

ANALYSING THE GOVERNANCE OF MALTESE CULTURE AND VALLETTA 2018 FROM A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL COUNCILS PERSPECTIVE

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This paper analyses culture from a national policy perspective and by taking into account the Valletta 2018 initiative that is directly and indirectly changing the cultural platform of culture in the Maltese Islands. Given the small geographic size of Malta and the strong interplay of the central government in policy-making, a special emphasis is made to the relationship between the local councils and the central government. The original contribution of this paper stems from its dynamic analysis of culture and governance. The analysis is supplemented by primary results that were derived from a survey conducted with all local councils in Malta and Gozo.

Key words: Culture, Public Policy, Governance, Local Councils, Valletta 2018 and Central Government

Introduction

The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) Programme was launched in 1985 and since then the ECoC title has been awarded to nearly 60 cities in 30 countries. The ECoC Programme has become a key platform for the capital's and country's positioning and a catalyst for economic, policy and cultural regeneration (Garcia and Cox 2013). As a result, the Valletta 2018 initiative cannot be analysed in isolation but has to be reviewed in conjunction with the cultural situation in Malta and with public policy initiatives.

During the last decades important concepts such as 'cultural diversity', 'cultural development', 'cultural participation' and 'cultural democracy' have been used interchangeably and with increasing emphasis (UNESCO 2006: 3–7). While culture can be considered from many different policy angles this paper will analyse the governance of cultural policy from four different dimensions: policy formulation, policy implementation, resource allocation, and community involvement. Culture cannot be analysed in a vacuum but the inter-relationship of culture with a number of policy aspects must be considered.

The paper is structured into five main sections. The first section outlines the methodology used to research this paper. The second section focuses on governance and policy formulation. It highlights the frequent shifts from one Ministry to another of Malta's cultural portfolio during the last decade and the interconnection between different policy documents and strategies. The third section assesses governance and effective implementation. This section emphasises the increasing shift from a 'government' to a 'governance' style of politics and as a result, the contribution of civil society and other key policy players, especially local councils. In parallel, the three-tier dimension of cultural

policy will also be discussed, namely: the Europeanisation of cultural policy and absorption of EU funding, the relationship between central and local government and the synergies and efforts of local councils on an individual basis. The fourth section examines governance from a resources point of view: the economy, financial considerations and the balance of power between central government and local councils in controlling the use of specific locations for cultural activities. This section provides a holistic picture of the financial injection in cultural policy on a national and local level, and assesses the policy's relationship with other crucial areas such as the economy. The fifth section highlights the concept of shared governance and evaluates the involvement of the community, the input of local councils to culture and most importantly the active involvement and participation of citizens in cultural activities.

The Governance of Cultural Policy: Methodology used

Traditionally, culture had been regarded as an isolated reality with very little connection with other policy areas, especially the economic dimension which embraces tourism development – an important economic pillar of a small island state such as Malta. As Daniell (2014) has argued, it is important to understand how culture affects policy in its different forms and the role it plays in shaping public policy.

With this perspective in mind, the author analysed the inter-connection of cultural policy through a number of dimensions by focusing on three main pillars:

- (1) The complexity of cultural policy and its connection with the political and economic perspectives.
- (2) The shift from the notion of 'government' to 'governance' focusing on cultural policy from a representative point of view and from direct or indirect citizens' involvement.
- (3) The multi-level dimension of culture at the European, National and Local levels focusing on the relationship between these three tiers of governance and the role of each level in setting the agenda, influencing cultural policy and the effective implementation of cultural projects.

The research methodology employed was the following:

- a) An evaluation of the success stories and the failures of past European Capitals of Culture (ECoCs).
- b) An analysis of the data published by the National Statistics Office (NSO), the Ministry for Finance (MFIN) and the Creative Economy Group through various publications or press releases.
- c) A series of interviews with various local councils representing the six main regions across Malta and Gozo.
- d) An online questionnaire disseminated to all 68 local councils in Malta and Gozo. Fifty local councils participated in the survey; this is representative enough to draw meaningful conclusions.

The survey was conducted during the months of April and May 2015. A total of 25 questions to local councils were formulated regarding the four governing dimensions assessed in this paper. In addition to this questionnaire, a series of interviews were

conducted with Local Council representatives, the Department of Local Government, Valletta 2018 Foundation, the Culture Directorate within the Ministry responsible for Culture and the Malta Arts Council. Interviewees were asked a series of open-ended questions in order to give them the opportunity to explain in detail the cultural situation, governance, and initiatives being organised through the Valletta 2018 Foundation on a national and local level. They were also given the opportunity to propose a way forward.

This paper presents primary data with regards to Valletta 2018 initiatives and the cultural situation in Malta. It also develops a comprehensive analysis of Malta's cultural policy in a variety of policy spheres and dimensions.

Governance and the Formulation of Cultural Policy

One of the most important aspects of the governing dimension is the formulation of policies (Burstein 1991). To understand better the cultural sector, it is important to understand the political influence which leads to the formulation of cultural policy. In fact, Michael Rios argues that the use of 'public space' has always been political (2009: 92). This section will analyse the relationship of culture with the political arena from a policy formulation perspective in order to better understand the policy background and Malta's preparedness for Valletta 2018.

Through an analysis of policy, the author tried to gauge the level of interest in culture at a national and local level by asking local councils' representatives about this phenomenon and their involvement in policy formulation. When compounded with an explanation of the main actors; the changes in the cultural portfolio in the last decade; and the main policy initiatives from 2006, this section provides a holistic overview of policy formulation in Malta's cultural domain.

Malta's National Cultural Policy and the Level of Priority on the Maltese Political Agenda

Malta's National Cultural Policy, published in 2011, emphasised the concept of 'space' not less than sixteen times. However, this concept was not only approached from a physical, logistical and infrastructural point of view but was also correlated with public policy and other governing and managerial considerations. Malta's Cultural Policy highlighted the fact that space is not to be regarded as a static concept but should also be linked to training, the incentivisation of research and innovation, experimentation, lifelong learning opportunities and opportunities for children to develop their talents (PSTEC 2011).

For decades, culture was not a priority policy area in Malta. On the contrary, culture was perceived politically as a micro-issue with very little focus and hardly deserving attention. It was not before the 1970s that culture started to feature as part of the electoral manifestos of the two main political parties, namely the Nationalist Party (PN) and the Malta Labour Party (PL). Nevertheless, 30 years elapsed before a public consultation document was launched in order to establish a cultural policy for Malta. Following this consultative exercise in 2001, a Cultural Heritage Act and the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts (MCCA) were established in 2002.

