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**EUROPEANIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF
CULTURE: ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF BUDGET AND POPULATION SIZE**

MA thesis

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Abstract

The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) is one of the greatest tools of the EU Cultural Policy. The ECoC allows for selected cities in the EU, and candidate states to be promoted in the European and international spotlight. Furthermore, it acts as a catalyst for development being viewed a 'mega-event'. However, winning a ECoC nomination requires years of work leading up to the title year. The ECoC acts as a tool furthering Europeanization among the selected cities by having to satisfy the criteria of the ECoC. This thesis argues that population and budget sizes of ECoC cities impacts the process of Europeanization. Through the theoretical framework of Europeanization, the analysis focuses on four interviews with ECoC officials combined with qualitative content analysis of ECoC monitoring reports to uncover understanding of how the population size and the budget of the ECoCs affects the process of Europeanization.

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) is a rather unique political system. Neither federal, nor simply intergovernmental, the EU is made up of 27 individual member states that compose the EU. While primarily starting out as an idea of economic integration, the concept of ‘spillover’ into other areas of integration such as culture happened as a natural result. Due to spillover, the EU has evolved over the decades and has started to see culture explicitly as a tool, with one example being the EU workplan for culture 2023-2026 (2022/C 466/01). Perhaps the biggest tool of culture in the EU is the European Capital of Culture (ECoC). The ECoC gives a chance for cities within the EU, and even out of it, to compete for bids to become a ECoC. Becoming a ECoC is a great privilege that allows the cities to promote their own cultural image internationally while generating development within the region.

One dimension in which the EU currently tries to increase its legitimacy is through the usage of EU Cultural Policy. As the name suggests, the EU Cultural Policy focuses on implementing cultural policies which tend to affect EU citizens more in their ordinary life rather than bureaucratic policies. One tool of the EU Cultural Policy, which is the oldest, and perhaps the most influential, is the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) program. The ECoC selects two or more European cities in the spotlight on the whole continent for a year. It also acts as a way for the EU to further ‘Europeanize’ host cities and regions within the EU and even EU candidate and potential candidate states. There is plenty of research on how Europeanization exhibits a bottom-up approach with ECoCs, especially at the societal and local level, with a few examples being Dragoman (2008) talking about bottom-up approaches in Romanian cities and (Lähdesmäki, 2014) and (Gierat-Bieron, 2020) researching local perceptions. However, less attention is focused on how the ECoC title within the EU Cultural Policy and how it exhibits any top-down, or as well as horizontal Europeanization taking place.

Analyzing the ECoC through Europeanization can help better understand and therefore guide the host cities into the vague expectations they need to overcome. One thing overlooked in studies on ECoC’s is that there is a lack of research on the role of other actors in the ECoC process. Other actors such as the state, the EU, local city governments and now even municipal governments are becoming involved with ECoCs, which is starting to become

larger in regional impact. The role of funding and how money impacts the ECoCs should be looked into further.

However, not all ECoC host cities are able to Europeanize as effectively as some of their predecessors and counterparts. ECoC's Europeanize host cities and regions un-uniformly due to the loose interpretation of the European dimension in the ECoC (Lähdesmäki et al., 2021: 73), which limits the effectiveness of the title. The European dimension of the ECoC guidelines is vague which results in a 'loose' approach for host cities to decide on how to organize the title year. This study proposes that erratic Europeanization is taking place is partly due to differing levels of funding as well as the great freedom ECoC recipients have in the implementation process, which hurts the ability of top-down Europeanization in the host cities and states. Not only so, but this thesis also believes the population size of an ECoC host city/region impacts the level of Europeanization, which could be partly due to more layers of bureaucracy in larger cities.

For the master's thesis, the research question is, how does varying levels of funding and size of ECoC small (less than 150k) and large host cities (400K plus) affect the top-down and horizontal Europeanization processes between these settings? The research question is analyzed specifically through the cases of the ECoC of Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024. There is a lack of research when it comes to analyzing funding and population size of ECoCs, which needs to be further looked into. Understanding the political nature of how local, regional, state and EU bodies operate in regard to the ECoC program and implementing policies and guidelines can help identify areas in need of upgrading for the ECoC.

The rest of the thesis structure will go as following, Section 2 will focus on the background of the ECoC as well as the EU role in culture. It will outline the structure of the ECoC and all the necessary information regarding the program. Section 3 will be the theoretical section of Europeanization. Section 3 will be split up into two sections of 3.1 focusing on Europeanization conceptual framework, and 3.2 will be about case examples from previous literature seen through cultural diplomacy. Section 4 will be the methodological section. The section will go into detail for why the selection of Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024 was chosen and the importance of it. Section 5 will be the analysis, and it will have three subsections, focusing on Tallinn 2011, Tartu 2024 and the comparison of them.

Section 5.1 focuses on Tallinn 2011 through interviews with officials from the Tallinn 2011 Foundation for the ECoC. It will also consist of analyzing European Commission monitoring and advisory reports before and after implementation for Tallinn 2011. For both

the Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024 officials, two interviews were conducted for each city, so four in total. Section 5.2 will focus on the interviews with Tartu 2024 officials as well as analyzing the ECoC monitoring reports leading up to the title year for Tartu 2024. Section 5.3 is the comparison of Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024. The aim is to see if there is a differentiation between the levels of Europeanization in host cities. The interviews will be used to see how the ECoC officials think they have handled holding the title and what changes they had to implement at the local policy level to obtain the title. Last but not least, Section 6 will be the conclusion, summarizing the key notes from the research and as well as answering the research question.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE ECOC

2.1. EU in Culture

Before mentioning the ECoC and why it is relevant, it is first important to start with the EU cultural policy. The EU cultural policy has a profound impact on EU affairs in EU member states as well as trying to contribute to a greater European identity. The EU can use the cultural policy as a soft tool for exerting influence. Using EU cultural policy as a soft tool allows for the EU to direct the future of what it expects. Some scholars even go as far in saying that “the relatively ‘soft’ cultural policy of the EU consists, in general, of the support of regional identity, combining social-economic and cultural development and opening up new ways of participation for the regional civil society (Kovács, 2013: 374)”. In this sense it emphasizes that the cultural policy is a rather important dimension of the EU.

Scholars such as Sciodolo (2025) contest that the EU’s cultural policy is a horizontal decision-making process due to being linked to the implementation of networks related to the fundamental principles of the cultural policy (Sciodolo, 2025: 146). Horizontal decision-making processes involve cooperating with different actors across Europe and abroad. The impact of networks, also referred to as transnational networks (TN) has increased horizontal Europeanization. Cooperation among different actors across Europe and the EU helps try to foster more of a European identity, useful for the continuation of the integration process.

It is apparent that culture is becoming more of an integral part of EU affairs and plans. In the Council Resolution On the EU Work Plan For Culture 2023-2026 (2022/C 466/01), it acknowledges recent events that shaped the direction of how the EU intends to work with culture such as the prioritizing and empowering the cultural and creative sectors within the EU due to Covid-19 as well as the War in Ukraine stressing the need of strengthening the resilience of cultural and creative sectors (Council of the European Union, 2022). In addition to cultural and creative sectors, the EU also intends on strengthening the cultural dimension of EU external relations which one example is working on preserving cultural heritage and empowering local cultural and creative sectors in Ukraine (Council of the European Union, 2022). Culture is explicit in EU policies and documents making it important to understand how culture acts as a catalyst for future EU policies and the direction of the union. By culture becoming more emphasized, it makes it relevant to analyze in a time where it is becoming more of a tool for the EU both domestically and internationally.

2.2. European Capital of Culture

The ECoC is an important dimension of the EU Cultural Policy, perhaps being the most visible and influential. First thought of by the then Greek Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri in 1983, Mercouri emphasized that culture and art should be on the same level as technology and economics. It was first started in an intergovernmental manner when it was first established in 1985, then the European Commission then got involved with the ECoC program starting in 2005, changing the structure of the ECoC (Sassatelli, 2008: 234). One of the main additions of the EC becoming involved was the establishment of the Melina Mercouri prize, which gave host cities 1.5 million euros by abiding by the criteria specified for the prize. By the EC getting involved with the ECoC, it highlights the importance of culture and what it means to be European on the EU and the local level. Scholars such as Lähdesmäki (2014) view the ECoC's main objective as cementing closer cultural ties across Europe (Lähdesmäki, 2014 :192). Sassatelli also shares a similar viewpoint with calling the ECoC the most direct attempt to at creating a European cultural space both practically and symbolically (Sassatelli, 2008: 226). However, what does cementing closer cultural ties actually mean? Does cementing cultural ties infer making a homogenous European culture or simply the diffusion of cultures? Phrases such as 'unity in diversity' would become synonymous with the ECoC highlighting the rich diversity of the EU while acting as a potential future hindrance for a homogenous European identity.

The European City of Culture, which it was first referred to as, focused on promoting the mega European cultural epicenters such as Athens, Paris, Berlin, and Amsterdam and other prominent European cities. Over time there are fewer cosmopolitan European cities left to host the ECoC, which results in the ECoC focusing on lesser-known, smaller cities in the EU member states, candidate and or a potential candidate state (Decision No445/2014/EU). Cities that are not the capital, but rather the second biggest city or even smaller can be referred to as second-tier cities, which make up almost 80% of Europe's urban metropolitan population (Parkinson et al., 2014: 1057). The core of Europe does not lie in the mega European capitals, but rather in smaller cities, which are more numerous. Smaller cities on the other hand could potentially be seen as not as 'European' enough as the European mega cities. Participation in the ECoC program is not about cities being European, but rather they are becoming European, as was the case with Glasgow 1990 onwards (Sassatelli 2008: 236).

After Glasgow 1990, cities started to realize the ECoC title can be used for urban renewal and other improvements to infrastructure and the city. In a way this can be seen as the ECoC becoming a catalyst for development and going beyond simply promoting culture.

It is necessary to understand the procedure of cities trying to become a ECoC, before moving to the theoretical component of Europeanization and cases of it analyzed through ECoCs. The first step is the bidding process for hosting a ECoC within the eligible states six years before the title year. Cities must send a proposal to be examined by ten independent experts from the EU level. The cities must try to propose bids that reflect ‘contribution to the long-term strategy’, ‘European dimension’, ‘cultural and artistic content’, ‘capacity to deliver’, ‘outreach’, and ‘management’ (Katsarova, 2019: 4). Each of these themes are thought to help increase the success of the ECoC program by outlining key areas for attention. Once the proposal is submitted, the panel then agrees on forming a shorter list of cities to assess more, requiring the cities to submit more detailed applications and then recommends one city per host country for the title (Katsarova, 2019: 5). Cities that have been nominated for being a ECoC have four years before their title year to get prepared. Because of Decision 445/2014/EU, the EU states that are ECoC recipients in the years 2020-2033 must carry out their own evaluation of the ECoC (Decision 445/2014/EU). The EU expects three monitoring reports for the ECoC cities being three years from the title, 18 months, and then two months from the title (Katsarova, 2019: 5). These monitoring reports aim to make sure that the host cities are staying on track with implementation and making sure that the European dimension is highlighted. Not only that but other criteria from the new guidelines expect the mentioned areas of long-term strategy, cultural and artistic content, and capacity to deliver (Decision 445/2014/EU: Article 5). The updated criteria points to the EU recognizing how the ECoC, if carefully planned, can have potential benefits (Decision 445/2014/EU: 10).

A prominent feature of what many ECoC recipients use the ECoC title to do involves improving the city in different aspects. The ECoC acts as a catalyst for urban renewal for many cities such as boosting infrastructural investments, igniting tourism, and improving the image of the city (Jones and Ponzini, 2018). The effect of urban renewal, infrastructural investments and other related areas is part of a city’s long-term goal. The ECoC title gives spotlight to the host city and that city and region wants to promote a good image of itself. Part of a better image of a host city is to have revitalization in its neglected areas as an example. Jones and Ponzini (2021) deem the ECoC title is a cultural ‘mega event’ which helps give these host cities the chance to speed up the rejuvenation of old areas in need of restoration which they knew was needed before the ECoC title (Jones and Ponzini, 2021: 35).

It is evident that the EU and specifically the European Parliament and the Council have acknowledged the importance of generating development from the ECoC. In Decision 445/2014 paragraph 6, “cities holding the title of European Capital of Culture (‘the title’) have also progressively added a new dimension by using the leverage effect of the title to stimulate their more general development in accordance with their respective strategies and priorities (Decision No 445/2014/EU: paragraph 6)”. The ECoC title not only gives a chance for the selected host city to promote its image and what it has to offer, the ECoC title also acts as a catalyst for development and improvement in the host cities, making it a powerful tool. One of the main obstacles is simply having enough money for a budget, to use it for development and long-term success.

The role of funding for ECoC host cities is an integral part to having success as an ECoC city. Funding for the ECoC remains an open idea with no set amount of money specified. While the Mercuri prize of 1.5 million euros is a nice gesture for abiding by the criteria, it is largely symbolic. Budget spending for ECoCs from 2007-2017 resulted in being around 60 million euros per city, up from 25 million Euros per city in 1985-1994 (Katsarova, 2019: 5). EU funds and grants make up a minority percentage for the host cities, leaving the rest for the local city, state, and municipal governments as well as the private sector to cover the rest.

