

PLOVDIV – THE CULTURAL CAPITAL OF BULGARIA

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Abstract: This paper is focused on the cultural diversity of Plovdiv city, Bulgaria that has been developed and preserved during the town's existence and its impact of the cultural life across the country that eventually led to the election of the city as European Capital of Culture 2019. Several events not well known to the general public were key factors for the preservation of the multicultural appearance and diversity of the city. A review of the four-year framework of programmes, projects and events implemented under the project "European Capital of Culture" funded by European Union is presented. The aim of the article is to present an analysis of the possibilities and the specifics in the development of projects from the creative industries in the city.

The article also reflects part of the results of an empirical survey conducted in the period 2017-2018 in the city of Plovdiv among 105 creative organizations through their managers. The purpose of the empirical study was to investigate the management profile of the art organizations, including the opportunities and capacities for developing and managing projects and using the European Union's creativity-related programs.

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Introduction

Plovdiv is one of the oldest cities in Europe. Its motto is "Ancient and eternal" and many times during its existence the city was declared as the cultural capital of Bulgaria. Over the centuries the name of the city has changed many times - Eumolpia, Puldudeva, Philippopolis, Trimontium, Flavia, Ulpia, Puldine, Filibe, and Plovdiv. The preservation of the cultural and historical heritage plus the development of cultural industries are of importance for the present appearance of the city and the preservation of its spirit. The main factors influencing the transformation and the preservation can be found within the statement of Barkalova and Kazashka: "Within the creative and cultural industries are combined the five pillars of evolutionary and emotional development of mankind and society: art – application of human creativity and imagination for the creation of beauty and emotions, science - theory, technology and innovation, as creations of the human intellect; education - learning, transfer of experience and knowledge, creation of attitude towards learning; culture - a sense of identity and belonging and personal development – intellectual and emotional growth of men as person and as part of the society." (Barkalova and Kazashka, 2010 p.81-83).

Plovdiv is also known as the city of the seven hills turned into a cradle of art and culture, a spiritual and intellectual center and a repository of education.

The footprints of the different cultures which passed through the city during its existence are easily distinguished within the preserved architecture and cultural monuments. The preservation of the city's cultural diversity took a great deal of effort and will throughout history, especially the period XIV – XIX century, when Plovdiv was part of the Ottoman empire.

On one hand the rich history of the city is a prerequisite and condition for the city to develop an economy based on the creative industries, which represent 10% of the city's economy. On the other hand, this is one of the reasons why Plovdiv was chosen as European Capital of Culture in 2019, together with the Italian city of Matera.

The European Union Initiative "European Capitals of Culture" dates back to 1985 and is one of the most recognizable cultural and arts initiatives in Europe. The initiative was launched at the suggestion of the Greek Minister of Culture - Mrs. Melina Mercury, and the idea is to focus on the cultural life of cities in Europe. Through culture and art, European Capitals of Culture improve the quality of life in these cities and enhance their sense of community. Citizens can participate in annual activities and play a bigger role in the development of their city and cultural expression. Being a European capital of culture brings fresh life to these cities, increasing their cultural, social and economic development. European Capitals of Culture present cultural diversity, cultural heritage and the common history of cities, the language of art and science is universal and opens new opportunities for creative personalities and researchers.

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In this context, this study is useful and up-to-date and can serve as a basis for future comparative analysis and research in this field.

Data and methodology

A total of 272 questionnaires were sent in electronic form to the managers of the creative and recreational industries in the territory of the city of Plovdiv, a total of 120 completed questionnaires with 99% response rates were received. After validation, due to inaccurate and missed answers, 105 questionnaires were submitted for analysis.

A statistical approach was found as the most appropriate method for studying the problem since the information was received directly from the managers of the art organizations. Moreover, as it was determined by Anna Veleva and Margarita Ruseva, in their book "The aggregate approach in statistics": "Statistics is an open system of rules (scientific macroknowledge and macroskills) that serves the human information system (HIS) in searching, finding and using the truth in a given problem situation - the truth as it exists in the reality. The HIS is self-organizing, self-controlling, self-governing and self-developing biological integrity, unity and synchronicity of matter, knowledge and energy." (Veleva and Ruseva, 2016).

