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C via C - Connecting citizens and towns Via Culture for inclusive growth
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C Via C **Connecting citizens and towns Via Culture for inclusive growth**

Co-financed with the support of the European Union via measure 2.1.
Town Twinning of the Europe for Citizens Programme

Guidelines Document on Cultural Branding



19.04.2019. Varazdin, Croatia

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I. About the project

C via C has been approved for co-financing from the European Union through the Europe for Citizens Programme, measure 2.1. Town Twinning. The value of the EU grant for the project is €20.160,00. The applicant/lead partner is **Pučko otvoreno učilište Varaždin (POU Varaždin), located in Varaždin, Croatia**, and the partners are:

- Ljudska univerza Ormož (LUO) from Ormož, Slovenia;
- Ljudska univerza Ptuj (LUP) from Ptuj, Slovenia;
- Muramenti Nemzetiségi Területfejlesztési Társulás MNTT) from Tótszerdahely, Hungary;
- Turistička organizacija Grada Sremska Mitrovica (TO SM) from Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia;

The project focuses on the role culture plays in creating inclusive growth and European identity in towns. It emphasizes the EU's role in enhancing cultural activities locally (in line w/the European year of Cultural Heritage). The project promotes key EU values that preserve culture and that also bring citizens together; i.e. values such as intercultural dialogue, volunteering, and inclusive growth. It also addresses misconceptions and challenges affecting cultural activities, such as:

- Limited understanding about how culture contributes to local development (employment, economic growth, building identity);
- Growing pessimism towards the EU, especially in cultural domains (for example, many believe they will lose cultural assets such as local languages due to EU integration);
- Limited knowledge about EU policies and programmes that support cultural actions
- Lack of knowledge on how to establish new tourism offers (products, services) linked to culture;

Many citizens in the partner regions view culture as important, but misunderstand how it drives employment & growth and lack formal cooperation with other citizens (& know-how) in promoting cultural assets (textiles, ceramics, histories, arts, etc.). This threatens efforts to preserve local identities & traditions. For the partners, culture represents new opportunities to connect citizens and regions, create conditions for inclusion and promote sustainable development. With this in mind, the project aims to enhance citizen engagement in cultural activities in line with EU values (volunteering, intercultural dialogue, inclusive growth) and enhance cooperation between towns in their efforts to preserve/promote cultural heritage. The project includes citizens from Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia & Serbia. The key activities included pre-event workshops, meetings b/w partners & a 3-day event (presentations, panel discussion, cultural quiz, 2 workshops w/group activities to enhance cooperation). Via group work, interactions, scenario-based learning and other activities, citizens will form new ties.

Based on the outcomes of the pre-event workshops, cooperation workshop and feedback and inputs received from the partnership, these guidelines on cultural branding have been developed. The partnership aims to provide other entities in the wider region information, best practices and basic steps on how to proceed with developing cultural activities that contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.



II. How was this document developed?– The process we took to create the guidelines

While preparing the project, the partnership realized that many cultural actions do not start due to the fact that citizens involved in cultural activities (youth, students, representatives of CSOs and public bodies, etc.) are overwhelmed by the challenges in starting up an action. In short, many small challenges keep coming up and soon they become an unbearable mess. As a result, many cultural promoters/citizens abandon their ideas before they get off the ground. This equates to lost opportunities for community development.

At the pre-event workshops, the partnership presented various best practices that show how European cities use culture as a brand. Some of the examples included:

- **San Gimignano, Italy**



The town is located in the heart of Tuscany and has a population of 8.000 people. Over the years, the town has capitalized on its history and traditional crafts. Apart from promoting and preserving its architecture, it has branded itself as the home of Pinocchio, and wooden dolls of the famous character are sought after by tourists. Each year 2.5 million tourists pass through the town. Tourism is the 3rd largest sector in the town's economy. In order to diversify the tourism offer, the town also has protected its authentic saffron and related recipes.

- **Salzburg, Austria**



Salzburg has taken its history, artistic skills and stories about the region to promote itself as a cultural tourism centre. *Mozartkugeln* was first created in Salzburg in 1890 by Paul Fürst, who decided to name his creation after the famous Austrian composer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The region is also considered a top destination for handmade Christmas decorations and Easter decorations (e.g. Christmas balls). It is also the home to the Sound of Music and



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Sacher cake. 4.2 million tourists come to Salzburg each year. Tourism makes 8.8% of Austria's economy and 40 billion EUR in revenue annually.

- **Delft, The Netherlands**



Delftware originated in the town of Delft in the 1600s. It is unique to the town and protected. Delft has a population of 100.000 people, but has over a million visitors each year. Delftware is a big attraction. Delftware works typically sell within the modest range of €2.000, 00 - €5.000,00, but the more rare and remarkable works can reach prices twenty times as much.

Based on the discussions, **participants told the partnership that they would like to understand what steps to take in order to go from a cultural idea to a cultural brand.**

On April 11th, POU Varazdin in cooperation with the partners organized the cooperation workshop. Participants from Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary and Serbia were divided into groups and provided fictional scenarios where various stakeholder groups (CSOs, local governments, business, schools, etc.) were trying to promote a particular cultural asset. Based on the information provided in the scenarios, the participants needed to identify the main challenges that needed to be resolved, the groups involved, and detail the main steps they would take to develop a brand around particular assets. After each group completed their task, they needed to present their work (i.e. the scenario they worked on, the name of their brand, and the steps they would take to promote the brand). Discussions and questions between the participants resulted in new links/relationships and the exchange of knowledge. Based on the inputs and feedback provided at the workshop, the partnership was able to develop a final set of guidelines on cultural branding.