Spending and making a budget for ECoC host cities depends on a variety of factors. For example, it is common to expect that a richer EU member state such as Germany might be more able to have a higher ECoC budget for cities due to better economic conditions. One example is Chemnitz 2025. Chemnitz, Germany, with a population around 250,000 citizens was able to produce a ECoC budget for 116 million euros, showing how there is no set amount of money to raise (Chemnitz - European Capital of Culture 2025). The EU realizes that there is a sizeable difference in economies between countries that joined the EU before 2004 and those that joined the EU later (Katsarova, 2019: 5). On the other hand, a member state’s government, local city government, municipal government and other actors have to be willing to dedicate funds for the ECoC. The budget for the ECoC is important as it dictates how many events can happen with that amount of money as well as the long-term impact of hosting the ECoC. Funding and producing the budget is the job of the ECoC team a city puts together.

Another way host cities can get help with funding is to create some corporate/private partnerships. An example of this is Tartu 2024 having partnerships with A.le Coq Brewery as their beverage partner, and Delfi media as their media partner (*Partnerid*, Tartu 2024). ECoC

cities having partnerships with private companies can help fund some of the ECoC and can result in stronger marketing strategies for the stakeholders involved. In addition, host cities can apply for urban development funding from the EU's Structural Funds as another source of funding (Katsarova, 2019: 6). However, there are alternative approaches to securing funding, such as applying for the urban development funds and other EU grants, but they take time to get. The EU recommends in the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020-2033, that "Candidate cities should explore the possibility, where appropriate, of seeking financial support from Union programmes and funds (Decision No 445/2014/EU)". While the EU could simply raise the amount of money for the Mercuri prize, they instead offer ECoCs to apply for grants and funds in a way that tries to limit EU funding for the ECoCs.

The ECoC does require a significant amount of money, time, and other resources for host cities. However, research has covered some of the economic impact of hosting the ECoC. For one, research has shown that ECoC regions have a higher GDP per capita than regions who were also competing but did not become the ECoC region (Gomes and Librero-Cano, 2016). ECoCs are not just about promoting different European cultures, economic data indicates how the ECoC can be seen as an economic tool. However, economic data from ECoCs still needs to be further developed as there is never enough data. Another study finds that the ECoC increases GDP per capita by 1.1% to 4.34%, which is close to Gomes and Librero-Cano 2016 research findings of 4.5% (Gerland, 2023). Similar results indicate that there is a positive economic trend when it comes to hosting a ECoC in terms of GDP. Other findings show that in regions hosting events, tourism on average is 3.2% to 6.2% higher than in regions not hosting events (Gerland, 2023). The short-term economic impact of hosting the ECoC provides insight but long-term economic impact of the ECoC remains less researched.

There has been some research on economic impact of individual ECoCs such as Favero and Malisan (2021) analyzing Matera, Italy. For Matera 2019, research found a boost in touristic presence by check-ins increasing by 115% while the number of nights spent by tourists rose 52% (Favero & Malisan, 2021: 49). Matera was a relatively unknown city by foreigners and the ECoC helped put the city into the spotlight. However, it goes without saying that economic and tourist data should not be generalized to all ECoCs as each city experiences different economic outcomes from hosting the ECoC. Overall, there is still a need for further economic insight into hosting a ECoC and if they really do have positive economic impacts on the regions where the ECoC is present.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Europeanization

The main theoretical component of the research is focused on Europeanization. Europeanization is a broad term that has different definitions with whom you ask. It could focus on a bottom-up approach, or it could be how the EU diffuses (top-down) policies to the member states and local levels. However, scholars such as Gierat-Bieron (2020) highlight the cooperation and communication among the different levels of governmental actors as a third form of Europeanization, similar to the multi-level governance theory. For the research, the thesis will be using Gierat-Bieron's definition of Europeanization as, "Europeanisation denotes a process of adaptation of national laws to the supranational solutions. One can say that top-down Europeanisation has a formal dimension, while bottom-up Europeanisation is less formal. There is also horizontal Europeanisation – crossloading, which takes place when a transfer of procedures occurs resulting from mutual communication and exchange (Gierat-Bieron, 2020: 96)". Gierat-Bieron's definition of Europeanization picks up off of Börzel's and Risse's conceptual definition of it being top-down and bottom-up, and however, added the component of 'cross-loading' helps explain how different policy actors work together on implementing a worthwhile ECoC program in host cities.

An example of horizontal Europeanization can be seen in the form of transnational networks which act to facilitate collective action in addition to policy cooperation and communication with different policy actors (Liu, 2024: 2). In the case of the ECoC's it is apparent that horizontal Europeanization occurs with the EU recommending ECoC host cities to collaborate with artists and other cultural actors from all over Europe. Less is known however about how these different policy actors work together with the EU and the host cities in implementing the ECoC program in host cities. Horizontal and top-down Europeanization will both be used in analyzing the difference between a large city (over 400k people) and a smaller city (under 150k people) in Estonia which will help find factors that help explain the impact of a cities size in hosting the ECoC program.

While there is readily available scholarly research on ECoC's, it tends to stay on the theoretical framework of bottom-up Europeanization. Previous research has focused on how ECoC's inhibit bottom-up Europeanization through the diversity of different European cultures and identities, especially on the societal level (Lähdesmäki, 2014). Another example

of previous research is done on Europeanization and using part of a bottom-up approach in relation to ECoC's is by Bozena Gierat-Bieron on the topic is how local citizens and tourist perceptions and understanding of Europeanness, Europeanization and the European dimension of Wrocław 2016. Gierat-Bieron mentions an example of the bottom-up approach of Europeanization happening by local citizens and the local government perceiving on "inventing the city", as well as searching for an identity of the city with the freedom the ECoC gives to the local government and population in forming their bid for the title (Gierat-Bieron, 2020: 105). Other research focuses on the identity of ECoC cities with an example being postsocialist cities (Buldakova, 2020). Some studies even find top-down and bottom-up Europeanization dynamics as in the case of analyzing ECoC Romanian candidate cities (Turşie, 2016).

On the other hand, there is some research utilizing the top-down approach of Europeanization in relation to ECoC's and the EU Cultural Policy. An example of previous research on the topic comes from Macrina Moldovan talking about top-down Europeanization mentioning, "European Cultural Policy began gradually to adapt the cultural and creative industries model into its own approach ('Lisbon Strategy' 2000: 'European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World' 2007) and it heavily influenced the development of national and local cultural strategies in the member states (Moldovan, 2023: 3)". Moldovan's research is essential in the study as they highlight the role of the EU having in shaping policies and outcomes for local and regional actors. Top-down Europeanization is seen through EU policy action such as directives, regulations, decisions and recommendations to member states. Scholar Antoinette Fage-Butler also contributes to the topic of Europeanization and ECoC's by saying, "Of course, the Europeanising function of ECoCs is about creating support for the political entity of the EU, not the continent of Europe (Fage-Butler, 2018: 152)". When the EU talks about what it means to be 'European', it is about being a European Union citizen, instead of the whole continent, which does not indeed have the same cultural beliefs. This thesis differs from the previous research done on ECoC's by looking at Europeanization from a top-down and horizontal approach rather than a bottom-up approach. Interviews were conducted with ECoC host city officials instead of local citizens and visitors which uncover potential top-down and horizontal Europeanization mechanisms, as well as problems in the way for host cities in hosting the ECoC's in a comparative case study of Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024.

Not only does Europeanization help explain the nuances of the relationship between host cities and the EU, but also multi-level governance theory (MLG) provides meaningful

insights into the complexity of how the EU works with its member states. Scholars such as Liu (2024) elaborated on a multi-level role ECoC host cities have relations with numerous actors on different levels (Liu, 2024). The ECoC takes into account working with other political actors such as the EU, the state level of EU member state, city level, municipal level resulting in a complex mixture of who's governing in the process. Usually, the local government of the city or municipality sets up a team to control the operations of the ECoC title year. The EU and specifically the EC acts as a monitor, evaluating the process the ECoC host cities three different times before the start of the title year. The three monitoring reports are intended to see if the host city is keeping up with the criteria of the ECoC such as the European dimension. The national governments of the ECoC host state also have some say in the ECoC process by often supporting them financially which could lead to expectations of certain criteria. The same is said with the city governments often contributing a significant amount of funds.

3.2. Cultural Diplomacy

It is important to now understand how the ECoC is a tool of Europeanization. It is able to be a tool of Europeanization due to the concept of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy relates to soft power and using culture as a diplomatic tool. In the case of the EU, cultural diplomacy has been used with success of cultivating mutual understanding and creating a sense of belonging among the EU member states (Goff, 2013: 8). Cultural diplomacy allows non-state actors to have more of a role in the soft-power component of it. Cultural diplomacy can be seen in the form of horizontal Europeanization, such as in the case of artists collaborating on projects for the ECoC. In the case of the EU, cultural diplomacy is said to function best when people can move across borders easily (Goff, 2013: 16). The example cases of Europeanization should be viewed in the greater context of cultural diplomacy as it is essential to the backbone of the EU.

One example of how the EU displays top-down Europeanization in the realm of culture is through the Decision of European Capitals of Culture for 2020-2033. The Decision lays out the fundamental framework for how the ECoC title should be done. The Criteria mentioned in Article 5 of the Decision of 2020-2033 is divided into categories being 'contribution to the long term strategy', 'European dimension', 'cultural and artistic content', 'capacity to deliver' and 'outreach' and 'management' (Decision No445/2014). Article 14 of

the Decision is important when it comes to ECoC's as it lays out the criteria for the host cities to follow if they want to receive the 1.5 million Mercuri prize from the EU. The first part of the criteria is that the program must have a European dimension. Examples of this would include highlighting the richness of cultural diversity in Europe, bringing common European aspects to the forefront, and fostering cooperation between different artists from different cities (Decision No 445/2014/EU). Another part is that the budget for the host city has to be maintained at a level capable of producing a high-quality culture program in line with the application the city submitted (Decision No 445/2014/EU). In addition, the independence of the artistic team needs to be respected in addition to having plans for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the title and the marketing action needs to reflect it is a Union action (Decision No 445/2014/EU). The ECoC program shall foster the participation of citizens living in the city and surroundings while also appealing to citizens from abroad. The Decision for 2020-2033 goes even further in describing more of what the EU expects for the long-term strategy such as envisioning the long-term cultural, social, and economic impact as well as strengthening the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors (Decision No445/2014/EU). The EU attempts to better define the criteria for candidate host cities to follow but it is still vague in nature.

Decision No 445/2014/EU goes even further in changing the structure of the ECoC program to be used even more as a soft power tool. One example of this is the EU saying, "The title should continue to be reserved to cities, irrespective of their size, but in order to reach a wider public and amplify the impact, it should also be possible, as before, for the cities concerned to involve their surrounding area (Decision No445/2014/EU: 12)". The inclusion of regional areas in addition to the cities bidding for the ECoC program offers a better opportunity for Europeanization to be spread in the more rural areas of the region of the ECoC. The outcome of this could be that traditionally EU skeptic citizens that live in the countryside may become friendly to the EU due to the ECoC investing in their region. While this requires numerous amounts of data in the future, it should be mentioned that the ECoC continues to evolve over the decades.

The monitoring and advisory reports for the ECoC's provides extensive background into what the EU expects from the host cities and regions which will help to seek top-down as well as horizontal Europeanization attempts from the EU, as well as other policy actors to the host cities. The ECoC staff recalls how they are functioning in relation to the criteria for themselves. The monitoring and advisory reports are relatively seldom, but they offer insight into what the EU expert panel recommends from the host cities. They point out certain things

that the host cities need to do better or what they have been doing good so far. The ECoC reports on the host cities is a great source of information and data regarding the ECoC's and will be used in part of the methodology of analyzing Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024.

However, just because a supranational institution such as the European Commission gained a role in the ECoC process, it doesn't mean that there is a uniform approach for host cities to implement. Monica Sassatelli emphasizes the clashing of local cultures versus a European culture being due to the EU Cultural Policy and specifically due to the phrase 'unity in diversity' which the EU emphasizes in their Cultural Policy (Sassatelli, 2008: 235). However, the vagueness of 'unity', or also referred to as 'united' in diversity is said to contribute to more creative programs for the ECoC host cities. Emilia Palonen further elaborates on the topic saying, "For the EU, the ECoCs have been producing Europe, but "Europe" comes across in many forms. What does the policy imply by "European" (Palonen, 2011: 101)"? What Palonen is referring to is how there is no exact definition of European. At the same time, the ECoC policy strengthens both unity and diversity in Europe (Palonen, 2011: 101). This vague field allows for different interpretations from ECoCs and the EU acts as a monitor to make sure that ideas still have a European dimension. The "unity in diversity" phrase was eventually altered to protection of 'cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue' as a new phrase of EU cultural policy in 2006 (Gierat-Bieron, 2020: 95). The change to protection of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is not a huge shift in the overall message but the change could be said to try to reflect more of a European culture narrative.