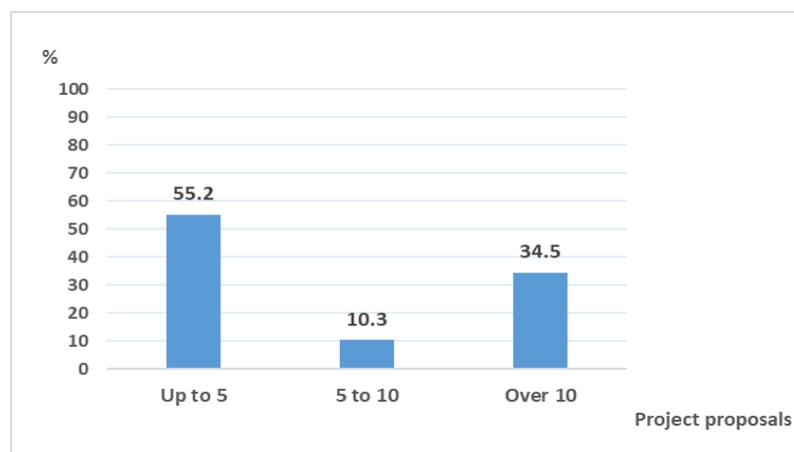
The management profile of 105 art organizations in Plovdiv was analysed. 57.5% of them are private and 42.5% are state organizations, of which 77.1% are small enterprises, 20.95% are medium enterprises and 1.9% are large enterprises. The art organizations with a turnover of more than 50 000 to 100 000 leva represent only 6.67% while the relative share of the organizations with turnover exceeding BGN 100 000 is relatively high at 31.43%. This is largely due to the share of medium and large creative industries in the city.

The staff number employed within the last year at creative organizations up to 2 people were 69.5% of the respondents, while only 7.6% of the organizations had more than 10 people. Between 3 and 9 people are employed in 22.9% of the creative industries that took part in the survey.

Average wages are an important indicator of the socio-economic development of the arts and therefore need to be analysed in different ways. The incomes of the employees in 61.9% of the creative and recreational industries in the city of Plovdiv are between EUR 230 and 460. It is alarming that in more than 35% of the organizations the average gross salary is up to EUR 230. Extremely small is the value of the relative share of creative industries in which the average monthly gross remuneration is over EUR 460.

Figure 1 presents the developed and submitted project proposals by art organizations in Plovdiv during the last 5 years. It is noteworthy that the average level of prepared and submitted proposals is quite low at 10.3%. We can conclude that most art organizations make proposals - 55.2%, and 34.5% of the art organizations apparently have a good previous experience in project preparation and implementation, and this determines the high percentage.

Figure 1: Developed and submitted project proposals from the creative industries in Plovdiv during the last five calendar years



Source: Kazashka et al., 2018

Figure 2 presents the projects developed and implemented in the last 5 calendar years. A high percentage - 53.8% of the creative organizations indicated the answer "up to 5 projects" and 30.5% of them had over 10 projects approved and implemented in the last five calendar years. Between 5 and 10 projects were realized by 7.6% of the creative industries in Plovdiv for the indicated period. From the results obtained it is clear that 8.1% of the organizations failed to implement any of the prepared and submitted project proposals.

Access to funding for arts organizations in these sectors may be difficult, mainly due to the intangible and collateral nature of their assets, the limited scale of the market, the uncertainty of demand, the lack of expertise on the part of financial intermediaries and the low examination of the specifics of the creative industries.

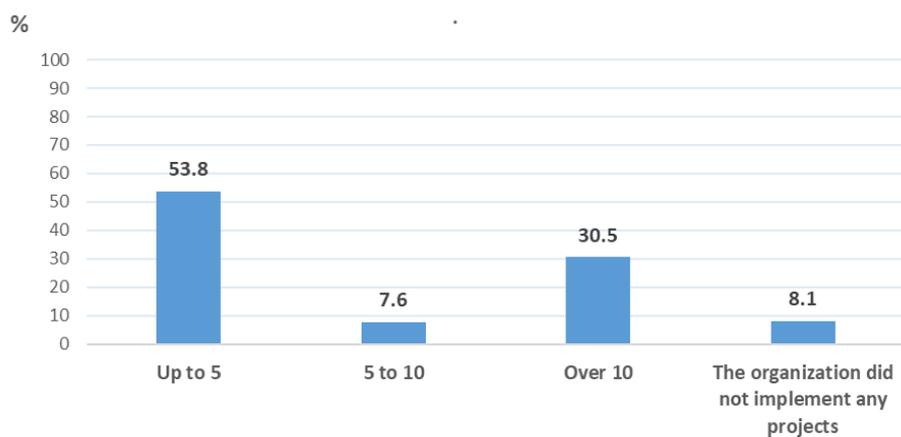
The interest of the present study is also the opportunity to finance cultural organizations through project activity, using national and international financial instruments.

From the results obtained, it is seen that the sector of the creative industries needs investor support. This requires the creation of a package of investment proposals in certain areas as well as investments by regional and municipal authorities.

