values—such as accessibility, environmental sustainability, and international cooperation—were not systematically addressed across the program; a problem that we already described in Part 2 of this report. ECoC priorities were implemented with a lot of good will, however, lacking clear articulation or systemic support, it was more of an individual initiative rather than a unified approach.

The impact of this ambiguity negatively influenced both workflow and morale. Curators described feeling unsupported and unsure of what was expected, which complicated planning and delivery. Team members, in turn, found it difficult to justify their decisions or to focus collective efforts, leading to frustration and a sense that the Permaculture potential was not being fully realized.

Steps Toward Resolution and Current Status

In response to these challenges, a new approach was introduced in 2025, focusing on making expectations more concrete and actionable for all team members and collaborators. Formal agreements with curators and partners now include specific requirements, such as the integration of accessibility measures. This example



demonstrates how combining clear obligations with targeted support can lead to practical improvements: in spring 2025 there were more projects that have implemented concrete tools and solutions than throughout the whole previous year.

Capacity-building efforts have also shifted, with greater emphasis on supporting curators and project managers directly. For instance, a dedicated audience development programme was launched, in large part tailored to the needs of individual projects. These operational changes have provided much-needed orientation for curators, managers, and collaborators, helping to clarify what is expected and how to achieve it.

It is important to note, however, that work on defining the Permaculture goals remains ongoing. The current focus is on developing goals in a practical, project-based manner, rather than through broad conceptual or visionary statements as was the case in 2024. While this operational approach has improved clarity and support for those delivering projects, it does not yet provide the kind of unifying vision that could inspire and align all stakeholders. Nevertheless, it represents a significant step forward in creating a more supportive and effective working environment, which is a crucial step for turning the Permaculture concept into reality.



2.3 Late or Lacking Information About Project Budgets

Key Findings

Project budgets were developed over an extended period, making it difficult to finalize plans or confirm details with collaborators. Unclear financial commitments strained relationships with partners, and discouraged innovation or risk-taking. The lack of long-term agreements made it hard for curators to invest in multi-year projects or secure institutional support.

By spring 2025, most projects had clearer budget allocations and curators could plan further ahead, though limited resources and the challenge of multi-year planning remain.

Recommendations

- Strengthen internal planning and request future project budgets early to facilitate negotiations.
- Offer targeted support and clear guidance to curators during uncertain periods to sustain motivation and project progress.
- Persistently pursue multi-year planning with local authorities, regardless of the challenges involved, as this is essential for the stability and success of the ECoC programme.

Problem Overview and Manifestation

In 2024, a significant challenge for both curators and the ECoC team was the lack of timely and clear information regarding project budgets. This issue became particularly acute as projects were already underway and curators needed to plan for the following year, 2025 (of not further to the future). Many curators reported that they received confirmation of their available funds only late in 2024, often after repeated requests and considerable delays.

This uncertainty was particularly problematic for projects with high visibility or prestige potential, which often require early and stable cooperation agreements. The lack of formal commitments also created tension with partner institutions, who were



sometimes reluctant to adjust their own programming and management practices to align with ECoC requirements in the absence of clear, long-term assurances.

The primary reason for delays was the unexpectedly complex and prolonged negotiations with local authorities. Despite the expectations set out in the bid book, the process of securing budget approvals took much longer and proved far more difficult than anticipated. The implementation period required balancing ambitious program goals with available resources, including staffing constraints that differed from initial plans. This environment demanded constant adaptation and creative problem-solving from all involved, as expectations often far exceeded the practical means available. All of this happened when the team was only transforming from a semi-official group of “enthusiasts” into a fully operational, legal institution.

As a result, the ECoC team couldn't give curators clear budget information until they finished negotiations with local authorities. This created a cycle of problems: curators couldn't plan without knowing their budgets, and the ECoC team couldn't make realistic plans without knowing what curators could deliver. This situation was also aggravated by the fact that some curators submitted unrealistic budget proposals or project plans that didn't align with available resources.

Curators felt stuck and couldn't move forward with their work or make commitments to their teams. Sometimes they had to rely on personal relationships to keep people interested. The ECoC team also struggled - without realistic project proposals from curators, they couldn't plan the overall program or set proper expectations with authorities. Both sides felt frustrated because they couldn't do their work properly.

Furthermore, curators also expressed concern about the absence of formal agreements guaranteeing the continuation of their projects beyond a single year. Without clear, long-term commitments from the ECoC team, curators found it difficult to make serious plans or invest resources in activities that required multi-year preparation, such as the production of new works or the development of international partnerships.



The broader challenge here lies in the reality that planning several years ahead is notoriously difficult in the context of public sector funding and shifting political relationships. Without strong and consistent political support, it is virtually impossible to secure the stability needed for multi-year cultural projects. This is not a unique situation for Budweis2028. Despite these challenges, many ECoCs have found ways to adapt and move forward, often by building flexible frameworks and maintaining ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, even when ideal conditions were not present.

Steps Toward Resolution and Current Status

Significant progress was made in addressing these issues in spring 2025. By April, the majority of projects had received clear information about their budgets, and most curators expressed at least moderate satisfaction with the amounts allocated for this year. This improvement was achieved despite the fact that the overall ECoC budget was officially approved only in March.