Another potential benefit of the vagueness of directions and instructions means the supranational aspect of the EC is limited in the realm of the ECoC. Unity in diversity, while it changed the name, can be a good thing, especially for artists and creators to think freely. However, in terms of Europeanization, unity in diversity or the updated motto of protection of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue challenges the notion of Europeanization. Implicitly, the phrase of protection of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue hints at both bottom-up and horizontal Europeanization. Protection of cultural diversity can be seen by locals as promoting their own regional identity instead of a more of a European one. Intercultural dialogue relates to horizontal Europeanization by the EU cultural policy and the ECoC promoting transnational cooperation and communication (Liu, 2024).

Lacking a uniform approach for ECoC host cities results in differing implementations of budget spending for events and artists in the host cities which could limit the effectiveness of Europeanization and thus limit the further deepening of the EU. It is also thought that the "unity in diversity" slogan in a way contradicts its meaning as it can pose a challenge to the

ECoC program by focusing on cultural values and history that is deeper than the modern-day conception of “Europeanness” (Basaraba 2022: 360). It is hard for scholars, politicians and citizens to distinguish what Europeanness means and varies on who you ask.

On the other hand of the “unity in diversity” argument, scholars such as Sassatelli and Palmer/Rae Associates do believe that the richness of the ECoC title is due to not having an agreed formula for a cultural program (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 14) and (Sassatelli, 2005: 236). While the looseness of implementation allows host cities to decide what they want to do, it can limit the possibility of Europeanization in favor of promoting regional/national cultures. The looseness of the definition of what constitutes as “European” has negatively affected the implementation of ECoC host cities such as Tallinn 2011 for instance. Tallinn 2011 had to change their ECoC theme from folklore and fairy tales to stories of the seashore due to the folklore and fairy tales not having a sufficiently strong European dimension (Rampton et al., 2012: 17). While contemporary ECoC host cities seem to understand more of the European dimension requirement, the vagueness of directions still remains posing a potential challenge for future ECoC host cities.

Another example of this looseness of the European dimension is highlighted in Cosmin Marinescu’s research on gain or loss framing for the ECoC’s. Marinescu found that her research showed that the ECoC program can be framed both as an advantage and a disadvantage. Marinescu found that the ECoC does help economic/tourist development as well as culture in a host city/region, but the ECoC lags behind when it comes to defining what is European and thus ECoC host cities differ between multiple interpretations of what it means to be European (Marinescu, 2022: 23). Different interpretations of what it means to be European can lead to this unity in diversity, but it could impede EU support. Some of the examples given by Marinescu of this differentiation are ‘Europeanized communication’, ‘based on EU values’, ‘a nationalistic one’, or ‘one that combines both of these’ (Marinescu, 2022: 23). While each of these different interpretations offer advantages and disadvantages, the fact is that there is a real problem in what the European dimension of the ECoC program should encompass in host cities going forward. The diversity of Europe is of course not a hindrance, but for the sake of contemporary times, perhaps it is time to better reflect on what it means to be ‘European’.

Luckily for scholars interested in the ECoC, the EU funded a study by Palmer/Rae Associates in 2004 that analyzed the European Cities and Capitals of Culture. The study provides vast insights into how the program operated back then and if there is still overlap in the findings more than twenty years later. One of the main findings had been related to the

aspects of governance. In the study, the researchers highlighted that the central issue of governance was linked to numerous host cities setting up autonomous structures such as foundations or not-for-profit companies (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 14). The autonomous structures formed by the host cities allowed a 'board' to be formed to direct the path of the program and for the build up to the title year. Palmer/Rae notes that, "The key responsibilities of the Board were most frequently cited as taking financial decisions, developing policies and strategies, taking decisions about cultural projects and raising funds and sponsorship (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 14-15)". The aspect of securing funding is vital for host cities if they want to have a successful program by not feeling limited on what they could do.

Other problems Palmer/Rae found related to the governance aspect of the ECoC is that cities faced bad relationships between board members, lack of cultural interests as well as political interests hurting the foundations of host cities (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 15). Not only does the Board/Foundation of the host cities navigate around the complex arrangements of governance with the city, often times they cooperate with the surrounding regions or municipalities. The effect of this is that it makes the governance expand its scope to include other partners, usually from nearby areas.

However, one of the most important findings from the Palmer/Rae study is that in a questionnaire of 51 respondents, 42 of the respondents said they either had partly satisfactory relationships with the EC (23), or not satisfactory relationships with the EC (19) (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 182). Furthermore, 63% of respondents who had a direct relationship with the EC gave them a satisfactory relationship or partly satisfactory (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 22). This modest grade could be due to the EC having less of a role during the time of the study. Reasons mentioned by respondents for the grade of the EC mentioned, inadequate levels of funding offered by the EU, a lack of interest, bureaucracy, and insufficient expertise (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 22). Inadequate levels of funding from the EU is an important finding of the study. It would be interesting to see if this data has changed a lot since the study in 2004. Palmer/Rae also concludes that the conflicting, vague criteria for the ECoC is detrimental to the progress of the scheme (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 188). What this means is that the vagueness of the ECoC criteria up to 2004 was more intergovernmental than it is today and resulted in differing scopes of ECoCs.

In regards on what it means to be European, and Europeanness, there is no broad consensus as briefly mentioned. For Tallinn 2011, Lähdesmäki noted that a higher level of Europeanness thought among local and citizens was only related to a few main variables such as the European/foreign artists and performers (14%), European visitors (12%), hosting the

ECoC event (11%), art performances (11%) and as well as the atmosphere or common mentality (8%) (Lähdesmäki, 2014: 12). The data from Lähdesmäki shows that the EU needs to work on what it means to be European if they want to better integrate European policies and culture in areas of the EU that require further Europeanization. One main finding from the research is that Europeanness was considered a combination of unique national cultures which is displayed to the audience of the ECoC (Lähdesmäki, 2014: 13). In this sense of Europeanness, it is through promoting different cultures to an audience of different backgrounds can lead to a more common European identity. Part of this unity in diversity can be seen as bringing Europeans closer together by better understanding each other through culture.

An interesting part from Lähdesmäki's data is that the biggest percentage of people what thought was Europeanness was found to be European or foreign artists or performers. In a way this shows that the people find horizontal Europeanization (cooperation between different artists from Europe) has a good chance to promote this European identity they seek to achieve. However, in the case of Tallinn 2011, the limited budget for the ECoC title year reduced the number of foreign artists and performers in turn for local, cheaper artists which limited the horizontal Europeanization of Tallinn 2011. One other important note from the study indicated that Estonian speakers differed from Russian speakers in thinking of what Europeanness means/represents. This is apparent by the Estonian speakers emphasizing the European artists, European visitors and the ECoC program as Europeanness which differs from the overall Russian speakers vision of it as displaying national cultures to a foreign audience (Lähdesmäki, 2014: 13). In a 2024 study conducted by David Knoll, he found that the ECoC can positively affect trust in the EU as well as identification as a European Citizen (Knoll, 2024: 10). The increased trust of the EU through the ECoC emphasizes its ability to Europeanize citizens and regions. Knoll's research claims that the ECoC does not show longer-lasting effects of citizens perceptions of the EU but it still has the potential to bring the European program to the citizens (Knoll, 2024: 11). The heterogeneity of the ECoC allows for different outcomes to emerge for the host cities which adds to the fact that longer lasting effects of the ECoC are hard to predict and measure.

The recent trend in the ECoC program is that smaller population cities are getting the ECoC title. Part of this is due to the already European cosmopolitan cities such as Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam and many others having already hosted the ECoC in its early days. With most capital cities, and even second largest cities having the chance to host the ECoC, it leaves smaller cities as the focal point. Focusing on smaller cities gives the cities a better

chance to Europeanize, which they would not have so much otherwise if it wasn't for the ECoC title. Less is known about how the population size of a host city impacts the amount of funding. The size of a city is generally known that the smaller a city is, the less amenities it has. Katsarova notes in their ECoC Briefing Report that city size seems to matter, with larger cities having higher budgets (Katsarova, 2019: 5). In addition, they point out that geography also matters for host cities as smaller cities can differ in funding size such as Tallinn 2011 (14 million) and Linz 2009 (69 million) (Katsarova, 2019: 5). It could be more about a region and state's economic well-being that can help contribute to a larger ECoC budget. Thinking in regard to the ECoC, smaller cities may not have large public venue spaces or buildings for hosting the ECoC. Not having the proper infrastructure can result in a divide for the ECoC taking place in a larger city with more resources. It does not mean that smaller cities need to have the same grandiose scale as larger cities, but that they are also able to have a proper ECoC title year. There is not much research on how smaller population size ECoC cities have functioned compared to their larger city counterparts, making it important to analyze.

The potential relationship between population size of a ECoC host city and the budget and the success of ECoC's is hardly touched upon. One reason is that it is extremely challenging to correlate the size of a city with the budget to determine its effectiveness. On the other hand, analyzing the population size and the budget of ECoC cities separately can possibly produce meaningful data. Scholar Ježek produced a table with the ECoC's starting from Luxembourg 1995 to Pilsen in 2015. The table has variables such as population size, number of projects, overall attendance, as well as program and infrastructure expenses. The table is useful in illustrating how Tallinn 2011 compared to other ECoC counterparts with the selected parameters. In terms of number of projects, Tallinn had 7,000 which was one of the most and it shows a small budget doesn't mean a limited number of events. However, Ježek 2015 mentions the inconsistency of determining a relative budget size with small population cities (Ježek, 2016). Comparing ECoC cities from different regions of Europe and different states has a number of variables that make it difficult to compare.

It is important to note the themes of both Tartu 2024 as well as Tallinn 2011 to get a better understanding of the planning behind the programs. Tallinn 2011 was focused on 'stories of the seashore', after having to change their initial program theme of folklore and fairy tales (Rampton et al., 2012: 17). The change to stories of the seashore reflected the long, but also recent past of Estonia and particularly Tallinn. The recent Soviet past was a key feature for Tallinn with converting the barren coastline to one that is inviting for tourists and citizens alike. The seashore around Tallinn was one of the main focal points for urban

renewal and development for the ECoC and beyond. An example is the Kultuurikatel (Culture Caldron) that was transformed from an old industrial site into a venue space and hub for cultural and creative operations (Rampton et al., 2012: 17).

Tartu 2024 differs from Tallinn in the program's theme being more centered on contemporary issues in their program title called, 'arts of survival'. The theme mentions issues such as inflation, external threats, the recent Covid epidemic, and other recent issues into their program for many events. Additionally, Tartu 2024 differs from Tallinn 2011 with including 20 municipalities being involved with the plans of Tartu 2024. The municipalities involved consist of Tartu linn (city), Tartu vald, Tõrva vald, Otepää vald, Kanepi vald, Kastre vald, Põlva vald, Peipsiääre vald, Räpina vald, Valga vald, Antsla vald, Võru linn, Võru vald, Luunja vald, Elva vald, Nõo vald, Kambja vald, Setomaa vald, Rõuge vald and Viljandi linn. The effects of Tartu 2024 are more widespread in a regional sense than what Tallinn 2011 had.

4. METHODOLOGY

For the study it uses two cases from one country, Estonia. Estonia has hosted the European Capital of Culture two times, like most other EU member states. Picking two cases in the same state offers better insight into the differences between the two ECoCs since the culture is common on a national level, which allows things to stand out between Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024. Culture between northern Estonia and southern Estonia could result in some differences, but this research believes that picking cities in the same country reduces background noises as well as increasing the degree of comparability. However, Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024 are 13 years apart from each other, indicating that these are two distinct different time periods of Estonia's recent history. The two different timeframes of 2011 and 2024 are far enough from each other which can help uncover aspects that have changed from one timeframe to the other. Two different timeframes can provide evidence into how the ECoC program is evolving and becoming more of a useful tool for the EU.

Tallinn is significantly bigger with a population size of around 460,000 people, while Tartu only has around 100,000 people. Tallinn has roughly 33% of the Estonian population as well as 43% of total workers in the country (Trasberg, 2021). Picking an EU member state that has hosted the ECoC title twice is a better method of comparing and contrasting since both cities fall under the same national legal jurisdiction. However, it is important to be careful not to state that this research will be able to be generalized for all EU cities and member states, which is extremely challenging, if it is even possible. Going back to the research question, how does varying levels of funding and size of ECoC small (less than 150k) and large host cities (400K plus) affect the top-down and horizontal Europeanization processes between these settings? The research aims to identify if smaller cities have a harder time securing funding compared to larger cities which could impact the success and Europeanization of the ECoC program. The aim of the interviews is to uncover the perceptions of local officials in charge of the ECoC program. It uncovers what needs to happen to have a successful European Capital of Culture as well as challenges in the way.

For the methodology and case selection, this research conducts interviews with both the staff of Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024, which is essential for the study. The interviewees held different positions for their ECoC team. For Tallinn 2011, the two interviewees both had experience with different managing aspects of Tallinn 2011, highlighting better understanding of what the ECoC entails than more technical roles for example. The selection of the interviewees came from finding names of people from the Tallinn 2011 Foundation

ECoC monitoring reports. After getting someone from the staff to agree on a virtual interview, the snowball method was used with the first participant (TLL 1) with them recommending another person for another lead, which led to the second interviewee for Tallinn 2011 (TLL 2). Choosing people from the Tartu 2024 team was more straightforward with going to their Tartu 2024 website and simply reaching out to the different contacts listed. For Tartu 2024, both of the interview participants had coordinator roles for different sectors of the program. Having interviews with people with managerial experience in the ECoC as well as other specific coordinators is beneficial as they shed light on different sectors within ECoC teams. For the Tartu interviewees they will be coded as (TRT 1) and (TRT 2).