To create such an investment program, more in-depth and more targeted research is needed in the fields of creative industries, marketing and economics of culture.

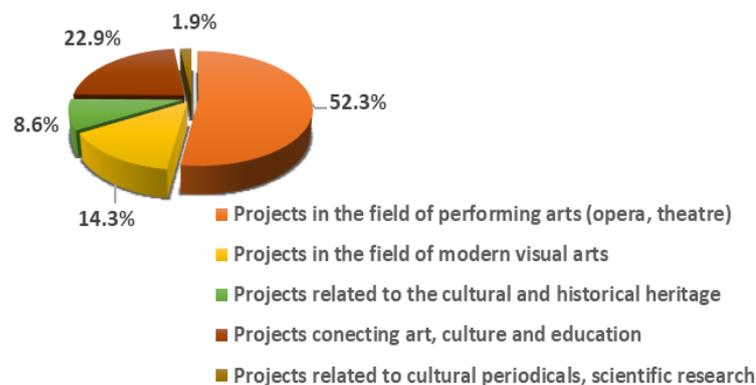
Account must be taken of the fact that 8.1% of the organizations did not develop and submit a project proposal. The reasons for this may be different, so special attention and further analysis needs to be paid to guide managers from these organizations and local governments about the training, tools and policies involved in activating this diaspora.

Figure 2: Successfully implemented projects over the past five calendar years



Source: Kazashka et al., 2018

Figure 3: Types of projects implemented by the creative industries in the city of Plovdiv



Source: Kazashka et al., 2018

Figure 3 presents the distribution of the realized creative projects by sector. The largest share of projects in the field of performing arts is 52.3%. Educational projects related to art are 22.9%, 14.3% of projects focus on modern visual arts. Successful project proposals in the field of cultural and historical heritage account for 8.6% of the approved and executed projects in the city of Plovdiv. The smallest is the value of the relative share of projects related to cultural periodicals and scientific research.

The conducted empirical study also shows the estimated value of the realized projects. The majority of projects - 63.9% - are worth up to 25,000 euros. Another part - 30.5% of the respondents are developing projects up to 50,000 euro, and only 5.6% implement bigger projects worth more than 50,000 euro.

Results of the implementation of key projects in 2014-2018:

The project "Tobacco City" - started in 2014 with organized discussions on the future of the old tobacco storages and district, 1 exhibition was held, and 1 documentary was broadcasted. In 2015 preparations were made to create an online platform that was implemented in 2016 (Official launch of the online platform "The Tobacco City", 2016). The platform is used for the dissemination of the project, the events and presentation of 10 conceptual ideas for the development of the district. In 2017, 1 conference was held and the "City Games" initiative was implemented. In 2018 a massive five-story building of a former tobacco warehouse and furniture shop was turned into a space for culture and art, and also the seat of the "Foundation Plovdiv 2019", opened its doors for the realization of cultural events. The building was named "WAREHOUSE".

The project "Kapana creative district" - in 2014 the first phase of the project was implemented - for the renovation and opening of 10 new art spaces. In 2015 the second phase of the project was implemented, bringing 6 new creative spaces for cultural events and where 13 events were held. In 2016 the third phase of the project "Kapana-Events and Intervention in the Urban Environment" was implemented, where a total of 27 project proposals were submitted for events and activities in the district from which 9 were implemented.

In the same year, the project's website was created. In 2017 in partnership with the "French Institute in Bulgaria", a fourth phase of the project was carried out with a focus on French Culture - 49 proposals were submitted, of which 5 were approved for funding. The approved projects were implemented in April and May of 2018 (About the Project "Kapana Creative District", 2017).

The project "Mahala" - launched in 2016 which started with conducting anthropological research into Plovdiv's "Stoliupinovo" district, mainly inhabited by the Roma population. In the same year, an "international architectural workshop" was conducted, as a result of which projects were planned for the development of the district. In 2017 discussions with focus groups occurred and training activities were held, a mapping of the "Stoliupinovo" district was also carried out. In 2018 an ethnographic survey of the communities within "Stoliupinovo" district was completed and published.

The project "Cinema Cosmos" consisted in 2016 of eight meetings which were held to generate ideas for the future development of the old socialist cinema. In 2017 the project has started with a discussion on the reintegration of cinema into the life of the city.

The project "Maritza River and Ada Island" which in 2016 consisted of the organization of 3 thematic events – an exposition of rare bird species living in the island area; the open screening of "Jumbo Wild films" and an interview with Alex Head with the topic "Adata island". In 2017 the project continued with an organized weekend for children and families dedicated to the Green Initiative. The complimentary international project "School for Spectacles" was also implemented, attracting 25 artists who participated in a one-week forum.