Following these milestones, the situation has improved drastically during the last decade and culture has become an important policy area in Malta. The survey conducted

with the local councils shows a significant increase in the prioritisation of culture in Malta. In fact, 78% of the local councils believe that nowadays culture is being given high priority on the government political agenda. 22% expressed their concern that culture is still not being given the deserved attention on a political level. However, only 12% of the local councils stated that culture is being given a very high priority on their own agenda. There is difference in terms of priority between the perceived national and the actual local levels. In fact 56% of all local councils see a difference in the level of cultural priority between the two layers of governance. When considering these figures, it is important to highlight that ECoC affects all levels of governance: the European, National and Local level.

The Main Actors in Malta's National Cultural Policy

In any policy area, not least cultural policy, it is important to determine the main actors who play a crucial role. As shown in Figure 1, Malta's cultural domain involves the interplay of several actors including both governmental and civil agencies, with the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government deemed to be the policy leader responsible for the crafting, implementation and evaluation of policies with the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts (MCCA), being a central agency responsible for providing the necessary support to the national strategies in line with the established policy framework. The Ministry comprises both the Department of Local Government and the Cultural Directorate. There are other important players in Maltese culture which are also mentioned in the National Cultural Policy. These include the Libraries Department, National Archives, cultural NGOs, local councils, religious organisations and private owners of cultural assets (PSTEC 2011).

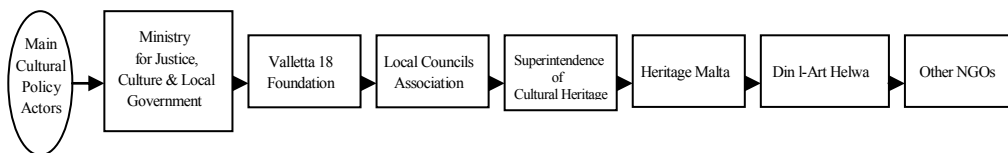


Fig. 1. Main Actors in Malta's Cultural Domain.

Central policy actors are the main drivers of Malta's cultural policy, however cultural policy should be decentralised and democratised. Local Councils can indeed be an important vehicle in order to achieve this aim. The survey shows that 78% of Malta's local councils think that they are one of the main actors of Malta's Cultural Policy. Out of the 11 Local Councils who do not feel that they are one of the main actors, 28.6% specified that the Central Government is the main actor, 7.1% Governmental Departments, 42.9% the Department of Culture and 21.4% Valletta 2018 foundation.

The Changes in the Cultural Portfolio during the Last Thirteen Years

Political direction and the strategic importance of the cultural portfolio is another perspective to governance and policy formulation. Throughout the years Malta's cultural portfolio has been subject to a number of shifts from one ministry to another. In the last thirteen years, culture shifted ministry six times, with an accelerated rate as of 2012.

Year	Ministry
2003	Ministry for Youths and the Arts
2004	Ministry for Tourism and Culture
2008	Ministry for Education, Sport and Youth
2012	Ministry for Tourism, Culture and the Environment
2013	Parliamentary Secretary for Culture and Local Environment
2014	Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government

Fig. 2. *The dimension of Culture within different Ministerial portfolios.*

When the Labour government returned to power in 2013, the cultural portfolio was administered by a Parliamentary Secretary for Culture and Local Government and a year later, in 2014, culture became part of the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government. Therefore, within a period of three years Culture changed ministerial direction three times. Such frequent changes hindered continuity and strategic long-term planning which is much required for this policy sector. Lack of continuity stemming from frequent changes in personnel was highlighted when reviewing the ECoC programme in general, especially Liverpool 2008 (Hull 2013).

The latest ministerial composition which integrates culture with local government may prove to be beneficial in instilling greater cultural awareness among local communities but it has lost the strategic economic connection between culture and tourism. A Ministry dedicated specifically to culture could prove to be crucial for the future success of culture in Malta. This would send a strong signal that culture is really a priority in Malta's political agenda and is not dependent on political manoeuvres or on its relationship with other important economic sectors or policy areas.

Malta's Cultural Policy Formulation: The Three Main Initiatives

An analysis of the political dimension involves three inter-connected policy and strategic initiatives as portrayed in Figure 3, namely: National Cultural Policy, the bid for Valletta 2018, and the Creative Economy strategy. These three initiatives were prepared in parallel, in the period 2006–2010. All initiatives encapsulate a number of strategic ideas from an educational, social and cultural point of view.

Planning for the Valletta 2018 bid started in 2006, twelve years before the event. During the drafting of the bid, Valletta 2018 Foundation gained from a knowledge-sharing experience with other ECoCs especially Lille 2004 and Marseille 2013. The thinking behind the National Cultural Policy, which is considered a platform for Valletta 2018 and all cultural initiatives in Malta, started in 2008 and the first draft cultural policy was published in 2010 with the final version being released in 2011. The strategy for the Creative Economy was launched in 2010 (MFIN 2010). These three different initiatives were crafted within the same period and masterminded by a number of cultural scholars, activists or officials who were involved in the policy process of all three.



Fig. 3. The three main Maltese cultural initiatives.

The National Cultural Policy refers to Valletta 2018 in a number of places. The policy ‘sets out the framework leading to a new cultural era in which Malta celebrates the European Capital of Culture in 2018’ (2011: 20).

The Valletta 2018 bid book emphasises that Valletta 2018 will, in the long term, develop the sustainability of the cultural sector leaving a legacy beyond 2018 (Valletta 2018 Foundation 2012:17). Furthermore, the measures and initiatives outlined in both the Valletta 2018 bid and the National Cultural Policy, such as international co-operation in culture and the democratisation of culture, show the strong connection between the two documents.

It is extremely important that civil society and the representatives of the communities are involved in policy making. In fact, the National Cultural Policy highlights the importance of enabling relationships among all stakeholders; this entails effective co-ordination of cultural management and initiatives between central and local government (2011: 22). The survey asked local councils whether they had been involved in any way in the formulation of the Cultural Policy. Eighty four percent of the local councils surveyed answered that they were not involved. 76% of the respondents also revealed that they were not effectively involved in the bid for Valletta 2018, even though all 68 local councils are signatories to the bid. Nevertheless, a number of local councils did mention the fact that consultation meetings were held for both the Valletta 2018 bid and the National Cultural Policy initiatives. Therefore, the result shows that although local councils were officially invited to participate in the formulation of these initiatives, they do not feel that they were a strategic partner in the crafting and formulation of the cultural policy and the bid for Valletta 2018.