The research conducted anonymous semi-structured interviews which allowed the participants to think freely and critically about the questions being asked. It was decided to conduct it this way in order to let the officials choose how to formulate their words which gives greater insight into how the division between local governments, ECoC officials and EU officials in setting up the program, monitoring it, and evaluating it. The argument for having the participants coded anonymously allowed them to be relaxed and give honest, straight forward answers, which is of course important in conducting interviews. The interviews are also intended to see how the ECoC officials think they have handled holding the title and what changes or rules they had to implement at the local policy level to obtain the title. In total, three interviews were conducted in an online format due to scheduling conflicts, and one interview was conducted in person.

The other method of research is conducting content analysis through the ECoC monitoring reports for Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024. The use of analyzing the monitoring report documents describes the effort being made by the ECoC teams to satisfy the ECoC criteria. Additionally, the reports will be used to help display if smaller population host cities differ from larger ones as well as the budget of each ECoC. This research is seeking to identify the Europeanization processes in a qualitative manner. For analyzing the ECoC monitoring reports, the plan is to specifically look at sections such as financing, the European dimension, governance and management, and overall background and conclusions gathered by the monitoring report authors. The interviews go hand in hand with the monitoring reports as they helped formulate some of the questions to ask the ECoC officials.

The Ex-post Evaluation of 2011 included Tallinn, Estonia and Turku, Finland as the ECoC's for 2011. Both ECoC host cities are examined in-depth on the cities' progress leading up to the title year as well as how they handled the title year. The report used

primarily qualitative interviews of the managing teams of both Turku and Tallinn 2011. However, the report also used secondary data sources such as analysis of the original ECoC applications of the two cities, quantitative data focused on the finances, activities as well as the results and outputs of the programs (Rampton et al., 2012). Comparing the final ECoC monitoring report findings for Tallinn 2011 to the interview data allows for a deeper understanding into certain dynamics such as the budget size and population size in this study.

The qualitative methodology of this paper allows for deeper insight into how ECoC was operated by a ECoC team and the impacts and challenges of hosting the ECoC. The research aims to specifically see how the ECoC functions in a larger and smaller city in one country, which is Estonia in this case. This has a chance to compare and contrast Europeanization between larger and smaller units due to being awarded the title of the European Capital of Culture. Firsthand insight into ECoC officials' experience offers valuable information that can be translated into advice for improving the ECoC structure. As mentioned before, Europeanization is a vague topic, and in regard to this thesis, it is specifically analyzed in the top-down and horizontal Europeanization approaches. However, data in regard to bottom-up Europeanization will also be mentioned that comes up from interviews and the monitoring reports. The interview findings will be compared with the literature review as well as the research question, bringing every component together for the analysis.

For the research, it is important to determine if top-down and horizontal Europeanization was at play during the candidate, and then implementation stage of the ECoC. In light of this, it is analyzed through the budget sizes of the ECoCs, as well as if or how population size has any impact. It is important to discuss with the interview participants whether they acknowledged Europeanization being an effect of hosting the ECoC, and if so, how was it felt or perceived? Getting in-depth info helps explain the Europeanization process unfolding in the two ECoCs of Estonia. Another goal of the interviews is determining if Tartu 2024 learned from any of the mistakes and challenges Tallinn 2011 experienced which will be interesting to find out.

Potential downfalls of the selected methodology shall be discussed. For one, it could be said that only conducting qualitative research limits the ability to put the research and results into metric data. Quantitative data can help come up with formulas on how larger and smaller cities function in regard to their ECoC program with specific variables. However, the decision to not use quantitative data for the analysis shall not be viewed as a hindrance. For Europeanization, this research believes it is suited to be examined in a qualitative approach as

Europeanization can be hard to quantify. The thesis aims to identify qualitative factors such as if city population size and funding impacts hosting the ECoC, which is something that is less known about.

There are however other downsides of the selected qualitative methodology. One of the downsides is that it is hard to determine how many interviews to conduct to get meaningful insight. At the same time, too many interviews can lead to over saturation if the interview participants share similar thoughts. However, one problem in relation to the selected methodology is that it can be challenging to get staff of a ECoC program more than a decade from its title year to agree to interviews. Not only that but very specific questions are also potential barriers with historical memory playing a role. Recollection of specific points of the ECoC could be forgotten when compared to interviewees who recently participated in hosting an ECoC. Related to this could be that some respondents say less when asked a question which could limit the effectiveness of a semi-structured interview. Another potential disagreement could be having the interviewees be anonymous. It could be viewed by some as limiting the effectiveness of the study with not being able to know their exact experiences for the ECoCs. In the defense of the anonymity selection, it does not matter a persons' name if they are suited for the interviews, which they all were.

However, the main downside of the selected methodology is that Tartu 2024's final ECoC report is set to be published in September of 2025. The final report could have been useful to compare Tartu 2024 interview data with the findings of the report. The final report Tartu 2024 will publish is likely to cover similar aspects of this study such as the budget of the ECoC. Getting better in-sight into how the budget was spent for Tartu 2024 in addition to other challenges of the ECoC would have been very beneficial. On the other hand, the interview data from Tartu 2024 participants produced a lot of valuable information which will be explained in the analysis in combination with the monitoring reports of Tartu 2024 up to the title year. Overall, the data collected from the interviews with ECoC staff was the main priority for the research to get firsthand insight.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1. Tallinn 2011

The ECoC of Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024 represent two different timeframes in Estonia's recent history. Not only that but the two cities differ in size, economy, and way of life. The analysis is divided into three sections focusing each on Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024, and the comparison of the two ECoCs. The ECoC Monitoring reports for both Tartu 2024 and Tallinn 2011 provide valuable insight into how the ECoC teams in each city have progressed since winning the nomination bid for the ECoC host city. The reports also address challenges the teams face and how they intend to fix the issues. For Tallinn 2011, there is more available information to analyze as it includes the Ex-post Evaluation of the 2011 ECoC's which includes Tallinn.

As briefly discussed earlier on, with different actors such as city governments contributing financially to host the ECoC, it could be expected that they want something in return. For Tallinn 2011, the city government was involved in Tallin 2011 which led to certain political disputes. The final report for Tallinn 2011 noted that, "those developing and implementing the ECoC were largely powerless to foresee and prevent the dispute between the City and State and the reduction in the budget (Rampton et al., 2012: 31)". Specifically, political battles between the city (Centre party majority) vs the state government made the new Tallinn 2011 Foundation in charge of the ECoC inefficient. Part of this inefficiency is linked to the parliamentary elections in Estonia which politicized the funding and governance of the ECoC (Rampton et al., 2012: 23). As a result of this politicization, Mikko Fritze resigned from his manager role by mentioning the city and state were not able to work together due to being controlled by different political parties (Rampton et al., 2012: 23). Politization and multi-level governance helps explain the processes between the actors within Estonia at the time.

Among the most important findings from the final monitoring report for Tallinn 2011 is that it detailed how Tallinn only reached the budget for 2007-2012 for only 16 million euros, making Tallinn one of the least resourced ECoC's to date (Rampton et al., 2012: 19). Part of this can be due to the 2008 financial crisis that disrupted the global economy, but the reduced budget for Tallinn 2011 goes to show that not having enough money to run the title year adds headaches on how to reduce the scope of the events while trying to keep them as

meaningful as possible. The final report tells us that there needs to be financial commitments long-term and stability when it comes to funding for the ECoC (Rampton et al., 2012: 34). As a result of this reduced budget, the plan to use artists from different European countries and others abroad were replaced by local artists who were cheaper than those from abroad. The lack of using different international partners limits the effectiveness of horizontal Europeanization for Tallinn 2011. For the ECoC budget of Tallinn 2011, 52% of the funding came from the Tallinn City Government and 31% came from the Ministry of Culture and the Mercuri prize was 11% (Rampton et al., 2012: 20). For having such a low budget for Tallinn 2011, the symbolic Mercuri prize is a significant part of the ECoC funding for the ECoC.

While Tallinn 2011 dealt with a limited budget, there are still benefits of their title year. An example of this is the open call for projects issued by the Tallinn 2011 Foundation in 2008. The open call was able to get 1,000 applications from the local society to have a chance to have their ideas promoted (Rampton et al., 2012: 17). Being able to allow citizens and artists to have their ideas promoted is beneficial for all parties. Furthermore, the open call was able to bypass the politization and managed to secure support from Tallinn's cultural sector (Rampton et al., 2012: 17). Another open call Tallinn 2011 had was the 52 Surprises and Ideas competition giving citizens a chance to pitch ideas on week-long events for money (Rampton et al., 2012: 18). Promoting local society input into Tallinn 2011 such as open calls can be seen as encouraging bottom-up Europeanization.

For the interviews of Tallinn 2011, there were some main takeaways from the participants being interviewed. In total there were two interviews with people involved in the Tallinn 2011 Foundation, which was the ECoC operator in Tallinn. Among the biggest findings was that political differences and political influence was challenging to the success of the Tallinn 2011 program. One interviewee highlighted the difficulty of progress due to the Mayor of Tallinn at that time Edgar Savisaar, not supporting many aspects of the plans for Tallinn 2011. One aspect that can be part of the reason why the mayor took a stubborn approach to the ECoC is partly due to the role of funding. As briefly mentioned before, the 2008 financial crisis affected states all around the world and in this case Estonia. As a result of this, the budget for the government was reduced due to the lack of money. The idea of more money needed from the EU for the ECoC is nothing new. Palmer/Rae Associates indicate in their recommendations that the EU should increase direct financial support which can help maintain EU credibility as a partner (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 192). Not much has been changed in regard to EU funding for the ECoC more than twenty years later, making the point still relevant today.

Interviewee 1 TLL was transparent and quick to say what was on their mind related to Tallinn 2011. It was discussed that the Foundation's relationship with the local city government was a complex one. Interviewee 1 thought that the City Council and the Mayor of Tallinn at the time Edgar Savisaar, controlled the Tallinn Foundation as the Board of the Foundation. In terms of working for the Foundation, TLL 1 said, "it was not easy, it was tiring due to the conflict and differing of opinion (TLL 1)". The politization relates to the findings by the Ex-post evaluation of Tallinn 2011 mentioning the political struggle between city (Tallinn) and state governments in Estonia (Rampton et al., 2012: 23). Related to this is, TLL 1 mentioned that part of this competition with the local city government on what Tallinn 2011 will do was partly related to money and the 2008 financial crisis. The severely reduced budget hurt expectations and led to less events. However, they mention that the Tallinn 2011 Foundation was in the hands of the city and all the time had to fight against 'a very old-fashioned way of viewing culture' (TLL 1). An old-fashioned way of culture could be debated as not seeing culture relevant at all or viewing it as very little impact in politics, as was in the case of Tallinn 2011. The financial crisis resulted in huge cuts to government spending and specifically in the field of culture which impacted Tallinn 2011. TLL 1 mentioned the political situation at the time saying, "There was really big problems with money, so in a way they as well focused more and more on this one big event, even politically he could not build roads and bridges anymore and the new playgrounds for the kids because there was no money (TLL 1)". What TLL 1 was referring to is that the mayor Edgar Savisaar, wanted to focus on one big event for Tallinn 2011 rather than many events due to the constraints of the budget of the State, as well as the City of Tallinn.

While TLL 1 was quick to point out the challenges associated with Tallinn 2011, they also highlighted the projects and part of the program they liked working on. Among one of the things was the Straw Theatre as it was unique and ecological. In addition, they mention how it was already a success that Tallinn (specifically Estonia) that they got the ECoC. Highlighting the benefit of getting the ECoC treats it like a mega-event in bringing in an international audience as well as using the ECoC as a means of development (Jones and Ponzini, 2021). The Ex-post Evaluation of Tallinn 2011 shows that the ECoC events of Tallinn 2011 managed to bring two million people, which is double what the Tallinn 2011 Foundation was anticipating (Rampton et al., 2012: 25). In addition, Tallinn 2011 experienced a 17% increase in foreign tourists in 2011 compared to data from 2010 (Rampton et al., 2012: 25). The data mentioned correlates to the ECoC being a mega-event with bringing in a large number of visitors to check out what the ECoCs are about.

Continuing on the theme of mega-events and why it is important for Tallinn to get the ECoC title, TLL 1 said, “Because towns in Estonia has not so many possibilities to get international (TLL 1)”. Tallinn 2011 was one of the first chances Estonia was able to market and display itself across Europe and the world since joining the EU in 2004. In mentioning potential mega-events Estonia can get, TLL 1 emphasized that Eurovision is a way, albeit hard to win the nomination while noting that ‘you won’t get the Olympic games in Estonia’ (TLL 1). The mentioning of the mega-event concept indicates that the ECoC is perceived as a mega-event by at least some officials in ECoC foundations. The impact here is that ECoC officials see the ECoC as a chance to act as a useful tool for cities. Seeing the ECoC as a policy tool relates to economic and urban development as noted by previous researchers on regions that host an ECoC (Gomes & Librero-Cano, 2016).