In the same year, the ADATA AiR residency program was also launched with the main goal to generate project concepts related to Ada Island. Following its announcement, the program has attracted 320 applications. In 2018, the first session of the program finished and 37 artists from 14 countries were selected to work on a rotating basis in Plovdiv. Moreover another 29 artists from 12 countries were selected in the second session of the program. In total 7 presentations on the ADATA AiR residency program were implemented.

The Cyrilisation Project - launched in 2017 with one exhibition under the motto "Together in Cyrillic" and a Calligraphy Workshop. In 2018 an international font conference was organized; "Typofest" festival was held and an exhibition "The Yard of the Cyrillic in Pliska" was organized.

Project Forum 2019 - started in 2016 in the same year 26 seminars, workshops and thematic conferences were held. In 2017 and 2018 project implementation continued with various events - presentations of successful projects, discussions, thematic lectures, creative workshops, educational platforms and info meetings (Plovdiv 2019 Foundation annual reports, 2019).

The palette of the various cultural events provided within the framework of projects selected as complimentary to the key projects of "Plovdiv 2019" unfolded in 2017 with the implementation of 14 complimentary projects. The build-up of events continued in 2018 - 11 projects implemented in the first quarter, 21 projects implemented in the second, 22 projects third quarter and 34 projects in the fourth quarter – laying down the foundations for the official opening of "Plovdiv 2019".

The official opening of "Plovdiv-European Capital of Culture 2019" took place in the form of an "opening weekend" of three days from 11th to 13th of January 2019 with the implementation of 38 events with duration from several hours to more than two days (11.01-11 events, 12.01-14 events, 13.01-13 events). The residents and guests of the city have had unforgettable experiences fueled by large-scale exhibitions; film screenings; children's programs - painting shops, children's workshops and quizzes; chamber concerts; theater performances; tango opera and various music and dance programs in open spaces. The events were organized at iconic areas of the town - Old Plovdiv, Kapana quarter, Tobacco city, museums, squares, street and park spaces. The main event of the opening program was the open-air show "We Are All Colors" on 12.01.2019 with the participation of over 1500 Bulgarian and foreign artists of all ages. The impressive number of participants on the stage is the result of a successful volunteer program implemented via specially designed volunteer software, articles written by volunteers, the volunteer program "Foster Family" and a variety of organized meetings with different topics ("Programme Highlights", 2018).

The implementation of events in the cities selected as European Capitals of Culture is carried out on the principle of financing a program based on projects to be implemented during the household.

In order to evaluate the success of the projects of organizations working in the field of creative and recreational industries, a question has been formulated which gives information on successfully implemented projects over the last five years.

Figure 1 presents the projects developed and implemented in the last 5 calendar years. A high percentage - 53.8% of the creative organizations indicated the answer "up to 5 projects" and 30.5% of them won and realized over 10 projects in the last five calendar years. Between 5 and 10 projects were realized by 7.6% of the creative industries in Plovdiv for the indicated period. From the results obtained it is clear that 8.1% of the organizations failed to implement any of the prepared and submitted project proposals. Access to funding for arts organizations in these sectors may be difficult, mainly due to the intangible nature of their assets and collateral, the limited scale of the market, the uncertainty of demand and the lack of expertise on the part of financial intermediaries, the examination of the specifics of the creative industries.

The interest in the present study is also the opportunity to finance cultural organizations through project activity, using national and complementary international financial instruments.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be summarized that during its centuries of existence, Plovdiv has always played the role of an economic, administrative, political, cultural and spiritual center, an educational and creative hub. The city, founded by a Thracian tribe, passed through the reign of Macedonians, Romans, Slavs, Byzantines, Latin crusaders; and at more recent times was inhabited by Bulgarians, Greeks, Turks, Jews, Armenians, and Roma; was demolished and rebuilt during its history; bearing the messages of the past centuries and preserving spirituality and culture; today Plovdiv is declared as the European Capital of Culture 2019. In this context, the conclusion is that creative industries need to use their capacity develop the city's culture and heritage.

The results obtained are the basis for future research and comparative analyses, and the results obtained are useful for realizing and increasing the opportunities for project development and management. An approach has been proposed to expand the knowledge and potential of arbors, to evaluate and motivate the choice of appropriate business models for management and financing.

There are a number of sectors within the cultural industries that could certainly benefit from financial support and EU specialized funds to support their development and innovation.

The transformation of traditional institutions into cultural industries consists of changing forms of governance, forming new partnerships, finding extra-budgetary sources of funding, providing modern services, etc., which in principle help to solve the internal problems of the cultural sphere.

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