Given the complexity and expertise required at this stage of the policy-making process, stakeholders such as NGOs and Local Councils find it difficult to contribute significantly to the idea generation of the policy in question. There seems to be a gap in this regard which could potentially be addressed in the run-up to Valletta 2018. The creation of a cultural forum could serve as a basis for continuous consultation between the many different governmental entities and all the stakeholders involved in the cultural sector especially since one of the aims of the National Cultural Policy is to develop a dialogue within the cultural sector (2011: 22).

In Kosice, the ECoC for 2013 the main local cultural operators were not sufficiently involved in the ECoC project and as a result they were not supportive enough of the initiative. These cultural institutions were not fully integrated in the ECoC project especially in the development phase (European Commission 2014).

Consultation of key stakeholders is essential not only in offering an alternative perspective on the ECoC but also allowing central government agencies to explore particular issues in more depth such as the effectiveness of the governance structure. At times, even though the necessary structures are created, real democratisation and decentralisation of power does not effectively take place.

What is also significant is the fact that since its launch in 2011, the National Cultural Policy has not been updated and no exercise was conducted in order to analyse which sections of the policy were successfully implemented and which parts require policy review. A holistic mechanism needs to be created in order to analyse the Cultural Policy. The lack of formal and clear mechanisms to review the National Cultural Policy does not mean that the implementation of the policy is not taking place. A number of initiatives which were mentioned in the policy were implemented, such as:

- the introduction of a series of information meetings with the stakeholders which strengthened the development of dialogue with the cultural sector;
- one-to-one meetings with the local councils regarding their application for funding from cultural schemes, which is rendering the central government mechanisms more accountable, effective and transparent;
- the introduction of a culture card for secondary school students which is facilitating the educational aspect of culture;
- the creation of design clusters intended to create physical space for artists and cultural organisations;
- the publication of a number of schemes from both the Department for Local Government (DLG) and Valletta 2018 which are contributing towards the growth of the cultural and creative industries;
- the signing of a number of bilateral agreements with Swedish Intercut, Milan Expo and Frankfurt European Central Bank which is promoting transnational and intercultural cooperation.

These are just a few of the implemented initiatives proposed in the National Cultural Policy and the Valletta 2018 bid.

The cultural dimension is a priority on the Maltese national political agenda but local councils are still not effectively being included in the policy formulation process, even though an overwhelming majority agree that councils are important policy actors. As local councils have indicated, there is a difference in the level of cultural priority at national versus local level. This also raises the question of the effectiveness of the shift from 'government' to 'governance'.

The Shift of the Notion of ‘Government’ to ‘Governance’: The Implementation of Cultural Policy

Government, Governance and Effective Implementation

‘Governance’ refers to the exercise of political and administrative authority at all levels in order to manage a continuum of policies as part of a country’s affairs. The issue of governance is crucial not only in the initial stages of policy-making but throughout the policy-making cycle, including its implementation. The survey conducted with local councils investigates the implementation of cultural policy at a national and local level, the relationship between local councils, central government and the Valletta 2018 Foundation and the local councils’ capacity to effectively implement cultural projects for the benefit of communities.

Malta’s Cultural Policy outlines three main governing principles which include the importance of empowering active community participation; the key governing factor of coordinating cultural management and initiatives between central and local government and other NGOs, and, the need to include decision-makers and policy-makers in the policy process (2011: 21).

The inclusion of all major players, not only local councils, is extremely important for the success of any cultural policy. The involvement of a continuum of policy-actors is highlighted through the concept of ‘cultural diversity’. A policy direction of diversity was endorsed by the UNESCO declaration of 2001 and the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity of the year 2005 (UNESCO 2006). It is important for ECoCs to demonstrate broad participation involving cultural organisations, residents and businesses (cited in Garcia and Cox 2013).

The shift from ‘government’ to ‘governance’ did not only happen in Malta but was a common experience across Europe after decades of centralisation. When policy-makers realised that the Central Government had reached its limits in its capacity to respond efficiently and effectively to the aspirations of the citizens and to a dynamic society, the idea of decentralising some of the government functions became very appealing (Fleurke & Hulst 2006).

Scholarly writers and analysts argued that democratic decentralisation, if implemented successfully, will bring about more transparency, accountability and responsiveness of government institutions. Responsiveness relates mainly to the degree of government reaction to the needs of ordinary people living in different localities (Manor 2006: 285).

The Maltese Scenario: Historically a Centralised Government

Historically, the Maltese government has been extremely, dominated by two strong political parties, the Labour Party (PL) and the Nationalist Party (PN). These two parties dominated the entire Maltese political scene and Maltese citizens in almost every policy aspect of their day-to-day life. The introduction of local councils had three over-arching aims. The first aim was decentralisation, which essentially meant the incorporation of the concept of subsidiarity. In essence this means that power is delegated to the local people. The second aim focused on the principle of democratisation which means that democracy would be enlarged by giving people not only the right to have a say in decisions, but also to take

decisions themselves in a framework of autonomous local government. The third aim concerned the concept of depolarisation which means that the elected councillors are not meant to work for the good of their party but work together for the enhancement of their respective locality. The Local Councils Act was published in 1993 and, as a result of that initiative, 68 local councils were created in the Maltese Islands (<http://www.lca.org.mt/>). The question worth investigating is whether these aims were realised in practice with regards to cultural policy.

The Shift towards National Cultural Governance: Assessing the Relationship between the Central Government and Local Councils when implementing Cultural Policy

Across the years there has been a growing tendency towards more consultation when crafting and implementing policies. As a result, horizontal policy-making (Colebatch 2009) is nowadays the style used to effect negotiations through a policy network involving a range of policy actors including NGOs, regulators, businesses and academic organisations.

The Europeanisation of policy-making resulted in a shift from a traditional pattern of policy-making, in which the executive dominates the entire policy-making process, to a system in which organised groups and societal actors gain access and exercise influence in policy-making. Such an approach gives rise to a pluralist view about how policies are crafted and implemented (Schmidt 2006).

The process for drafting Malta's cultural policy started in 2009 and was the result of invaluable feedback including a series of focus groups. The policy had the direct contribution of academics, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions and departments from Government Ministries.