In terms of questions regarding the EU’s involvement in the ECoC, TLL 1 and TLL 2 had some differences. TLL 1 thought that the Melina Mercouri prize amount of 1.5 million euros was ‘of course not enough’ for host cities as it is ‘symbolic’. They also say the Mercouri prize could be more, but they think the cultural capital shouldn’t be depending on European money (TLL 1). Part of this reasoning is that they thought that the EU might want to give more money to influence more. In terms of the overall funding mechanism, TLL 1 thought at this moment it is ‘quite okay’. In thinking that the overall funding mechanism is quite okay relates to them viewing further EU power in ECoCs as negative. The position of TLL 1 is similar to an intergovernmental approach to culture, meaning that the states should largely decide on how to operate the ECoC their way.

For TLL’s 1 response to if smaller population host cities have a harder time securing funding, they were not sure if population size impacts funding and also thinks it is hard to compare smaller and larger cities. A related example discussed by TLL 1 mentions that they thought the organization and funding was handled good by Tartu 2024 compared to Tallinn 2011. They further go on to say that ‘it depends on the local situation in the country’ for why population size may or may not impact funding, which is important (TLL 1). The ‘local situation’ TLL 1 refers involves a large range of different factors. Some local situation factors can be political stability and trust in the ECoC by different government actors within a state such as the local city government, municipal government, state government. Other examples include factors such as the economy and local communities support, and so on.

Continuing to discuss population size of ECoCs, TLL 1 mentions that smaller ECoCs still need certain infrastructure such as a theatre or a concert hall for events and such (TLL 1). Discussing the need for certain infrastructure to host an ECoC demonstrates that population

size does to a certain extent play a role in shaping ECoC nominations and bid-books. A smaller city such as Bad Ischl, Austria, which is one of the other 2024 ECoC's with 15,000 residents has to have their own approach and realistic expectations for the ECoC compared to a larger, cosmopolitan city where they would have more choices in how the ECoC could function.

For the relationship between the ECoC and the EU, TLL 1 prefers an open relationship with little or no guidance, for any structure for the host cities. They also thought the vagueness of EU directions was a good thing for the ECoC host cities. Part of this reasoning was them saying that, "The European Capital of Culture is just a name and not a format (TLL 1)". TLL 1 sees the ECoC as a chance for ECoC teams to get creative, and to think outside of the box since there is vagueness of EU directions to take advantage of. At the same time, the ECoC could be said it is becoming more of a format that host cities should follow, albeit it is still largely vague in nature. As mentioned earlier, Decision No445/2014/EU updated the criteria of the ECoC showing that the EU continues to recognize the importance of the ECoC. In addition, TLL 1 thought that the EU never felt imposing over Tallinn 2011, which shows that the top-down Europeanization dimension is fairly limited for ECoC's over the host cities, at least in 2011 and in the implementation phase of the ECoC.

In terms of if other Estonian cities could host the program, TLL 1 thought that other smaller cities in Estonia such as Narva, Pärnu could function as a ECoC. They thought that a region-specific locality such as Saaremaa or the islands in general could be an interesting concept for a future ECoC (TLL 1). TLL 1 was very fond of the idea of smaller ECoC cities and what they could offer. In terms of asking what TLL 1 thought that could be learned from Tallinn 2011, the respondent said that, "what's there to learn about? Nowadays it's much more controlled, I would say by the European Union (TLL 1)". The control they are referring to is the European dimension criteria for the ECoC. TLL 1 was adamant in thinking that the EU should not have more control over the ECoC program. Overall, TLL 1 thought that Tallinn 2011 resulted in long term success, and at least it was not negative. Compared to Tartu 2024, TLL 1 thought that Tartu 2024 was supported by the mayor and other governmental actors and that maybe Tartu 2024 learned from Tallinn 2011 to have a stable political basis.

TLL 2 had some similarities to TLL 1 but there were still differences between the two subjects. In terms of main accomplishments of Tallinn 2011, TLL 2 thought opening up the seashore was an important accomplishment since the coastline was barren and empty during the Soviet period as well as it being the theme of Tallinn 2011 'stories of the seashore'. The

opening of the seashore was thought to be connected to everything within the ECoC for Tallinn 2011 (TLL 2). Another accomplishment discussed was the volunteers for Tallinn 2011 and how it was a success having them help on different projects and being used in a systematic way. Tallinn 2011 was able to get the local community involved by people helping to work while dealing with a small ECoC budget. The result of a severely reduced budget resulted in having to hire artists and personnel from nearby for less expensive costs. In terms of if Tallinn 2011 was successful, they thought ‘it was okay’, while citing that Tallinn 2011 was influenced by the city government saying, “Tallinn was maybe too much political (TLL 2)”. Specifically, TLL 2 mentions the city versus state government difficulty for the program. The city versus state government difficulty was due to different parties and coalitions in a small country such as Estonia. Like the other TLL participant, both interviewees from Tallinn 2011 expressed that politics was in the way of hosting the ECoC which should be seen as one of, if not the main challenges of Tallinn 2011. Answers from both TLL 1 and 2 on the subject of politics corresponds to the findings in the ECoC final report (Rampton et al., 2012: 23).

TLL 2 compares Tartu 2024 to Tallinn 2011 and thought that ‘Tartu was different, no change in personnel’ (TLL 2). They believe having the same ECoC team is an important aspect of having a good ECoC. In mentioning the impact of planning for Tallinn 2011, TLL 2 notes that the ECoC was planned in 2006, but in 2008 the financial crisis happened and resulted in cuts to the budget, which meant limited activities (TLL 2). It is hard for ECoC foundations/teams when their anticipated ECoC budget has to be reduced which in turn makes the ECoC have to downscale their plans, as what was described in the ECoC monitoring reports for Tallinn 2011. For what TLL 2 would have liked to have done differently for the ECoC, they thought that it would have been better for the Tallinn Foundation with someone that has knowledge of the Tallinn local city government might have helped with making the process more smoothly with the Tallinn Foundation director (TLL 2). What TLL 2 meant by this is that having someone that can deal with the political complexities at the time would have been beneficial for the Tallinn 2011 Foundation. As well, TLL 2 says in regard to a ECoC team that, “stability is the most important thing” and also that the ECoC foundations had to challenge city departments as “that’s the whole idea of the European Capital of Culture as well to challenge those departments or those ways of acting (TLL 2)”. TLL 2 is referring that ECoC foundations should challenge pre-conceived notions of culture by city departments and challenge them to help collaborate on a European

project. The findings here are similar to TLL 1 mentioning the Tallinn Mayor at the time having an ‘old fashioned way of viewing culture’.

For the Melina Mercouri prize, TLL 2 thought that the Mercouri prize was not enough for host cities and called it symbolic, as the “cherry to the cake (TLL 2)”. For if the EU should raise the Mercouri prize, they thought that they should raise the prize, stating that, “there’s always a shortage of money (TLL 2)”. TLL 2 thought that funding for the ECoC’s should be a mix of EU and local city funding. They thought that if it was only EU money that funds the ECoC, “then many local citizens just don’t feel that responsibility for the ECoC”, since they did not contribute any funds to it locally (TLL 2). Local citizens may not know how the ECoC is funded as ECoC host cities largely use public budgets from their city and state governments to cover most of the expenses. If the EU were to cover most of the funding for the ECoC, then the local society would feel less responsibility as TLL 2 notes. In the case of how the budget was raised for Tallinn 2011, the final evaluation of Tallinn 2011 showed that the City of Tallinn contributed 52% of the ECoC budget with the Ministry of Culture providing 31% (Rampton et al., 2012: 20).

For if smaller population ECoC host cities may have a harder time implementing successful programs, TLL 2 thought the overall theme of the ECoC is changing. They said, “It used to be focused on European Culture centers now to more smaller cities for long term changes. The ECoC’s are more for the local population (TLL 2)”. Over time there has been a shift to smaller population size cities hosting ECoCs as evident with the 2024 ECoC recipients of Tartu (100,000 residents); Bodø (43,000 residents); and Bad Ischl (14,000 residents). When asked if the ECoC’s Europeanize the local area, they thought yes it does Europeanize the local community/area, however they did not provide much insight into the reasoning. In smaller cities, it may be likely that they are more likely to see the impact from ECoCs, however this requires further research. In regard to if there was EU oversight over Tallinn 2011, TLL 2 thought that there was no imposing EU oversight. The result of this ties into the fact that the EU, and specifically the EC acts as if they are trying to stay out of over imposing which is why ECoCs have to conduct their own data and present the monitoring reports themselves.

For if other Estonian cities such as Narva or Pärnu could host the ECoC, TLL 2 thought that Narva was a good choice and “maybe Narva needed it more than Tartu (TLL 2)”. What they were referring to is that Narva in its current age is less European than Tartu and the city could have needed Europeanization more than the already European city of Tartu. While TLL 2 thought Narva could have used the 2024 ECoC more than Tartu, they

were quick to point out that they were glad Tartu won the nomination and thought that the population size of Tartu was actually good (TLL 2). The population size of Tartu is good because it is big enough as it already has infrastructure needed for large events such as the ECoC, but it could be small enough to have a big impact. While TLL 2 thought that the invasion of Ukraine would have disrupted any potential plans for Narva, they were vague on reasons why Narva was not the best suited for the ECoC. Implicitly, it was due to the neighbor on the other side of the Narva River and unnecessary outcomes emerging. TLL 2 said, “Everything is influenced by the war (TLL 2)”. While TLL 2 thought that Tallinn 2011 ‘could have been better’, they thought the seashore was a lasting success of the program. Another interesting finding was that they also thought that the islands and/or specifically Kuressaare, could also manage a ECoC just as TLL 1 thought recognizing a potential future Estonian ECoC.

In terms of the vagueness of directions from the EU level for ECoC’s, TLL 2 thought that it is fine having the vagueness of directions from the EU if you are involved in the foundations or involved in the cities who are (TLL 2). The vagueness allows for more creativity and less rules and regulations for the ECoC foundations which is viewed as a plus. On the other hand, TLL 2 expressed that the ECoC is more about the bottom-up aspects of Europeanization than the top-down Europeanization. This is evident with TLL 2 saying, “I think that the ECoC’s is more important to the local people or the local people of the city to change or do some interesting things to raise the self-esteem that we can manage that (TLL 2)”. The evaluation of Tallinn 2011 shows similar findings with 94% of Tallinn 2011 projects considered that Tallinn 2011 was visible or very visible with local and national media (Rampton et al., 2012: 33). When compared to international media, 27% of Tallinn 2011 projects were considered visible or very visible (Rampton et al., 2012: 33). Part of the low visibility in the international media is largely due to lack of funding to promote Tallinn 2011 across Europe. On the other hand, the national media is bound to cover ECoC events in its own country expressing why Tallinn 2011 was visible or very visible by national media.

5.2. Tartu 2024

The interviews with Tartu 2024 staff and the monitoring meetings of Tartu 2024 provide recent insight into the build up until the opening of the 2024 ECoC. The third monitoring report is employed for the bulk of the analysis of the monitoring reports of Tartu

2024. The third ECoC monitoring reports for Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024 help summarize the issues and goals and what has been done up to the start of the title year. However, the first and second monitoring reports for Tartu 2024 also prove to be beneficial for the analysis. By analyzing all three monitoring reports before the Tartu 2024 title year helps uncover trends and changes the Tartu 2024 team does, as well as recommendations by the expert panel. Like the analysis of Tallinn 2011, the ECoC monitoring reports are used to be compared with the interview findings. The interviews in contrast allow for a deeper understanding of what is happening in ECoC teams in relation to governance, support, budget constraints, successes and failures.

Among all the crucial information discussed, it is noted that Tartu 2024 secured more than 20 public funders from local level to national level as well as private sector partnerships being established (*Tartu 2024 Third Monitoring Meeting Report, 2023: 3*). As mentioned before, Tartu 2024 had to secure enough partnerships to help out with costs of the event as well as using the partnerships to market Tartu 2024 to consumers. For the budget of Tartu 2024, the Foundation provides 70% of the overall total, leaving the rest for state or EU funds (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 7*). The total budget of the ECoC of Tartu 2024 was 26 million euros, higher than Tallinn 2011's budget of 16 million euros. The impact of this is that the second largest city in Estonia, Tartu, was able to surpass the capital city in funding. While these numbers are smaller than ECoC budgets in western European nations, the analysis indicates that cities in Estonia do not need to have the same ECoC budget capacity as other EU member states.

One distinction of Tartu 2024 from Tallinn 2011 was the regional scope of Tartu 2024. Most of Southern Estonia in Tartu 2024 participated with 20 municipalities in Southern Estonia being involved, denoting that the ECoC for Tartu 2024 is not simply about the city of Tartu, but rather the whole of Southern Estonia. One impressive note is that 80% of Tartu 2024's bid book projects made it into the final program being approved by EU officials (*Tartu 2024 Third Monitoring Meeting Report, 2023: 2*). It is impressive having 80% of the original projects approved by the EU while the EU does not really guide the host cities in choosing projects and plans. In terms of the opening event for Tartu 2024, the team realized they underestimated the budget and had to increase the budget since the opening requires a significant amount of capital, which is important to note (*Tartu 2024 Third Monitoring Meeting Report, 2023: 5*). The Tartu 2024 team expressing themselves underestimating the budget goes to show that the ECoC host cities have to try to be creative on effectively producing quality and meaningful events while being on a cheap budget.