Curators were also asked to prepare preliminary budgets for their projects for 2026 by the end of June, which should allow ECoC team members for more thorough planning and negotiation with local authorities.

While the issue of limited financial resources remains—several curators noted that available funds are still insufficient to fully realize their plans as they were put forward in the bid book or to offer competitive remuneration—the environment has shifted from one of frustration and stagnation to one of greater clarity and hope for better future. The focus has moved toward managing workload and identifying areas where additional support is needed, rather than being dominated by concerns over basic budget information or struggles with the local authorities. Continued attention to timely communication and transparent decision-making will be essential to maintain this progress and to ensure that curators and their collaborators can plan and deliver high-quality projects with confidence.

Furthermore, there are also early signs of improved long-term planning, such as the identification of key highlights for 2028 in collaboration with local authorities. However, the broader challenge of aligning ECoC planning cycles with the realities of public sector funding and political relationships remains. While progress has been



made, continued attention to formalizing long-term cooperation will be essential to secure the participation of key partners and to realize the full potential of the ECoC programme.



2.4 Lack of Clarity in Team Roles and Internal Communication

Key Findings

Roles and responsibilities within the ECoC team were often unclear, leading curators to repeat information and struggle to identify decision-makers for their projects. Leadership changes and under-manning (fewer staff than planned) compounded uncertainty, making it difficult to maintain continuity and effective communication. The introduction of a new organizational structure and additional staff in early 2025 brought greater transparency, but many employees and curators still found their roles and relationships ambiguous, requiring ongoing clarification and adjustment.

Recommendations

- Clearly define and communicate roles, responsibilities, and decision-making channels for all team members and curators, ensuring everyone knows their points of contact.
- Foster open and regular internal communication to address uncertainties promptly and ensure feedback from curators is acknowledged and acted upon.
- Balance flexibility with structure by encouraging individual strengths while maintaining clear relationships between positions and consistent alignment with ECoC goals.

Problem Overview and Manifestation

In 2024, the ECoC team and project curators faced persistent challenges due to an unclear division of roles and responsibilities. Curators often did not know which team member was responsible for key decisions about their projects, such as budget approvals or programme changes. This led to situations where information had to be repeated to multiple people, as internal communication channels were not well defined. Leadership changes, such as the replacement of the CEO, added further uncertainty about whether previous decisions and commitments would be honored, complicating project management.



These difficulties were closely linked to two underlying factors. First, the team operated with significantly fewer staff than originally planned in the bid book, resulting in under-manning that strained both daily operations and long-term planning. Second, there was an initial commitment to an idealistic, completely flat organizational structure. While intended to foster openness and flexibility, this approach proved difficult to implement in a context marked by political uncertainty, and a highly bureaucratized environment.

These structural ambiguities had several negative effects upon the morale of work. Curators sometimes felt left alone with their challenges, even after clearly communicating their need for support. They also found themselves repeatedly preparing documents, budgets, and plans, yet felt that these efforts did not translate into concrete decisions or progress. There was a perception that the ECoC team prioritized internal workshops and discussions about values over practical project management.

At the same time, team members experienced increased workloads and a sense of being overwhelmed, as the lack of structure made it difficult to delegate tasks effectively. This environment led to concerns about wasted time and inefficiency, with some curators feeling that their input was not being heard or addressed.

Steps Toward Resolution and Current Status

At the beginning of 2025, a new organizational structure was introduced, accompanied by the recruitment of additional staff in roles such as international relations, artistic programme, marketing, capacity building, volunteer coordination, and the project managers. While the former positions should deal with specific areas of Permaculture, project managers are intended to serve as key points of contact between the ECoC team and external collaborators, providing more consistent support and oversight. Most curators welcomed this change, although some noted that project managers joined too late in the process to make a substantial difference for 2025.



A clear and operational system of meetings—both within working groups and for the whole team—has also been established. This regular meeting structure has significantly improved information flow and fostered greater integration and collaboration among team members.

This structure was formalized in a diagram, making responsibilities more transparent, even if not yet fully described in written procedures. However, many new employees have expressed that they are still in the process of discovering their own tasks, as their everyday work turned out to be much more ambiguous than expected. The same refers to curators – several people in this groups said that they do not have clarity over what tasks exactly their project manager can deliver (but also, that they will be happy to work on this with them).

While this situation can allow individuals to work according to their own predispositions, interests, and strengths, it is only effective if accompanied by a strong focus on establishing clear structure of relationships between positions—rather than relying on the characteristics of individuals in those roles—and on consistently addressing the ECoC goals.

Overall, the process of fully embedding the new structure and ensuring that all team members and curators are aware of the appropriate points of contact is ongoing. Continued attention to internal communication, clear delegation of responsibilities, and the development of operational procedures will be essential to maintain progress and support effective collaboration as the Budweis2028 moves towards the title year.