Another important example of good governance is the consultation which took place when the bid for Valletta 2018 was being planned. Regular meetings were held with stakeholders, mostly with the Creative Economy Group within the Ministry for Finance, and the Cultural Directorate which now forms part of the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government.

The questionnaire in this study investigated cultural governance by focusing on the relationship between central and local government at the implementation stage of Cultural Policy. A high percentage of the Maltese and Gozitan Local Councils surveyed (72%) specified that they are being involved in the implementation of Cultural Policy while only 18% expressed their concern for lack of co-ordination. Nevertheless, 58% stated that their respective Local Council is involved in a tangible relationship with the Central Government or a Central Governmental agency while 42% indicated that they do not have any relationship with the Central Government.

Local Councils mentioned financial schemes as the most popular way in which they are interacting with Central Government agencies such as those offered by the DLG and the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA). Such financial schemes are helping local councils to finance cultural events in their respective locality. In total 65 cultural activities were organised in 2014 with a total budget of €249,000. Many events, however, were more focused on attracting crowds than ensuring cultural standards. This issue will be analysed when discussing the community space.

Despite the tendency towards more devolution of power and involvement of civil society, Malta seems to have adopted a direct administrative model of governance through the Valletta 2018 Foundation, since all efforts are being administered through this centralised agency. It is important to consider that since Dublin 1991 only four cities used the direct administration model, namely Avignon 2000, Kraków 2000, Santiago de Compostela 2000 and Cork 2005 (Garcia & Cox 2013).

Such a model and symptoms of excessive centralisation are reflected in Valletta 2018 activities, since 56% of the local councils stated that they are not being involved while 52% indicated that they were never approached by the Valletta 2018 Foundation. The problem lies in the lack of effective communication and collaboration. In actual fact a number of meetings were organised by the Valletta 2018 Foundation such as the Cultural Mapping meetings which took place in 2014. Although all local councils were invited and the meetings were organised in all regions, attendance was very poor. Five sessions were held and were attended by an average of five local council representatives for each meeting. From a strategic point of view, such indifference shows a lack of long-term vision since the Cultural Mapping project will be beneficial in terms of attracting both local and foreign tourists in the communities, in addition to identifying cultural sites which were not previously formally identified.

Another problem hindering effective implementation is that Local Councils do not have a sufficient expertise to steer cultural projects. In the survey, 56% of local councils highlighted the impediments to their participation and contribution. Lack of resources, ineffective capacity, lack of communication, insufficient co-ordination, lack of managerial know-how and lack of cultural interest at a local level are the major reasons for inadequate participation of local councils. A staggering 94.9% think that lack of financial resources are the main problem which is hindering Local Councils from participating in the cultural domain.

These results should not imply that assistance from central government is absent. The real problems are the insufficient resources and lack of economies of scale in the use of resources. In fact, 74% stated that they are receiving assistance from central government either through Valletta 2018 Foundation or through the DLG. However, 18% stated that they are not receiving any assistance at all. Only 6% of the local councils are receiving help which is not of financial nature.

Problems concerning lack of effective communication and co-ordination are being partially addressed by the setting up of six regional co-ordinators. These regional co-ordinators should facilitate better implementation for Valletta 2018 activities in the local communities. Furthermore, a Valletta 2018 Gozo office was also launched and a strong focus will be made to ensure that Valletta 2018 logo is visible in all activities supported by the Foundation.

***The Shift towards multi-level Governance in Culture:
the ‘Europeanisation’ of Cultural Policy***

As can be noted in Figure 4, the initiatives and funding from both the European Union and the Central Government cannot be ignored when analysing the state of culture at the local level.

In terms of governance, the European Union has gradually evolved from a ‘top-down’ model to a much more inclusive model of policy-making, which in essence meant the greater involvement of the social and economic partners throughout the policy cycle. The notion of multi-level governance goes a step further since it not only emphasises the role of civil society and the greater involvement of citizens, but it is based on the coordinated action between the EU, member states and regional authorities (Van den Brande 2014).

The shift from government to governance led to an increasing influence not only in legislative terms but also in the importance of culture at a national and at a local level. The new millennium put culture as a central focus for the European Union in terms of policy-making (Barnett 2001). Such a way forward resulted in the ‘Europeanisation’ of public policy, not least in cultural policy. This meant that a common stance is being adopted on a European level when it comes to cultural policy.

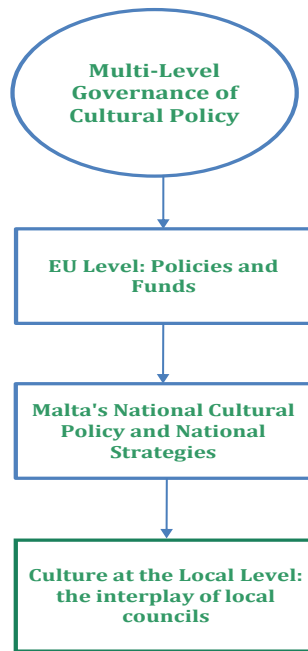


Fig. 4. Multi-level governance of cultural policy.

The 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Culture affirmed the importance of: access to culture, cultural exchange and dialogue, cultural diversity, production of and participation in culture, the freedom of cultural expression, the adaptation of cultural policies to the changing socio-economic circumstances, the respect for cultural heritage and the role of culture in contemporary Europe (European Council 2013).

The European Competitiveness Report estimates that 3% of total employment in Europe is specifically in the creative industries. In 2009, more than 6.4 million people were employed in such industries. Sweden, Finland and Iceland have the highest levels of employment in culture and creative industries with a rating of 7.30, 6.05 and 5.85 respectively. Malta has one of the lowest levels of employment in the cultural sector in

Europe with an index of 3.63 (Power 2011). This means that more effort is required in the Maltese Islands to help the cultural employment sector to flourish.

The effect of Europeanisation cannot be understood solely in relation to employability. EU funds are the major contributions that provide for greater focus on culture on the political agenda across the EU. Between 2007 and 2013, €6 billion were allocated to culture within the Cohesion Policy, which represents 1.7% of the total EU budget. Out of the €6 billion, €3 billion were allocated to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, €2.2 billion for the development of cultural infrastructure and €775 million to cultural services (CSES 2010).