In terms of the European dimension for Tartu 2024, the team was able to work with 20 partners and countries in helping them with their title year. Overall, the team expected 150 total international partners to help participate in the program, which is a big number, but they were vague on how the international partners would participate (*Tartu 2024 Third Monitoring Meeting Report, 2023: 5*). Having many international partners from across Europe and abroad helps work to increase horizontal Europeanization through collaboration with specialists from different cultures. In addition, Tartu hosting the ECoC is expected by the Mayor of Tartu to raise the city, as well as the university to be seen as an open, tolerant, and culturally rich city and region (*Tartu 2024 Third Monitoring Meeting Report, 2023: 6*). For Tartu, the ECoC it is not so much about becoming European but rather showing that Tartu is already a European city.

Just like Tallinn 2011 as well as every other ECoC, Tartu 2024 faced different challenges while preparing for the ECoC. One of the unexpected events was Covid-19 and how it required large amounts of funds to keep up with. Covid-19 also impacted the international ties of Tartu 2024 with other ECoC-cities. However, Tartu 2024's Foundation CEO Kuldar Leis mentioned how the Covid-19 Pandemic did not affect the long-term plans in a significant manner (*Tartu 2024 First Monitoring Meeting Report, 2020: 5*). Another challenge was simply inflation and the economic situation of higher prices and energy costs. Not only so, but the war in Ukraine also impacted Tartu 2024 by the Tartu 2024 Foundation having to cancel ties with their Russian neighbor for some plans. Another result of the war in Ukraine was that Tartu 2024 had a new challenge to persuade tourists that Estonia is a safe destination still (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 6*). Tartu 2024's theme of 'arts of survival' highlights the recent negative events as a way of overcoming tough challenges. While some global events happened after the inception of the 'arts of survival' theme, the ECoC theme acts as a flexible topic to fit in contemporary issues and how to overcome them.

One interesting aspect of Tartu 2024 was how the Tartu 2024 team was structured. The CEO is the only member of the Board as it was thought that this would lead to a lean and clean management structure with only one final decision maker (*Tartu 2024 First Monitoring Meeting Report, 2020: 8*). Having one final decision maker allows for a more fluid approach instead of multiple people deciding the decisions. For Tartu 2024, the CEO was more business savvy than in culture which has both positive and negative effects. The business background could help with securing proper funding which is a major part of hosting the ECoC. On the other hand, a business savvy background could mean that the art/culture

component might not be valued as much as a business approach and could simply view art/culture through money.

From the ECoC monitoring reports, Tartu 2024 did not have to make any quick, radical changes to their implementation during the lead up to 2024. However, the second monitoring report highlighted areas the Tartu 2024 team should improve upon. One recommendation by the ECoC expert panel is that Tartu 2024 needs to intensify its funding efforts, particularly with stronger international communication as well as alternative areas for funds (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 10*). The recommendation shows that there is likely to be a shortage of money when it comes to hosting the ECoC. Also related to money is the panel recommended to develop a financial contingency plan to handle the financial situation in Europe with rising costs (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 10*). The ECoC panel team emphasizing that Tartu 2024 needs to have their financial situation covered shows how important funding for the ECoC is.

Another recommendation from the second monitoring report is that Tartu 2024 should expand its marketing campaign to reach European wide coverage while also being the biggest brand in Estonia in 2024 (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 10*). The ECoC panel has mentioned before that Tartu 2024 needs to try to promote the ECoC to a larger audience than just its surrounding neighbors and region. As a result of this, Tartu 2024 could secure more private funding from abroad. The third recommendation is simply extending the ‘arts of survival’ concept to include EU values for a more European-wide reflection such as freedom of speech, respect for diversity (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 11*). Extending the arts of survival theme to other contemporary issues allows for a larger, diverse audience that can be interested in what Tartu 2024 has to offer. The recommendation also indicates that not being sufficient enough in the European dimension revealing top-down Europeanization with having expectations from the EU about the ECoC being European.

The fourth recommendation is also closely aligned with focusing on the European dimension of Tartu 2024. The first note from the ECoC expert panel is that they encourage Tartu to “enlarge the links and integration beyond the Baltic countries and the European countries with which Tartu has already consolidated links, extending partnerships also to southern and Eastern European countries, through tailor-suited artistic cooperation, so as to ensure more diversity (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 11*)”. What this indicates is that the ECoC expert panel is encouraging Tartu 2024 to increase its horizontal

aspect of cooperation with individuals from abroad. The effect of this is that horizontal Europeanization can flourish more in diversity by having cooperation with different partners.

The last recommendation for the European dimension is that the panel suggests close cooperation with ECoCs and green cities in the EU. The result of this could help design and implement sustainable big events (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report*, 2022: 11). Related to this, Tartu 2024 says, “Tartu is the first European Capital of Culture where such great emphasis was placed on environmental protection when organizing events (Tartu 2024)”. As a result, Tartu 2024 has developed a guide for all organizers to follow in terms of environmentally friendly habits. Some examples from the guidelines includes reusing items from events to limit single use objects, being cautious about not wasting resources like water and electricity, trying to set up events convenient for public transportation as well as giving visitors information about car alternative directions to the events (*Tartu 2024 Guide to organizing environmentally friendly events*). Establishing a guide to better practices for organizers of events is useful for future ECoC cities to learn about. In addition, the guide can be applied to other organizers of events which adds to the legacy of Tartu 2024 beyond its title year.

The interview with the first Tartu 2024 interviewee coded as (TRT 1) was conducted as an in-person interview. TRT 1 had broad insight into ECoC affairs making it valuable for the research. For one, TRT 1 thought that Tartu 2024 was overall a success and would give it a four-out-of-five-star rating (TRT 1). TRT 1 does mention how they (Tartu 2024 Foundation) can always do better, but there are always limitations such as manpower, finances, and time (TRT 1). They also note that the Tartu team was able to be successful in spite of recent negative events such as rising costs, Covid-19, and the war in Ukraine which is similar to the findings of the monitoring reports. Being able to be adaptive in challenging times as mentioned shows the success of the ECoC given the challenges. TRT 1 mentioned that knowing how complicated the ECoC process can be helped lead to a successful program for a ECoC (TRT 1). The ECoC can be viewed as difficult to understand with all the actors at different levels of government and the EU guidelines for the ECoC. One particular aspect of the ECoC program that host cities often have trouble with the European dimension such as with Tallinn 2011 (Lähdesmäki et al., 2021: 76) and strongly present in the past decades of ECC/ECoC cities before 2004 (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 88). The European dimension has somewhat become clearer in the expectations of host cities, but host cities still struggle to fully grasp the value and vague understanding of the European dimension.

In terms of what was a challenge for the Tartu 2024 team, TRT 1 mentions how political support could be a challenge for some ECoC's. In the case of Tartu, political support was not an issue, but when they think of other ECoC's, they think it is definitely a challenge. As discussed in the Tallinn 2011 section, politization severely affected the success of the ECoC based off both the monitoring reports and the interviews. Political support is hard to fully achieve with so many actors within the state such as the national government, ministry of culture, city government, multiple municipal governments as well support from the citizens. Political support is essential for ECoC's as that means a better chance of receiving adequate funding to host a ECoC, since the majority of the funds comes from the state and local governments. TRT 1 also mentions how it was a success factor for the team having the national and municipality governments keeping their promise of political support (TRT 1). As mentioned with Tartu 2024, it encompassed a total of 19 municipalities of Southern Estonia. Being able to achieve relatively full political support from all the actors involved in Tartu 2024 is a political accomplishment. Having different municipal, city, and state governments put aside political differences to cooperate on hosting a ECoC needs to be essential for ECoC bidding cities and nominees.

TRT 1 goes on to describe how everything is a challenge when hosting a ECoC, and how it is important to manage expectations. If Tartu were to do the ECoC over again, they thought 1,600 events might have been too much. Having too many events results in less funds for each project and may end up in over-stretching personnel and costs. With so many events, it requires significant amounts of volunteers to oversee each event for security, clean up staff, information specialists, and so on. In total, Tartu 2024 had 4,672 volunteers logging over 106,786 hours (Tartu 2024). A downside of having many volunteers could be over relying on the free help of them to help manage the ECoC program. The opposing view is that more volunteers give more say of the local community in the ECoC project.

For the Europeanization aspect of Tartu 2024, TRT 1 thought that the ECoC has Europeanized Tartu but did not give a specific reason for how or why. TRT 1 mentioned how, "most people don't realize the ECoC is a European initiative" and "It's a European Capital of Culture, without Europe there wouldn't be this project (TRT 1)". The significance is that the local citizens might not be well aware of the EU's role in the ECoC process besides simply acknowledging that the EU selects the ECoCs. TRT 1 also explains that the people may also think that the ECoC is fully paid by the EU (TRT 1). In thinking if the ECoC is a good tool for Europeanization, TRT 1 thought that it is good, and without this event (ECoC) it would be worse (TRT 1).

Another point of discussion with TRT 1 was about if there was vagueness of directions from the European dimension, they thought that ‘you cannot really push it’, referring to the EU criteria for the European dimension. What is meant by that is TRT 1 emphasizing that the EU cannot overstretch the criteria for the European dimension. Part of this reasoning is that more guidelines can potentially limit the creativity of ECoC recipients. They then talked about how they see the European dimension as something that connects, in this case it is about values (TRT 1). However, TRT 1 mentions that values should be strict and concrete for the ECoC (TRT 1). TRT 1 also mentions that cities often struggle writing about the European dimension. As mentioned earlier, the vagueness of the European dimension is both supported for allowing greater creativity and freedom (Sassatelli, 2005: 236) and (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 14) and also those who view it as a hindrance to EU objectives and goals (Basaraba, 2022: 360).

TRT 1 when asked if there should be more structure from the EU in helping ECoC host cities, the interviewee thought that you cannot structure art (TRT 1). Furthermore, they expressed that there should be supporting mechanisms in place, but not a structure for art itself (TRT 1). They also discuss how it is too early to say from their side if there should be a readjustment of the ECoC structure. TRT 1 then goes on to elaborate on the culture of Estonians in artistic management. In referring to his coworkers and Estonian partners, TRT 1 says, “Estonians are liberals and like little restrictions as possible (TRT 1)”. Further mentioned was how Tartu 2024 tried to learn from the Dutch way of handling artistic management in a stricter, business-like way and noted that it is different in the Estonian context. Trying to learn from other European peers shows the collaboration with different partners across Europe in a horizontal Europeanization manner for Tartu 2024.

Another interesting thing is they thought that in general the EU should be watching more closely what is happening to the project, in response to asking about if some programs or events were watched more closely by the EU. TRT 1 continued saying that, “Feels as if sometimes we have to knock on the door of the EU saying what they are doing (TRT 1)”. In referring to if there was too much EU oversight, the interviewee thought that no there wasn’t and maybe it was an Estonian thing to do everything correct and by the book (TRT 1). TRT 1 portraying Estonians as hard workers who do everything by the book shows the goodness of fit of Estonia implementing European initiatives and that is reflected in the ECoC monitoring reports for Tartu 2024. Perhaps there would be different answers on EU oversight for ECoCs in other host cities, but both Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024 signified that there was little EU oversight besides the ECoC monitoring meetings. Interviewees from both Tallinn 2011 and

Tartu 2024 staff show that top-down Europeanization in the form of ECoC guidelines such as the European dimension remains vague, and does not have a huge impact on the implementation of the ECoC's.

In the role of EU funding, TRT 1 shared similar views to those of the Tallinn participants. TRT 1 thought that the 1.5 million euros for the Mercuri prize is relatively little, especially with inflation over the years. Moreover, they thought that the EU should fund more for the ECoC, although a certain amount was not mentioned (TRT 1). The interviewee also mentioned one example of a new funding idea by doubling the Mercuri prize to three million euros and half of it goes to the legacy of the ECoC program, as cities are still struggling with this aspect (TRT 1). Showing the long-term effects of hosting a ECoC is hard to do successfully as most of the budget has been used on the title year. For the case of Tartu 2024, the Tartu 2024 Guidelines for the organization of environmentally friendly events is perhaps the most visible part of the Tartu 2024 legacy.

As mentioned before, population size of ECoC cities is critical in understanding if it has any role on shaping the process of ECoCs. For if the population size of a ECoC city impacts the successfulness of the project, TRT 1 thought that no it does not, as the core of the EU is smaller cities (TRT 1). More reasons discussed for why no was chosen was that it depends more on the needs and objectives of the city, and that city size does not matter at least in idea (TRT 1). What TRT 1 is referring to is that there are a variety of different factors impacting the success of ECoCs. However, TRT 1 mentions how smaller cities are likely to not have so much financial capacity (TRT 1). Not having a high financial capacity is limiting and can impact the ECoC process negatively with rising budgets for ECoCs. Related to smaller population ECoCs, TRT 1 mentions that the smaller the city, the more impactful it might be (TRT 1). They then mention that Tartu seemed more feasible and/or tangible for the whole project more likely than Tallinn 2011 (TRT 1). For why Tartu 2024 was more feasible/tangible than Tallinn 2011 relates to a number of factors such as political support from different bodies and levels of government, the 2008 financial crisis, and also that it was the first time a city in Estonia was able to host the ECoC, making it more of a challenge.