Part 3. Perceptions of Budweis2028 by audiences and cultural operators

Key Findings

- Audiences generally perceive Budweis2028 as ECoC positively, with no significant negative associations. The most common concerns relate to potential overcrowding, increased traffic, and parking issues, while a minority worry about how funds are spent or whether the benefits will be long-term.
- Culture operators also report few perceived disadvantages but express deeper concerns about the risk of the programme straying from its declared values. Key fears include political interference, clientelism, excessive commercialization, lack of genuine public engagement, insufficient regional partnerships, and a failure to create lasting legacy or improvements in cultural infrastructure.
- The main advantage for audiences is a richer and more varied cultural offer, especially the introduction of non-traditional activities and high-profile events. Additional perceived benefits include increased recognition for Budweis and improvements to cultural infrastructure.
- Culture operators highlight different priorities, emphasizing the need for better cooperation (including internationally), more operational support, expanded audiences and community engagement, skill development, and infrastructural improvements.

Recommendations

- Develop and maintain a consistent, systematic branding strategy that creates long-term positive associations with ECoC, but does not overshadow the identity of individual projects or dictate the audience's experience.

- Ensure branding is present but discreet, providing clear and simple information about ECoC's role as the initiator or supporter of activities, without dominating the content or messaging of each event.

In this final part of our report we are presenting results of preliminary studies concerning how culture operators and audiences perceive the fact that Budweis is become a European Capital of Culture for year 2028. We are referring here to data from open-ended questions that we included in four surveys conducted among: 1/ participants of Permaculture Forum, 2/ participants of Kul.turista; 3/ curators of ECoC projects; 4/ audiences of a theatrical festival South Specific. We were asking about potential advantages and disadvantages resulting from being an ECoC for 2028, as well as those things that would make one evaluate ECoC as a failure (only among culture operators). The answers we got from participants of South Specific represent the perspective of audiences (N=422), while the answers from Permaculture Forum, Kul.turista and curators represent the perspective of culture operators (N=48).

By far the most important result of all analyses is that the cultural audiences do not have any negative associations with Budweis being an ECoC. The most frequent answers given to the question over disadvantages, in this groups were: “none” (meaning that they don’t see any disadvantages; 32,1% of respondents) an “I don’t know” (N=33,8%). Otherwise, the things that concerned people most were related to overcrowding of the city: 19,7% people spontaneously said that they fear of “too many people / too many tourists”. Other frequently indicated potential trouble was closely linked to overcrowding, and pointed to too much traffic (and difficulty with travelling through the city) and lack of parking areas (10,8% statements refered to these). Finally, some respondents thought that there may be some disadvantages related to how money is spent: that it is devoted solely to culture (while there are also other important needs that should be addressed) or that the money will be spent in an inappropriate way (e.g. for several one-off actions instead of long-term change, or that there will be a general overspending).

We obtained similar results from surveys filled in by cultural operators: almost all of them said that they see no potential disadvantages related to Budweis being ECoC.

However, we also asked this group about what they would consider a failure (a question that was absent from the survey for the audience of South Specific). The answers to the question over „Co by se muselo stát, abyste vyhodnotili EHMK v Budějovicích jako NEÚSPĚCH?“ showed how strong was the fear for disintegration of the program from the declared values (often linked to the politicians taking over the whole initiative, but also to the danger of clientelism and being limited to the closest circle of people directly involved in ECoC operations). This disintegration could consist in simply failing to achieve the goals, but also too much commercialization, too much focus on ones' careers and personal brands, putting too much pressure on attendance (but at the same time – failing to engage general public, going unnoticed, meaningless for the locals), lack of cooperation with culture actors from the region and, in general, lack of partnerships between organisations. An important topic was also lack of legacy, that is, achieving no lasting effects after 2028: that projects started in the process simply vanish, there are no significant changes in cultural infrastructure, that culture operators go back to the “old-fashioned” ways of doing things, that there are no well-established European cooperations, continuing lack of more stability when it comes to political and administrative support for culture).

On the other hand, the key ECoC-related advantage for the audience would be a wider cultural offer (more activities in numbers and in their variety, including more “non-traditional” activities and events that bring in world-known names to Budweis). 55,0% respondents who participated in South Specific mentioned at least one of these topics. Any other type of advantage enumerated in the answers did not come close in frequency to cultural offer. It is worth mentioning that 9,5% people also said that ECoC can bring more recognition to Budweis in the country and abroad. 9,0% pointed to infrastructural interventions for cultural operations, which is certainly related to the fact that they were the theatre audience, well aware of the conditions in which the Reavolving Auditorium and the South Bohemian Theatre operate.

If it comes to culture operators, their perception of ECoC advantages is different from the one of the audience. This is not to say that the perspectives of two groups are incompatible, rather, that the focus of culture operators is placed on different things. 18,8% of respondents in this groups mentioned better cultural cooperation, including on international level. 20,8% would welcome more support for their operations: from



financial resources, through skills, to simply feeling that they are important for people and becoming more visible outside the culture sector itself (e.g. to politicians). 18,8% specifically referred to gaining new audiences or building better relationships with local communities, including those that do not participate in culture on a regular basis. Another 12,5% would welcome opportunities to develop new skills, get inspired and in general – to grow as individuals and as organisations. Finally, for 10,4% of respondents ECoC could improve the infrastructure for cultural operations.