Structural Funds are not the only funding programme in the EU from which countries could potentially benefit. Creative Europe is a seven-year funding programme with a budget of €1.46 billion (2014–2020) which accounts for 4.5% of EU GDP (MEUSAC 2014). In practice, this programme provides funding for at least 250,000 artists and cultural professionals, 4,500 book translators as well as 800 films across Europe. This means that the European Union presents enormous opportunities for funding. From a local perspective, the Maltese artists, local councils and organisations need to acquire the proper skills to tap into the funding.

On a national level, the European prioritisation of the cultural sector led to the creation of the Creative Economy strategy, which underscored the contribution of culture to the national economy. The economic and the cultural product are intimately linked, nevertheless, it would be a strategic mistake if the economic dimension took over culture.

From an investment perspective, Malta's cohesion policy explicitly states that the Government has invested heavily in Malta's cultural fabric both through EU and national funds (MEAIEM 2014: 44). Through the new programming period 2014–2020, apart from extensive opportunities to invest in cultural initiatives, the government will foster hubs in order to promote various forms of culture within the community. These cultural hubs will be an opportunity for local talent to develop their abilities and to attract local visitors while enhancing cultural growth within the communities. The Maltese government will try to tap funds through the EU Cohesion Policy in order to do this. Therefore, the final result should strengthen local creative communities. The Operational Programme specifies that one of the main intended beneficiaries, in addition to NGOs and business enterprises, will be local councils.

During the previous Structural Funds programme (2007–2013), culture and the creative industries were considered within other important priority axes, clearly showing the link between culture and other policy areas. A total of €55.9 million were allocated to Malta's national programme through the European Structural Funds. From this amount, €41 million were allocated to two main cultural heritage projects: the restoration and rehabilitation of historical fortifications managed by the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs and an archaeological heritage conservation project managed by Heritage Malta (Creative Malta, 2014). Therefore, it is evident that there was very little investment in purely cultural activities even though Malta's expenditure of EU structural funds on culture (9.5%) makes it the highest ranking country within the EU in this regard. However, it is important to consider that, as is the case with Bulgaria, Romania and the Czech Republic, expenditure on culture is primarily linked with cultural heritage and tourism (CSES 2010: 41).

On a purely local and city level, a substantial number of ECoCs have tapped Structural Funds to invest in cultural heritage, infrastructure and skills required in this dynamic industry. According to the European Commission, a total of €3 billion were invested by ECoCs between 1995 and 2004 (Creative Malta 2014).

It would be a strategic mistake in terms of political direction if there was excessive focus on EU funding when analysing the organisational dynamics of ECoCs. Another important policy action is the funding and initiatives promoted by the Central Government such as the cultural activities organised by local councils. In the last 5 years, more than 200 cultural activities were held in the communities with a total budget of more than €1.5 million.¹

In addition to central-local synergies, local councils have been able to tap funds and realise projects by working through regional co-operation. The Foundation for the South Eastern Region, GAL Xlokk was crucial in helping localities absorb EU Funding through the LEADER programme. Several projects materialised such as the refurbishment of Saint Joseph local club in Hal Kirkop and the Saint Leonard Band Club youth outreach initiative for sustainable traditional and cultural activities (Salerno 2014).

Further to the consideration of the three governing tiers, Malta has the advantage of capitalising on the advantage of the dynamism that a city-state characteristic could offer. This in fact was the case with Luxembourg 2007 (Creative Economy 2011). The investment, initiatives, synergies, co-ordination and community excitement can be easily spread and much more effective in a micro-state such as Malta.

The results of the survey with local councils and the analysis presented in this section reveals that while local councils are being involved in the implementation of Cultural Policy from the Central Government or its agencies, this strong relationship has not materialised with the Valletta 2018 Foundation. Effective governance requires a continuous interaction in a structured and organised framework between all stakeholders involved, in both the drafting and implementation phase of Cultural Policy. Local councils' inability to organise cultural activities and to implement cultural policy in their communities, as communicated through the survey, needs to be addressed.

Governance from a Resources Dimension: The Economy and Financial Considerations

The success of culture and its multiplier effect on the economy on a local, national or European level, requires a continuum of resources: physical, financial and human. UNESCO explained such a view through a 'triangle of sustainable development' which was developed in the 1980s and was further emphasised in the nineties (2006: 5).

The local councils' survey focused on the three main pillars of the resources dimension. This section analyses the management of the physical space and investigates the bodies or authorities who decide which cultural events are to be held. Given that culture is a main contributor towards the Maltese economy, its impact on a national and a local level is considered. The financial investment in cultural activities and in Valletta 2018 is also analysed.

Culture and the use of Physical Space

Urban parades and carnivals raise issues concerning cultural identity, democracy and public space (Rios 2009). The physical space, which ultimately represents the localities where the cultural activities are being held, is a fundamental resource-requirement for the success of any cultural project (see Borg R.P. *infra*). Considering that Malta is amongst one of the most densely populated countries in the world, the availability of space is becoming more and more challenging.

From a legal perspective, the Maltese Local Councils Act specifies that arterial and distributor roads, national monuments, national parks or gardens, industrial estates, harbours, airports and other national territories, establishments and main buildings are the responsibility of the central government (1993: 19). Such areas are defined and listed in a specific schedule entitled 'Fourth Schedule' which is attached as an appendix to the Act. Spaces within the respective localities, however, are the remit of local councils.

In the survey, 50% of the Local Councils indicated that the use of public space for cultural activities depends extensively on whether the specific location falls under the remit of the central government or the local councils as specified in the Local Councils Act. Nevertheless, 44% of the councils stated that when cultural activities are held in their respective locality, they manage the public space. Only 6% stated that the central government controls the use of space.

Culture and the Economy

Another important consideration in the resources dimension is the connection between cultural policy and economic development. Valletta 2018 will present an enormous opportunity for Malta to market and develop culture and tourism which could have a long-lasting effect on the country's economy. Valletta 2018 could have a direct impact both on cultural services, as was the case with previous ECoCs, as well as having a broader socio-economic impact. Liverpool 2008 experienced enormous growth during the same year while Linz 2009 was a classic example of steady economic growth in the longer term (European Parliament 2013: 12–13).

In his foreword to the *National Cultural Policy*, former Maltese Prime Minister Dr Lawrence Gonzi described creativity as a 'key for full development of a country' and as the 'backbone of a strong economic development which gives rise to further job creation in our country'. According to the Cultural Policy, data published in 2010 shows that the Maltese cultural sector growth throughout the period 2001–2007 has been 3% and contributed to 4% of the GDP (2011: 17).