On if other Estonian cities could host a successful ECoC project, TRT 1 thought that it depends on the idea, meaning that it could be possible for smaller cities to produce a meaningful theme/idea. Regarding if there are any downside of smaller cities may face in the ECoC process, they mention how they believe in the energy of cities, and that logically, bigger cities have more energy. The energy is similar to the liveliness and action of cities.

They go on to note that small groups have done big things, meaning that bigger cities are not the only ones to have a big effect on their surroundings.

Community engagement was also mentioned with the interviewees. TRT 1 mentioned how a majority of the program came from open calls, showing the bottom-up aspect allowing citizens to pitch ideas. In addition, they thought that citizen participation was more important in the beginning and that the project might not have got to certain groups (TRT 1). On the other hand, Tartu 2024 collaborated a lot with different partners from the EU and abroad. TRT 1 talked about the 2024 ECoC Trio and how Tartu was able to cooperate with the other 2024 ECoC cities in regard to culture cooperation and jointly producing the first ever ECoC presentation for the EU (TRT 1). While Tartu 2024 still managed to have numerous international partners, the second monitoring report of Tartu 2024 indicated that the Covid-19 pandemic made it difficult to strengthen international ties which led to a pragmatic strategy focusing on already established connections with nearby countries (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 8*). Some examples of the Tartu 2024 pragmatic partnerships included Latvia and Lithuania, the U.K, Finland, Germany as the main partnership countries.

TRT 1 mentioned how horizontal cooperation could not have been possible if it weren't for the ECoC. Continuing, they emphasize the importance of horizontal cooperation on how it brings together cities from different regions which otherwise would never have had the chance to do so (TRT 1). Horizontal cooperation is related to horizontal Europeanization as it allows for the diffusion of ideas and helps Europeanize the actors involved in the process. Lastly when TRT 1 was asked about if Tartu 2024 learned anything from Tallinn 2011, they say many things are different, such as the different timeframes of the ECoC (TRT 1). Another divergent area between the two cities was the political support as mentioned before from the ECoC monitoring reports. Tallinn 2011 was very different than Tartu 2024 in this area. In terms of the cooperation with Tallinn, TRT 1 further elaborated that there were a couple of meetings with Tallinn 2011 officials and how the creative council was a shared link between the two cities.

TRT 2 has similarities to the other participants as well as new contributing new insight related to the ECoC. Starting with asking if there were any main accomplishments of Tartu 2024, TRT 2 mentioned, "we feel that in every municipality we really had valuable events worth visiting and also the locals were proud, and as a team we are also happy (TRT 2)". For if Tartu 2024 was an overall success, the interviewee mentioned that they had vast amounts of events (1,600), with 70% of the program having international partnerships and

felt that every target group had something for them (TRT 2). They also thought that more or less Tartu 2024 would do the same thing, albeit easier if they were to host the ECoC again. For their most favorite thing/aspect to work on while being a part of Tartu 2024, they felt that creating the system for the whole southern Estonia was their favorite part with implementing it and thinking that it was working, and everyone was doing their part (TRT 2). Already based on asking Tartu 2024 staff about the success of the ECoC, the answers indicated that Tartu 2024 had a more manageable ECoC than Tallinn 2011 did.

In terms of recommendations for other ECoC cities, TRT 2 said, “the main thing is trust, you need to create trust. Towards the team who is running the title year and based on this trust also the partners are coming to they will be on board (TRT 2)”. They go further on to elaborate how having a strategic plan is also important, such as how you will keep these partners. An example they mention of this is creating networks with cafeterias, hotels, while having networks with our municipalities, networks for program organizers (TRT 2). They go on to further mention how they would advise others to build these networks which is not seen as part of the program (TRT 2). The networks help facilitate better connections between ECoCs and local businesses.

Like the rest of the participants, TRT 2 felt that there were no areas in which felt like the EU was critically watching. In terms of if there were any policy areas that the team did not have control over, they mentioned the train connection, and how they couldn't fix it in time for 2024. Besides the issue of disrupted train service to and from Tartu, the whole realm of logistics was mentioned as a challenge by TRT 2. They mention how the renovation of the railway wasn't the best example of hospitality they would say as (TRT 2). Other challenges in the realm of logistics was the GPS jamming and interference with air transportation within Estonia, and specifically Tartu was a major issue. The interviewee mentioned how Estonia's neighbor to the east was 'attacking' the Tartu airport with GPS jamming, showing that the interference is not just an inconvenience, but it also poses as a security threat. While it was found that the gps jamming does not severely affect civil life, it still shows Estonia lies on the edge of the west. Another similar thought is expressed in second monitoring report of Tartu 2024, “Tartu and Estonia are border strongholds for EU values (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 5*)”. Another challenge of the ECoC for Tartu related to this was the fear of foreign tourists thinking that Estonia is in a conflict area related to the war in Ukraine (TRT 2). Foreign tourists and citizens perceiving Estonia as next to a conflict area indicates that it is hard to fully express Estonia is a safe destination as tried by Tartu 2024 (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 9*).

In light of viewing the ECoC as a means of Europeanization, TRT 2 thought that it is a successful means for increasing Europeanization in ECoC host cities. For if the ECoC has helped Europeanize Tartu, they thought that it is already here as Tartu is a university city with a lot of international people, but specifically it gave a push to the cultural field (TRT 2). Furthermore, TRT 2 says that they think the ECoC is a successful program for increasing Europeanization in the selected host cities (TRT 2). TRT 2 shares similar viewpoints with the other participants by acknowledging Europeanization occurring in ECoCs.

In discussing the Mercuri prize, TRT 2 thought that the 1.5 million euros is not enough to satisfy requirements for the host cities, although no certain number was in mind for how much it should be. Referring to the Melina Mercuri Prize, TRT 2 said, “we explained it to the European Commission and European Parliament, and they were quite surprised that it’s such an insufficient amount of money (TRT 2)”. Telling the EC and EP about the low level of funds from the EU side indicates a bottom-up Europeanization approach by the local level saying their thoughts on the ECoC funding mechanisms. TRT 2 goes on to say that they hope the EU will review the amount of money for the Mercuri prize going forward. In whether should obtaining the funding for the ECoC change, they thought that maybe there can be an extra place to apply for extra funding like the Mercuri prize for fulfilling certain criteria.

For if the population size of ECoC host cities impacts the success of the ECoC, TRT 2 mentioned here is not the question of size, it’s the question of political stability that can these political forces or the municipalities who signed (TRT 2). They elaborated that it is more about everybody keeping the agreements and mentioned how Tartu was lucky to have all 20 municipalities kept what they promised. In asking about how other Estonian cities such as Narva or Pärnu or the region of the islands such as Saaremaa, Muhu and Hiiumaa could handle the ECoC, TRT 2 thought that they could. They give justification that there have been a variety of cities smaller ECoCs than Tartu. Furthermore, they specify how the European Commission and European Parliament are looking through the requirements for the ECoC and to help make it more accessible also for smaller cities. In terms of potential downsides associated with smaller ECoC cities, TRT 2 expressed that maybe the impact is not so huge if you’re doing a smaller region or city (TRT 2). When asked whether a bigger city like Tallinn could possibly be easier to secure funding, they said that it depends on the municipality which is similar to other responses.

Another area of discussion with TRT 2 was the topic of collaboration. In asking about the collaboration between the 2024 ECoCs, TRT 2 mentioned how they are currently working on legacy issues and how they would cooperate in the future. They went on to explain that

they would meet every other week to cooperate and even went on to say that they would give a ten out of ten for collaboration as they were really lucky and satisfied with the results of cooperation (TRT 2).

If Tartu 2024 learned anything from Tallinn 2011, TRT 2 mentions that yes, they did learn from Tallinn. One example given was that TRT 2 took away from Tallinn 2011 was that they created different communication systems, and in their case (Tallinn 2011) their central communication team was making communication (TRT 2). They go on to mention that Tallinn 2011 was not even able to manage to write press releases because of how they had so many events and that there could be days with ten events happening simultaneously (TRT 2).

5.3. Comparison of Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024

Overall, there are some key differences and similarities from the answers given by the interviewees. For one, all four interviewees thought that Tartu 2024 had a more successful ECoC program than Tallinn 2011. One reason for this was the politization of the Tallinn 2011 Foundation being controlled by the mayor and city council at the time. Another reason was the 2008 financial crisis that affected the world. Similarly, Tartu 2024 also had to deal with the Covid-19 Pandemic which impacted partnerships and the budget for the ECoC. Tartu 2024 but was able to have a more stable ECoC than Tallinn 2011.

Looking back to the research question, how does varying levels of funding and size of ECoC small (less than 150k) and large host cities (400K plus) affect the top-down and horizontal Europeanization processes between these settings? To start, having a limited budget can impact several things, with one of the most important being international partnerships. Having limited projects with international and European partners hurt the process of horizontal Europeanization of Tallinn 2011. Tallinn 2011 had to get creative with the budget and conduct open calls for projects as they simply did not have the money to bring in artists from abroad (Rampton et al., 2012: 19). While Tallinn 2011 resulted in limited horizontal Europeanization, bottom-up Europeanization from the societal level in open calls and volunteering gave citizens a voice for Tallinn 2011. The significantly smaller city of Tartu managed to reach a higher ECoC budget than Tallinn 2011 which ultimately gave them more room to bring in international artists and partners for the ECoC.

Population size on the other hand is harder to accurately describe its impact on ECoCs. All four interviewees mentioned that it is hard to say if and how population size

affects any aspects of the ECoC and other factors influence the ECoC. Smaller ECoC cities do have a more challenging time since they are more limited with resources and space compared to larger cities. Some examples of resources needed for a ECoC include plenty of accommodation for tourists, concert/exhibition venues, enough restaurants as well as other areas not mentioned. While a smaller city may have less amenities compared to larger cities, most of the interview participants mentioned it is not about the size of a ECoC, but rather about the concept/theme of a program.

Funding for Tartu 2024 has some similarities and differences to Tallinn 2011. For one, Tartu 2024 was shortly after an economic downturn due to the Covid-19 pandemic, just as Tallinn 2011 was after the 2008 financial crisis. The 2008 financial crisis was severely worse than the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of financial loss but still highlights this similarity of both ECoCs having to deal with the effects of negative economic global events. In terms of the option to co-finance, Tartu 2024 notes that due to the war and the economic situation, private fund-raising was harder but not impossible (*Tartu 2024 Second Monitoring Meeting Report, 2022: 10*).

In total, Tallinn 2011 had a budget of 16 million euros while Tartu had a budget of 26 million euros. Usually it would be expected that a larger city, and also the capital of a state to raise more money for ECoCs and other projects, than a second city for instance. With Tartu 2024 having a larger ECoC budget can point to several factors. For one, Tartu 2024 encompassed 20 municipalities demonstrates that Tartu 2024 covers a much larger regional area than Tallinn 2011 did, which could result in having to raise enough funds to spread out over the regions. Another reason why Tartu 2024 may have been likely to raise more than Tallinn 2011 is due to the mentioned issue of politization of Tallinn 2011 and the conflict between the city and state.

For Tartu 2024, the interviewees thought that Tartu 2024 was a success and that the ECoC has contributed to further Europeanizing Tartu. The interviewees emphasized how it was important not only for Tartu, but for the most of Southern Estonia to be projected throughout Europe and the world. One interesting aspect found from the interviews was that while the interviewees acknowledged that the ECoC is a tool of Europeanization as well as being present in their host cities, there was not many examples the interviewees could express how Europeanization was present in their respective ECoCs. TRT 2 pointed out that the ECoC of Tartu 2024 helped give a push to the cultural field through Europeanization. On the other hand, Tartu 2024 had 65% of their projects had international partners (Tartu 2024), showing that the process of horizontal Europeanization is strong.

Top-down Europeanization was less explicit than analyzing horizontal Europeanization of Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024. One example mentioned where top-down Europeanization was present in Tallinn 2011 was with the original theme of ‘folklore and fairytales’ not being sufficient enough to satisfy the European dimension of the ECoC (Rampton et al., 2012: 17). It was argued that the folklore and fairy tales theme looked to the past rather than to the future which was not adequate to fulfill the European dimension criteria. All the interviewees thought that the EU never felt imposing in regard to the development of the ECoCs in Tallinn and Tartu showing a relaxed approach besides the monitoring reports where they keep a close eye on the progress. One interviewee even mentioned that it felt like they had to go knock on the door of the EU and tell them what they were doing (TRT 1). The finding is that top-down Europeanization dimension is found in the criteria of the ECoC’s and is not so much present during the implementation phase besides the Mercuri prize and recommendations from the ECoC monitoring reports.