Highlights from the work on April 11th, 2019 in Varazdin



III. Our Guidelines on how to Conduct Cultural Branding

After examining the work of each group and identifying the issues that each partner is facing in their communities, we identified the following guidelines on how to begin with a cultural brand:

- 1. Identify specific assets and past practices:** Every place has specific legends, skill sets, traditions, crafts, natural assets, etc. that contribute to its local identity. The towns that succeed in branding themselves as cultural destinations have focused on specific assets that are unique, attractive and in line with global trends. As a starting point, research is required. First and foremost, cultural promoters should examine what has already been done and determine whether or not the so-called new idea is not a repeat of failure. Research also refers to going to the archives and finding certain facts and interviewing various citizens in the community. Once initial ideas have been determined it is important to brainstorm with stakeholder groups in order to further develop and adjust the idea to the actual local/regional socio-economic situation.
- 2. Focus on global trends:** Some towns have actually invented cultural brands out of what many would have never thought of, and have branded their towns in line with popular trends.

One excellent example of this is the town of Vulcan, Alberta, Canada. In 1994, Vulcan was facing multiple problems. Agriculture was the main sector and commodity prices had plummeted. Citizens were leaving the community because there were no employment opportunities. Due to fiscal pressures, public services had also been reduced. The town was on the brink. The town council came up with a very unique idea to reverse these trends. The town's name, Vulcan, was the same as that of the home planet of the famous Star Trek character Spock. Based only on this, the town created a cultural brand around the Star Trek franchise. The town built statues, monuments and a tourist information centre based on the series and each year it holds Spock Days, which is dedicated to Star Trek fans, i.e. "Trekies". As a result, citizens are now proud of their community and tens of thousands dedicated Star Trek fans (and other visitors) visit the Vulcan each year.



With this example in mind, cultural promoters must keep in mind that many visitors come to places if they are "in". If the focus is on something that is not interesting or attractive to the wider public, the brand will not be sustainable. The key question is "what makes your brand different and more attractive than the rest?"



3. Develop a draft concept and further build it in cooperation with other stakeholders:

It is essential to put things down on paper. An initial concept note/summary needs to provide the basics of the idea (i.e. the who, what, where, why, when and how much money – W5). This will ensure that a base is established and that you can gain partners and supporters for the development of your idea/brand.

The fact of the matter is that promoters need to be ready to defend their ideas. Promoters need to explain the advantages (economic, environmental, cultural, financial, etc.) of the idea and shape their arguments to the needs of various stakeholder groups. Why is this needed? For example, if we want to protect a natural asset with biodiversity such as a forest and convert it into a protected park, environmental groups may support the idea, but what about the business that wants to use the forest land for a new factory? They may be your worst enemy if they are not on board. Everyone has different interests and goals. Not everyone will like a new idea, and if they are not convinced that it will bring benefits, it is possible other groups will do everything possible to stop your idea from getting off the ground. Clear communication about the benefits of a certain action is crucial and if certain interests are not considered, the idea may not ever startup.

4. Plan specific details: Even if we have support from various community groups, it is possible that an idea will fail if certain aspects are not planned. Some key questions that need to be considered include:

- Who will promote the brand? Who's responsible for what? What's their role? Who will be our partners?
- What activities will we do? How much money do we need over the next year? What about the long-term?
- What expertise do we need to keep things operating?
- How do we promote our brand? Who will be targetted? Communication canals?
- What risks do we need to consider? How will we prevent the risks?

Promoters need to expand on their initial concept and have a business plan ready. In this way, they will be able to control progress on launching the brand on the market and determine whether or not it succeeds.

5. Monitor progress and adjust the original plans according to outcomes: Once a plan has been solidified, the brand can be put on the market. Promoters need to commit to the brand and closely examine what goes well and what does not work out. Key progress indicators should be monitored closely, and the causes of success and/or failure need to be reported on. Based on findings, promoters must revisit their initial plans and change their plans accordingly. In this way, promoters will have a brand that is sustainable, interesting and attractive over the long-term.



IV. Closing remarks

These guidelines have been prepared in order to provide citizens tips on what to consider and develop in their efforts to create cultural brands for their towns. We must emphasize that cultural promoters need to make their own decisions based on the actual realities that exist in their communities. Some steps listed in the previous section may need to be adapted differently to certain situations. We hope that this document helps you and your colleagues to develop cultural activities.

The partnership of the project C Via C greatly appreciates the support of the Europe for Citizens programme, and we encourage other organizations/institutions to consider the programme as a means to expand their networks, exchange knowledge and best practices and engage citizens in actions. We encourage you to consider EU programmes and policies as a basis for your project ideas as well since the European Union offers various funding opportunities:

Policies:

- **European Year of Culture 2018** - https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/european-year-cultural-heritage_en -
**Details on the priorities and impacts within the initiative are found on the link.*
- **European Agenda for Culture:** https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/strategic-framework_en
**This is the strategic framework for culture which was concluded in May 2018.*

Programmes

- **Europe for citizens:** https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/europe-for-citizens/strands_en
**For CSOs/NGOs, town twinning and networks of towns*
- **Creative Europe:** https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/node_en
**The programme co-funds cultural activities relating to events, performances, awareness building, education, film, TV productions, etc.*
- **Erasmus+ programme:** https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en
**Support for exchanges, education relating to culture and similar*
- **INTERREG programmes:** <https://interreg.eu/about-interreg/>
**This website provides an overall picture. Various INTERREG programmes support infrastructure development, training, awareness building and other activities relating to culture. The main condition of INTERREG programmes is interregional cooperation. Multiple countries and partners must be included and the partnership must pursue joint goals.*