The *Cohesion Policy 2014–2020 Operational Programme I* outlined that culture is a major contributor to tourism, one of the main pillars of the Maltese economy. This was corroborated by a market profile survey organised by MTA. It was estimated that 42% of all tourists chose Malta because they were interested in seeing the culture and history of this island. Malta experienced a staggering increase of tourists (from 486,653 in 2008 to 603,581 in 2012) because of the promotion of its cultural and historical attractions (2014: 9).

The impact of culture on the country's economy cannot be analysed only from a macro-perspective but is to be reviewed also at a local level. A Case Study entitled: *The Impact of Arts and Culture on City Life and the National Economy*² (MFIN, 2010) studied the

economic impact of cultural events in the Valletta and Floriana areas over a span of seven weeks in 2010. The total direct revenue generated was estimated at €5.6 million and an additional indirect impact of €9.2 million on the economy. The direct and indirect impact was estimated at €15 million and the added value generated from cultural activities reached 0.1% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2012, the number of cultural occupations registered in Malta in 2009 were 6,250, which is equivalent to 4% of total employment, of which 75% are employed full-time (MFIN 2011).

The survey conducted with local councils shows that 90% of Maltese local councils strongly believe that on a national level, cultural policy is being linked with other policy areas such as tourism and the economy in general. 69.8% of local councils affirmed that cultural policy is being linked to local policy.

It is important to highlight that the growth of cultural industry is limited by a number of factors. One of these factors is the average salary earned by cultural employees which in the period 2008–2010 was recorded at €15,267 p.a. and was found to be lower than the national average wage which was set at €18,834 (MFIN 2013). This is of course hindering the growth of the cultural sector since it is financially unattractive to pursue a career in culture as an alternative to other economic sectors which are much more financially rewarding.

Involvement of local councils in twinning projects is limited. In fact, in 2012, only 1% organised a twinning cultural project with another locality while 2% organised a cultural twinning project with a foreign country. These percentages increased to 1.9% and 5.2% respectively in 2013 (NSO 2013 and 2014). In this study, 50% of local councils admitted that their local council was never involved in a twinning project and only 16% are planning to embark on such an initiative. Thirty-four percent stated that their local council was involved in a twinning project. Most local councils mentioned the initiatives: ‘Europe for Citizens’ and ‘Bringing the EU closer to local communities’. In 2013, the Mellieħa local council organised a twinning conference which involved 89 delegates and included municipalities from Denmark, Italy, Cyprus, Romania and Latvia.

In the survey, local councils mentioned a number of factors which are hindering them from participating in twinning projects, 78.4% mentioned financial resources, 8.1% lack of knowledge, 5.4% lack of capacity and 8.1% mentioned lack of support from central government as the reason for lack of involvement.

This data show that an absolute majority of local councils failed to capitalise on twinning projects and the possible economic benefits that could derive therefrom. Knowledge and managerial experience are also great advantages of such twinning projects. In light of this, Government could consider creating a fund specifically intended to encourage local councils to participate in twinning projects. The fund would also include the services of a programme manager in order to help local councils manage complex and logistically demanding initiatives.

Culture and Financial Considerations

Without any financial investment it would not be possible to effectively govern culture and to create an effect on the economy. Moreover, in an era of tight budgets, fiscal consolidation and strict adherence to the Maastricht criteria, the level of cultural financial investment may be seriously limited. Tallinn 2011 is a case in point since investment in

culture was decreased from €13.5m in 2008 to €4.3m in 2010, while operational expenditure slowed down from €20.2m to €17.6m (Rampton *et al.* 2012: 14).

In Malta, however, cultural expenditure during the last years has been on the increase and the budget allocated for Valletta 2018 activities was strengthened through European funds and the Central Government. Table 1 shows that total government expenditure in purely cultural services increased from €26,002,000 in 2008 to € 44,625,000 in 2012 (NSO, 2014). This means an increase of almost 60% in expenditure on cultural services from Malta's central government. However, it is important to note that this expenditure is merely 1.5% of the total budget for Malta.

Table 1. Recreation, Culture and Religion – Level of Expenditure

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total Expenditure (millions in Euros)	36,377	43,011	49,968	56,859	63,262
Recreational and Sporting Services	4,295	6,317	8,447	10,709	11,458
Cultural Services ³	26,002	30,527	35,589	39,237	44,625
Broadcasting and Publishing Services	3,338	3,052	2,980	2,945	2,949
Religious and Other Community Services	466	466	480	650	792
R&D Recreation, Culture and Religion	49	101	56	80	1
Recreation, Culture and Religion	2,226	2,549	2,434	3,276	3,437

Source: NSO News Release entitled: *Expenditure of General Government Sector by Function 2008–2012*.

From 2012 to 2013, the number of events organised by local councils increased by 21% (489 to 593) The total expenditure of local councils for the organisation of cultural events in 2012 was almost €1.1 million (NSO 2013 and 2014). However, when compared to total central government expenditure on cultural services (circa €44.6 million), local councils' expenditure in culture is only 2% of their respective total budget, while 40% of their budget is allocated to salaries and 18% was dedicated to administrative costs and purchase of materials. The proportion of Local Council expenditure on purely cultural activities is in actual fact much lower. It is worth noting that the highest share of expenditure on cultural activities was attributed to the Southern Harbour District with 32 %, followed by Gozo with 27 % (NSO, 2013).

Table 2 shows that the level of annual investment of local councils in culture is less than €10,000 in the majority of cases. Given the budgetary limitations, the central government could consider allocating an apportioned budget with a percentage of the funds specifically allocated to culture.

Table 2. Level of financial investment in culture by local councils

Level of financial investment (EUR)	Percentage of local councils
More than 1,000 but less than 10,000	60%
More than 10,000 but less than 20,000	22%
More than 20,000 but less than 50,000	14%
More than 50,000	4%

One must keep in mind, however, that local councils have other sources of finance besides the annual general budget allocated by the Central Government, this includes national schemes and programmes such as Valletta 2018. Other important sources of revenue are EU funds which include Structural Funds, Italia-Malta Programme and the Leader Programme. When Local Councils were asked whether they have ever absorbed funds, 66% answered in the affirmative while a staggering 34% answered that they have never absorbed either EU or National funds. From those who absorbed funds only 12.1% indicated EU funds as their source of revenue and 87.9% mentioned National funds. Most of the local councils mentioned red tape, lack of human resources dedicated to obtaining and managing these funds and lack of awareness as the major problems.