Among the biggest findings of the interviews as well as the ECoC monitoring reports is that all four interviewees thought that the Mercuri prize of 1.5 million euros was not enough. Most of the interviewees called the Mercuri prize symbolic. However, while all four interviewees mentioned how it was too little, the interviewees were split on whether there should be more funding from the EU. Reasons given for why the EU should not contribute more money to the ECoCs is that if they would give more money they would probably want to influence more (TLL 1). A division was apparent between interviewees who thought the EU should contribute more funds (TLL 2 and TRT 2) while the other half thought it may limit the creativity ECoC recipients currently have (TLL 1 and TRT 1). For being a European initiative, ECoCs are heavily dependent on state and city funding to support their efforts.

Another main finding from the interviews and the ECoC monitoring reports is that the respondents mentioned how political stability may be more important than population size. While the budget size of Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024 impacts the process of horizontal and bottom-up Europeanization, the impact of population size is less notable. However, politization and the need for political stability was mentioned in the ECoC monitoring reports for Tallinn 2011. In addition, the Tallinn 2011 interviews indicated that politization was one of the main issues besides the limited ECoC budget (TLL 1 and TLL 2). For Tartu 2024, politization was not present, even with a total of 19 different municipalities participating in Tartu 2024. The impact is that it demonstrates that having multiple actors involved in a ECoC

process does not have to end up in politization, and how trust is essential to hosting a ECoC (Interviewee 4).

Overall, the challenges and Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024 are different from one another. For one, Tallinn 2011 was in a different era of Estonian politics with politization affecting the ECoC process for Tallinn 2011. For Tartu 2024, challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, inflation, and as well as actions from their aggressive neighbor to the east Russia impacted the success of Tartu 2024. Both Estonian ECoCs overcame challenges impeding their implementation phases just as all other ECoC teams.

One thing that is crucial to note is that due to Tallinn 2011 having one of the lowest ECoC budgets to date it impacted the horizontal Europeanization process with not having funds to bring in enough international partners. As a result, Tallinn 2011 turned to the bottom-up Europeanization dimension by having citizens participate in open calls for Tallinn 2011. A simpler explanation is that due to a reduced budget, Tallinn 2011 had to sacrifice horizontal cooperation with international partners in favor of the cheaper option of local artists which resulted in bottom-up Europeanization more than horizontal Europeanization. For the aspect of top-down Europeanization, the criteria laid out in *Decision No 445/2014/EU* is the procedures ECoC recipients must follow if they want to host the ECoC. The problem with the criteria specified is it is still largely vague in nature, resulting in vast interpretations of the European dimension which is something ECoC recipients have trouble with working on.

6. CONCLUSION

The objective of this research was to seek a better understanding of how the variables of population size and budget impacted the process of Europeanization in Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024. The results from the interviews and content analysis of ECoC monitoring reports indicate that the budget of the ECoCs impacts the process of Europeanization in hosting a ECoC, specifically horizontal Europeanization. Population size on the other hand did not make a difference with the smaller city of Tartu (100,000) people out-funding Tallinn (450,000+) by ten million euros. There are a variety of reasons for this with some being related to the 2008 financial crisis as well as Tallinn having a more developed economy than it did in the 2000's-2010's.

This thesis built upon the previous theoretical framework of Europeanization through ECoCs. Much of the literature on the ECoCs focuses on analyzing the impact on the local level as well as the economic impact of the ECoC. The thesis specifically sought to explain how population size of a ECoC host city as well as the budget size of ECoC host cities impacted the Europeanization of the ECoCs. After conducting the interviews with ECoC officials and comparing the data to the ECoC monitoring reports, the budget size of the ECoCs seems to have a substantial effect of impacting the Europeanization processes in the ECoCs. Budget size affected the horizontal aspect of Europeanization which resulted in Tallinn 2011 turning towards the societal level to pitch their own ideas for events for Tallinn 2011, showing the bottom-up dimension of Europeanization.

While the budget sizes of the ECoCs showed to have an impact on the Europeanization of ECoCs, less is clear on how population size of ECoC cities/regions impacts Europeanization in the ECoCs. Data from the interviews paints a cloudy picture with different answers given for why the population size may or may not impede the process of Europeanization. One of the findings mentioned that a smaller ECoC city/region may be able to 'feel the effects' more than a larger city/area. Another finding from a different interviewee mentioned how bigger cities have more energy which can result in more change and action in larger cities.

Small cities as well as bigger cities all need to be pragmatic and require a thorough, realistic, and sustainable plan in creating a ECoC theme. In this sense, population size does

affect how many tourists can be accommodated, but each ECoC takes into account their own thoughtful, manageable approach in developing a meaningful ECoC, working around whatever population size of a city/region they have. Future ECoCs can learn from the research on Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024 in that it is essential to have realistic expectations and the need for trust among actors and stakeholders involved. Carefully designing how a ECoC budget will be allocated is important to the success of the ECoC.

Looking back to the research question, how does varying levels of funding and size of ECoC small (less than 150k) and large host cities (400K plus) affect the top-down and horizontal Europeanization processes between these settings? As mentioned, the role of budget size impacts the horizontal Europeanization process if the ECoC budget is limited which can result to a turn to focus on bottom-up Europeanization, as in the case of Tallinn 2011. In regard to top-down Europeanization, population size does not appear to have impact while budget size is also in question. While top-down Europeanization is harder to measure, Tartu 2024 had an easier time implementing EU recommendations for the ECoC than did Tallinn 2011.

The vague interpretation of the European dimension criteria for the ECoC indicates that top-down Europeanization happens the least compared to bottom-up and horizontal Europeanization. Tartu 2024 on the other hand cooperated with a total of 19 municipalities in southern Estonia showing that cooperating with a large number of different actors does not have to mean politization and decision gridlock. The ECoC is a valuable tool for the EU and its member states and even non-member states to display themselves on the European and international stage. Bidding for a ECoC title requires multiple policy actors within that state to come to an agreement on unity for collaborating on developing a successful ECoC.

This research covered areas which have not been analyzed closely in the realm of the ECoC. Specifically, the data gathered from interviews indicates that the EU should think about raising the Melina Mercouri prize. While the interview participants were divided on if the EU should increase its say in the ECoCs, all the interviewees pointed out how the ECoC is a European initiative, but it is the state and local governments providing the majority of the ECoC budgets. It is hard to say if the EU intends to further develop their say in the future of the ECoC. Since the establishment of the ECC (former ECoC) in 1985, the ECoC has come a long way in the EU gradually expanding its influence in the ECoC process. The ECoC still largely allows for open interpretation of the criteria allowing for each ECoC to be creative when it comes to developing a ECoC theme.

To conclude, the ECoC is a tool of the EU that seeks to promote European culture and values through collaboration and awareness. Europeanization is a result of the ECoC with ECoC recipients cementing closer ties with other states and partners through horizontal cooperation. Furthermore, local citizens often have a say in the development of a ECoC through open calls and volunteering, highlighting the bottom-up Europeanization aspect. The research has shown how the budget size of a ECoC affects the process of Europeanization in Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024. The other variable of population size was less evident in how it affected Europeanization in the ECoC process. Broader implications of the research indicate that having a large ECoC budget allows for more freedom and flexibility on how to address the ECoC criteria which results in a stronger process of Europeanization. Having a limited and reduced ECoC budget as in the case of Tallinn 2011 resulted in the ECoC having to scale down their expectations which hurt the Europeanization process of the ECoC.

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Tartu 2024 Interview Questions:

1. Looking back at the title year, are there any main accomplishments of the program? If so, what were they?
2. Would you say the program was overall a success? Could you explain why or why not?
3. What were some of the challenges of Tartu hosting the event?
4. If you could do the ECoC title year all over again, what would Tartu do differently in your opinion?
5. What would you tell other ECoC host cities to do or recommend based on the title year?
6. Do you believe the ECoC title helped Europeanize Tartu more? If yes, what are some examples?
7. Is the ECoC a successful program for increasing Europeanization in the selected host cities? Why or why not?
8. Do you think the Melina Mercouri prize of 1.5 million for abiding the European dimension is enough to satisfy its requirements for the host cities?
9. If the 1.5 million euros is not enough for the prize, is there a certain number you think host cities should get for the criteria?
10. Should obtaining funding for the host cities change? Should the EU help take more of a role in helping these host cities?
11. Does the population size of a ECoC host city impact the successfulness of the program in your eyes?
12. Was there a vagueness of directions of host cities to follow for being able to host the ECoC program?
13. Should there be more structure in helping host cities and local regions implement meaningful programs?
14. What are your thoughts on citizen participation for the ECoC title year? Was the community engaged enough?
15. If the community wasn't engaged enough, could you think of some ways to help increase it for future host cities and regions?
16. How do you think other smaller Estonian cities like Narva, Pärnu, the islands such as Saaremaa would function as an ECoC host city?
17. Are there any downsides smaller population host cities and areas may face during their implementation and title year?
18. Were some events like Tartu 2024 Opening watched more critically by the EU?
19. Were there any (policy) areas the Tartu team did not have control over?
20. Was there too much EU oversight during the program and/or during the implementation phase?
21. What was your favorite thing to work on while being a part of the Tartu 2024 team?

Appendix 1 continuation

22. If you were in charge of the ECoC program in a bigger city like Tallinn, do you think funding would be easier?
23. Are there downsides of having the ECoC in a small host city (less than 100k)
24. Did Tartu cooperate with any other 2024 ECoC? What kind of cross collaboration?
25. Was the size of the Tartu 2024 staff adequate for having a successful title year?

Tallinn 2011 Interview Questions:

26. Looking back at Tallinn 2011, are there any main accomplishments of the program that stood out to you? If so, what were they?
27. Would you say the program was overall a success? Could you explain why or why not?
28. What was your favorite thing to work on while being a part of the Tallinn 2011 team?
29. What were some of the challenges of Tallinn hosting the event?
30. If you could do the ECoC title year all over again, what do you think Tallinn would do differently in your opinion?
31. What would you tell other ECoC host cities to do or recommend based on the Tallinn title year?
32. In terms of EU funding, do you think the Melina Mercouri prize of 1.5 million is enough for the host cities?
33. If the 1.5 million euros is not enough for the prize, is there a certain number you think host cities should get for the criteria?
34. Should obtaining funding for the host cities change? Should the EU help take more of a role in helping these host cities?
35. If you were in charge of the ECoC program in a bigger/smaller host city, do you think it would change the outcome of securing funding for the program? If so, how?
36. Was the vagueness of directions (specifically the European dimension) of host cities overall a good thing or bad thing? Should there be more structure in helping host cities implement meaningful programs?
37. How do you think other smaller Estonian cities like Pärnu or Narva would function as an ECoC host city?
38. Are there any downsides smaller population host cities may face during their implementation and title year?
39. Besides budget restrictions, were there any (policy) areas or things the Tallinn team could not have control over?
40. Besides the mandatory EU monitoring meetings, did EU oversight over Tallinn 2011 ever feel imposing at any point?

Appendix 1 continuation

41. How did changing the Tallinn 2011 theme from Folklore and fairytales to the seashore impact the implementation of the program?
42. Do you believe that the original theme of folklore and fairytales idea was sufficient enough for the European dimension to be satisfied for the Melina Mercouri prize?
43. Do you think Tallinn 2011 resulted in long term success? Why or why not?
44. Has Tallinn 2011 Europeanized the city in any way due to the ECoC?
45. Is the ECoC a successful program for increasing Europeanization in the selected host cities? Why or why not?
46. Do you think population size has any impact on a city hosting the ECoC, if so, what?
47. Do you think they learned any from Tallinn 2011?
48. Do you think the invasion of Ukraine played a role in shaping Tartu 2024?

Research Consent Form

TITLE OF STUDY

Europeanization Among ECoC Host Cities of Tallinn 2011 and Tartu 2024

PRIMARY RESEARCHER

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PURPOSE OF STUDY

This interview is intended to cover discussing how Tallinn 2011 ECoC officials as well as Tartu 2024 ECoC officials perceived hosting the ECoC and the relationship with the EU. The researcher, Nicholas Kozicki seeks to identify the different types of Europeanization (top-down and horizontal) in seeing how that affects the implementation of policies and events for the program.

PROCEDURES

The procedure of the interview first starts by introducing myself, the researcher. I will start with more background questions of the interviewee and then move towards more in-depth political questions regarding the ECoC. The interview will roughly take 30 minutes in a semi-structured interview manner.

RISKS

Potential risks of the interview is expressing political views to the researcher, however it not mandatory to answer questions that are uncomfortable to the interviewee. If the participant seeks anonymity, then arrangements can be made.

BENEFITS

Benefits from participating in the interview is that I (the researcher) will share the final report and generalizations I obtain from my interviews. There is no financial reward for

Appendix 2 continuation

participating, but the benefit is understanding more about the complex relationship of the EU with the ECoC host cities in working together.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

COMPENSATION

No compensation for participating in the interview.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Primary Researcher directly by telephone at +372 56308077 or at the following email address nicholak@ut.ee.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

Appendix 2 continuation

Note: Please delineate the "Consent" section of the Informed Consent Form by drawing a line across the page (like this - ~~Example~~). This delineation is important because the consent form grammar shifts from second person to first person, as shown in the example.

CONSENT

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Signature _____

Researcher's Signature _____