The DLG and the Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division organise information sessions whenever a call for national or EU funding is published. Furthermore, the DLG held a series of one-to-one sessions with all local councils to explain what is expected from the funding application and how it can be improved. However, despite all these efforts, Local Councils are still finding it difficult to tap the resources available even though they can also seek professional assistance from MEUSAC (Malta EU-Steering and Action Committee). The Maltese Government could consider appointing a small team of professionals working in collaboration with the Local Councils Association (LCA) and who will be specifically dedicated to help local councils tap EU Funds.

Table 3 illustrates the annual allocation for cultural activities per year for the period 2009–2013 managed by the DLG. Within less than three years, from 2011 to 2014, the central government allocation decreased by almost 26%. These figures show that investment in culture at local level does not correspond to the investment at a national level and requires special attention.

Table 3. Cultural Activities Scheme – Department for Local Government

Scheme period	1-12-2009 until 31-12-2010	06-07-2010 until 30-12-2011	1-12-2011 until 31-10-2012	1-12-2012 until 28-02-2013	1-12-2013 until 28-02-2014
Amount (€)	276,500	280,800	336,900	273,345	249,000

Another important facet of financial investment in culture is the budgetary allocation of Valletta 2018. Table 4 compares the level of financial allocation in relation to past ECoCs. Programme expenditure between different ECoCs varies from €7 and €325 per capita. This is because a number of ECoCs experienced financial difficulties during the global economic slowdown which started in 2008 and persisted until 2012. The Valletta 2018 financial estimates are based on the figures presented in the bid book and population figures published by the NSO.

Table 4. ECoCs Cultural Budget – A comparative analysis

City	Year	Population	Programme Budget	Expenditure per capita
Linz	2009	189,284	61,500,000	324.91
Vilnius	2009	560,200	25,000,000	44.63
Pécs	2010	156,974	35,390,000	225.45
Ruhr	2010	11,316,429	81,000,000	7.16
Istanbul	2010	3,483,052	193,950,000	14.39
Turku	2011	178,784	50,000,000	279.66
Tallinn	2011	416,470	7,400,000	17.77
Guimaraes	2012	162,636	41,000,000	252.09
Maribor	2012	157,947	30,000,000	189.94
Marseille-Provence	2013	4,500,000	98,000,000	21.8
Valetta	2018	423,282 ⁴	48,000,000	113.4

Source: Hull (2013:10).

From the selected countries, Malta is ranked sixth from a total of eleven ECoCs when it comes to the total financial budget allocated for such an initiative.

In conclusion, it may be affirmed that investment in culture has increased significantly during the last years and that culture has become an important pillar for Malta's tourism and economic success. However, despite the increasing level of financial investment at a national level, local councils are not investing at the same rate. They are also facing difficulties to absorb funds from EU financial instruments and they lack the managerial capacity to tap into resources, steer cultural projects and be involved in twinning projects.

A 'Shared Governance' approach to Cultural Governance: The Involvement of Citizens and Communities

A shared governance approach, through the involvement of the community in the cultural planning, management and governance provides more impetus towards cultural appreciation, more collaboration in the cultural and creative sectors, the strengthening of knowledge, greater innovation and the ability to pursue larger projects. Shared governance and community involvement rests on the premise that governance is not limited to ensure effective representation of several interest groups but should also exhibit direct community involvement.

The Level of Citizens' Interest and Participation in Cultural Activities

The local councils' survey found that 86% of Maltese local councils think that in practice, given that Malta is a small island state, Valletta 2018 is a national project rather than a capital city major event.

Two of the main key indicators outlined by the European Commission were the total number of and attendance at ECoC (European Commission 2010). Liverpool 2008 was an opportunity to change public cultural participation in a significant manner. In preparation for Valletta 2018, it is important to analyse the situation with regards to community participation and attendance to cultural events. Table 5 provides an analysis of the

community dimension in accordance to the most popular cultural events in Malta in 2013. A total number of attendees is indicated for each type of event, including a percentage figure and the number of events per type which were held in the same year.

Table 5. Attendees in various cultural activities

Type of Event	Attendees – 2013	Event participation (% attendance per type)	Number of Events – 2013
Agrarian Feast	17,760	3.2%	15
Commemoration Day	73,822	13%	60
Crafts	56,177	10%	16
Cultural Visits	6,452	1.1%	82
Dance	2,380	0.4%	8
Drama	11,432	2%	17
Film	1,160	0.2%	7
Gastronomy	59,630	10.6%	22
Heritage Exhibition	5,550	1%	12
Heritage Trail	1,612	0.3%	10
Historical Re-Enactment	95,670	17%	35
Literature	5,352	1%	15
Music	28,035	5%	60
Non-Direct Cultural Activities	11,808	2.1%	60
Public Lecture	19,955	3.5%	25
Visual Arts Exhibition	4,523	0.8%	18
Other Cultural Events	162,046	28.8%	107
Total	563,364	100%	593 (including school events which amounts to 24).

Source: NSO, 2014.

At first glance, the global figure of attendees of more than 560,000 is significant when considering that Malta's population is around 430,000. However, the NSO 2011 survey shows that there is greater participation in religious village feasts as opposed to local council festivals. Only 1.1% of the population helped in the organisation of local council festivals when compared to 7.3% who actively participated in village feasts. 24.7% attended local council festivals, which is a much lower percentage rate when compared to 57.4% who attended village feasts and 41.6% who attended Good Friday procession but is comparable to the figure of 26% who attended Passion Plays and 29.6% who attended Carnival.

The survey disseminated amongst Local Councils revealed that these still find it difficult to generate a high level of interest amongst local citizens. A total of 48% of local councils stated that the level of interest has increased but is still lacking the desired levels. This shows that across time, the cultural interest is increasing steadily but much more needs to be done in order to create a national cultural awareness.

Strategies to Inject more Interest in the Cultural Dimension

For a vibrant cultural community space, it is crucial that the level of interest at community level is constantly high. Despite the emphasis on local community involvement, there is little research in order to reveal the factors which contribute towards greater participation (Garcia and Cox 2013: 91). Nevertheless, Marseille-Provence 2013 provides a number of practical examples on how to increase citizen participation which include free open-air events in public spaces. These events provided for 19% of all audience across all cultural activities. Organising specific activities for young people constitutes another effective strategy; examples include culinary events in school canteens and events for children in public libraries. The majority of events were targeted to engage young people who do not usually attend cultural events or disadvantaged groups living in certain regions (European Commission 2014: 45–46).

Local councils were asked what could be done to inject further interest in cultural activities and in Valletta 2018. The responses gathered can be easily compared with the specific policy measures outlined in the Cultural Policy and Valletta 2018 bids. Table 6 provides a comprehensive picture of the responses.

Table 6. Measures which could possibly increase the level of cultural interest among Maltese Citizens: Responses from local councils

Measures to increase the level on interest in Culture amongst Maltese Citizens	Percentage of responses – Local Councils
Put Culture as a higher priority on the Political Agenda	48%
Involve more Local Councils	78%
Involve more educational institutions	30%
Involve more the business community	44%
Create activities which involve more active participation	60%
Create activities which involve international actors	26%
Cultural Diplomacy – promote Maltese artists in the International For a	34%
Strengthen the role of the Social Web	26%
Target different categories of people	56%
Invest in activities which attract crowds	54%

In the study, an overwhelming number of councils mentioned that local NGOs, voluntary local committees, band clubs, parish groups and sports clubs were the key means to involve the local community. With regard to the activities organised by the local councils themselves, there are contrasting views concerning the large number of gastronomic festivals being organised. These activities, which are also a way of reflecting Maltese identity, are mainly intended to attract crowds from beyond the individual locality. In the years 2014 and 2015 the following festivals, subsidised by DLG schemes, were organised including: bruschetta, nutella, strawberries, honey, fish, snails, melons, ravioli, ricotta and sea urchins in various localities throughout Malta. Although 54% of the local councils surveyed think that this is one of the best measures to increase cultural interest amongst Maltese citizens, central governmental agencies argue that too many activities are

concentrated on food which is resulting in a loss of diversification of Malta's cultural product, which could strengthen the Maltese cultural package.

Local councils try to involve local artists to participate in cultural events, however, there is lack of co-ordination and effective synergies between the local councils in order to include a maximum number of individual artists and citizens in cultural activities. This situation is being addressed through the Valletta 2018 Foundation. Up to mid-2015, the Foundation was involved in 36 projects organised with a number of stakeholders. Nine are community projects which range from community hip-hop to 'Poetry in Potato Bags' (which involves the exchange of poetry, seeds and potatoes between Leeuwarden and Malta). Other projects are intended to strengthen cultural education and training, especially among the younger generations. Six main cultural events were organised for a wide public, such as artists' involvement in New Year's Eve public celebrations.

The flagship project of Valletta 2018 in collaboration with the Culture Directorate is the Design Cluster situated at the old slaughterhouse in Valletta. Several stakeholders are partners in this initiative such as Malta Enterprise, Malta IT Agency and the University of Malta. It is an urban regeneration project focused on creative networking and community integration. In essence, artists and culture-oriented organisations will be provided with the necessary physical space from where they can be creative and develop their talent.

In addition to the projects led by the Valletta 2018, the President's Prize for Creativity is a noteworthy initiative intended to promote culture and the arts amongst the youth.

Conclusion

The survey and the research conducted with local councils shows that during the last years, significant milestones were achieved in Malta's cultural arena. The creation of a National Cultural Policy, the successful bid of Valletta 2018 and the influence of the Creative Economy Strategy have helped cultural policy become an important policy area in the Maltese political agenda. In fact, an overwhelming majority expressed the view that culture is now a priority in the Maltese political agenda and local councils are an important vehicle to inject more cultural appreciation in localities and communities. Despite the encouraging results, a number of other initiatives are required to strengthen Malta's cultural domain and lay a stronger governing foundation for Valletta 2018. Maltese citizens still need to feel part of Valletta 2018 rather than perceiving it as a project which pertains to the central government. Attendance levels at cultural activities will serve as an important benchmark for the success of Valletta as Capital of Culture. It is interesting to note that in small states, such as Luxembourg, there is a marked attendance of the national population, 40% of the national population and 60% of the city population to ECoC activities (Garcia & Cox 2013). We would expect similar patterns to emerge in Malta.

The analysis conducted in the policy formulation dimension revealed that the cultural portfolio has been tagged to six different ministries in the last thirteen years. A dedicated ministry for Culture should be established. This governing dimension also highlighted the problem of lack of effective consultation at policy formulation level. A significant number of local councils stated that they were not involved in the bid for Valletta 2018. Initiatives such as the Valletta Forum, a Valletta 2018 initiative bringing together diverse organisations, could focus on improving consultation with local councils.

Implementation of the Cultural Policy is another important governing facet. It was noted that the *National Cultural Policy* (2011) was not updated or revised in the last five years. Therefore, an effective mechanism should be envisaged to strengthen the practical approach of this policy initiative. This would include a management and an IT structure to scrutinise the successful implementation of the Cultural Policy and to provide a basis for periodical policy updates.

The resources dimension manifested the differences in the financial investment when comparing the national with the local level. In fact, local councils' expenditure for culture still lags far behind the national budgetary allocation. An apportioned budget that binds local councils to spend a percentage of these monies on culture should be allocated.

The local councils' survey highlighted the lack of finances, lack of knowledge and lack of managerial capacity that is hindering participation in higher-level projects, such as twinning projects.

Although investment in culture has increased significantly throughout the years, a clear distinction between the funding allocated to the restoration of cultural heritage and purely cultural activities is to be made. Given that most of the cultural expenditure is linked to cultural heritage, more investment should be dedicated to purely cultural services.

Moreover, in order to stimulate employment in the cultural sector, more efforts are required to tackle the problem of a relatively low annual salary which is limiting the growth of the sector.

The challenge for Valletta 2018 is to create a legacy for future generations which could be sustained through more investment in educationally-centred cultural initiatives especially in schools but also the creation of a formal knowledge and research transfer programme. In this way Valletta 2018 will not be a one-year project but an event which will have lasting effects for decades to come.

Notes

1. The range of activities included Medieval Malta, BirguFest, Bormla Culturefest, Citrus Festival, Traditional Maltese Wedding and Carnival in Fleur-de-lys and Birkirkira.
2. This study was conducted by the Creative Economy Working Group within the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with the National Statistics Office.
3. Expenditure on Heritage Malta, St James Cavalier Creativity Centre, Manoel Theatre, National Philharmonic Orchestra, Superintendence of Cultural Heritage and Malta Council for Culture and the Arts.
4. Given that in a micro-state such as Malta the ECoC initiative will have a wide-ranging effect across the country, rather than being concentrated in Valletta, it is logical to calculate per capita expenditure on the whole country.

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